

Northern Coastal Plain Region



Regions L, Q & R: Beaufort, Bertie, Camden, Chowan, Currituck, Dare, Edgecombe, Halifax, Hertford, Hyde, Martin, Nash, Northampton, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Pitt, Tyrell, Washington, Wilson

- Total land area: 8,884 square miles
- Agriculture: 5,390 farms, \$1.3 billion in receipts
- 20 rural counties
- 13 CAMA counties
- Agricultural and fishing economy with narrow zones of tourism
- Minor military presence in four counties

Projected Population Growth in Northern Coastal Plains Counties

2000	2010	2020	2030
710,087	751,422	807,087	856,034

Natural Resources: The state's largest sounds, including the Albemarle-Pamlico estuary, produce more than 90 percent of the state's commercial seafood species. Bordered by the northern Outer Banks, these sounds are unique on the East Coast for their low salinity and dominance of wind tides. Vast wetlands – including marsh, swamp forest and pocosins – border the shorelines and inland areas, and include several large, shallow natural lakes. The western part of the region, a gently rolling plain cut by rivers and streams, features fertile farmland. Outstanding ecological features include the Roanoke River, which contains the largest intact and least disturbed expanse of bottomland and cypress-tupelo forests on the East Coast.

Specific Growth and Conservation Concerns: Agriculture is critical to the local economy, so emphasis is placed on preserving this resource from urbanization. Vast acreage along rivers and tributaries are undevelopable floodplains, and tend to be environmentally sensitive. Rehabilitation of water resources on damaged farm and forestlands is needed. Healthy fisheries are also critical to the regional economy.

Regional Conservation Planning

The Upper Coastal Plain Council of Governments (UCPCOG) has developed a regional strategy as a foundation for open space conservation in Edgecombe, Halifax, Nash, Northampton and Wilson counties. Continued planning for open space conservation at a regional scale will identify the ecological and recreational systems on which the region depends for its health and quality of life and prioritize multijurisdictional opportunities. Future efforts will look at establishing local efforts that fit within the regional framework and ensure broad-based support and implementation. The Upper Coastal Plain Region Open Space Strategy is available on the UCPCOG Web site: <http://www.ucpcog.org/pds>

The Mid-East Commission worked with Beaufort, Bertie, Hertford, Martin and Pitt counties to develop a coordinated open space conservation strategy. Farming and forestry dominate the landscape in a very rural area. Significant land areas are already conserved in gamelands, state parks and along the Roanoke River. Additional open space being considered includes multiple use areas such as habitat corridors, trails and greenways. County maps of property that has been conserved or in which there is interest in conserving will continue to be refined. www.mideastcom.org

The Albemarle Commission developed an Open Space Plan for 10 CAMA counties in the northeast corner of the state (Camden, Chowan, Currituck, Dare, Gates, Hyde, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Tyrrell and Washington counties). Both ends of the economic spectrum are represented in this region, with Dare experiencing a tourism-fueled influx of new residents and most other counties sparsely populated. The area is dependent on agriculture and commercial fishing; programs like CREP and CHPP support both conservation and the economy of the region. Large portions of this region are already in state and federal land conservation programs; greenways could provide connectivity between refuges to encourage ecotourism.