North Carolina Sentinel Landscapes Committee Minutes
June 9, 2025, 1:00 PM – 2:28 PM
Conference Call Number: 984-204-1487
Conference ID: 539 553 712#

Attendees:
Committee members present:

- David Smith, Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture
- Rick Long, NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
- Jeff Michael, Deputy Secretary, NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
- Shannon Deaton attended for Kyle Briggs, Executive Director, NC Wildlife Resources Commission
- Dr. Myron F. Floyd, Dean, College of Natural Resources
- Chester Lowder, Sentinel Landscape Partnership Liaison

Other Attendees: In-person – Corey Hoilman, Chris Baillie, Neil Oakley, Jon Lanier, Cameron Dawson, Joe Austin, Veronica Jamison, Anita Kennedy, Reva Orr, Sabrina Shaffer, Ryan Manning, Will Summers, Bill Edwards, Dewitt Hardee, Steve Woodson, Tristan Reynolds, Christian Vose, Ashton Bachman, and Will Robinson; Online – Carmen Lombardo, Jacob Boyd, Denise Evans, Jaime Simon, Gwen Abernathy, Kevin Johnson, Lisa Shealy, Addie L. Thornton

Reading of 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.

The minutes from the February 25 meeting were presented for approval. Jeff Michael made the motion, and Rick Long seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Corey Hoilman presented the report for the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. He said he was filling in for Division Director Evan Davis was under the weather. Hoilman reviewed all four open military contracts – Boyd, Futral, Jenkins, and McCotter II – with Working Lands Trust, totaling 3,414.74 acres. He also informed the committee that the two contracts for Small Farm 1 and 2 in Jones County had been withdrawn at the landowner's request. He reviewed recorded military partnership conservation easements since 2016 – 20 USAF easements conserving over 10,900 acres in Bertie, Hyde, Tyrrell and Washington counties, and three Navy/USMC easements in Jones and Pamlico counties conserving over 2,300 acres. He also presented a summary of the funds from each of the partners that have been used to protect these properties, bringing the total easement value $28,309,105.57, and he broke down spending to date through the MOU with NCMAC.

Rick Long presented for the NC Department of Military Affairs. He discussed the possibility of the elimination of the MAC through the state budget process, but said he was hopeful that the funding for the MOU would continue. He said his organization is working with NC DHHS and DoD on a dual licensing process for in-home certified childcare for military employees, with a goal of allowing care-givers to begin providing services quicker.

Jeff Michael presented for the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. He highlighted the work of Will Summers and his group with the NC Land and Water Fund. He reviewed their grant application summary, saying that NCLWF received $132.7 million in requests for 2025 grants. He said 138 applications were received, with 89 of those for land acquisition, 31 for restorations, five for innovative stormwaters, and 13 for planning. He reported that 29 applications are within ENCSL counties, the associated requests total $18.2 million, and would preserve roughly 3,000 acres. Michael said final funding determinations will be made in October. Summer said the division had received over $26 million in funding through personalized license plates sales, and also reported on the upcoming possible House Bill 74 that would give a tax credit for donation of a conservation easement.

Shannon Deaton gave the report for the NC Wildlife Resource Commission. Similar to Land and Water, she reported on the Recovery and Sustainment Program, including the Bear Garden timber stand improvement project, and said that once crews are done there they will move to the new Stones Creek project. The Holly Shelter Game Land has undergone 470 acres of prescribed burning. Deaton said the operational program staff with NCWRC's Wildlife Management Division continue to work within the ENCSL focal area to expand private lands conservation. From February through May 2025, staff reported meeting 17 private landowners within the ENCSL, and she said this will result in the management of 10,490 acres. She also discussed their ongoing partnership with the NC Museum of Natural Science, SC Department of Natural Resources, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, West Liberty University and Georgia Southern University on a multi-state crayfish project to manage the understudied species. She reported on the land acquisition adding 179 acres to Bertie County Game Lands, and adding four tracts adjacent to the Windsor Boating Access area which border the Cashie River that falls in the NC Natural Heritage Program Cashie River Area. She also reported on the Angola Bay Game Land in Pender County. This project is onto the second phase, and when finalized it is expected to result in 7,500 acres of peatland restoration. The next plan of action for NC Wildlife will be due on September 30, 2025. Deaton said there is an open public comment period open till July 5. She also reported on the federal funding matching grants required to create a SWAP and to conduct a 10-year mandatory comprehensive review.

Dr. Myron Floyd gave his report for the NCSU of Natural College Resources. He reported that there is new leadership on campus with the selection of Kevin Howell as the new chancellor, effective May 5. Floyd said Howell brings two decades of leadership to the role. Floyd also reported that Natural Resources just launched their Climate and Sustainability Academy, and that NC State will be facing a $14.8 million reduction in federal research grant funding.

Chester Lowder presented on behalf of the Sentinel Landscape Partnership. He reported on a cost share program meeting with 170 landowners in attendance, and also recognized Chris Baillie for all of his collaboration work and getting the committee together.

Chris Baillie presented his ENCSL updates. He reported on grant proposals submitted, near-term submissions and the near-term priorities. He said there are six active proposals currently. He reported on a project between NC State and the City of Goldsboro, and on a submission from Camp Lejeune, MCAS New River, Onslow County and the City of Jacksonville, hopefully to receive funding in September. He reported on administrative items within the ENCSL, including the strategic plan draft and the next REPI Challenge deadline approaching on July 3.

Jeremy Goodwin with the NC Department of Transportation was not present.

Reva Orr with Working Lands Trust made a presentation about her organization. Founded in 2013, WLT is a non -profit 501(c)(3) with a mission to conserve working lands throughout the state, with a focus on preserving NC farms and forests and helping with military readiness projects. They are currently in partnership with NCDA&CS, USDA and the military on numerous active projects. She reported that since their founding they have preserved 17,489 acres on 33 properties.

Jacob Boyd, the Director of the NC Coastal Federation, gave a presentation to the group. He gave an overview of the Salt Marsh Program, which aims to improve coastal health with focuses on salt marshes, oyster health, water quality and marine debris. He reported the Salt Marsh Program broke up into NC Salt March Action Plan, South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative Living Shorelines and the Blue Carbon Initiative. He said the main goal is to minimize the loss of acreage through 2050 and beyond. He spoke on some Living Shoreline projects for 2025. He reported that the MCAS Cherry Point shoreline was completed in March. He also spoke about the initial shoreline along MCAS New River and Camp Lejeune, and the dredge spoil island adjacent to Bogue Airfield. Boyd said all are ENCSL priority geographies to help build community and improve our ecosystem. He also reported on the EPA's Climate Pollution Reduction Grant, which will fund $421 million to fight carbon emissions and enhanced carbon. The area affected includes NC, SC, VA and MD. He reported that the NC Coastal Federation has awarded $30 million to restore and protect carbon coastal habitats.

David Smith asked if there were any further Sentinel Landscape Committee business items or public comments. Hearing none, Chester Lowder made the motion to adjourn, and Dr. Myron Floyd seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 2:22 PM.