North Carolina Sentinel Landscapes Committee Minutes
May 30, 2019
2:00 pm – 3:30 p.m.
Hall of Fame Room, NCDA&CS, Raleigh, NC
Conference Call 712-775-7031 Access Code 597842

Attendees:
Committee members present:

- Steve Troxler, Commissioner of Agriculture
- Dr. Mary Watzin, Dean of NC State University College of Natural Resources
- Gordon Myers, Executive Director of NC Wildlife Resources Commission
- Walter Clark, designee for Reid Wilson, Chief Deputy Secretary of NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (NCDCNR)
- Ariel Aponte, Designee of NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (NCDMVA)
- Chester Lowder, NC Sentinel Landscapes Partnership Representative

Other Attendees: Michael Scalise, Joe Ramirez, Michelle Lovejoy Tina Hlabse, Jonathan Lanier, Bob Bardon, David Smith, Zane Hedgecock, Janine McLawhorn, Dewitt Hardee, Robert Hosford, Evan Davis, Laura Brookshire, Will Best, Patrick Archibald and Veronica Jamison. Brian Joyner on the phone.

Veronica Jamison called the Roll of Members and announced a quorum was present.

Commissioner Troxler read the Ethics Reminder:

Under the State Government Ethics Act, the chairman is required to remind all members of their duty to avoid conflicts of interest or appearances of conflicts of interest. If you have any conflict or appearance of conflict of interest with respect to any item on the agenda, please state this for the record and refrain from inappropriate participation on that item.

Commissioner Troxler requested a motion of approval for the minutes as presented to the members. Mr. Chester Lowder moved for approval of the minutes for March 6, 2019. Mr. Ariel Aponte seconded the motion. The minutes were approved as presented.

Dewitt Hardee, Director of the Farmland Preservation Division, reported there is $2.3 million total funds available for Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscape (ENCSL) military/agriculture conservation easements. This remaining budget balance will be used based on the activity of the prior week's Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation (ADFP) Trust Fund Advisory Committee meeting.

The ADFP Trust Fund is currently working with the Working Lands Trust to close the 2016 United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Agricultural Lands Easement (ALE) Regional Conservation Partnership Program

(RCPP) contracted projects contracts by July or August. The 2018 RCPP/United States Navy parcels have been contracted. One ADFP Trust Fund/Navy parcel has been contracted and others have been selected for contracting.

2018 USDA RCPP United States Air Force (USAF) parcels include 4,872.78 acres with an estimated $12,305,807.09 in conservation easement expenditures. These are broken down by funding source:

- USAF: $3,458,429.28
- ADFPTF: $3,458,429.28
- USDA NRCS ALE: $5,388,948.54

2018 USDA RCPP Navy/Marine Corps Installations East (MCIEAST) parcels include 336 acres with an estimated $545,889.00 in conservation easement expenditures. These are broken down by funding source:

- Navy/MCIEAST: $157,419.00
- ADFPTF: $157,419.00
- USDA NRCS ALE: $231,051.00

There are 14,724 acres under a conservation easement purchase option in the USAF priority area. There are 9,850 acres under a conservation easement purchase option in the MCIEAST priority area. There are more interested landowners in the priority areas.

The easement template for USDA NRCS ALE/ADFP Trust Fund/USAF is complete. The easement template for USDA NRCS ALE/ADFP Trust Fund/Navy is under negotiation. An NCDA&CS/US Army cooperative agreement is currently under negotiation. All easement templates are available for download at www.ncadfp.org/downloads.

David Smith, Chief Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture, stated that the proposed state budget is not kind to the ADFP Trust Fund. Mr. Hardee noted that the proposed decreased budget means the ADFP Trust Fund will not be able to move forward with all the acres under option and it takes away some of the one-time match for conservation easement funding sources.

Ariel Aponte, Assistant Secretary of NCDMVA, reported that he has a new position as the Assistant Secretary focused on military affairs. In his new role, he will be traveling to assess North Carolina's aviation platforms and the Army's future in aviation, including drones and airlifts. Mr. Aponte explained the importance of protecting land that accommodates multi-domain training (land, sea, and air) and is conducting an air evaluation to better understand who and what is in the sky. North Carolina is postured to be a model state in terms of aviation.

Walter Clark, Director of the Clean Water Management Trust Fund and representative for NCDCNR, reported they received $2 million in total requests for the Clean Water Management Trust Fund. There are five projects, most coming from Land Trust partners, that are considered high priority for the military. The five projects have been vetted by the military. The Clean Water Management Trust Fund's board meets in September to decide which grants will be funded and Mr. Clark expects that the five military-related projects will all be funded. The total value of the five projects is $5.5 million.

Gordon Myers, Executive Director of NC Wildlife Resources Commission, reported they are in a partnership with MCIEAST and the Army to conduct timber restoration on 775 acres, long leaf pine habitat and native grass restoration on 90 acres, and prescribed burns on 1,400 acres with an additional 386 acres due for prescribed burns this summer. There are 1,400 acres of timber sales planned for the Recovery and Sustainment Program (RASP). A land acquisition is under way or completed for Salters Creek Landing, 5,182 acres in Carteret County. This 5,182-acre project includes multiple funding sources (Clean Water Management Trust Fund, Navy, Wildlife Resources Commission Agency Funds, North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA), and private donations) and will help buffer key airspace for the Marine Corps' Piney Island Bombing Range. Additionally, archeological studies were completed at both Bear Garden and Stones Creek.

Mr. Myers introduced the aquatic safe harbor program, which is the first of its kind in the country. The program will proactively create a safe harbor for 22 aquatic species. They are rearing finfish with NC State University. There are regulatory assurances to private landowners and environmental partners that the land will not be impacted by the presence of the species.

The red cockaded woodpecker (RCW) has been downgraded. A letter was mailed to landowners asking for a 30-year commitment to continue the efforts to maintain habitats for RCWs. The current downgraded status of the RCW is due to the commitment of small groups, including RASP.

Mallory Martin was present at the meeting with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. He is taking on more responsibilities with Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and has a meeting next week to present findings.

Dr. Mary Watzin, Dean of NC State University College of Natural Resources, reported that the NC Landowner Outreach Project is expanding to additional counties and military installations. Southeast Regional Partnership for Planning and Sustainability (SERPPAS) has reengaged around good mapping, which was its initial focus.

Dr. Watzin is stepping down as Dean and the end of this summer, and in the fall, she will be in the Provost's office working to unite colleges around coastal resilience.

Chester Lowder, NC Sentinel Landscapes Partnership Representative added the following update:

> Mr. Lowder, Mary Lou Addor, and Michelle Lovejoy attended a sentinel landscapes orientation meeting last week. Below are takeaways from the meeting.
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> - They met and interacted with other sentinel landscapes staff/partnerships from across the country. They learned that every sentinel landscape designation area is different, and each program is implemented differently.
> - Other states often comment that NC's sentinel landscape area is too large, but Mr. Lowder feels that they do not understand how many bases and supplemental training areas NC has. Mr. Lowder and others from NC strategically mentioned adding Camp Butner to NC's sentinel landscape designation, but other groups/states are holding

back before considering adding other designations. Requests for adding areas to designations might be entertained at the end of the year.

- There is a Federal Coordinating Committee with representatives from Department of Defense, Department of Interior, and Department of Agriculture.
- Mrs. Lovejoy added that other states have brand new sentinel landscapes coordinators with no experience. NC does have good experience that new coordinators can learn from.
- Mrs. Lovejoy spoke with representatives from USDA about what the Farm Bill offers or can offer in terms of sentinel landscapes and local communities in and around sentinel landscapes.
- Mr. Lowder and Mrs. Lovejoy mentioned a documentary produced by Grizzly Creek Film Company about sentinel landscapes that they previewed at the meeting. It brought up good questions without directly asking them and challenges viewers to learn more. Mr. Lowder suggested that we watch the ten-minute version of the documentary at the next Committee meeting.

Mr. Lowder also reported that NC's Sentinel Landscapes Partnership is trying to get early groups of the Partnership involved again. The Partnership is also brainstorming what other programs can be looked at that may help NC military readiness.

Mr. Lowder asked if anyone present has anything that needs to be brought to the attention of the Partnership.

Mr. Clark mentioned that one of the proposed Clean Water projects has to do with Camp Butner.

Mr. Aponte asked for a list of the proposed Clean Water projects and asked if NC has a Sentinel Landscape video. Robert Hosford said there is a video, and it is posted on YouTube and on Dr. Watzin's website.

Mr. Hardee asked for the Partnership to define who can be considered a partner and to define terms for when the Partnership label can be used. Mr. Lowder said it is a partnership of the willing. Anyone who is willing to help and believes in the mission can be involved. Dr. Watzin added that the goal is to involve anyone that can advance the effort of the Partnership.

Mr. Hardee is concerned about people/groups wanting to use Partnership label if they are not formally part of the Partnership. Mr. Lowder stated that that has not been an issue yet. The Memorandum of Understanding with the Partnership will be redone in 2020. He does not want there to be a formal structure at this time. He wants to continue operating on consensus, not voting. Dr. Watzin added that if someone is using the Partnership or Sentinel Landscapes label inappropriately or in contradiction to the mission/efforts, then that needs to be addressed. Mr. Myers asked if there is a logo or anything that might benefit from having copyright protection. Mr. Lowder said that Jesse Birckhead is working with the Partnership to develop a logo. Dr. Watzin added that the Partnership needs to be careful with branding. The logo will have to work for five different committee partners and big "P" partners. Rules of usage for a logo will have to be developed.

Mr. Smith gave an update on the Hurricane Florence Disaster Program of 2018. Over $170 million have been distributed to farmers. The end of the first phase is wrapping up now. Henderson County and other mountain counties might be added, pending legislation. Commissioner Troxler said it is important to note that 10 percent of farmers bring in 90 percent of the industry income for the state.

Mr. Hosford gave an update on NC military service base leadership and command. There have been several turnovers in leadership at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, MCIEAST, and Fort Bragg. Major General Alford is returning to Fort Bragg from Afghanistan in July. Colonel Curtis is coming to Cherry Point. Colonel Don Yates will be the Wing Commander at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base.

Other business: Mr. Aponte said on June 20, several entities are coming together at the NC National Guard Joint Force Headquarters to discuss what aircrafts are available to assist with upcoming/current hurricane season. He informed the Committee that the completion of the veteran nursing home in Raleigh is currently still on schedule.

No public comments.

Next meeting is August 22, 2019 from 2:00-4:00 pm.

With no further questions and discussion, Commissioner Troxler entertained a motion for adjournment. Mr. Myers moved to adjourn with Mr. Aponte seconding the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Adjourn 3:08 pm