

Article 61A.

North Carolina Sentinel Landscapes Committee.

§ 106-747. North Carolina Sentinel Landscapes Committee.

(a) Committee Established. – There is established the North Carolina Sentinel Landscape Committee (Committee).

(b) Findings and Purpose. – The General Assembly finds that sentinel landscapes are places where preserving the working and rural character of the State's private lands is important for both national defense and conservation priorities. It is the intent of the General Assembly to direct the Committee to coordinate the overlapping priority areas in the vicinity of and where testing and training occur near or adjacent to major military installations, as that term is defined in G.S. 143-215.115, or other areas of strategic benefit to national defense. Further, the Committee shall assist landowners in improving their land to benefit their operations and enhance wildlife habitats while furthering the State's vested economic interest in preserving, maintaining, and sustaining land uses that are compatible with military activities at major military installations and National Guard facilities. In its work, the Committee shall develop and implement programs and strategies that (i) protect working lands in the vicinity of and where testing and training occur near or adjacent to major military installations or other areas of strategic benefit to national defense, (ii) address restrictions that inhibit military testing and training, and (iii) forestall incompatible development in the vicinity of and where testing and training occur near or adjacent to military installations or other areas of strategic benefit to national defense.

(c) Powers and Duties. – The Committee shall:

- (1) Recognize all lands in the State as sentinel landscapes areas that are so designated by the United States Department of Defense.
- (2) Identify and designate certain additional lands to be contained in the sentinel landscapes of this State that are of particular import to the nation's defense and in the vicinity of and where testing and training occur on, near, or adjacent to major military installations or are of other strategic benefit to the nation's defense. In this work, the Committee may seek advice and recommendations from stakeholders who have experience in this sort of identification and designation.
- (3) In designating sentinel lands as directed by subdivision (1) of this subsection, the Committee shall evaluate all working or natural lands that the Committee identifies as contributing to the long-term sustainability of the military missions conducted in this State. In its evaluation of which lands to designate as sentinel lands, the Committee shall consult with and seek input from:
 - a. The United States Department of Defense.
 - b. The North Carolina Commander's Council.
 - c. The United States Department of Agriculture.
 - d. The United States Department of the Interior.
 - e. Elected officials from units of local government located in the vicinity of and where testing and training occur on the proposed sentinel lands.
 - f. Any other stakeholders that the Committee deems appropriate.
- (4) Develop recommendations to encourage landowners located within the sentinel landscape designated pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection to voluntarily participate in and begin or continue land uses compatible with the United States Department of Defense operations in this State.
- (5) Provide technical support services and assistance to landowners who voluntarily participate in the sentinel landscape program.

(d) Membership. – The Committee shall consist of at least the seven voting members and two nonvoting ex officio members as follows:

- (1) The voting members shall be:
 - a. The Commissioner of Agriculture, or the Commissioner's designee.
 - b. The Secretary of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, or the Secretary's designee.
 - c. The Secretary of Natural and Cultural Resources, or the Secretary's designee.
 - d. The Executive Director of the Wildlife Resources Commission, or the Executive Director's designee.
 - e. The Dean of the College of Natural Resources at North Carolina State University, or the Dean's designee.
 - f. The Secretary of Transportation, or the Secretary's designee.
 - g. A representative of the North Carolina Sentinel Landscapes Partnership.
- (2) The nonvoting ex officio members shall be:
 - a. The Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscapes Coordinator.
 - b. A representative from the United States Department of Defense Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program.

The Commissioner of Agriculture or the Commissioner's designee shall serve as Committee chair. Upon a favorable vote by a majority of the voting members, the Committee chair may appoint voting members and nonvoting ex officio members representing other State agencies, local government officials, federal agencies, military installations, and nongovernmental organizations that are experienced in land management activities within sentinel lands.

(e) Transaction of Business. – The Committee shall meet, at a minimum, at least once during each calendar quarter and at other times at the call of the chair. A majority of members of the Committee shall constitute a quorum. The first Committee meeting shall take place within 30 days of the effective date of this act.

(f) Reports. – The Committee shall report on its activities conducted to implement this section, including any findings, recommendations, and legislative proposals, to the North Carolina Military Affairs Commission, the Agriculture and Forestry Awareness Study Commission, and the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources beginning September 1, 2017, and annually thereafter, until such time as the Committee completes its work.

(g) Administrative Assistance. – All clerical and other services required by the Committee shall be supplied by the membership and shall be provided with funds available. (2017-10, s. 3.19(a)-(g); 2020-78, s. 5.1(d); 2024-32, s. 17.)