

Southern Coastal Plain Region



Regions O & P: Brunswick, Carteret, Columbus, Craven, Duplin, Greene, Jones, Lenoir, New Hanover, Onslow, Pamlico, Pender, Wayne

- Total land area: 7,701 square miles
- Agriculture: 5,221 farms, \$1.7 billion in receipts
- 12 rural and one urban counties
- Seven CAMA counties
- Agriculture & tourism-based economy
- Military installations in five counties

Projected Population Growth in Southern Coastal Plains Counties

2000	2010	2020	2030
939,977	1,013,255	1,126,537	1,229,851

Natural Resources: Small estuaries and sandy uplands make up this region. Longleaf pine savannas, known for a high diversity of plant species, and pocosins are significant natural communities. Several major “blackwater” rivers, clear and stained from decayed organic matter, originate in sandy portions of the coastal plain. Inland, once covered by vast longleaf pine forests, is now mostly farmland. Outstanding ecological features include the oldest stand of trees in the eastern United States, species-rich Lake Waccamaw, and a high concentration of rare carnivorous plants.

Specific Growth and Conservation Concerns: Many of the future focus areas that provide critical habitat for endangered species are located in coastal counties. These are also the counties that are most desirable to developers, since the area’s natural beauty attracts visitors and new residents. With the loss of jobs and tax base, it is difficult for local officials in many communities to prioritize stewardship of water quality, habitat protection and air quality above development.

Regional Conservation Planning

The Cape Fear Council of Governments developed an open space strategy and map for Brunswick, Columbus, New Hanover and Pender counties. Creeks adjacent to coastal areas are under pressure from increasing development and recreational use, so maintaining water quality is a priority. Some environmentally sensitive areas are already conserved as open space and used for parks, gamelands and reserves, but additional areas could be included. Agriculture and timberlands can be preserved and kept economically viable through easements and tax incentives. www.capefearcog.org

The Eastern Carolina Council (ECC) completed an open space plan for Carteret, Craven, Duplin, Greene, Jones, Lenoir, Onslow, Pamlico and Wayne counties. These counties range between largely agricultural rural areas where open space is taken for granted and rapidly developing coastal communities that appeal to tourists and retirees. Further open space planning will address encroachment around military installations, high growth coastal areas, water quality and the region’s natural environment. <http://www.eccog.org>