
PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

North Carolina
Working Lands Group

May 2009

**NORTH CAROLINA WORKING LANDS GROUP
PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT
AMONG THE
NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES (NCDENR)
AND THE
NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES (NCDA&CS)
AND THE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)
AND THE
NORTH CAROLINA SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION COMMISSION (NCSWCC)
AND THE
NORTH CAROLINA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE (NCCES)
AND THE
NORTH CAROLINA FARM BUREAU (NCFB)**

PURPOSE

To promote a long term working relationship among the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources (NCDENR), the NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS), the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the NC Soil and Water Conservation Commission (NCSWCC), The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service (NCCES), and the North Carolina Farm Bureau (NCFB) on collaborative efforts to protect farm, forest and ranch lands around military installations that will result in net agricultural, environmental, natural resource, and economic and military readiness benefits.

Goals: NCDENR, NCDA&CS, NRCS, NCSWCC, NCCES, and NCFB have established the following partnership goals for taking action in:

- Express mutual commitment to preserve working landscapes (forestry, agriculture, and agribusiness) in the vicinity of military installations in North Carolina; thereby supporting the military readiness mission, supporting an economically sustainable agricultural industry, promoting the sustainable use of natural resources, and managing local habitats for listed and other at-risk species;
- To identify existing DoD, DENR, NCDA&CS, NRCS, NCSWCC, NCCES, NCFB and other Federal, state, and private sector programs that may be used to promote the conservation and preservation of working landscapes and open spaces;
- To develop a framework for the North Carolina Working Lands Group that may be used as a model for farmland preservation and military readiness in other states in the southeast; and,
- To develop and support one or more Working Lands Group pilot projects.

Implementation: We plan to achieve our goals by fostering a spirit of teamwork among our organizations at all levels. We will meet in partnering sessions as needed and convene regular conference calls to ensure we are achieving our goals. This partnership agreement does not commit DoD, DENR, NCDA&CS, NRCS, NCSWCC, NCCES, NCFB, or any other future partners to fund particular initiatives.

Effective Date: This Agreement is effective when signed by all parties. and should be reviewed annually to renew our commitment and consider needed changes. This agreement may be modified or amended only through the written agreement of all parties. This agreement is voluntary. Each partner will do those things that are

both good for the relationship and good for that partner, whether or not the other partners reciprocate. Any partner may choose not to participate in any activity or action embarked upon by the Working Lands Group and may terminate their membership in the partnership at any time.

Limitations: This Agreement does not create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable by law or equity against DoD, DENR, NCDA&CS, NRCS, NCSWCC, NCCES, or NCFB, their officers or employees, or any other person.

STEVE TROXLER

North Carolina
Department of Agriculture and
Consumer Services

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DEE FREEMAN

North Carolina
Department of Environment and
Natural Resources

Handwritten signature of Dee Freeman in blue ink, underlined.

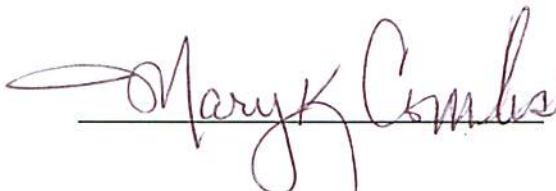
RICHARD SMITH

Acting Chairman
North Carolina
Soil and Water Conservation Commission

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MARY COMBS

State Conservationist
United States Department
Agriculture Natural Resources
Conservation Service

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LARRY WOOTEN

President
North Carolina Farm Bureau

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JON ORT

Director
North Carolina Extension Service

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SUPPORTING ENDORSEMENTS:

BEVERLY EAVES PERDUE

Governor of North Carolina



JOHN CHAFFEE

President and CEO

North Carolina Eastern Region



PAUL DORDAL

Executive Director

BRAC Regional Task Force



Attachment: NC Working Lands Group Partnership Principles

NORTH CAROLINA WORKING LANDS GROUP PARTNERSHIP PRINCIPLES

I. BACKGROUND

- A. In fiscal year 2003, Congress granted statutory authority in the National Defense Act for the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) to work with state and local governments and conservation organizations to reduce encroachment on military test and training ranges. To implement this authority, DoD established the Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative (REPI). REPI funds may be used to support a variety of DoD partnerships that promote compatible land use. By relieving encroachment pressures, the military is able to test and train in a more effective and efficient manner. By preserving land surrounding military installations, working landscapes are preserved, and habitats for plant and animal species are conserved and protected.
- B. The North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is the lead stewardship agency for the preservation and protection of North Carolina's outstanding natural resources. DENR supports a variety of conservation initiatives administered by different Divisions within the Department. Conservation initiatives include sustainable use of natural resources and conservation of fish, wildlife and wilderness areas. DENR's mission also includes sustaining working lands such as Forestry and Agriculture and Agribusiness. The vision of DENR is to work together through innovation, teamwork and partnerships, to achieve a cleaner environment, better conservation, protection, restoration and enhancement of our natural resources, healthier lives, a stronger economy, and greater understanding of the interconnection and interdependence of people, other living things and natural systems, for the health, wellbeing and benefit of all, now and in the future.
- C. The North Carolina Department of Agriculture (NCDA&CS) seeks to maintain sustainable forestry, agriculture, and agribusiness industries in the state of North Carolina and preserve farmland and other agricultural and natural resources. NCDA&CS also seeks to sustain the rural heritage of the state. These goals can be encouraged through financial incentives on working lands that enable the landowner to maintain a profitable business. Incentive payments to maintain working lands may provide an additional source of income to landowners that would otherwise consider selling property for development or other uses.
- D. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), provides technical and financial assistance to private landowners, State and local units of government, tribes, and other Federal agencies through a partnership effort to conserve, maintain, and enhance natural resources and the environment
- E. The North Carolina Soil and Water Conservation Commission (NCSWCC) is charged to organize, coordinate, and assist the programs and activities of the 96 local soil and water conservation districts in North Carolina. The Commission also establishes, oversees and allocates resources for the Agriculture Cost Share Program for Nonpoint Source Pollution Control and the Community Conservation Assistance Program. It also approves best management practices for use in various state water quality protection programs, approves requests for individual designation as a technical specialist for water quality and animal waste management systems, approves requests for planning assistance under Public Law 566, and sets policies for local districts. The Commission consists of seven members appointed by the Governor, with six of the members being local soil and water conservation supervisors and one being selected at-large.
- F. The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service (NCCES) maintains centers in all 100 counties that serve as the link to the vast knowledge base of N.C. State and N.C. A&T State universities that

helps build quality communities by providing educational programs and outreach to stimulate community economic development while maintaining a strong natural resource base that includes water quality, waste management, wildlife management, forest management through collaborative problem-solving.

- G. North Carolina Farm Bureau Federation (NCFB) promotes farm and rural issues through governmental relations, marketing, field representation, agricultural education, member services and other programs.
- H. DoD, DENR, NCDA&CS, NRCS, NCSWCC, NCCES (subsequently referred to as the Agencies) believe that protecting rural landscapes and working lands will help to further the objectives of each Agency. Therefore, participating in broad-based conservation efforts will be mutually beneficial.
- I. The Agencies have opportunities to work collaboratively to explore efficiencies and effectiveness of conservation of military, agricultural, and forestry lands through Federal, state, and local programs. Cooperative efforts can improve resource management and protection; improve public services; accelerate implementation where appropriate; provide better understanding of the Agencies' goals, objectives, and programs; and help minimize conflicts.
- J. Each Agency will bear its own costs and retain full responsibility and authority to execute and accomplish its programs. All commitments are subject to the availability of appropriate funds. Nothing in this document shall be construed as authorizing any agency to provide any goods or services to another agency or requiring that any agency enter into a contract, financial assistance agreement, and interagency agreement or otherwise incur a financial obligation.

II. PURPOSE

Growing populations and shifting development patterns are consuming America's land at unprecedented rates. The public pays the price for this unplanned development in the loss of working land and open space, loss of habitat for local listed and other "at risk" species, rising property taxes, expensive infrastructure, budgetary shortfalls, and air and water pollution. Increasingly, the loss of agricultural land and open space is also threatening our military readiness, economy, and culture.

According to a June 2002 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on military training, 80% of communities surrounding military installations are growing faster than the national average; these national challenges are amplified in southeast North Carolina, which faces some of the most rapid population growth in the entire U.S. The rapid pace of urban growth into rural areas around military installations and ranges presents two sets of problems. First, as residential and commercial development increases in areas near military installations, people may experience more aircraft over-flights, dust, and noise from military activities. Second, important military training exercise may be compromised due to incompatible land use adjacent to or near installations and ranges.

Farming, ranching, and forestry can be very compatible with military land use. Preserving working lands on the perimeter of military installations and training areas can help sustain military training and testing by buffering them from residential development and other incompatible uses. Open space provided by these buffers allows continues access to training and testing ranges, night vision exercises, artillery practice, supply drops, and parachute jumps – crucial training to ensure our troops train as they fight. Additionally, open space maintains habitat for threatened and endangered species.

The objective of the North Carolina Working Lands Group is to link those conservation efforts of federal, state, and local agencies in the vicinity of military installations. The purpose of this Partnership Agreement between the Agencies is to:

- A. Build working relationships between communities and the military to address conservation, economic, and sustainability issues.
- B. Promote conservation of military, agricultural, and forestry lands.
- C. Examine policy and possible legislation to support maintaining working lands.
- D. Promote land use that is both compatible with and complimentary to military requirements as well as mutually benefit each Agency's mission requirements through multiple benefits.
- E. Share decision-support information, including applicable GIS data.
- F. Create a framework for the North Carolina Working Lands Group that may be used as a model for farmland preservation and military readiness in other states in the southeast.
- G. Develop and support one or more Working Lands Group pilot projects in North Carolina.

III. AREAS OF COOPERATION AND MUTUAL INTEREST

Farming, ranching, and forestry practices result in open space, which is compatible with military land use. The Agencies seek to preserve working lands uses in the state in order to support and sustain the military's readiness mission, preserve unique natural habitat for listed and other "at risk" species, support the economy, and culture, of eastern North Carolina. Best Management Practices (BMPs) installed on working lands also help to protect and preserve water quality in the state, resulting in a cleaner environment. In short, good farmers make good neighbors, and all Agencies seek to preserve working lands, open space, culture, and the economic viability of eastern North Carolina.

Programs and Projects

- Collaborate in developing data and sharing information pertaining to the effectiveness of various farm, forest, and ranch land protection programs.
- Collaborate in the development and establishment of a program to protect rural landscapes and working lands in the vicinity of military installations that encourages voluntary participation by landowners. Support the development of one or more Working Lands Group pilot projects.

Monitoring and Modeling

- Participate in a review of the Working Lands Group pilot project after one year of implementation and conduct a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis of the pilot program.
- Evaluate the degree that each partners' mission was supported and the degree that sustainment of natural, economic, cultural, and military resources were sustained for the future.

IV. COMMUNICATIONS AND COORDINATION

- Conduct teleconference calls as needed.

- Meet annually to review Working Lands Group successes, identify new opportunities of mutual interest, and develop goals for the coming year.
- Designate Agency representatives for the implementation of this agreement.