Presentation to the LRC Study Committee on Cultural and Natural Resources
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UWHARRIE REGION
Cultural and Eco-Tourism Opportunities

LRC Questions

• History of Economic Development Efforts
• Roles of State, Local, Private, NGO
• Why Did Efforts Stop
• What Will it Take to Start Them Again
• State’s Role, Start-Up, On-Going Funding Needs
What and Where are the Uwharries

7-9 County Rural Area

Under the Urban Crescent

Along the Yadkin Pee Dee River
Proximity to Major Urban Populations

- Yadkin
- Pee Dee Lakes
- Morrow Mt State Park
- Uwharrie National Mts.
- Morrow Mt State Park
- N.C. Zoo
- Seagrove Pottery
- Pinehurst
- Fort Bragg Military Reservation

North Carolina Map with major locations marked.
Rich in Natural and Cultural Heritage

Mountains & Lakes
TOURISM OPPORTUNITIES
Small Businesses & Jobs

**Active/Soft Outdoor**
- Cycling & Hiking
- Sporting Events
- Hunting
- Canoeing & Kayaking
- Golf
- Gold Panning
- Bird Watching

**Agritourism**
- Peach farms
- Wineries

**Cultural Heritage**
- Seagrove Pottery
- Glass Blowing & Metal Working
- Town Creek Indian Mound
- Transportation Museum
Asset Investment

• **Morrow Mountain State Park** – 3rd oldest state park. Land donated by community (Stanly Co) in 1935

• **Uwharrie National Forest** – *Great Depression Federal Government Purchased*

• Much *privately held* (>90%)

• Demonstrate **Value** as Natural Resource Protection Strategy
Economic Development Mission

• Create a sustainable local economy based on abundant natural and cultural assets of Central NC

• Various Names
  – Yadkin Pee Dee Lakes Area
  – Uwharrie Lake Region
  – Central Park
  – Heartland
Multiple Planning and Economic Development Jurisdictions

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<th>COUNTY</th>
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<th>DOT Div/RPO/MPO</th>
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</tbody>
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Planning and economic development oversight

Covered by 4 COGS
Planning and economic development oversight

Covered by 2 MPOs and 5 RPO and 3 DOT Divisions
Planning and economic development

Four (4) Economic Development Regions
Past Efforts

- **1993 – Yadkin-Pee Dee Lakes Project –**
  - NC Commerce Convened Local Leaders
    - Centered on geographical commonality of lakes

- **2000 – Uwharrie Lakes Region**
  - Assessing Tourism and Outdoor Recreation (Appalachian State)
  - Economic Impact of an Alternative Economic Development Strategy (UNC Charlotte Belk College of Business Administration)
  - $2.1 billion potential with investment and over 25,700 jobs
  - Study needs updating
  - Created maps, brochures, cultural tourism training

- **2005 – Central Park**
  - focusing more on Starworks Creative Enterprise
  - 65 jobs – Wet Dog Glass and Seagrove Clay manufacturing
  - NGO Struggling for funding
Early 2000’s Funders

- Alcoa Foundation
- Asheboro Elastics Corporation
- BB&T Foundation
- Effie Allen Little Foundation
- Ellerbe Telephone Corporation
- Golden LEAF Foundation
- Institute of Museum & Library Science
- Klaussner Foundation
- Myrick Construction
- National Trust For Historic Preservation
- NC Natural Heritage Trust Fund
- NC Rural Center
- Progress Energy Foundation
- Toledo Foundation
- USDA Rural Development
- Uwharrie Capital Corporation
- Wachovia Foundation
- William A. Smith Trust
- Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation

Over $1.5 million in funds and >$4 million in in-kind assets and services
Challenges

• No Governmental Structure to help bring counties together
  – Area is large and diverse
  – Some counties just do not have financial resources
  – Tourists Don’t Think County Lines

• Need to Do the Research and Analysis to define what the region is to attract tourists
  – Demonstrate value of pooling resources to market a brand
  – Chicken before the Egg

• Manufacturing vs. Tourism
  – Tourism will be based on small businesses and entrepreneurship
Recent Effort

• Uwharrie Regional Resources Commission
  – 2010 (no funding or staff)
  – Developed Strategic Plan, Goals and Objectives
    • Need to market regionally, pool resources, Protect Natural Resources
  – With input from Commerce/Tourism, tactical approach; focus on tourism product development
    • Consultant Research & Analytics
    • SWOT Analysis & Lodging Study
    • Poll Stakeholders
    • Poll Target audience
    • To Identify Key Assets
  – URRC and Rural Center eliminated 2013
Why the Uwharries

• Proximity to Growing Urban Centers
  – Knowledge-based workers, young military want active outdoor opportunities
  – Opportunity to create a recruiting asset

• Area has lost manufacturing jobs – Needs help
  – Some of the counties have over 25% poverty rates

• Area is the Center of the State
  – High Potential given cultural and natural resources
  – If Develop the tourist attractions will enhance anchors

• Active Communities and NGOs
  – Developing a network of trails and protecting key lands
  – Developing a Unique Niche in Creative Enterprise & Arts Related Manufacturing
Interagency Collaboration

Uwharrie Region – *Opportunity to bring State Agencies and other resources together for a multi-county region*

- **Agencies:**
  - DOT (bikeways, greenways)
  - Cultural Resource (historic and cultural sites)
  - Agriculture (farms, vineyards)
  - DENR (trails, attractions, state parks)
  - WRC (gamelands)

- **Share Data** – link to VisitNC responsive website, enhance with GIS/GPS and phone apps

- **Replicable Across State**
WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

• Determine Their Unique Selling Position
  – What do people most want from Uwharrie Region? What is the tourism product that will get visitors to come and to stay longer? Where do you go? Where is central starting point?
    • Consultant Research & Analytics
      – SWOT Analysis & Lodging Study
    • Poll Stakeholders
    • Poll Target audience
    • Identify Key Assets
    • Infrastructure Planning
    • Product Development – Grow/Attract Businesses
    • Brand and Market

• Long-Term Sustainability –
  – Grow Tourism businesses
  – Pool Resources
  – Look to Others for Funding (local government, businesses, urban areas)
WHAT IS NEEDED

• Commerce Resources to Lead Product Development and Bring in Other Resources
  – Tourism hasn’t helped develop product needed before the marketing step to date

• Funding for Consultant Research & Analytics
  – incl. SWOT analysis & lodging study $50,000

• Private Funding
  – Web/App ($40,000)
Many Opportunities Across State Varying Scope

- Nantahala
- Gold Trail
- Lake Mattamuskeet
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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