



North Carolina General Assembly
Senate Chamber
State Legislative Building
Raleigh, NC 27601-2808

February 2, 2017

Mr. Peter Stangel
U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities
Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense
1400 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1400

Dear Mr. Stangel,

We write to express our full support for the North Carolina Sentinel Landscapes High Priority Protection Program proposal being submitted for award consideration through the 2017 Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Challenge Program. This proposal leverages funding and partnership support from a variety of sources to achieve multiple objectives, including the protection of private agricultural and forestry lands to address the military's concerns of installation encroachment buffers and airspace protection. If fully funded, the project will leverage a total investment of \$40 million and preserve 20,000 additional acres of land integral to military operations and training.

North Carolina has the fourth largest military population in the nation, including the largest Army base in the world, so it is no surprise that this footprint represents the #2 industry in our State. With five military bases, one military ocean terminal, a U.S. Coast Guard base, and numerous bombing ranges and airspace training routes, our military operations support 578,000 jobs (386,000 of which are private sector) and contribute \$34 billion in personal income and \$66 billion in gross State product. During 2014, 79 of our 100 counties had active Department of Defense prime contracts worth \$2.5 billion.

North Carolina is proud of its military heritage, and we are actively protecting our military installations and training areas from development encroachment so that these missions may continue unaltered and even expand in scope. The 33 counties that comprise the federally designated Eastern North Carolina Sentinel Landscapes contain millions of acres of privately owned farms and forestland. Conservation of these lands not only preserves the continued use, and future expansion, of the military's training and operational missions, but also includes the promotion and sustainability of family farms, the protection of endangered and vulnerable wildlife species, and the provision of clean air and water.

North Carolina's REPI Challenge Program proposal presents a unique opportunity to integrate the conservation needs of our State with the current and future expansion of the operational and training needs of North Carolina's U.S. Air Force, U.S. Army, and U.S. Marine Corps installations into a single comprehensive project. Further, a fully funded REPI award of \$10 million will result in leveraging a total investment of \$40 million to achieve these goals. Therefore, we are proud to offer our unwavering support and hope to hear of a positive announcement in the coming months.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Phil Berger". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Phil Berger
President Pro Tempore

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Harry Brown". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Harry Brown
Majority Leader