North Carolina Sentinel Landscapes Committee Minutes
June 16, 2026, 1:30 PM
Conference Call Number: 984-204-1487
Conference ID: 237605680#

Attendees:

Committee members present:

- For Commissioner Steve Troxler: David Smith, Chief Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture
- For Rick Long: Doug Taggart, Interagency Coordinator, N.C. Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
- Jeff Michael, Deputy Secretary, N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources
- Dr. Myron Floyd, Dean, N.C. State College of Natural Resources
- For Kyle Briggs: Shannon Deaton, Division Chief of Habitat Conservation, N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission
- Chester Lowder, Sentinel Landscape Partnership Liaison
- Jeremy Goodwin, State Roadside Environmental Engineer, N.C. Department of Transportation
- Denise Evans, Community Planner, 4th Civil Engineer Squadron, Seymour Johnson Air Force Base
- Marty Korenek, Government and External Affairs, Marine Corps Installations East

Other Attendees: In Person: Evan Davis, Veronica Jamison, Kelsey Pearce, Allison Rodriguez, Aubrey Hilton, Anita Kennedy, Joe Austin, Mikey Fulk, Jon Lanier, Neil Oakley, Addie Thornton, Bill Edwards, Weston McCorkle, Will Allen, Mark Pfanstiehl, Travis Morehead, Chris Baillie, Christian Vose, Jared Lamb, and Will Summer

Online: Brenna Thompson, Brian Rubino, Edward Davis, Dewitt Hardee, Kenneth Lingerfelt, Kevin Johnson, Lisa Shealy, Janine McLawhorn, Reva Orr, Nancy Richardson, Sabrina Shaffer, Steve Woodson, Tom Potter, Sara Ward, and Rodney Woolard

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 February 18, 2026, meeting were presented for approval. Chester Lowder made the motion, and Shannon Deaton seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Evan Davis presented for the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Davis said the only current open contract with military partners, Boyd Farm with USAF-SJAFB in Washington County, is moving toward the finish line and is expected to close in or around the July 15. Next, he reported on completed easements with military partners to date, and reviewed the table showing total contributions for those easements. He briefly discussed the memorandum of understanding with N.C. Military Affairs Commission, which has a funding balance of $226,456.26, and highlighted the need for the agency and its partners to make sure year-end deadlines are met.

Doug Taggart with the N.C. Department of Military and Veterans Affairs provided a brief update on conservation efforts and their work to assist service members. He thanked Evan Davis for sitting in on a recent meeting.

Jeff Michael with the N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources spoke briefly on the extension of the state conservation tax credit and the incentive it offers to landowners, as well as the pending state farm bill which he said he hoped to find out soon if it will pass. He presented a summary of grant applications for the North Carolina Land and Water Fund's 2026 cycle. He said there were over $116.8 million in total requests and 154 applications — 86 were for land acquisition, 41 for restorations, eight were for innovative stormwater projects, and 19 were for planning projects. Of those applications, 36 are in the 33-county area of the ENCSL, requesting $22.5 million combined across in all project types and cover a total of 7,165 acres. Funding decisions will be made in October. He asked Will Summer to review lists of grant applications. Summer also provided final numbers for the amount of certified conservation tax credits for the 2025 calendar year. The total of requests – just over $5.1 million – exceeded the $5 million provided for by the legislature.

Shannon Deaton presented for the N.C. Wildlife Commission. She reviewed the agency's accomplishments and activities since February. She highlighted the RASP program, stating that N.C. Wildlife has recently treated 973 acres with prescribed burns. Deaton said 211 acres of clear-cutting had taken place in Bear Gardens to prepare for longleaf pine conservation efforts. She also said that 45 acres of longleaf pine had been thinned for future red-cockaded woodpecker recruitment clusters, and 25 acres had been treated at Stone Creek Game Lands. Deaton detailed the American Ecosystem Restoration Initiative (AERI) Longleaf Pine Habitat Grant that N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission had received, which is a four-year grant that will help the Southeast Sentinel Landscapes comprised of North Carolina, Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida. The funding will help with 42,290 acres of longleaf pine habitat and aquatic barrier assessments. In other news, Deaton said the Wildlife Action Plan will be released on the agency's website in July 2026. She spoke about field work focused on rare coastal fish, and the coastal crayfish CSWG survey. This grant will do surveys in N.C., S.C., and Georgia to learn about the different variety of crayfish. David Smith asked about their experience working with other states. Deaton said it is somewhat of a nightmare because everyone has different reporting styles but it's a multi-state grant.

Dr. Myron Floyd reported for the N.C. State College of Natural Resources. He said he had a few updates, first and foremost his stated plans to retire from N.C. State effective January 1, 2027. Floyd said there will be an interim dean to be announced at a later date. Floyd moved on to discuss the NFWF America's Ecosystem Restoration Initiative that is providing $3.1 million for SERPPAS partners.

Chester Lowder reported out for the Sentinel Landscape Partnership. He remarked on the effect of the partnership on the landscape and how things have changed over the last 50 years, which he credited to the strong collaboration among the military and all of the partners.

Lowder turned the presentation over to Dr. Chris Baillie to report on the Eastern NC Sentinel Landscape Partnership. Dr. Baillie recapped recent meetings including the ENCSL Partnership Meeting on April 22 and the SERPPAS Principals Meeting from April 27-29. From the annual ENCSL Partnership Data 2025 Call, he highlighted new highs and superlatives included in that year's data, including the highest level of non-federal committed funding since the inception of the ENCSL at $36.2 million, the highest private funding since inception at $9.1 million, and the highest local funding since inception at $1.5 million. The project spotlight for this quarter was Troutman Longleaf Farm, a Three Rivers Land Trust easement project with Fort Bragg/Department of War - REPI in Hoke County. This project provides a military training buffer, helps protect the primary source of drinking water for the city of Southern Pines, and includes over 500 acres of longleaf habitat. Dr. Baillie also recapped the hiring process for the ENCSL Partnership Resilience Specialist, and introduced the selected candidate to the committee, Dr. Faren Wolter.

Dr. Chris Baille said the upcoming Eastern N.C. Sentinel Landscapes Partnership Report will be going over land use policies, transferable tax credit systems, and forest product markets.

Jeremy Goodwin reported out for the N.C. Department of Transportation. He gave a brief update on the new U.S. 70 Highway Bypass, which he said was looking like it would include taking about 300 acres of land. Goodwin said a further update would be provided at the next meeting.

Denise Evans presented for Seymour Johnson Air Force Base. She said she didn't have anything pressing to discuss, but said she was happy to hear the Boyd easement tract would be closing sometime in mid-July.

Marty Korenek with the Marine Corps Installations East said he had nothing to report at this time aside from his work on the project list for 2027.

Addie Thorton gave a presentation on the 2026 SERPPAS Principals Meeting, which coincided with the partnership's 20th anniversary. Of the meeting's outcomes, she said the 2026 SERPPAS Strategic Plan was approved; members visited Paint Hill Farm, a readiness

and recreation project supporting Fort Bragg; and the principals endorsed SERPPAS engagement on supporting the Marine Corps Maritime Center of Excellence, on impacts to the Department of War from declining forest markets, and on regional corridors supporting SERPPAS interests.

David Smith asked if there were any other comments or business for the committee. He asked for a motion to adjourn, provided by Jeff Michael and seconded by Chester Lowder. The motion carried, and the meeting adjourned at 2:47 PM.