North Carolina Sentinel Landscapes Committee Minutes
August 22, 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. Myron Floyd, NC State University College of Natural Resources
- Gordon Myers, Executive Director of NC Wildlife Resources Commission
- 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

Commissioner Steve Troxler called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m., thanked everyone for being in attendance, and called on Veronica Jamison to do a roll call. A quorum was present.

The Commissioner welcomed Dr. Myron Floyd to his first Sentinel Landscapes meeting and asked if he would share a bit about himself. Dr. Floyd has been with NC State for 14 years, the last 5 of which he has been the department head of Parks Recreation & Tourism Management. He is originally from South Carolina and has worked at 4 different land grant universities. The Commissioner's only question was to make sure Dr. Floyd, being from SC, was not a fan of mustard-based BBQ sauce. Dr. Floyd said BBQ sauce from all regions had their own special qualities to which the Commissioner responded, "That was a very political answer."

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.

There were no declarations made of any conflicts of interest. He next called for a motion of approval of the minutes from the May 30, 2019 meeting. He received two motions from Gordon Myers and Reid Wilson. There were no additions or deletions to the minutes. The minutes were approved.

Commissioner Troxler then moved on to committee member reports pertaining to NC Sentinel Landscapes activities, and called on Dewitt Hardee, Director of Farmland Preservation, to begin. Mr. Hardee first went over the $150k of contracted funds from the military. $35k was funded to NC Foundation for Soil & Water, $40k to NCSU College of Natural Resources, and $75k to the

ADFP Trust Fund. Most of the funding is going towards reimbursement, so there is not much activity right now, but this should be finished in the next 3-4 months which is on schedule. Regarding the Foundation for Soil & Water report, Michelle Lovejoy is handling this and providing educational information to landowners across Eastern NC within the Sentinel Landscape. She has organized 5 landowner outreach workshops and 5 community level meetings. Dr. Mary Lou Watzin with the NCSU College of Natural Resources is also providing educational outreach working extensively with the Sentinel Landscape Partnership. It is currently ongoing and the NCSU College of Natural Resources report notes on the meeting presentation slides provide a detailed outline of those efforts. Regarding the Trust Fund, $75,000 is being used for 3 temp employees who are working with the landowners who have interest working with military related projects.

To date $29,221,127.67 has been obtained for military related projects in the Sentinel Landscape Area in Eastern NC, but so far only $1,679,936.50 has been expended of that. $20.7 million has been contracted, and $6.8 million is currently in negotiation to be contracted, so everything is moving forward as expected. Looking at it individually, the USAF currently has 9,879.53 deeded acres and $19.5 million in total project funds, and MCIEAST has 1,680.86 deeded acres with a little over $2.2 million in project value. Looking at what is under option (meaning it is not under contract, but the landowner has expressed interest and signed an agreement saying they will go forward with the easement pending funds), there are 11,754.7 acres with a value of over $12 million in USAF easements, and with MCIEAST there are 9,849.55 acres with a value of $6.3 million under contract easement option. There are an additional 7,000 acres under USAF that have yet to be reviewed for value, but based on previous evaluations, it looks as though those acres will be valued around $8 million. This list continues to grow. Everyday ADFP Trust Fund is working to find more landowners who are willing to participate.

2016 USDA NRCS RCPP ALE parcels totaling 2,037.15 acres and $6.5 million were initially set to close in early August 2019, but due to differences in evaluations needed to be approved by the different partners this has been pushed back to a possible late September to early October closing date (these will be the first ALE-ADFPT-USAF Conservation Easements recorded).

Regarding 2018 USDA ALE contracts, four USAF easements at 2,232.35 acres valuing $3.6 million and two MCIEAST easements at 225.88 acres valuing $386,025.75 are ongoing. Moving on to military partnership activities with ADFP Trust Fund only (not ALE): regarding USAF and ADFPTF, there are six farms totaling 5,610.03 acres valued at $9.3 million. There are 4 farms and 1,334 acres under contract with ADFPTF and Navy-MCIEAST valuing at $1.7 million. There was one contract (Tingle Farm) changed from perpetual to 25-year term. With the US Army, ADFPTF is continuing to create a similar program as it has with the USAF and MCIEAST. Currently there are no contracts with the US Army because the last few years they have been under an internal audit which has prevented them from working with ADFPTF. The letter attached to the agenda says that the audit is over, and the funding freeze has been lifted.

ADFPTF has also applied for funding through the Environmental Enhancement Grant program through the NC Attorney General's Office in an attempt to bring all possible parties to the table. A total of $2 million is available for the 2019 request for proposals. ADFPTF submitted letters of

intent for 17 projects/farms. Evan Davis added that regarding the EEG grant ADFPTF received an email today that they can go forward with full applications for the 17 projects. The due date is September 24.

The Commissioner thanked the ADFPTF staff for their efforts on all of this while also simultaneously dealing with the disaster/hurricane relief efforts.

Commissioner Troxler announced next up would be the NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Report from Ariel Aponte. For this quarter there were several key leader engagements inside the state of NC, outside the state of NC, and internationally. Focusing on one of the key engagements they had in Washington D.C., Ariel and the Department of Commerce had a roundtable with the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense. The purpose of the visit was to develop communication between the Military Engagement Installation Assurance Site Clearinghouse and the State of North Carolina, discuss Seymour Johnson Airforce Base compatible use program, and also to discuss the State of North Carolina drone efforts on UAB. Out of that discussion they found out that the State of NC is leading the effort when it comes to other states, for example with their House bill for a wind energy facility. NC has set the standard for other states to look at how NC developed the process for an entity to dispute proposed wind turbine development. Also acknowledged at the roundtable was that a joint regional analysis will be conducted between NC, SC, and VA regarding ground and/or air training routes. NC's ranges offer a lot of support for the readiness of service members, with NC and Fort Bragg being the "center of gravity," so they realize they can do a lot to support us and give us some better study analysis of where we are with that. They are also looking at the military training route usage, not only on the grounds of the Sentinel Landscape Area but aerial routes, too. There were also discussions of how to protect that airspace.

The next engagement Mr. Aponte went on to discuss was the Fort Rucker Engagement. Senior leadership is taking an initiative to focus on Sentinel Landscape Area defense community infrastructure program, which provides funding to state and local government off-base infrastructure projects. It is still being pushed but once they do these community projects it will have to be determined how it will impact Sentinel Landscape when it comes to encroachment. They also had a discussion on reports of climate change due to two installations in the state of NC being possibly impacted by wildfires and/or hurricanes. Lastly on this point, the National Defense Authorization Act was just funded and impacted most of our installations. The Air Force, Marines, and Army are being funded for a lot of military capabilities (new F-35s for example), so they need to make sure that they are ready for that military capability. They are also traveling with the Governor on August 29 to SJAFB to discuss the DOT and their upcoming projects and how they will affect the Sentinel Landscape and military installations.

David Smith asked if there was an update on the veterans' home facility near the fairgrounds, and Ariel said those efforts are still ongoing.

Next, Commissioner Troxler called on Reid Wilson for the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources report. In the 2018-19 fiscal year, the Clean Water Management Trust Fund total grants equaled about $28 billion with $3.7 million of that going to military related projects

equaling 7,100 acres in 16 additional projects. Turning to this year, Clean Water received 115 applications back in February totaling $65 million, 6 of those are military related projects totaling 1,700 acres at $2.5 million. The Clean Water Board will meet in September to approve a certain amount of money towards projects. The staff has already scored the projects based on their listed criteria. What they do not know is when the board will have to dispense. It started with the Governor's proposal of $25 million months ago, the conference budget came back with $20 million for Clean Water. The Governor's counter proposal also includes $20 million, so if they negotiate and reach a budget, it's likely Clean Water will be $20 million. If no agreement on budget is reached, last year's recurring budget would kick in at $13.1 million. Obviously, a big difference. Another thing to keep in mind is each year they get $4 to $5 million in license plate revenue. Mr. Wilson expects what they will do in September is approve the $13.1 million and then rank projects from highest to lowest priority so if there is $20 million they will be able to provisionally approve those along with the $4 or $5 million from license plates. They will be able to provisionally approve those as the money comes in every month. However, if there is a budget resolution by then, they will know exactly how much money they are going to have, but it is not yet known.

A law was passed that changes a number of things including the Clean Water Management Trust Fund's name; it is now officially the Land and Water Fund. The change was made because Land and Water Fund is less "clunky" and more descriptive of what they do. They also in the legislation were told to evaluate other potential criteria to factor into their scoring system, including existence of official conservation plans. The legislature wants to make sure all Clean Water projects are part of a regional plan that makes sense. The Commissioner asked if all of that was in the budget as well, and Mr. Wilson said "no, that was in a different bill that was signed into law and separate from the budget."

Mr. Wilson then moved on to the other part of their annual report regarding the Natural Heritage Program. Last year the program did natural heritage surveys on about 30 properties in the Sentinel Landscapes region. Mr. Wilson predicts they will be asked to do approximately that many this fiscal year as well. A lot of that data factors into the scoring for projects that come before the Land and Water board which is a good thing. It contributes to making sure the projects they fund, including the military ones, are targeted as highest priority projects. That was the end of Mr. Wilson's report.

Mr. Hardee said that ADFPTF is trying to pull down additional REPI Challenge funds ($15-$20 million in the pot for 2020). ADFPTF will have a planning session at the Farm Bureau on August 29 and wants to make sure Land and Water Fund will "put money up to pull money down." They were not successful in that last time and are hoping for more dedication this time.

The Commissioner then asked Laura Kilian if ADFPTF lost some funding after the final budget was worked out. Ms. Kilian replied that it was actually an even wash because the NC General Assembly took $3.5 million out of ADFPTF budget for the first fiscal year and allocated the $3.5 million for moving expenses and equipment for the new Ag Sciences Center. The $3.5 million is supposed to go back to ADFPTF for 2021. The Commissioner commented how it is sometimes hard to follow all the proposals and shifting of funds, and Ms. Kilian said it was originally going

to be much more that they were going to take from ADFPTF. She and Jon Lanier had to defend ADFPTF because it appeared they were just going after pots of money within agencies, so it is something to think about going forward. There were no further questions for Mr. Wilson.

Next was Gordon Myers with the NC Wildlife Resources Commission report. They are continuing to progress through the Recovery and Sustainment Program in which they are partnering with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, along with the Marines and Navy. The Wildlife Commission is responsible for conducting short- and long-term management activities to establish and conserve long leaf pine forest habitat for red cockaded woodpecker recovery. Marine Corps installations gets off-base recovery consideration. To date over 1,000 acres of restoration harvest has been completed, 90 acres of long leaf and native grass restoration, 1,400 acres of prescribed fire conducted, and 9 miles of road upgrades which are important in order to facilitate future restoration work. They have also completed the necessary archeological studies which will help them in the upcoming year to accelerate some of the work that is already underway.

In June they closed on the Salters Creek acquisition project, a 5,100-acre tract which includes multiple funding sources.

They are continuing with ongoing technical guidance and support with their Green Growth Toolbox. They have integrated military needs and priorities within the Green Growth Toolbox. As do community and local development planning, they can account for those needs as they find compatible uses for wildlife or other conservation lands as well as military buffers, and it helps them to communicate it to local planning.

Mr. Myers said it is not exactly a Wildlife Commission project, but he wanted to bring attention to a project through SERPPAS; the Southeast Regional Partnership Planning and Sustainability (GoodMap). They work closely with the science applications team with Fish and Wildlife Service; they're housed in their headquarters, and the Science applications team was volunteered to do a project with SERPPAS. Mr. Myers recognized them for the great job they did. They looked at how to integrate partner footprints into a broader map of the southeast. Their three major accomplishments were: developing an improved GIS layer of the military mission footprint in the southeast, they received $1 million to create and improve a fire tracking and recording system, and they have added regionally important data layers that show conservation and military interests and incorporated those into the REPI interactive maps.

In closing Mr. Myers spoke on the coastal resilience grant. A webinar is scheduled for September 4th from 1-2pm.

The Commissioner asked if there were any questions. There was a question about why it is called "GoodMap," and Mr. Myers explained it goes back to the formative years of SERPPAS and how they wanted to develop a "good map." Dewitt Hardee asked if the maps were of both public and private lands or just private, and Mr. Myers said he believes it is of both. There were no more questions.

Next up the Commissioner called on Dr. Myron Floyd with the NCSU College of Natural Resources report. First regarding the College's primary role of facilitating and coordinating Sentinel Landscape partnership: the funding was provided by the NC Department of Military and Veteran Affairs. The funding also goes into producing working lands publications for access by working professionals and/or landowners, or as curriculum or supplemental information for training and workshops.

With funding support from the US Endowment for Forest and Communities, they coordinate monthly with the Federal Coordinating Committee and other Sentinel Landscape Coordinators about national and state level goals, innovative strategies that link military readiness with working farms and forests, and conservation.

Mary Lou attended the national workshop for Sentinel Landscapes Coordinators. The workshop served as an orientation for the 7 Sentinel Landscapes Coordinators to aid their success and connection to the Sentinel Landscapes Federal Coordinating Committee (Departments of Defense, Interior, and Agriculture). A process was introduced to develop objectives and key results for the Sentinel Landscapes Partnership – at the national-, landscape-, and individual-level.

Mr. Floyd next spoke about the project known as Spaces Between the Bases: The North Carolina Strategic Plan for Sustaining Military Readiness through Conservation Partnerships. The project is designed to integrate common goals and objectives from various organizations that will result in a Conservation Blueprint for North Carolina. The project is a partnership between US Fish & Wildlife Service, NC State University, the NC Sentinel Landscape Partnership, and other interested parties.

Next there is the facilitation of the REPI Challenge Proposal: in partnership with the NC Department of Agriculture, the College will explore the possibilities of a REPI Challenge proposal for the 2020 request with MCIEAST, Seymour Johnson AFB, and other interested partners. The College will provide facilitation service of the REPI Challenge discussion and process on August 29 and another date to be determined.

Finally, there is another emerging project, Building Capacity for Natural Resources Management. Conservation Corps and Conservation Legacy is partnering with the College of Natural Resources to help pilot the development of a Prescribed Fire Crew. With priority recruitment to NC State undergraduate and graduate students and potentially community college students and other land grant institutions, the pilot program is designed to build competencies with emerging burn leaders for natural resource management. These developing fire crews would focus on Fire Management, Fire Monitoring and Education, and Other Land Stewardship Needs. Dewitt Hardee asked for elaboration of the Fire Management, Monitoring, and Education. Dr. Floyd said the students will be trained in aspects of leading prescribed fire, they may or may not actually be practicing on the ground within the Sentinel Landscape, but they are learning and building the capacity to possibly be hired by the Forest Service and/or other organizations. Mr. Hardee raised the point that we do need more prescribed burning.

Next Commissioner Troxler recognized Chester Lowder for the Sentinel Landscape Partnership report. Mr. Lowder said they continue to be very active. The Mission Statement is: Sentinel Landscapes are landscape-scale areas; they are the working or natural lands that serve to protect and support the rural economy, the natural environment, outdoor recreation, and the national defense test and training mission of the military or state-owned National Guard installation or installations that anchor such landscapes. Sec.317. Sentinel Landscapes Partnership (US Department of Defense, US Department of the Interior, and the US Department of Agriculture). Mr. Lowder said that what they are hearing in this report is that they are successful in carrying out that mission statement. The partners at the national level are Defense, Interior, and USDA. They are trying to dovetail those programs into the efforts here in North Carolina also.

Update: There is one more meeting this year on November 7, at the Farm Bureau or another designated place. The partnership does coordinating-calls on a regular basis; there are calls scheduled for September 13, October 11, November 8, and December 13.

In the August 16 quarterly meeting, the focus was on *Building Connections with Partners*. They have had a strong partnership with NCDA&CS who has carried a lot of the weight along with Wildlife Resources and College of Renewable Resources, but they need to develop those partnerships with others to help keep the movement/program going forward. The North Carolina Department of Commerce and the US Forest Service were formally announced as partners at the August meeting. They will be looking at Working Lands organizations going forward as well as landowner organizations. Mr. Lowder reiterated that they work by consensus, and they do not take formal votes.

They also had a discussion about the Land Trust Rally which will be in Raleigh from October 17-19, 2019 at the Convention Center. The Federal Coordinating Committee of the Sentinel Lands will also be meeting in Raleigh on October 17. There will be a formal meeting of the coordinators on the 17th.

There was a representative of the Middle Chesapeake Georgia Sentinel Landscape at their quarterly meeting as well, and she gave an overview of their programs there. That is in part their effort to bring other landscape areas to NC to glean information from them.

There was also a report made at the meeting about the Home Town Strong Program here in NC. The NC Office of Recovery and Resiliency sent Jessica Whitehead to discuss the ongoing efforts there.

Other announcements include the REPI Challenge proposal development at NC Farm Bureau with NCDA and NC State. August 27 – MCIEAST (Michael Scalise) and NC State (Mary Lou Addor) will join the NC State Colleges of Natural Resources and Ag and Life Sciences in a brief presentation to the Congressional Staffers of the Eastern NC Sentinel Landscape at the Hofmann Forest. They will highlight the value of linking military readiness with working lands and conservation and the NC success story. Also on August 27, there is a one day SERPPAS conference on Coastal Resiliency held in Savanah between NC SeaGrant, the military, and others. September 9-10 is the SERPPAS Steering Committee meeting in Atlanta. Mr. Lowder is planning on going to Atlanta to attend.

Next a video was shown that was put together by the Federal Sentinel Lands Coordinating Committee. It was a ten-minute video that presented an overview of Sentinel Landscape Partnerships. There is a much longer (30 minute) version. The Commissioner had one complaint regarding the video and that is he did not see enough North Carolina. Since this is a first effort and they are still editing the shorter version, they will work on getting more NC in the video. The problem with getting more NC in the video is that NC landowners are typically smaller in comparison to those in the video. There is a North Carolina specific video that is about 5 years old that has not been used much, but the Commissioner recommended we show it to potential NC landowner partners in the future. Ms. Addor said it is on YouTube, and she will send out a link to everybody if needed.

Next was Evan Davis, Assistant Director of the ADFP Trust Fund, to discuss the draft of the Legislative Annual Report by the State Sentinel Landscape Committee. Evan passed out a hard copy of the newest draft that included reports from NC State and NCDA&CS. Everyone also received electronic copies. Mr. Davis said there was no feedback from other Committee agencies at this point but to provide changes to him as soon as possible. Mr. Hardee added to keep a record/summation of progress throughout the year as they are trying to keep documentation as precise as possible.

Commissioner Troxler then called on Will Best from the Department of Commerce to report on the goal of the Dare County Range Complex Compatible Use Grant. Going back to 1992 the Department of Commerce has participated in, conducted, and/or provided technical assistance to over six joint land use studies throughout NC including Camp Butner and GIS applications. They recently conducted and completed studies for the Seymour Johnson AFB and Dare County Range. They are recently awarded by the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Department of Defense Office of Economic Adjustment, $160,000 grant funds which the Department of Commerce will supply the match in-kind. In that $160,000 they are going to announce an RFP to acquire a vendor that will implement the recommendations that were developed in the original plan. Robert Hosford was very involved and brought the Department of Agriculture to every meeting they had. They plan on implementing those recommendations. He does want to know who will replace Mr. Hosford so they can plan ahead. The Commissioner commented on the partnership with the Dare County Bombing range; how NCDA&CS keeps the roads up and puts the fires out. It can be hard to keep employees because that work is not always part of the mission. So NCDA&CS went to the military and said we would like to give this contract up; we can still put out the fires but would rather someone else cut the grass and maintain the roads. The military was not happy with that and said they could go somewhere other than NC, so NCDA&CS has continued to do its part to keep them here. Mr. Hardee asked Mr. Best when it will be complete, and Mr. Best said it is projected to be August 2020.

Public comments: Michelle Lovejoy (NC Foundation for Soil & Water Conservation) is working on pilot initiatives related to community and on-farm resilience. A group of them are going to Iowa to hopefully bring back some good ideas. The 5 counties chosen for community outreach meetings are: Washington, Hyde, Craven, Moore, and Jones. Those were all selected

by our military partners. The NC Foundation for Soil & Water Conservation is celebrating it's 20th year.

Next Meeting is December 5, 2019. The Commissioner asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motions were given by Reid Wilson and Gordon Myers to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 3:20pm.