

MINUTES

Farmland Protection Program Durham Soil and Water Conservation District

Meeting Number: 5 (Farmland Protection Advisory Board) Date: August 21, 2025

Advisory Board Present:

Nicole Connelly – Chair, Little River VAD
Deborah Luecken – DOST Representative
John Cowan – Cape Fear VAD
Matthew Eagle – At large
Kenny Browning – Eno River VAD
David Heeks – At Large
Talmage Layton – Falls VAD
Carolyn Rose-Seed – At Large
Mark Waller – Farm Bureau
Samantha Gasson – At Large
David Harris – SWCD Board

Others Present:

Lisa Marochak – Soil & Water
Sherry Scully – Soil & Water
Celeste Burns – Open Space & Real Estate
Jill Fusco – Open Space & Real Estate
John Lyttle – Cooperative Extension

The regular monthly meeting of the Farmland Protection Advisory Board was held on Thursday, August 21, 2025 at Durham Farm Bureau. This meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by the chair, Nicole Connelly.

1. Nicole Connelly opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.
2. **Approval of July Board Minutes** – Motion made by Samantha Gasson to approve the July meeting minutes as submitted. Mark Waller seconded the motion. All in favor; motion passed.
3. **UDO Update** – Sherry Scully read report shared by Robin Schultze.
4. **Financial Report** – No expenditures this month to report.
5. **Annual Report September 2 Work Session Presentation** – Sherry Scully reminded the Board of the September 2 presentation to the BOCC.

Sherry reported to the Board the past five-year value of Rollback PUV taxes and interest, as requested. The Board feels this is something that should be reviewed annually.

6. **Farmland Protection Plan Update** – Sherry Scully reported that no progress has been made on the Farmland Protection Plan.
7. **VAD Update** – Sherry Scully requested approval for three Applications received this month:

- Fran Cook – 146 acres on Hopkins Rd
- Sandra and Jerry Wrightenberry – 88 acres on Roxboro Rd
- Samantha Gasson and Scott Stirrup – 38 acres on Isham Chambers Rd (Renewal)

David Harris made a motion to accept the applications received. Kenny Browning seconded the motion. Nicole Called for a vote; motion passed. (Samantha Gasson left the room for vote and discussion.)

8. **Easements/Open Space** – Celeste Burns introduced Jill Fusco, her new staff member that will be assisting with open space and farmland protection.

Celeste shared her presentation on screen along with rankings of three proposed easement projects:

- Fran Cook's, Mountain Creek Farm – 147 acres

- Sandra and Jerry Wrightenberry's Mountain View Farm – 119 acres
- Tom Washington's Washington Farms – 76 acres

Celeste shared that the ranking form that is used for these land preservation projects is somewhat outdated but allows the department to compare all program projects. Celeste requested support from the Board for these projects that will be presented to the BOCC at their September 2nd Work Session. David Harris motioned to support these three farmland preservation easements. Mark Waller seconded the motion. Unanimous support was received; motion passed.

9. Soil & Water Conservation District Update – Lisa Marochak made Board aware of the District's upcoming events and opportunities:

- The [Ag Economic Development Grant Program](#) - deadline to apply for August 25, 11:59pm.
- Tri-County Pasture Field Day – September 24 at 9-3 Register [here](#).
- [Native Plant Sale](#) hosted by SWCD and Cooperative Extension will be held September 25, 4-6 pm.

10. Cooperative Extension Update – John Lyttle provided details of upcoming events:

- Mobile Poultry Workshop – October 21, 10-3
- [CEFS Soil Sampling Training](#) at NC State Plant Sciences Building – October 28, 10-12
- [Disaster and Risk Management for Farmers](#) – October 17 and October 3, 10-3 at Durham Cooperative Extension office

11. Durham Open Space and Trails Commission Update – Deborah Leuchen shared that the Commission has formed a UDO Review Committee that will be involved in the next stage of planning. They are looking to require new developments to set aside open space.

Adjourn – With no additional business, Chair Connelly adjourned the meeting at 7:05 pm.

Nicole Connelly
Chairman

Sherry Scully
Soil and Water

November 20, 2025
Date approved