



State of North Carolina

JOSH STEIN

GOVERNOR

November 7, 2025

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 29

ALBEMARLE-PAMLICO NATIONAL ESTUARY PARTNERSHIP

WHEREAS, the Albemarle-Pamlico Estuary comprises one of the nation's largest estuarine systems and is distinguished by remarkable biodiversity, natural resources, and a rich history, and provides extensive economic benefits to North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, the United States Congress designated the Albemarle-Pamlico Sounds as an "estuary of national significance" in 1987; and

WHEREAS, greater understanding, protection, and restoration of the Albemarle-Pamlico estuarine system supports its ecological integrity, the regional economy, and local communities, and plays an important role in the resilience of coastal communities; and

WHEREAS, the Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership ("APNEP") excels as a science-based cooperative among the State of North Carolina, the Commonwealth of Virginia, the United States Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA"), and many other federal, state, and local agencies and organizations, and tribal communities; and

WHEREAS, APNEP has a thirty-eight-year legacy of supporting and synthesizing scientific research and monitoring, and continues to provide extensive information that addresses natural resource and environmental issues; and

WHEREAS, the mission of APNEP is to understand, protect, and restore the significant resources of the Albemarle-Pamlico estuarine system; and

WHEREAS, scientific information from the Albemarle-Pamlico Estuarine Study (1987-1994) was combined with extraordinary citizen involvement to develop a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan ("CCMP") that was first adopted in 1994 and revised in 2025; and

WHEREAS, APNEP solicits and fosters meaningful community involvement to implement the CCMP, which guides efforts to understand, protect, and restore the region's significant resources; and

WHEREAS, the State of North Carolina is committed to protecting and restoring its natural resources and supports APNEP's mission by encouraging and supporting cooperation and collaborative partnerships among diverse stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, APNEP requires a legal framework specifying its governance structure and organizational processes; and

WHEREAS, an APNEP Office ("Office") is necessary to coordinate and facilitate CCMP implementation and support APNEP's mission; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to Article III of the North Carolina Constitution and N.C. Gen. Stat. §§ 143A-4 and 143B-4, the Governor is the chief executive officer of the state and is responsible for formulating and administering the policies of the executive branch of state government; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 147-12, the Governor has the authority and the duty to supervise the official conduct of all executive and ministerial officers.

NOW, THEREFORE, pursuant to the authority vested in me as Governor by the Constitution and the laws of the State of North Carolina, **IT IS ORDERED**:

Section 1. Introduction.

This Executive Order amends and restates Executive Order No. 250, issued on February 18, 2022, and establishes the Office and the APNEP Management Conference. Specifically, this Executive Order outlines the structure of the Management Conference to streamline efforts to fulfill APNEP's mission and collaborate with natural resource and environmental policymakers in the APNEP region.

Section 2. Office and Host.

The Office shall be hosted by the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality ("Department") to coordinate and facilitate CCMP implementation and support APNEP's mission. The Office shall serve as a conduit for information, collaboration, and coordination among the state and federal agencies, local governments, tribes, academia, and the public.

The Office shall consist of the Director of the Office ("Director") along with the requisite staff necessary to meet the needs identified by the Management Conference, which is described in Section 3 of this Executive Order.

The Department shall serve as the host for the Office, and the Office will be housed within the Department's Office of the Secretary. The Department shall efficiently assist in the operation and support of the Management Conference. The Department shall only be responsible for assisting with administrative and fiscal management of the APNEP-EPA cooperative agreement, which provides federal funds for APNEP, and for assisting with the management of other funding sources.

Section 3. Management Conference.

a. Purpose

1. A Management Conference consistent with Section 320 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, 33 U.S.C. §§ 1251-1376, shall be established to advise, support, and guide CCMP implementation, and to assist the Office in fulfilling its mission.
2. The Management Conference shall advise APNEP on APNEP's overall policy, budget, and community engagement direction.
3. The Management Conference shall review and revise the CCMP as necessary in response to changes in the environment or resource management actions.

b. Membership

1. The Management Conference shall consist of diverse stakeholders with interests in the Albemarle-Pamlico watershed and shall utilize a collaborative, consensus-building approach to implement the CCMP.
2. The Management Conference shall consist of three standing committees: a Leadership Council, a Citizen Advisory Committee, and a Science and Technical Advisory Committee.
3. The Director shall appoint the initial membership of the Leadership Council and two standing committees, as described further in subsections c, d, and e below. To the greatest extent possible, the Director shall ensure geographic and demographic diversity within the membership, as well as its members' willingness to serve.
4. The Leadership Council and each standing committee shall establish bylaws, operating procedures, and leadership. The bylaws shall address the circumstances under which its membership may be expanded, and how vacating members are replaced.

c. Leadership Council

1. Purpose

- i. The Leadership Council shall work with the Office, advisory committees, and other groups to advise, support, evaluate, update, advocate for, and guide CCMP implementation. The Leadership Council is the primary guidance body for the Office.

2. Membership

- i. The Leadership Council shall include the following voting members:
 1. The Secretary of the Department, or the Secretary's designee;
 2. The Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, or the Secretary's designee;
 3. The Director of North Carolina Sea Grant, or the Director's designee;
 4. Two members of the Citizen Advisory Committee (Section 3.d);
 5. Two members of the Science and Technical Advisory Committee (Section 3.e);
 6. A representative of a local government or regional Council of Governments;
 7. An at-large member with vested interests in the region; and
 8. A representative of a local, state, or national conservation organization.
- ii. The Secretary of Natural Resources of the Commonwealth of Virginia, or the Secretary's designee, shall be invited to participate as a voting member.
- iii. A representative of the EPA's National Estuary Program shall be invited to participate as a non-voting, ex-officio member.
- iv. The Leadership Council may expand its membership, as it deems necessary, upon a two-thirds affirmative vote.

d. Citizen Advisory Committee

1. Purpose

- i. The Citizen Advisory Committee shall work with the Leadership Council on CCMP implementation and meaningful community engagement activities. Committee members shall serve as liaisons to citizens, agencies, tribes, and relevant parties regarding environmental and natural resource management relevant to CCMP implementation. The Committee shall work to engage diverse communities and populations in its decisions and represent diverse perspectives within the Management Conference.

2. Membership

- i. The membership of the Citizen Advisory Committee shall be broad-based and may include the following natural resource management interests within the Albemarle-Pamlico estuarine system: local governments; local or regional planning; environmental equity; commerce and industry; education; recreation; tourism; fishing or seafood industry; agriculture; forestry; military; tribal organizations; local, state, or national conservation organizations; soil and water conservation districts; finance; communications and media; local and state agencies; and federal agencies.

e. Science and Technical Advisory Committee

1. Purpose

- i. The Science and Technical Advisory Committee shall provide independent advice to the Leadership Council and the Citizen Advisory Committee on scientific and technical issues, including ecosystem assessment and monitoring in support of CCMP implementation.

2. Membership

- i. The membership of the Science and Technical Advisory Committee shall be broad-based and may include scientists and technologists from local colleges, universities,

and research institutes as well as technical staff from federal and local agencies, industry, and environmental organizations, with expertise in science and technology relevant to environment and natural resource management in the Albemarle-Pamlico estuarine system.

- ii. Each member shall have substantive expertise in one or more scientific and technical fields germane to APNEP's mission and relevant to environmental and natural resource management, including, but not limited to, landscape ecology, terrestrial ecology, wetlands ecology, submerged aquatic ecology, marine biology, fisheries and wildlife science, hydrology, remote sensing, ecological assessment, engineering, agricultural technologies, forest technologies, soil conservation, water quality modeling, environmental policy, economics, public policy, planning, spatial statistics, education, and law.

f. Administration and Expenses

1. Each standing body within the Management Conference shall be responsible for determining its own meeting schedules, rules of order, terms of service, bylaws, chairmanship, attendance requirements, ad hoc committees, and other matters of protocol.
2. Members shall serve voluntarily and without compensation or per diems. Extraordinary expenses may be reimbursed subject to approval by the Director and in accordance with EPA cooperative agreement requirements, the Department's travel policies, state law, and the policies and regulations of the Office of State Budget and Management.

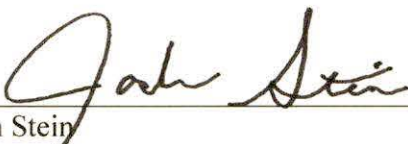
Section 4. State Programmatic Support.

- a. Executive Branch agencies of the State of North Carolina shall coordinate and collaborate with the Management Conference and the Office on actions to implement the CCMP.
- b. Council of State agencies of the State of North Carolina and the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission are encouraged to coordinate and collaborate with the Management Conference and the Office on CCMP implementation.
- c. Campuses and institutes of the University of North Carolina system are invited to collaborate with the Management Conference and the Office on CCMP implementation.

Section 5. Effect and Duration.

This Executive Order amends and restates Executive Order No. 250, issued on February 18, 2022, and supersedes and rescinds any other previous executive orders to the extent that they conflict with this Executive Order. This Executive Order is effective immediately and shall remain in effect until November 7, 2027, unless earlier rescinded or replaced.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto signed my name and affixed the Great Seal of the State of North Carolina at the Capitol in the City of Raleigh, this 7th day of November in the year of our Lord two thousand and twenty-five.


Josh Stein
Governor

ATTEST:


Elaine F. Marshall
Secretary of State

