



The May 2007 report highlights projects and related announcements that will assist with the creation of new jobs and the preservation of a significant number of existing jobs.

NGK Spark Plugs breaks ground on expansion

NGK Spark Plugs (USA) Inc. broke ground for the expansion of its Sissonville, W.Va., plant on April 28.

Governor Joe Manchin, First Lady Gayle Manchin and Senator Jay Rockefeller were among the dignitaries who joined NGK President Norio Kato and Vice President Tom Wetzel for the event. Expansion plans include construction of a new 75,000 square-foot building and hiring new employees. The company expects to begin assembly and production in the third quarter of 2008.

NGK made the decision to expand at this location after a national search of other sites. Based on its positive 12-year history with a dedicated work force at the Sissonville location and the cooperative efforts of government and private agencies, "the West Virginia site was the obvious choice for the expansion," Wetzel said.

March unemployment rate drops to 4.9 percent

West Virginia recorded its lowest unemployment rate for March as the state's jobless rate fell one-half of a percentage point to 4.9 percent, Workforce West Virginia said. For the month, the number of West Virginians working increased by 3,100 residents to 765,300 people. The number of unemployed residents fell by 4,100 to 39,700, the agency said. Employment gains were recorded in several areas including construction, 1,700; trade, transportation and utilities, 1,200; and leisure and hospitality, 1,200.

Greenbrier resort reopens after renovations

The Greenbrier resort reopened in April after three months of extensive renovations. All 721 guest rooms now have plasma-screen TVs, new bedding and electronic key locks. Many of the award-winning resort's facilities and recreational programs are now open to non guests. The Greenbrier Spa will be open to the public Mondays –Thursdays. Tours of the Cold War era nuclear fallout shelter is open daily for tours. Reservations are required for the spa and dinner.

Recycling company to create new jobs in Mercer County

The West Virginia Economic Development Authority approved a \$5 million loan to Recycle West Virginia, LP ("RWV"). The new recycling and metal shredding operation is in Princeton, Mercer County. The company plans to purchase and install a state of the art shredder and related cranes, loaders and bailers.

The new recycling firm is expected to create up to 38 jobs in three years. RWV will purchase 14 acres at the former Princeton Roadway Shop, which is part of a 60 acre inactive rail yard in the historically industrial section of northern Princeton, and refurbish the five buildings on this site. Once the buildings are refurbished, the shredder/recycler will be installed inside the largest building (56,000 sq. ft.) on the site.

U.S. Commerce Secretary praises West Virginia economy

U.S. Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez visited West Virginia in April, first stopping in Mingo County to learn about a thriving "aquacultural" business, and then finishing his trip in Huntington, where he addressed 458 people at the Huntington Regional Chamber of Commerce's 116th Annual Dinner.

Using the words "impressed" and "amazed," Gutierrez expressed enthusiasm for West Virginia's efforts to diversify its economy and focus on transportation, tourism and technology as its means of growth. The aquaculture business in Mingo County is well ahead of the curve in terms of farming fresh fish that could decrease the country's reliance on imported seafood, he pointed out.

According to the Department of Commerce, aquaculture is an almost \$1 billion U.S. industry and a key area for future economic growth in the fishing industry. The Mingo County Fish Hatchery, located at Thacker Fork near Pie, W.Va., is one of the first projects to use water from an abandoned coal mine to grow cold water fish, Arctic Char, which are marketed primarily along the East Coast. The hatchery produces 1.2 million fingerlings a year. Gutierrez said West Virginia could serve as a model for other states. Only Hawaii has a similar initiative right now, Gutierrez said.

L.L.Bean names Quad/Graphics as catalog printer

Quad/Graphics is now the exclusive printer and distributor for the L.L.Bean catalogs. The Martinsburg plant will share production with plants in Oklahoma City and Lomira, Wis. L.L.Bean is a major retailer of outdoor gear and clothing. The multi-million dollar deal goes into effect January 2008.

"We were impressed with their innovation, technology and quality," said Steve Fuller, L.L.Bean senior vice president of corporate marketing.

Tax system overhaul produces more timely, easier-to-read business tax statements

Gov. Joe Manchin recently announced the first results of the state tax computer system overhaul: monthly business tax statements and an easier-to-read business registration certificate.

Previously, the state could not send taxpayers an account statement on a timely basis, sometimes leaving businesses unaware how much they owed or when to pay. Now the tax statements can be mailed monthly, like credit card statements. The state's business registration certificate has also been improved, from a check-size paper with small print to an easier to read standard-size page. Monthly tax statements were mailed to 13,000 businesses in April. The account statements show activity for sales tax and withholding taxes. When the system is completed, Gov. Manchin said, the new system is expected to increase tax revenue by \$18 million a year by notifying taxpayers that may have been unaware of money owed and by reaching new taxpayers sooner.

FCX Celebrates 20 Years of Success in Business

FCX Systems Inc. celebrated its 20th anniversary in April. The company, which employs 105 people, manufactures aviation ground support equipment. FCX has 40 percent of the world market share, with 70 clients on seven continents.

The company manufactures a solid-state frequency converter – an electronic box that powers airplanes when planes are on the ground. The FCX product line also includes air conditioning and heating units for airplanes and a power supply for F-22 Raptors that cannot be detected by radar.

Charleston Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) ranks in top third in U.S.

For the third year, Charleston has shown consecutive improvement in economic strength and growth. According to Policom Corporation, the Charleston Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) ranked in the top one-third among 361 other MSAs in the United States.

Other West Virginia MSAs that are improving include: Huntington/Ashland MSA, 276; Morgantown, 240; Wheeling, 304; Weirton/Steubenville, 351; and Parkersburg/Marietta/Vienna, 297.

Economies are ranked on consistent growth in size and quality and are measured by a variety of labor indicators. From Policom's research, it determines if an area is growing or declining, what is causing this to happen, and offers ideas and solutions to communities to improve the situation.

Entrepreneurs Earn Their Stripes in the Minor Leagues

Thomas S. Lyons, a professor of entrepreneurship at Baruch College's Zicklin School of Business in New York, and Gregg A. Lichtenstein, a business consultant in Margate, N.J., have developed a system to encourage entrepreneurial talent. The system is modeled on baseball's farm system, which Professor Lyons called "one of the best talent-generating systems in the world." Like the baseball model, the Entrepreneurial League System features clearly defined talent levels — rookie league, single A, double A and triple A — along with general managers, coaches and scouts.

In two years, the pair formed leagues in West Virginia and central Louisiana with a third league starting this month in western Michigan. The league has more than 90 entrepreneurs in West Virginia. The ESL model, and several participating businesses in West Virginia, were recently featured in The New York Times.

West Virginia towns receive "best places" ratings

Morgantown ranked among the top 10 in Forbes Magazine's list of "Best Places for Business and Careers." The ratings were based on colleges in the area, cost of doing business, cost of living, crime rate, culture and leisure, educational attainment, income growth, job growth and net migration. Huntington ranked top "best" for cost of living.

Pleasants, W.Va. is the second "Most Affordable Place to Live," based on home price and income ratios, according to Progressive Farmer's 2007 report: the "Best Places to Live in Rural America."

Glade Springs Village in Daniels has been rated as "ideal for retirement" in Where to Retire magazine's March/April issue. Factors included the community's 18-hole championship golf course, proximity to attractions such as Tamarack and outdoor recreation such as fishing and skiing.

Agritourism a growing industry

West Virginia received a \$43,000 Federal State Market Improvement Grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for a program to develop agritourism in the state, said Cindy Martel, marketing specialist with the West Virginia Department of Agriculture. Agritourism includes corn mazes, wineries, orchards and other rural attractions. When the program concludes, the department will have a five-year plan detailing how to develop agritourism in the state.

The 18-month project started Sept. 1, 2006. Since then, 173 individuals and businesses that can accommodate group tours have submitted information to Martel. "We're going to put it in the format of a directory. We're working with the (Division) of Tourism ... It will be accessible on their Web site. This has helped update the (Division) of Tourism's database."