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Weekly highlights from the
North Carolina Department of Commerce



Gov. Bev Perdue meets with Canadian Ambassador to the U.S. Michael Wilson (right) and Commerce Sec. Keith Crisco.

Canadian ambassador visits Raleigh, Charlotte

Canadian Ambassador to the United States Michael Wilson was in Raleigh on April 8 to meet with North Carolina business representatives and state government officials. During a luncheon hosted by Commerce Sec. Keith Crisco, Wilson stressed the importance of strong business ties between North Carolina and his country. He also discussed the significance of a robust trade relationship and how the ties remain strong during this economic slowdown. Wilson spent April 9 in Charlotte.

Canada is North Carolina's largest trade partner. In 2007, North Carolina exported \$5.6 billion worth of goods and services to Canada. More than 100 Canadian companies have operations in North Carolina, including RBC Centura, the wholly owned subsidiary of the Royal Bank of Canada. Canadian companies support more than 11,000 jobs here. North Carolina's tourism industry has also greatly benefited from Canadian visitors, 946,800 of whom visited



U.S. Sen. Richard Burr plants a specially selected, fast-growth Loblolly Pine with Biofuels Center Forestry Director Dean McCraw. The Biofuels Center of North Carolina is field-testing these fast-growth pines.

Burr visits Biofuels Center

U.S. Sen. Richard Burr visited the [Biofuels Center of North Carolina](#) in Oxford April 7 for a briefing on North Carolina's plan to develop a biofuels industry sector. Sen. Burr is a member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

The state imports more than 5 billion gallons of liquid fuels annually, costing tens of billions of dollars each year. The long-term task of the Biofuels Center is to reduce the state's dependence on imported liquid fuels. To do so, the center is implementing [North Carolina's Strategic Plan for Biofuels Leadership](#), a mandate from the N.C. General Assembly.

Butterfield visits Northeast

North Carolina in 2007.

Read the op-ed by Sec. Crisco in the April 12 edition of The News & Observer: [State touts Canada as solid trade partner](#)

Commerce releases overview of economic conditions affecting N.C.

Commerce's Division of Policy, Research, and Strategic Planning has developed an "Overview of Current Economic Conditions Affecting North Carolina" report. The report provides a monthly summary of economic indicators using the latest data available: unemployment, industry employment, announced layoffs and closings, foreclosure rates, and home sales. [See the full report.](#)

During the month of February, certain economic measures declined at an accelerated pace while others showed signs of slight improvement.

- The state unemployment rate continues to increase.
- Ninety-nine counties experienced an increase in unemployment rates in February.
- North Carolina lost 27,900 jobs in both traditional and knowledge-based sectors.
- Home foreclosures fell sharply and home sales increased in February.

German tour operators to visit Outer Banks

Commerce's Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development's Director of International Marketing, Heidi Walters, will host five German tour operators on a familiarization tour of the Outer Banks, April 16-21. These key operators will be conducting hotel and attraction site inspections as well as taking part in a workshop for better working with the FIT (Foreign Independent Traveler) market.

region

U.S. Rep. G. K. Butterfield made a stop at the Northeast Commission April 7. The meeting at the commission's office in Edenton was attended by county managers, economic developers, Northeast Commission board members, and industry representatives interested in talking with the congressman about shovel-ready projects within the region.

Some of the highlights discussed included the North Carolina Center for Automotive Research (NCCAR) facility in Northampton County. This vehicle testing facility will provide companies with a confidential location to assess and evaluate new vehicle performance and reliability. Initial construction phases of the project are underway. [Read more.](#)



Bio N.C. Hotbed campaign launched

BioSpace launched the Bio N.C. Hotbed Campaign the week of April 6. This campaign promotes biotechnological, pharmaceutical and medical device communities in Research Triangle Park and other areas of North Carolina. This year's hotbed map is now available and displays the locations, logos and building images of businesses in the industry. You can click each logo to link to its company profile. The North Carolina Biotechnology Center is one of the sponsors this year. [Read more.](#)

Site selectors to meet in Pinehurst



(Left-right) A tour operator discusses future North Carolina travel product opportunities with Assistant Sec. for Tourism, Marketing and Global Branding Lynn Minges, Tourism's Domestic Marketing Director Frank Jernigan and Visit Charlotte's Tourism Manager Tracy Aldridge

Tourism Division promotes N.C. at travel showcase

North Carolina was well-represented at the annual Travel South Showcase in Kissimmee, Fla., on April 4-8. Lynn Minges, assistant sec. for tourism, marketing and global branding, and Frank Jernigan, director of domestic marketing for the Division of Tourism, attended along with 15 travel industry partners.

The North Carolina group conducted strategic business development meetings with more than 150 tour operators from more than 30 states plus Canada, the United Kingdom, Brazil and Japan. Minges also briefed domestic and international media and tour operators, 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 who participated were: Biltmore, Cabarrus County CVB, Cherokee Travel Promotions & C of C, Crystal Coast TDA, Days Inns-Outer Banks, Haw River Wine Trail, I-95 North Carolina Destinations, the Northeast Commission, Outer Banks VB, Ramada Plaza Outer Banks, Rockingham County Partnership for Economic & Tourism Development, Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts Complex, Visit Charlotte, Visit Lexington and Wilmington/Cape Fear Coast CVB.

An Ambassadors Wine Reception at Showcase honored tour operators who have provided leadership and support in promoting the Southern travel industry. Tour operators sampled wines provided by Biltmore Winery and attendees heard more about North Carolina's vineyards and wineries.

The 2009 N.C. Site Selectors Invitational, underwritten entirely by the [Friends of North Carolina](#), will be held at the Pinehurst Resort April 19-21. Forty site selection consultants from across the U.S. and Canada are scheduled to attend the event, which will provide an opportunity to build and sustain relationships with Commerce personnel and other economic development leaders in the state. Consultants will hear from Commerce Sec. Keith Crisco, Transportation Sec. Gene Conti and N.C. Community College President Scott Ralls regarding North Carolina's response to the current economic crisis.

Metrics from B&I Division

Below are year-to-date metrics tracked by the 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.

January - April 9, 2009

New projects assigned YTD:	123
Projects announced YTD:	20
Jobs created YTD:	1,786
Capital invested YTD:	\$411,855,000
Direct Account Interactions (industry visits by existing industry staff) YTD:	506
Calls to the Business ServiCenter YTD:	8,026

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

Jackson County manufacturer to add 61 jobs

Gov. Bev Perdue announced April 7 that Stonewall Packaging LLC, a joint project of Jackson Paper Manufacturing Co., is building a new plant in Sylva to produce recycled cardboard packaging.

The company plans to invest more than \$16 million to renovate and modify a vacant mill, creating 61 jobs in Jackson County. The announcement was made possible in part by a \$200,000 grant from the One North Carolina Fund.

"As global markets evolve, North Carolina's manufacturing sector is keeping pace to take advantage of new opportunities," Gov. Perdue said. "Companies like this one are investing in green-friendly products while continuing to enjoy our state's top-rated business climate, skilled workforce and unparalleled quality of life." [Read more.](#)

Scotland County adds natural-products manufacturer, 98 Jobs

Gov. Bev Perdue announced April 8 that Nature's Earth Products Inc., the nation's largest supplier of natural cat litter and manufacturer of hardwood-blend fuel pellets, is opening a new manufacturing facility in Laurinburg. The company plans to invest more than \$12 million and create 98 jobs during the next three years in Scotland County. The announcement was made possible in part by a \$196,000 grant from the One North Carolina Fund.

"North Carolina's forward-looking policies continue to attract companies specializing in emerging green-industry markets," Gov. Perdue said. "Our state's skilled workforce, top-rated business climate and extraordinary quality of life offer the perfect environment for businesses like this one to locate and expand here." [Read more.](#)

N.C. in the News

This Week's Highlights

- [OUR VIEW: Dell needs to 'fess up about layoffs](#) (High-Point Enterprise, April 13)
- [GMAC Financial selects 440 South Church](#) (Charlotte Business Journal, April 13)
- [BRAC benefits preview presented](#) (Fayetteville Observer, April 12)
- [A different kind of green](#) (Charlotte Business Journal, April 13)
- [DRS to Add 100 Jobs in Pasquotank County](#) (WNCT - Greenville, April 13)
- [High-tech firm to hire 240 people in Raleigh for iPhone support](#) (WRAL - Raleigh, April 9)
- [N.C. film advocates commission economic impact study](#) (The Associated Press, April 9)
- [Durham entices Burt's Bees](#) (The News & Observer - Raleigh, April 8)
- [Fuel pellet factory brings 98 jobs to Scotland County](#) (Fayetteville Observer, April 8)
- [N.C. CEO Forum Announces Speakers and Panelists](#) (Durham Herald Sun, April 7)
- [Packaging plant to employ 61 in Sylva](#) (Asheville Citizen-Times, April 7)
- [Dunn plant to close](#) (The News & Observer - Raleigh, April 7)
- [Piedmont Aviation Expands Operations in North Carolina](#) (Expansion Management, April 7)

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