

MINUTES

Farmland Protection Program Durham Soil and Water Conservation District

Meeting Number: 4 (Farmland Protection Advisory Board) Date: July 17, 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
Helena Cragg – At Large
David Heeks – At Large
Michelle Burton – County Commissioner
Talmage Layton – Falls VAD
Carolyn Rose-Seed – At Large

Others Present:

Lisa Marochak – Soil & Water
Sherry Scully – Soil & Water
Brooke Roper – DCo Transportation
Andrew Meeker – East Coast Greenway Alliance

The regular monthly meeting of the Farmland Protection Advisory Board was held on Thursday, July 17, 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 March Board Minutes** – Motion made by Matthew Eagle to approve the May meeting minutes as submitted. John Cowan seconded the motion. Nicole called for vote; motion passed.
3. **Presentation of Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Plan** – Brooke Roper, Durham County Transportation Department's Transportation Planner and Andrew Meeker with East Coast Greenway Alliance were present to share details of the Durham to Roxboro Rail Trail Plan and status of the process of engagement and implementation. Currently, the planners are in Stage 2 of the plan. Brooke will continue to keep the FPAB up to date with the process and encouraged board to talk to landowners within the Rail Trail corridor and ask them reach out to her with concerns or questions about the plan. Sherry Scully will share Power Point presentation, contact information, and website link with the board.
4. **Introduction of Michelle Burton** – County Commissioner, Michelle Burton represents the BOCC on the FPAB and was present. Ms. Burton introduced herself. She looks forward to working with the FPAB and offering support.
5. **Annual Report Review** – Sherry Scully presented the FY 25 draft of the Farmland Protection Advisory Board Report. Discussion was held and edits were suggested. Sherry and Nicole will make these edits and share with the Board. Pending these edits, Nicole requested approval of the Annual Report. Matthew Eagle made the motion to approve the FY 25 Annual Report, pending the edits. Talmage Layton seconded the motion. All in favor, motion passed. Lisa Marochak will request that the FPAB is included in the September 2nd Work Session of the BOCC.
6. **Financial Report** – Lisa reported the FY 2026 budget includes \$3,037 in the FPAB account.
7. **VAD Update** – There are no VAD applications currently.
8. **Easements/Open Space** – Celeste Burns provided the following report: We are excited to have Jill Fusco join our open space team! Jill comes to the County after seven years with the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources working as field representative with the NC Land and Water Fund, grant administrator, and GIS assistant. Jill has a degree in Zoology and Wildlife Sciences from NC State University and holds a

graduate certificate in GIS. We are thrilled to have Jill on board to assist with our continuing open space and farmland protection work! We look forward to in-person introductions in August.

The Open Space Department continues to work with funders (USDA and National Guard) to close the following 7 funded conservation easement projects: Clara Glenn, Bill and Margie Sparrow, Neil And Catherine Frank, Ken and Janine Wolfe, Wesley Poole, Cliff Teasley, and Robin Davis. Two to three projects are anticipated for proposal in August.

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 was allocated \$250,000 by the BOCC. Applications are being accepted with a deadline to apply for August 25, 11:59pm.
 - Durham Soil and Water Conservation District will celebrate their 60th Anniversary on July 31st. Registration is due by Thursday, July 18.
 - Native Plant Sale hosted by SWCD and Cooperative Extension will be held September 25, 4-6 pm.
10. **Cooperative Extension Update** – Representative not present; no report provided.

Adjourn – With no additional business, Chair Connelly adjourned the meeting at 7:45 pm.

Nicole Connelly
Chairman

Sherry Scully
Soil and Water

August 21, 2025
Date approved