



**The January 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.**

- **Customer services center to bring 700 jobs to Huntington**

A company that specializes in outsourced customer management services plans to open a service center near Huntington that will employ 700 by June. PRC will hire 100 people to start in January, then hire an additional 100 workers every three weeks until it reaches 700, said Bob Johnson, PRC's talent acquisition manager. PRC will open its inbound call center in the former Arch Coal building. An experienced, available workforce and "the readiness of the building played a big part" in PRC's move to the area, Johnson said.

- **Morgantown facility is world's first internationally accredited biometrics lab**

The National Biometric Security Project announced that its Test, Research and Data Center in Morgantown, W.Va., has earned ISO/IEC 17025 certification. The accreditation makes NBSP the only ISO-accredited biometrics laboratory in the world. The accreditation covers performance testing, conformance testing, and custom testing programs.

The ISO accreditation will enable NBSP to begin commercial Qualified Products List testing, said NBSP Chairman and CEO John Siedlarz. NBSP is a not-for-profit organization that provides independent evaluations of biometrics technology.

- **Weyerhaeuser installs \$25 million OSB press**

Weyerhaeuser Company is investing \$25 million in its Sutton plant to replace its old press with a new Dieffenbacher Oriented Strand Board (OSB) press. The heaviest component of the new press weighs 206,000 pounds and measures 13 feet wide by 25 feet long. Approximately 150 contractors and all of the mill's 185 employees worked on the installation project.

Weyerhaeuser Company is one of the world's largest integrated forest products companies. It has offices or operations in 18 countries, with customers worldwide. Weyerhaeuser is principally engaged in the growing and harvesting of timber; the manufacture, distribution and sale of forest products; and real estate construction, development and related activities.

- **Division of Coast Guard relocates to Martinsburg**

Personnel from the Mariner Services Division of the U.S. Coast Guard now will oversee the nation's ports and waterways from its new location in the Eastern Panhandle. The division, which was displaced by Hurricane Katrina, will be located in the Burr Industrial Park in Kearneysville until its permanent headquarters is constructed in Martinsburg. The Mariner Services Division will add 80 jobs to the business park's more than 125,000-square feet of office space. Although West Virginia generally is not considered a maritime state, "Technology makes West Virginia a maritime state," said Rear Adm. Brian Salerno. "From here the Coast Guard ensures fast, accurate documentation, security checks and medical review for over a quarter million U.S. merchant mariners."

- **West Virginia Small Business Development Center helps 207 clients in December**  
The West Virginia Small Business Development Center (SDBC) provided 380 hours of counseling and training to 207 clients last month. The SDBC has provided 1,665 hours of counseling and training to 847 clients this fiscal year beginning Oct. 1, helping to create or retain 88 jobs. SDBC staff trained 97 people at 13 events in December and trained 460 people this fiscal year. Two loans totaling \$181,500 were approved in December. Twelve loans totaling nearly \$1.8 million have been approved fiscal year-to-date. New customer satisfaction was 100 percent in December and for the year.
- **Martinsburg firm wins place in federal contract pool**  
A Martinsburg company was one of more than 40 service-disabled, veteran-owned businesses awarded a U.S. General Services Administration government-wide contract potentially worth \$5 billion during the next several years. HMS Technologies now will compete for federal procurements under the awarded contract, formally known as the Veterans Technology for Services (VETS) Government-wide Acquisition Contract (GWAC). HMS Technologies was the only West Virginia firm qualified to provide information technology services to various federal agencies, said company president and CEO Harry M. Siegal. HMS is a client of the Small Business Development Center of the Blue Ridge Community and Technical College in Martinsburg.
- **Wheeling Island Racetrack plans \$8 million expansion**  
Wheeling Island Racetrack and Gaming Center has announced plans for an \$8 million expansion. The project, expected to be completed by June 2007, will add 16,000 square feet to the gaming facility. The buffet kitchen also will be expanded, and a covered walkway constructed.
- **Rentech and MCRA plan to develop clean fuels plant**  
The Mingo County Redevelopment Authority (MCRA) in Williamson, W.Va., and Rentech Inc. have joined to develop a Fischer-Tropsch clean fuels plant in Mingo County, W.Va. The project would convert synthesis gas produced from West Virginia coal into ultra-clean transportation fuels. MCRA and Rentech plan to jointly develop, finance, own and operate the project, which is expected to produce three to nine million barrels a year of the ultra clean fuels for use in the Mingo County region.  
  
The first phase of the project calls for a 60-day due diligence period, beginning the first week of January 2007, to determine project viability.
- **Verizon continues to expand high-speed Internet access throughout West Virginia**  
Verizon Communications Corp. has added digital subscriber line Internet service to its Gauley Bridge and Walton, W.Va., markets. Upgrades to Verizon telephone switching centers in the two towns have made the service available to people living near the centers. Verizon plans to upgrade 15 switching centers across West Virginia for DSL service by early 2007. Its DSL service is available in more than 227 locations across the state, and the company plans to push that number up to 350 this year.

- **New tech group networks for future of region**

A newly formed network of Martinsburg business professionals met for the first time in December to discuss ways to advance high-tech business in the region. The technology group is sponsored by the Gateway New Economy Council and has set a follow-up session for January. The business people discussed opportunities afforded by the Shepherd University Research Corporation (SURC), the possibility of hosting a forum on ways to acquire federal contracting opportunities locally and a map of the area's resources.

- **Hunters harvest 16 percent more bucks than last year**

The Division of Natural Resources reported that hunters harvested almost 65,841 bucks during the two-week firearm season Nov. 20 – Dec. 2. That's up nearly 16 percent from last year, said Paul Johansen, assistant wildlife chief for the state DNR. He said the increase is a sign that West Virginia's deer population is healthy and doesn't exceed the land's capacity. Preston County saw the most deer harvested with 26,000.

Hunting and fishing have an estimated annual economic impact of \$710 million in West Virginia.

- **West Virginia Economic Development Authority approves Leslie Equipment expansion loan**

The West Virginia Economic Development Authority granted preliminary approval for a \$2 million loan to Leslie Equipment Co. for expansion. The company plans a 35,840 square foot sales, parts and service facility in Cross Lanes, Kanawha County. Leslie Equipment has operations in Cowen, Beaver, Fairmont and Norton in West Virginia, as well as locations in Kentucky and Ohio. The company carries John Deere equipment, parts and accessories for use in highway construction, general excavation and logging operations.

- **West Virginia American Water invested \$16.7 million in improvements in 2006**

During 2006, the state's largest water utility company invested \$16.7 million in infrastructure improvements and line expansions in 2006. West Virginia American Water Co. provides services to approximately 25 percent of the state's populace.

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