

NORTH CAROLINA'S SOUTHEAST ACHIEVES RECORD-SETTING RESULTS IN 2020-21

Partnership Completes Regional Inventory of Site Drone Videos

August 26, 2021 (Elizabethtown, N.C.) The pandemic may have disrupted much of the world's economy, but North Carolina's Southeast enjoyed its best year ever in terms of businesses bringing new investments in the region. Thirteen companies across diverse industry segments unveiled plans to invest a total of \$153.6 million in the Southeast Region, creating 1,291 announced new jobs.

New operations ranged from boatbuilding and advanced textiles to aerospace and corporate headquarters. "We knew from the level of project activity that we were in a strong position, but only after tallying the final numbers did we realize 2020-2021 would be an excellent year," says Jeff Etheridge, chairman of North Carolina's Southeast. The organization generated a total of 133 leads during the year, hosted 68 client visits and meetings, and made 415 building and site recommendations. "We owe a lot to our hardworking team, and credit truly goes out to our amazing local economic developers and committed team of allies and partners," Etheridge says.

Among the projects NC's Southeast assisted with was White River Marine Group LLC. An affiliate of Missouri-based Bass Pro Shops, the company is the world's largest manufacturer of boats. Once complete, White River Marine's 500-worker operations in Craven County will generate a \$22 million payroll impact on the region's economy, according to the NC Department of Commerce. The region's metalworks cluster saw the expansion of Crown Equipment Corporation, which is creating 130 new jobs in Lenoir County. "Crown is an example of the growing companies that choose to continue operating in our state because of our resilient economy, capable workforce and supportive communities," Governor Roy Cooper said upon the company's February announcement.

Marketing, research assistance and project management support from NC's Southeast supported both relocations and expansions in the region. "Our partners at the Southeast were involved in almost all of the major opportunities we worked on last year, and we're incredibly grateful for the help their team gives us at key moments in the development of these clients and projects," says Mark Pope, senior vice president of the NC Global TransPark Economic Development Region, which is based in Kinston. "We're excited by all the activity that has come our way and look forward to working closely with our regional and statewide partners on building upon all the recent momentum."

Approximately 90 percent of the announced jobs during the year involved manufacturing. The number includes consumer foods manufacturers such as Steven Roberts Original Desserts, which is adding 100 employees to its operations in Robeson County. Other efforts involved headquarters and R&D opportunities. In September, Southeast leaders joined partners in Moore County and executives from the US Golf Association in announcing plans for Golf House Pinehurst, a \$36 million initiative involving testing, developing and management operations.

"In addition to the history-making numbers from last year, there was strong activity across the region's major industry segments," explains Steve Yost, president of NC's Southeast. "Cluster diversification is a key component of our regional economic strategy, and I'm proud of the fact that so many of our target industries and member counties were able to participate in the high level of activity."

The year was also marked by innovation in marketing and promotion of the region. Regional leaders are now completing 18 drone videos of the Southeast's leading industrial properties. The videos will be emailed to site-selection consultants and posted on the state's web-enabled Sites and Buildings database. They will also be used as collateral for virtual recruitment meetings, and county partners will deploy the videos in local marketing efforts. Financial assistance from Duke Energy, ElectriCities of North Carolina and the North Carolina Electric Membership Cooperatives is driving the drone video initiative, which is being executed with technical support from SynTerra Corporation.

A public-private partnership headquartered in Elizabethtown, N.C., **North Carolina's Southeast** links business leaders with county governments in seeking to “provide strong economic development leadership in southeastern North Carolina through innovative marketing and collaborative regional initiatives that will support the creation of new jobs, generate capital investment and secure new business locations.” Member counties include Anson, Bladen, Brunswick, Columbus, Craven, Cumberland, Duplin, Hoke, Lenoir, Montgomery, Moore, New Hanover, Onslow, Pender, Robeson, Sampson, Scotland and Wayne. For additional information, visit www.ncse.org

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