



# Agriculture Development and Farmland Preservation

Agriculture Development and Farmland Preservation (ADFP) has worked extensively to promote the creation of county-wide farmland preservation plans, Voluntary Agricultural Districts (VADs) and Enhanced VADs. These types of tools foster county level support for the agriculture community by identifying rural areas to preserve that are integral to agribusiness and providing private landowners limited assurances for agricultural production. These tools have promoted enrollment into the state's Present-Use Value Program and educated local conservation districts on opportunities. Furthermore, ADFP has focused efforts on providing matching funds for easements of value to the military with an emphasis on agricultural working lands. The initial focus has been on "away" and special-use air-space and has included the provision of bonus points for those applying for ADFP grants in a dual emphasis area.

## Working Lands Conservation

MCIEAST has partnered with the Forest Education and Conservation Foundation (FECF), an affiliate of the North Carolina Forestry Association (NCFA) and NC State Extension Forestry, to explore ways to sustain working lands in eastern North Carolina. One outcome from the research has been the establishment of a "Working Lands Trust" by NCFA. By establishing a land trust specifically for working lands, NCFA hopes to offer landowners term or perpetual easements to protect their land from development while still permitting timber harvests — thus reducing some of the challenges for working forests. NC State Extension Forestry is creating training materials and providing outreach support for landowners practicing forestry, farming or conservation to better ensure they know their options. As with the other North Carolina Sentinel Landscapes Partnership initiatives, landowners can decide how to conserve their land.

## Local Foods and Renewable Fuels

Food and Fuel for the Forces is a project focused on increasing local purchasing capacity by building the infrastructure and networks necessary to develop long-term connections between the Marine Corps installations and the farmers and foresters in eastern North Carolina. The goal is increased use of local food products on military bases and growth of a regional biomass (including biofuels) industry. Making it a priority to purchase products from North Carolina helps maintain the economic viability of working lands. MCIEAST worked with the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA), the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), North Carolina Eastern Region (NCER), Foster Caviness and Sodexo on implementing this strategy. As a result, DeCA's vendors have increased their North Carolina-based commissary food purchases, and NCDA&CS is highlighting local foods to shoppers. Making the foods appeal to the shoppers will encourage more local product purchases. DLA's food catalogues will identify local products to mess hall and club managers, and military residents will have access to farmers' markets on installations. Additionally, an eastern North Carolina biomass business plan for new local refineries will help MCIEAST meet Department of Navy biofuel use goals with locally produced biomass.

## Innovative Conservation Strategies

The conservation partnership in North Carolina tested an "out of the box" model to determine if private landowners are willing to place term-limited restrictions on their property, making the air space above their property more compatible with military aviation training. Restrictions included keeping land in forestry and agriculture, limiting tall structures and upward shining light, and restrictions on clustered development and non-agribusiness-related structures. The model sought to determine if landowners would be willing to participate through term-limited contracts (10, 20, 30 years) and if so, what compensation would be acceptable. The model used a market-based reverse bid process over multiple bid rounds to determine a floor and ceiling pricing that would be acceptable to both the private landowner and the military. Although not fully tested, the model clearly indicated a willingness by private landowners to participate as reflected by the number of applicants. The model also indicated a trending of a price point that would be acceptable to both the landowner and the military. The model was delivered by a diverse and effective partnership, including the North Carolina Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation and 17 local soil and water conservation districts. Results not only will be of benefit in protecting away space through future efforts but also in multiple cases where landowners may not be receptive to easements and/or perpetual solutions.

