

Face Of Eastern North Carolina Is Changing, New Industry Creating More Opportunities

(Editor's Note: Dr. E. Walton Jones, a former professor of economics at North Carolina State University, is North Carolina field director for the Coastal Plains Regional Commission. He is assisted by Joe Grimsley, a native of Wilson).

By Dr. E. Walton Jones

The face of Eastern North Carolina is changing.

New industry is creating more opportunities and higher-paying jobs in many areas. Tourism is increasing and mechanization is making the farmer's job easier and more profitable.

And yet, the development potential of Eastern North Carolina has barely

been tapped. Consider these possibilities for bringing about further development of these potentials:

—A major coastal highway intersected by primary east-west roads to provide access to resources and markets.

—A manpower development program that would train everyone who needs a skill and provide assistance in matching each individual's talents with a job suited to his interests.

—An all-out effort to develop the full potential of coastal resources—recreation, fishing, transportation and new uses of products from the sea.

—A positive alliance among units of local government to tie rural and urban areas together into

viable communities to support high technology industry and provide a full range of service.

—A program that will speed full mechanization of tobacco and vegetable production.

—A positive program to attract high technology industry with good paying jobs.

—New corporate organizations to link small farming units into aggressive business enterprises.

—Full application of science and technology to meet the challenge of industrialization and urbanization.

These are a few of the program ideas being considered by the Coastal Plains Regional Commission.

Right now, the commission, a federal, state and local government partnership for economic planning and development, is engaged in major studies to identify the appropriate programs to raise the standard of living for citizens in 159 counties in North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia.

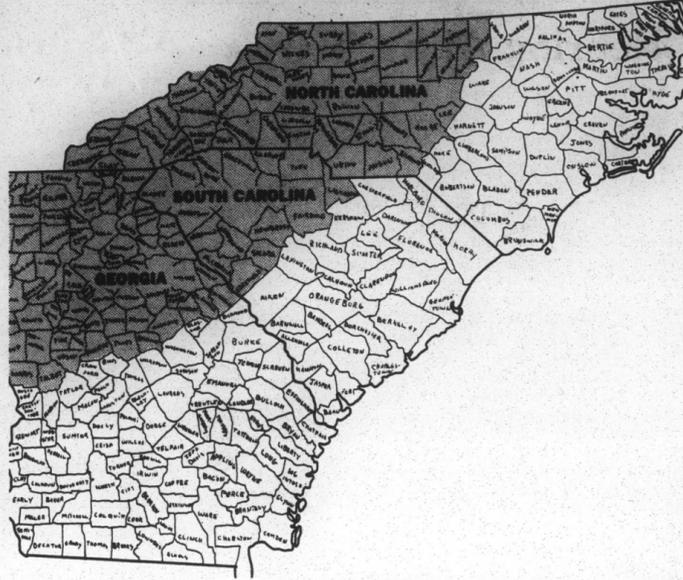
Patterned after the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Coastal Plains Regional Commission gives the governors of the three states equal voice in decision-making with a federal co-chairman appointed by the President of the United States. Gov. Dan Moore currently is the state's co-chairman of the commission.

No funds are made available, nor is action taken in North Carolina without the approval of the governor.

To increase the effectiveness of the planning and development effort, the commission has established state field offices in each state. The North Carolina office is located in the State Administration Building in Raleigh.

The commission hopes to accelerate the economic growth of the area through programs that bring to bear the resources of local leadership, local government, state government

COASTAL PLAINS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REGION



and the federal government.

To achieve this goal, it has designated six principal target areas for concentrated study. These include transportation, industrial development, marine resources, education and manpower training, tourist industries and agriculture.

Transportation will play a major role in the future development of the 45-county area of Eastern North Carolina.

The commission has retained Wilbur Smith and Associates of Columbia, S. C., to study the regional transportation systems in the three-state area and recommend a developmental highway plan. The commission expects to have the results ready for a Congressional presentation in January, 1969.

One of the most promising means of increasing the income of the people of Eastern North Carolina is through industrial development. The area is growing, but the large supply of underemployed manpower offers almost limitless opportunity for the future.

The Battelle Memorial Institute of Columbus, Ohio, is conducting research to study the potential of the region to support high technology industries. These types of industries would offer higher-paying jobs and accelerate the area's growth. Encouraging the expansion of the tourist industry in Eastern North Carolina is another major target area for the commission. A study is underway to help determine which areas in the three states offer the best potential for commercial complexes, to stimulate year-round tourism in the coastal areas.

North Carolina's strategic location to the major northern population areas, and the state's abundant supply of land and water indicate that a major expansion of the tourist industry is possible. Development of this industry will bring new wealth into the state.

The Coastal Plains Region is in the midst of an agricultural revolution. Cotton and peanuts are almost completely mechanized. Progress is being made in the mechanization of tobacco, vegetables and horticultural specialty crops. These developments offer hope for higher earnings and for further development of processing industries.

An advisory committee, consisting of four appointees from each of the three states, has approved agricultural conferences at which experts and farmers can jointly explore means of bringing about the further development of agriculture in the region.

Perhaps the most interesting area of study to the commission is that of marine resources. The commission staff, supported by a marine resources committee appointed by the governors of the three states, is studying the many uses of the sea and

its marine environment.

The Atlantic Ocean is a unique resource, offering exciting potential for future development. It is regarded as a new frontier for mineral and chemical wealth.

Although the extraction and use of products from the sea must be considered a long-range objective, our marine environment is already contributing substantially to our economy through fishing and tourism. The commission's work will hopefully accelerate this potential.

The future economic development of the Coastal Plains region hinges to a

great extent on the development of its human resources.

The education and manpower development study being conducted by the commission is aimed primarily at developing a

program to upgrade the skills of people in the region to meet the needs of high-technology industries. The education study will consider whether a model manpower training center or additions to current centers is a more effective method of increasing the skills of individuals in the region who will man the new jobs created.

The Coastal Plains Re-

gional Commission's programs are far-reaching, yet the objective of increasing personal income in the area is one that is worthy of concentrated effort.

In any regional planning and development program, participation by local governments and the people of the area is a necessity.

An excellent example of this approach might be drawn from the Appalachian Regional Commission. Multi-county planning organizations, called Local Development Districts, in the 29-county area of Western North Carolina initiate projects and provide the local leadership necessary to any planning and development effort.

The idea of multi-county planning and development not only promotes a spirit of cooperation between local governments,

but also insures that maximum benefit can be obtained from the resources available within the planning area.

These districts do not rule out city and county planning, nor do they rule out local governments receiving funds from the commission or other agencies as done at present.

The Coastal Plains Regional Commission is a relatively young organization, having been chartered in July, 1967. At the present time, funds for administration and planning have been made available to the commission. It also has a limited amount of funds for provide the local leadership necessary to any planning and development effort.

The commission itself made only one project grant in 1968—\$213,108 to the Southeastern Community College in Whiteville. Continued on Page 3

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