North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Committee

June 20, 2023

Main Agriculture Building - Hall of Fame Room, 2 W. Edenton Street, Raleigh, NC 27601
Time 1:30pm – 2:34 pm

Attendees:
Committee members present:

- Weston McCorkle for Commissioner Troxler, NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
- Rod White for Rick Long, NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
- Jeff Michael, Deputy Secretary, NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
- Brian McRae for Cameron Ingram, NC Wildlife Resources Commission
- Mary Lou Addor for Dr. Myron Floyd
- Chester Lowder, Sentinel Landscape Partnership Liaison

- Other Attendees: Joe Austin, Evan Davis, Corey Hoilman, Anita Kennedy, Jon Lanier, Allison Rodriguez, Nancy Richardson, Rodney Woolard, John Shaw, Dewitt Hardee, Rhonda Murray, Steve Woodson, John Shaw, Neil Oakley, Joy Rybolt, Abby Thornley, Edward Davis, Sabrina Shaffer, Mikey Fulk, Bill Edwards, Eva Buckner, Chris Baillie, Denise Evans, Emma Hughes, Janine McLawhorn, Marty Korenek, Charles Bass, Tom Potter, Michelle Lovejoy, Jason Rose, Scott Shoulars, Will Best, and Christian Vose.

- **Reading of Ethics Reminder** 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.

- Minutes from the February 14, 2023, meeting was approved. Jeff Michael made the motion to approve, and Mary Lou Addor seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

- Evan Davis gave his report for NCDA&CS Farmland Preservation. He reviewed current military partnership easements within the Sentinel Landscape, which include G&H Farms, McCotter Farm Phase I, Armstrong Farm Phases I & II, as well as the new contracts out for execution with Working Lands Trust, all of which include Navy/MCI East partnership. Those new contracts are Futral, Jenkins, Small Phase I & II. Since July 2016, almost 11,000 acres have been placed under easement in the Sentinel Landscape. Evan reviewed the NCMAC MOU budget breakdown (award, expenses through last

month, and the balance). Evan and Weston McCorkle briefed NCMAC last month on this information. Quarterly reports are due at the end of this month, which Evan will present to the Base Sustainability Sub Committee on July 12th.

- Rod White, the Installation Coordinator with the NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, presented the report for his agency. No new updates to report.

- Jeff Michael, Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources in the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, gave their update. Will Summer, Director of Division of Land and Water Stewardship, which administers the NC Land and Water Fund and the Natural Heritage Program, also attended. Jeff said in previous meetings their report has been primarily about the NC Land and Water funding of conservation around military bases. The National Parks Service also has federal funds available through their Land and Water Conservation Fund. The NC Division of Parks and Recreation has a grants-making team for application evaluation and distribution of these federal funds. Jeff recently learned that there are funds specifically for match in conservation projects around military bases. The deadline for the NC Parks team to submit applications to the National Parks Service is August 21st. Local applicants have until June 23rd to get application materials to the NC Parks Team for their review prior to the August deadline.

  Wil Summer reported on the NC Land and Water Fund and Natural Heritage Program. He said that Feb. 2023 grant applications had come in – $98.5 million in requests from 143 applications for mostly land acquisition. Fifteen acquisition applications were from Eastern Sentinel Landscape counties ($10.6 million/6,400 acres). He wanted to make a distinction about their military buffer projects. Some projects they refer to as military buffer projects are not in Sentinel Landscape counties (such as in Durham and Brunswick counties), and also some projects they fund in the Sentinel Landscape area are not military related. Eleven applicants for military buffer projects are not in the Sentinel Landscape counties. The board met to award funding to 17 flood risk reduction projects, and seven of those projects are in ENCSL counties.

- Brian McRae gave the NC Wildlife Resources Commission Report. He started with an update on RASP (Red-Cockaded Woodpecker Recovery and Sustainment Program) which is in the Sentinel Landscape. As of this spring, further longleaf pine restoration efforts have taken place at Bear Garden across 526 acres. WRC staff met with and provided management guidance to 25 landowners in ENCSL area, covering 10,000 acres with the objective to provide enhancement for habitat for various species of greatest conservation need in these areas. The Angola Bay Gameland project with TNC has moved to implementation phase with the objective to restore 7,500 acres, re-wet peat, restore pocosin, and provide wildfire reduction. The road raising part of project is being completed. They will apply for an America the Beautiful grant to complete funding.

- Mary Lou Addor provided the update for the College of Natural Resources, NCSU. She spoke about research of interest, publications of interest and programmatic interests. One research of interest relates to the loss of tree inventory, tree canopy, and the resulting economic loss from climate change. Another study, Internet of Animals, relates to AI. Dr. Addor mentioned publications of interest via the College of Natural Resources, many that can be downloaded for free, and can be helpful to landowners. She encouraged this group to check out these publications in case some of the audiences that ENCSL agencies work with may find them useful. She mentioned upcoming workshops of interest: June 21 – timber income and expenses at the Ag Building in Wake County; June 20 – Cumberland County landowner resource workshop.

- Chester Lowder provided the report for the Sentinel Landscape Partnership. He attended virtually and asked Lou for assistance. ENCSL is part of National Sentinel Landscape partnership, and several attended a recent meeting in Camp Ripley in Minnesota (an early Sentinel Landscape partnership). At the ENCSL Partnership meeting within the last month, the MOU was adopted by voluntary agreement among the partners. Lou discussed various partnerships around each installation. Around Fort Liberty, there is RULAC and Sandhills Conservancy, TNC, and the Wildlife Resources Commission. MCI East has many partners in the Onslow BITE working on conservation and military readiness. Seymour Johnson is trying to build capacity with Johnston and Wayne counties. The riverine flooding event held in Sept. 2022 explore unique ways to reduce flooding events.

  ENCSL Partnership feels their role is to help with five-year strategic plans. A new ENCSL website is in development, is to be shared with principal partners after July 4th, and is designed to provide archives of information. Since February, the Partnership has had two in-person and two virtual meetings. Lou said they may go back to the previous model for meetings starting in September, where the principals meet in the morning and the afternoon session is educational and open to the larger public. They expect to have more meetings this year than any previous year because they have a lot going on – efforts to strengthen military readiness, working with partners on MERS in communities, energy and water connections, and road systems to name a few. The REPI challenge pre-proposal has been submitted for SJAFB. Their RCPP proposal is due on August 18th, and will focus on ENCSL landowners' connection/coordination.

- Corey Hoilman from NCDA&CS Farmland Preservation presented the ENCSL combined map. This map shows conservation efforts across ENCSL partners, what has been accomplished and where further efforts are needed, and emphasized that it is still a working draft. Evan said map will be shared after meeting with identification of various layers. He wants to make sure any concerns with sharing of data and public access to information are addressed.

- Jeff Michael asked if the map includes other conservation partners that were not funded through partners in the ENCSL Committee. Evan said if data was submitted to the Natural Heritage layer, we would have that data, although it can be confusing because there are

different types of restrictions/ different easements. We don't want the map to imply all land is equally protected. If a project doesn't have State funds, currently we don't have that data. This is a first draft. Jeff said there have been attempts over the years to pull this conservation easement information. Lou asked if there are NGOs who can contribute data. Evan looked at a model from VA based on solar to get ideas. Some information is restricted. In NC, electric sub-station information is now restricted data because of recent damage. If we want to include sensitive data for strategic planning, we can do that with certain restrictions. We would like consensus on data sensitivity and to get the map in a final form before distribution.

John Shaw (virtual attendance) had a question about the large number of acres marked as state-owned properties. These are technically not legally protected because the General Assembly can sell these lands and then they can be developed. He asked if we can we get better protection on state-owned properties? Wil Summer says there is a tool used by the NC Land and Water Fund when they protect property that is going to owned by the State: dedication under the Natural Preserves Act is a conservation agreement that is analogous to a conservation easement. The entity managing the site and the Council of State have to give up the right to sell. Wil later provided this summary: The NC Natural Heritage Program encourages conservation and stewardship of natural areas through programs that create Dedicated Nature Preserves (DNP) under the Nature Preserves Act (GS 143B-135.250-.272). Dedicated Nature Preserves, owned by state agencies, local governments, or nonprofit conservation groups, are permanently protected through a legally binding agreement with DNCR to manage the land for conservation of its natural heritage resources. State-owned land can only be removed from dedication upon approval of the governor and the Council of State. Scott Pohlman from the Natural Heritage Program scott.pohlman@ncdcr.gov is a good contact for further information.

Information on the Natural Heritage Preserves Act can be found here:
https://www.ncnhp.org/conservation/dedicated-nature-preserves

Jeff mentioned the Department of Corrections has stepped forward after Executive Order 80 (encouragement on action to thwart effects of Climate Change). Corrections evaluated their land holdings around state, decided which were not needed, and worked with Will's team to dedicate land. They are an example to show other agencies what they can do.

- No other public comments.

- Weston McCorkle asked for a motion to close the meeting. Jeff made the motion, and Brian seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 2:34 pm.