

## **Economic Alliance of North Central Louisiana – A Six-Parish Partnership To Create A Sustainable Economy**

### **Situation:**

Parishes in the north central region have been working independent of each other for years, often working alone on the same projects, frequently attending regionally sponsored programs, but always aware of parish boundaries. To remove some of those physical boundaries, in the spring of 2007, three mayors from the towns of Jonesboro, Bernice and Dubach enlisted the help of Dora Ann Hatch, LSU AgCenter community rural development agent, to host a meeting with other mayors along the highway 167 corridor to discuss the highway expansion.

### **Action:**

The Highway 167 Mayor's group later expanded its audience, established a name, mission and focus. The newly formed group, "The Economic Alliance of North Central Louisiana" is comprised of Bienville, Claiborne, Jackson, Lincoln, Winn and Union parishes. The mission of the alliance is to create partnerships and strategies to create a sustainable economy. Its goals are to focus on the Sparta Aquifer; economic development; retirement and quality of life issues, which includes tourism, lakes, and arts; health care; film industry; and transportation. Since its creation, more than 300 people from the six parishes have attended the eight regional monthly meetings hosted since May 2006. The membership includes mayors; police jurors; utility company representatives; business owners; citizens; chamber of commerce presidents and members; tourism directors and members; and local and regional government officials. The alliance meets in Ruston, the center of the region, and Ms. Hatch facilitates the meetings. Meeting agendas provide opportunities for collaborative ventures between parishes and allow parish officials a forum to discuss issues common to all parishes.

### **Impact:**

Parish boundaries are beginning to fade as alliance members recognize the assets within the six parish region. Members are beginning to work together on projects to benefit the region. Lincoln Parish has offered to list building sites in the region on its site list for companies looking to relocate. The membership is also planning a trip to Baton Rouge in the spring of 2007 to visit with the Governor and legislators to talk about the region and its needs. The LSU AgCenter has facilitated the alliance meetings and has assisted in scheduling guest speakers to provide information that will help grow the regional economy. The LSU AgCenter plans to continue to provide support to the group during its infancy.

### **Funding Source:**

Ruston Mayor's Office LSU AgCenter

### **Contact:**

Dora Ann Hatch  
Community Economic Development Agent, Homer, La.  
(318) 927-9654, ext. 229  
dhatch@agcenter.lsu.edu