

# sync<sup>TM</sup> Weekly highlights from the North Carolina Department of Commerce



## Perdue announces small business assistance

Gov. Bev Perdue on April 9 called on the General Assembly to pass a legislative package designed to assist small businesses in creating and maintaining jobs. The package includes tax incentives, grants and an expansion of the small business preference for companies seeking contracts with state government. Gov. Perdue is making the announcement as part of a three-stop JobsNOW tour of small businesses in Asheville, Lexington and Fayetteville.

"Small businesses are the backbone of North Carolina's economy, and a major driver in our economic recovery," said Perdue. "They put our friends, neighbors and family members to work. They anchor our communities. Supporting small businesses means supporting jobs for North Carolinians." [Read more.](#)

[Perdue hits downtown to tout small-business plan](#) (Asheville Citizen-Times, April 12)



N.C. Dept of Commerce Deputy Sec. Dale Carroll (right) moderates a panel of site selection consultants including (from left) Grant



Gov. Bev Perdue at the Michelin announcement

## Michelin to add 74 jobs in Stanly County

Gov. Bev Perdue on April 12 announced that Michelin North America Inc. will expand its operations in Stanly County. The company plans to create 74 jobs and invest more than \$11.3 million during the next three years in Norwood. The project was made possible in part by a \$620,000 grant from the One North Carolina Fund. The N.C. Dept. of Commerce's Uconda Dunn was the developer on this project.

"Creating jobs is my top priority. North Carolina continues to attract global brand-name companies seeking the perfect location to expand and create sustainable new jobs," said Perdue. "Our state's top business climate, skilled workforce and superb quality of life make an ideal combination for companies looking to invest, succeed and thrive."

Michelin North America plans to add tire retread production capability in Norwood to better serve commercial, military and general aviation customers. Salaries will vary by job function, but the annual average wage for the 74 new jobs will be \$35,784 plus benefits. That is greater than the Stanly County annual average wage of \$28,288. [Read more.](#)

## Plastek Industries to bring 250 jobs to Richmond County

Gov. Bev Perdue on April 12 announced that Plastek Industries, a leading maker of plastic consumer, cosmetic and pharmaceutical

*Williams of Miller Canfield Paddock and Stone PLC; Billy Moore of Moore and VanAllen PLLC; John Eagleson of DB Global Technology Inc.*

## Perdue touts N.C. to national site consultants

On April 12, Gov. Bev Perdue spoke in Charlotte to a gathering of national site selection consultants from Los Angeles, Dallas, Atlanta, Chicago, New York, New Jersey, and other parts of the country. Her speech, titled "North Carolina's Value Proposition," was delivered during the Experience North Carolina 2010 event, which was staged by the N.C. Dept. of Commerce and Friends of North Carolina partners from across the state. The program also included a panel with site consultants from three firms that in recent months have led site searches resulting in successful corporate locations in North Carolina. [See TV coverage from WSOC of Gov. Bev Perdue's speech and the event.](#)

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## Clariant to bring 50 jobs to Charlotte

Gov. Bev Perdue on April 6 announced that Clariant, an international specialty chemicals company, will expand in Mecklenburg County. The company will consolidate customer service and business support operations from Rhode Island to its existing Monroe Road facility in Charlotte, adding 50 jobs and investing \$2.5 million during the next three years. The project was made possible in part by a \$55,000 grant from the One North Carolina Fund. The N.C. Dept. of Commerce's Ron Leitch was the developer on this project.

"North Carolina is a top choice for companies seeking the perfect location to expand and enhance their operations," Perdue said. "Our exceptional business climate, along with a focus on job creation and worker training, continues to attract businesses and investment to our state."

Clariant, headquartered in Switzerland, is a global specialty chemicals company with operations throughout the United States. The company employs nearly 400 people at five facilities in North Carolina, including operations in Gaston, Iredell and Mecklenburg counties. Clariant plans to relocate two businesses from Rhode Island to Charlotte. The relocated operations include customer service, business support, laboratory services and regional sales. [Read more.](#)

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## Carroll to address WNC Communities gathering

N.C. Dept. of Commerce Deputy Sec. Dale Carroll is scheduled to address a regional assembly April 30 at the Virginia Boone Heritage Center, WNC Agricultural Center, near Asheville. Carroll will discuss Gov. Bev Perdue's 2010 agenda for North Carolina, including jobs and economic recovery, education and safe communities. To attend, please RSVP by April 26. Call (828) 252-4783 or [e-mail](#).

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packaging, plans to create 250 jobs and invest \$19 million in Richmond County over the next three years. The project was made possible in part by state grants from the One North Carolina Fund and the Job Development Investment Grant program. The N.C. Dept. of Commerce's Ken Allen was the developer on this project.

"Our skilled workforce and highly-rated business climate continue to attract top-notch companies to our state," said Perdue. "My number one priority is to continue to leverage these assets to create more jobs."

Plastek Industries is a family-run business started in 1956 in Erie, Pa. Today, the company employs more than 2,000 people in the U.S., Brazil, Venezuela and the United Kingdom. The Richmond County facility, which will be located just outside of Hamlet, is the company's first in North Carolina. [Read more.](#)



*(Left-right) Blue Ridge Farm Ventures Executive Director Mary Lou Surgi, Sen. Kay Hagan, and AdvantageWest Board Chairman Tommy Jenkins*

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## Hagan visits Blue Ridge Food Ventures

Blue Ridge Food Ventures, North Carolina's first business incubator specifically designed to provide services to farmers and food entrepreneurs, welcomed Sen. Kay Hagan on an April 7 tour of the 11,000 sq. ft. facility, located in Asheville. A job creation program of AdvantageWest, Blue Ridge Food Ventures is celebrating five years of providing services to farmers, food entrepreneurs and, now, natural products manufacturers.

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## Community colleges to train new health IT professionals

Pitt Community College (PCC) has been named one of five institutions across the country to lead a regional consortium of community colleges to train thousands of new health information technology (health IT)



*A motorcyclist riding "The Dragon" in Western North Carolina.*

## North Carolina and Tennessee work together to reopen "The Dragon"

North Carolina and Tennessee reached an agreement allowing the Tennessee Dept. of Transportation (TDOT) to reopen an 11-mile stretch of U.S. 129 in Blount County, Tenn., known as "The Dragon" on April 12. It has been closed since a rockslide occurred along the highway on March 14. The scenic stretch of U.S. 129 known as "The Dragon" is popular with both motorists and motorcycle riders for its 318 turns in 11 miles and has a significant economic impact for the region.

Gov. Bev Perdue's administration, including N.C. Dept. of Transportation Sec. Gene Conti and N.C. Crime Control and Public Safety Sec. Reuben Young, along with U.S. Rep. Heath Shuler, N.C. Sen. John Snow and N.C. Rep. Roger West, worked with their Tennessee counterparts, as well as local businesses, to come up with the plan that will keep U.S. 129 open between the Tabcat Bridge and the North Carolina state line each day between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. The section of U.S. 129 in Tennessee from just past the Foothills Parkway to the Tabcat Bridge will remain closed as crews work at the rockslide site.

"This shows how in time of need, neighboring states can work together to provide for the safety of motorists and the economic needs of their communities," said Perdue. [Read more.](#)

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## N.C. to have a strong presence at Travel South Showcase

The Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development is leading a strong North Carolina contingency to the annual Travel South Showcase in Birmingham, Ala., April 10-14. International Marketing Director Heidi Walters and Public Relations Director Wit Tutttell, along with travel industry partners, are conducting strategic, business development meetings with tour operators from over 30 states plus Canada, the United Kingdom, Brazil and Japan. Tutttell will brief domestic and international media, focusing on what's new with the state's tourism products and on North Carolina's position as a travel destination market leader. The industry partners participating include:

- Asheville CVB
- Biltmore
- Cabarrus County CVB
- Days Inns-Outer Banks

professionals. The new training opportunities in North Carolina will expand Gov. Bev Perdue's JobsNOW "12-in-6" program, which provides training for 12 careers in six months or less in key, fast-growing job sectors.

"North Carolina's community colleges and our JobsNOW initiative are aimed at training and retraining our workers to get them into fast-growing careers – such as health IT – where jobs are available right now," said Perdue. "These new professionals will also have a significant impact on medical care in North Carolina and around the country."

The PCC-led consortium received a \$10.9 million grant from the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services for the first year. Additional funding is available for a second year after successful completion of a mid-project evaluation. [Read more.](#)



*Steve Brantley in Tokyo*

## In SYNC: Steve Brantley

Durham native Steve Brantley has been an economic developer/industrial recruiter with the Division of Business and Industry Development at the N.C. Dept. of Commerce since 1988. His focus is on attracting Asian industries, a focus that originated from his years living in Japan while in the U.S. Navy. When he came to Commerce in the '80s, he worked mainly with Japanese companies like auto parts suppliers. Japan is a significant investor in our state, with more than 150 companies currently here. Because Brantley focuses on a region, he has worked with a host of unrelated industry sectors, including pharmaceuticals, textiles, auto parts, IT, chemicals and aerospace.

- Harrah's Cherokee Casino & Hotel
- I-95 NC Destinations
- NASCAR Hall of Fame
- Outer Banks VB
- Ramada Plaza Outer Banks
- Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts Complex
- The Carolina Corridor
- Visit Charlotte

Showcase, an invitation-only, appointment-style marketplace focusing on increasing travel to and within the 12 Southern states, attracts over 675 of the top suppliers and buyers from the travel industry.



An arctic fox at the N.C. Zoological Park

## N.C. Zoo now largest land-area public zoo in the U.S.

Land acquired last week by the [N.C. Zoological Park](#) expands the size of the park to more than 2,000 acres, making it the largest land area public zoo in the United States. A lot of the new land will remain untouched to preserve the zoo's natural surroundings. But that doesn't mean there aren't big things to come. Officials are considering adding an Asian exhibit, a hotel and possibly even a water park. They will do a feasibility study this summer. [Read more.](#)

In addition, the zoo saw record attendance over the Easter Holiday weekend. With records broken on Good Friday, Saturday and Monday, plus a strong showing on Sunday, the zoo saw more than 7,250 visitors above the previous Easter four-day mark, set in 1995. Zoo officials credit the record attendance to a variety of factors, including the idyllic weather of recent days, an economy that continues to keep holiday travelers closer to home and increased marketing of several new attractions at the park.

## March economic overview released

On April 9, the N.C. Dept. of Commerce's Policy, Research & Strategic Planning Division (PRSP) released its Monthly Overview of North Carolina's Economy for March 2010. The March report is slightly different than previous months. State and county release dates for January labor force and industry data do not follow the usual monthly schedule because of the longer processing time required for annual benchmarking. As a result, some of the monthly data the division typically reports on is not available. As a supplement, PRSP provides a brief overview of the impact of the recession on North Carolina's

The opening of the Chinese market in the past five years has introduced emerging prospects and leads from that country as well, and Brantley says Commerce is now working very hard to position its marketing and recruitment efforts with China. Most recently, Brantley has been asked to assist in the recruitment of green technology manufacturing and R&D prospects such as solar panel makers, wind turbines, battery storage technology, LED lighting and electric vehicle transportation. Brantley says that he relies on experts from the State Energy Office and N.C. State's Solar Center for their guidance and assistance on these projects.

"Clean energy projects should be a rewarding opportunity for our state to attract new businesses and technologies, and I am glad to be a part of that process," he says.

When not recruiting business to North Carolina, Brantley enjoys mountain hiking, motorcycling and following Tar Heel sports (he's a UNC-Chapel Hill graduate). But he is particularly passionate about photography, which he has pursued for more than 35 years. He recently created his own [personal photography Web site](#) to showcase some of his work. His favorite themes include macro flowers, motor sports, Asian travel and Civil War battle reenactments, and his dream is to one day publish a photography book centered on one of these themes.



Image by Steve Brantley

## Metrics from B&I Division

Below are year-to-date metrics tracked by the N.C. Dept. of Commerce's Division of Business and Industry (B&I) that illustrate some of the recent activities of the Division. The metrics include the number of new economic development projects assigned to B&I development staff; the number of economic development project announcements; the number of announced jobs created and capital invested; the number of interactions existing industry staff had with businesses throughout the state; and the number of contacts received by the Business Link North Carolina/Business ServiCenter.

labor force and industry employment. Analysis related to all other data is consistent with previous monthly reports. [Read the overview.](#)

Among the findings:

- North Carolina's unemployment rate increased slightly to 11.2 percent, the result of a growing labor force.
- Non-farm employment decreased between January and February.
- Closings and layoffs decreased in February and were below the four-month and 12-month averages.
- Home sales and housing units authorized increased; foreclosures were down for the month but up from a year ago.

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## Two communities receive grants

The N.C. Dept. of Commerce recently awarded grants to two communities.

Lenoir County was awarded a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) in the amount of \$1 million to assist in the construction of a natural gas line to allow for new construction at Sanderson Farms. The grant will allow the company to create 100 full-time jobs and invest \$121 million dollars.

Also, the Town of Mocksville has been awarded a CDBG in the amount of \$1 million to assist in providing water and sewer to allow for expansion at Crestwood Farms. The grant will allow the company to create 103 full-time jobs and invest \$2 million.

Jan. 1 - April 12, 2010

New projects assigned:	129
Projects announced:	24
Jobs created:	3,962
Capital invested:	\$416.4M
Industry visits by existing industry staff:	347
Calls to the Business ServiCenter:	6,971

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## N.C. in the News

This Week's Highlights

- [Appliance retailers signing up for energy-efficient rebate weekend](#) (Wilmington Star-News, April 12)
- [Top industries in Western North Carolina begin hiring new workers](#) (Asheville Citizen-Times, April 9)
- [All-Star Game expected to bring economic boost](#) (WRAL - Raleigh, April 9)
- [Sandhills sees future in biofuels](#) (Fayetteville Observer, April 9)
- [NCSU panel to discuss economy](#) (Salisbury Post, April 7)
- [Swiss Bear celebrating its 30th anniversary](#) (ENC Today, April 7)

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