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News Release

NCDA&CS joins USDA and Air Force for Historic Conservation Partnership

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The North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has recently partnered with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service and the U.S. Air Force to record five conservation easements in eastern North Carolina. This marks the first ever easements to use funding from these three sources at the state and federal levels, and a first for a streamlined approach to conservation restrictions.

“This project represents a new level of coordination between state and federal agencies, and protects land that benefits us all,” said Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler. “Agriculture is North Carolina’s biggest industry followed by the military, and it is more important than ever that we work to protect the farmland that produces our food and fiber and maintains our military readiness.”

Conservation easements set restrictions on uses of land to help preserve it and prevent overdevelopment. Previous easements with multiple funding sources would have each signatory’s restrictions recorded separately, requiring landowners to consult each agency individually to keep track of their obligations.

The five new easements, the last of which was recorded on Jan. 8, use a “common template” in which all partners agree on a single list of restrictions in order to simplify the process.

“The Natural Resources Conservation Service uses the Farm Bill’s Agricultural Land Easement Program and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program to secure conservation easements within the project’s scope,” said Timothy Beard, USDA NRCS State Conservationist. “The Agricultural Land Easement Program helps landowners and other entities protect, restore and enhance wetlands, grasslands and working farms through conservation easements. The Regional Conservation Partnership Program promotes coordination of NRCS conservation activities with partners that help expand our collective ability to address on-farm, watershed and regional natural resource concerns.”

The five easements recorded include one in Hyde County and four in Tyrrell County. All five easements are located beneath airspace important to the mission of Seymour Johnson Air Force base in Goldsboro. These easements protect Air Force training operations and reduces the potential of incompatible land uses.

The easements are also part of the federal Sentinel Landscape program, which designates 33 counties in eastern North Carolina as areas of mutual interest to the USDA, United States Department of Defense and United States Department of the Interior.