

**Subject:** FW: Rural Partners UPDATE: April 2008  
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News

### **Drought-stricken farms to get help under \$6 million program**

Recent rains may have eased drought conditions somewhat, but North Carolina farmers are still reeling from half a billion in crop losses they sustained last year. A new \$6 million cost-share program will ease the burden and help them prepare for a new season. The N.C. Agricultural Drought Recovery Program was unveiled April 22 in Raleigh. The program will cover 75 percent of the cost of restoring drought-damaged pastureland and providing additional water supply for livestock and crops. It was funded by a \$6 million grant from the N.C. Tobacco Trust Fund Commission and will be administered statewide through local Soil and Water Conservation District offices beginning May 1. In announcing the program, Rural Center President Billy Ray Hall said it will enable more than 1,000 farmers and farm operations to repair some of the damage from last summer's severe drought and prepare for future dry spells. Edgecombe County farmer Gwen Pitt said the immediacy of the program will allow farm operations like hers to put the disastrous 2007 growing season behind them and continue farming throughout this year and into next. The Rural Center worked with the General Assembly's Joint Select Committee on Agricultural Drought Response, the Tobacco Trust Fund Commission, several state agencies and other agricultural interests to design the program. Rep. Ray Rapp, co-chairman of the legislative committee, said a bill seeking an additional \$6 million to extend the program to more farmers will be submitted to the General Assembly in the coming weeks. To find out more, visit the Rural Center's [website](#).

### **Study of state's equine industry kicks off May 1**

Horses are big business in North Carolina, yet the equine industry's fragmented nature has long made it difficult to measure its economic impact and capitalize on opportunities for growth. Beginning May 1, North Carolina's equine industry will be the subject of a study detailing its direct and indirect contributions to the state's economy. The final report, to be presented to

state lawmakers in early 2009, is expected to recommend measures to protect existing equine assets and to stimulate growth. The General Assembly funded the study at the request of the equine industry. It charged the Rural Center's Agricultural Advancement Consortium with administering the study with oversight provided by the seven-member Equine Study Executive Committee. A series of meetings around the state is giving horse owners, industry professionals and other interested parties an opportunity to learn more about the study and become involved in the process. For more information, visit the Rural Center's [website](#) or contact consortium director Billy Guillet at (919) 250-4314.

**Rural Venture Fund invests in Morganton aviation firm** The Rural Center has announced it will invest \$350,000 in VX Aerospace Corp. of Morganton, marking the fourth investment of the center's Rural Venture Fund. The center's investment will enable the company to take on a multi-million-dollar Department of Defense contract and ultimately lead to the creation of 60 full-time jobs in economically distressed Burke County. VX Aerospace designs and manufactures advanced composite replacement parts used in military aircraft and unmanned, single-engine planes. The center's investment will be used to purchase property and equipment, hire new workers and begin construction on a 10,000-square-foot production facility adjacent to the Morganton-Lenoir Airport. Established in the fall of 2007, the Rural Venture Fund provides working capital to companies in the most economically distressed areas of North Carolina. Its investments carry the expectation of a return, but on less demanding terms than traditional venture capital. For more information on the Rural Venture Fund, contact Ashley Crane in the business development office at (919) 250-4314.



## Meetings

### **Fundraising for nonprofits conference April 29-30, Columbia, S.C.**

A fundraising conference in Columbia, S.C., will give nonprofit leaders the tools to launch successful, sustained capital campaigns. The April 29-30 conference, sponsored by the National Development Institute, will include panel discussions with philanthropists and national fundraising professionals. Topics include donor research, feasibility study strategies and estate funding plans. The cost to attend is \$249. To find out more or to register online, visit the conference [website](#).

## **NC REAL to hold entrepreneurship institute June 23-27**

NC REAL will hold its five-day REAL Entrepreneurship Institute June 23-27 at the Sea Trail Golf Resort and Conference Center at Sunset Beach. The institute is an in-depth training that prepares educators in high school, post-secondary and community-based settings to teach *REAL Entrepreneurship*, the hands-on course that helps students learn to think, plan and act as entrepreneurs. Institute participants experience the highlights of the REAL course as their students will, interact with experienced REAL instructors and prepare lesson plans. The cost is \$1,500, which includes tuition, most meals and lodging based on double occupancy. To find out more, or to register, call Malinda Todd at (919) 781-6833 or click visit the NC REAL [website](#).

**CED to hold Biotech Conference May 19-20 in Winston-Salem**The Council for Entrepreneurial Development (CED) will hold its 17th annual Biotech Conference May 19-20 at the Benson Convention Center in Winston-Salem. The conference brings together the Southeast's life science community for an in-depth look at industry trends and innovation. Each year the conference attracts biotech entrepreneurs, major pharmaceutical companies, life science research leaders, policy makers and investors. Through May 12, registration is \$275 for members of CED members, and \$375 for non-members. Registration fees will increase \$50 after that date. To view the full agenda or to register online, visit the conference [webpage](#).



## **Reports and Research**

### **Biofuels not to blame for higher food prices, says Texas A&M report**

In the rush to develop and speed production of biofuels, are we unwittingly setting the stage for escalating food prices and resulting global food shortages? That question is the basis of a new report released last week by Texas A&M University. The report concludes that higher energy costs, not biofuels production, are the primary force behind rising food prices. Moreover, the report says prices for staples such as bread, eggs and milk have only a slight relationship to ethanol or corn prices, but instead result from basic supply and demand. Livestock producers

are being squeezed by the higher corn prices, the report says, unable to pass on costs either up or down the supply chain. The question about the connection between biofuels and food prices arises because corn is the preferred feedstock for ethanol. To read the report in its entirety, click [here](#).

### ***Popular Government* features articles on general obligation bonds, community visioning**

The new issue of *Popular Government*, a quarterly magazine published by the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Government, contains articles on community visioning, collaborative leadership and general obligation bond ratings. To download an online version of the publication, click [here](#).

### **Report recommends improving Hispanic access to higher education**

A new report by the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce offers recommendations for improving access to higher education for working Hispanic immigrants. The report, “Building Tomorrow’s Workforce: Promoting the Education & Advancement of Hispanic Immigrant Workers in America,” focuses on the innovative roles employers and community colleges are playing in the promotion and advancement of Hispanic immigrant workers. It is crucial that states act now, according to report authors, considering that within a decade, one out of every four new workers in the United States will be a Latin American immigrant. To download the report, click [here](#).

### **U.S. ranks fourth in Internet infrastructure**

In the international media, the United States has taken hits in recent years on Internet technology, infrastructure and innovation. A new report ranks the country fourth internationally – behind Denmark, Sweden and Switzerland – for its ability to develop and deploy Internet technology. According to the “The Global Information Technology Report 2007-2008,” the United States ranks very high for its environment for Internet technology and scores in the top 10 on technology absorption, research collaboration and venture capital. It posted more moderate scores in such areas as bandwidth technology and mobile phone subscribers. To read the report in its entirety, click [here](#).



## **Funding Sources**

### **Applications for Clean Water Partners grants due July 28**

Local governments seeking funding through the Clean Water Partners Infrastructure Program

have until July 28 at 5 p.m. to submit applications to the Rural Center. The program provides grants for water and sewer projects that address critical health or environmental problems in rural communities. To be considered for funding under the program, applicants must have attended a how-to-apply workshop. The next sessions are scheduled for May 7 in Raleigh. This will be the program's second round of grants. Grants awarded during the first round will be announced June 24. For more information, go to the Rural Center's [website](#) or contact [Julie Haigler Cubeta](#) at 919-250-4314.

### **ARC accepting grant applications for renewable energy projects**

The Appalachian Regional Commission has announced the second round of a grants competition to assist Appalachian communities in leveraging renewable-energy and energy-efficiency resources to revitalize their economies. ARC expects to provide eight to 10 awards of up to \$75,000 each, for a total of \$500,000 in awards, to help communities implement these strategies. Eligible projects should result in the creation of new jobs or businesses in the targeted communities. For more eligibility criteria and to see the 2007 award recipients, click [here](#).

## **Awards to recognize excellence in affordable housing**

Enterprise Community Partners is offering community-based and regional nonprofit organizations awards for excellence in the design and management of affordable housing and the operation of supportive housing for special needs populations. Winners will receive \$40,000 for first place, \$30,000 for second place, and \$20,000 for third place. Submissions are due by May 16. To find out more, click [here](#).



### **In the N.C. Press**

***Washington Daily News: Global warming may flood one-third of state*** Hyde and Dare counties and the Outer Banks would be part of the ocean floor if sea levels were to rise one meter, a scientist studying the impact of global warming on North Carolina's coast said recently. Enrique Reyes, an associate professor of biology at East Carolina University, said one-third of the state would be lost to the ocean if sea levels rose 20 feet. Reyes is a member of a scientific team from the University of North Carolina system that is in the midst of a multi-

year field study aimed at informing state agencies how to manage rising sea levels. Sea levels on the North Carolina coast rise about one-quarter of an inch every year, according to Reyes, who spoke at the N.C. Estuarium. Reyes said that rate is manageable because many plants can adapt to the rising water and survive. However, the rate has increased in recent years as the average global temperature has risen, he said. If the rate reaches half an inch per year, the state's marshes and wetlands will drown, he said. Reyes and the team of scientists he works with are trying to understand what effect humans have had on global warming and the effects climate change will have specifically on North Carolina. Reyes said that rising sea levels would have the most profound effect on eastern North Carolina, which would eventually lose the wetlands, marshes and Outer Banks that serve as lines of defense against hurricane winds and waves.

### ***Henderson Daily Dispatch: Grants to jump-start alternative fuel sector***

The Biofuels Center of North Carolina has announced that it will distribute \$2.55 million to help jump-start the state's alternative energy sector. At least 75 grant and loan applications totaling nearly \$13 million were received March 17 in response to the Biofuels Center's request for proposals, officials said. The Biofuels Center's board approved 15 applications totaling the \$2.55 million at a meeting Tuesday. Biofuels Center President John Ganzi on Wednesday said the large number of applications shows the pent-up need for capacity building to create such a sector within the state. The money will be applied to agriculture, industrial production, research and work force development. The Biofuels Center was created by lawmakers to provide statewide technical expertise in optional fuels and was funded by a \$5 million appropriation from the 2007 General Assembly.

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