

Southern Piedmont Region



Regions C & F: *Anson, Cabarrus, Cleveland, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Polk, Rowan, Rutherford, Stanly, Union*

- Total land area: 5,463 square miles
- Agriculture: 7273 farms, \$936 million receipts
- Eight rural and four urban counties
- Agriculture-based economy

Projected Population Growth in Southern Piedmont Counties

2000	2010	2020	2030
1,865,023	2,102,491	2,503,793	2,918,761

Natural Resources: A moderately rolling landscape, dissected by rivers and streams with gentle ridge tops in between becomes rugged where it meets the mountains at the westernmost boundary. Most of the region's rare species habitats occur in remnants of former open prairies and a few areas with hardpan soils. Major natural community types are upland oak-hickory forests, moist hardwood forests and floodplain forests. Dams or reservoirs alter the flow of major rivers, but a few smaller streams have significant aquatic communities and extremely rare mussels. Outstanding ecological features include the spectacular cliffs and peaks of Hickory Nut Gorge.

Specific Growth and Conservation Concerns: The rapidly developing urban areas along major highways create concerns about air quality, sustainable growth and water resources, but has drawn attention to the need to plan in a coordinated manner across jurisdictions. The preservation of the natural heritage in rural areas remains a primary goal, and is expected to enhance the region's economic growth.

Regional Conservation Planning

The Isothermal Planning and Development Commission has identified existing conserved and protected lands, along with potential areas for future conservation efforts, by working with local governments and various land trusts. Cleveland County has identified several corridors for preservation in its land use plan update, including scenic highway designation and the expansion of greenways, connecting to the existing Broad River greenway. Polk and Rutherford counties are exploring ways to partner in conservation efforts along the Overmountain Victory Trail, and along with McDowell, are developing goals and projects as a part of planning efforts of the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area. www.regionc.org

Centralina Council of Governments' Sustainable Environment for Quality of Life (SEQL) program is a 15-county, bi-state effort in the Charlotte metro region to integrate environmental considerations into all aspects of planning and economic reinvestment. More than 65 jurisdictions have signed on as SEQL partners. SEQL's initial focus on air quality has broadened to include open space and greenway development and its economic/environmental impacts. Centralina also participates in regional open space initiative being funded through Foundation for the Carolinas and facilitated by the Lee Institute, aimed at leveraging foundation seed money for major open space acquisition. Much of the initiative's work is based on the Open Space Framework developed by the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute under contract to Voices and Choices. Concurrently, Centralina is working with the Trust for Public Lands as they lead development of the Catawba Regional Trail network, and with the Lake Norman RPO as they promote development of the Lake Norman Bike Trail. <http://www.seql.org/> +