



The April 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 to expand in Sissonville

NGK Spark Plugs USA Inc. is building a new spark plug assembly facility in Sissonville, W.Va. The manufacturer plans to build the new facility next to the oxygen sensor plant and distribution center it already operates in Kanawha County. The existing plant employs about 220 people. NGK anticipates that the initial assembly and production of the new plant will begin in the third quarter of 2008.

NGK decided to build because its California plant cannot keep up with increased demand and has no space for expansion. The company researched locations for the new plant for about a year before deciding on Sissonville. Based on the 12-year positive history of a dedicated work force and the cooperative efforts of governmental and private agencies, the commitment to West Virginia was an obvious choice, company officials said.

Company to produce biodiesel at Bayer site in Institute

Illinois-based Emerald Biofuels LLC has announced a \$15 million project to produce biodiesel fuel at the Bayer CropScience site in Institute, W.Va. Construction of the production facility is expected to start in June at the Institute site, with product shipment beginning by the end of the year. A contract between Bayer CropScience and Emerald Biofuels, based in Golf, Ill., calls for 30 million gallons of biodiesel fuel from the plant annually. At least a dozen employees from Bayer CropScience will support the biodiesel plant.

David Drew, president and chief executive officer of Emerald Biofuels, said, "The Bayer CropScience Manufacturing Industrial Park in Institute offers a strategic manufacturing location for us; distribution by truck, rail and barge; and Bayer CropScience's world-class resources that they'll be providing for the operation, maintenance and supervision of the facility."

Governor welcomes Enviro Tech to West Virginia

Enviro Tech International Inc. has acquired the assets of Farr Manufacturing and Engineering, a move that keeps the Williamstown, W.Va., plant open and preserves more than 40 manufacturing jobs.

"We congratulate Enviro Tech owners Larry Clark and Ted LaMantia for recognizing the business opportunity in purchasing Farr Manufacturing," said Gov. Joe Manchin. "We appreciate Enviro Tech's timely purchase that allows ... the retention of more than 40 good manufacturing jobs in the state, and the planned creation of 25 to 50 additional jobs."

Illinois-based Enviro Tech manufactures solvents and degreasers that are used as the cleaning solvents for the degreasing equipment produced by Farr Manufacturing. FARR Manufacturing Division of the ETI Corporation will continue to produce vapor degreasing systems, solvent recovery systems, aqueous cleaning systems, heat treating furnaces and other industrial equipment, said Enviro Tech President Larry Clark.

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State unemployment rate 5.4 at percent, lowest February rate on record

West Virginia's unemployment rate was 5.4 percent in February, the lowest February rate on record, WORKFORCE West Virginia reported. The total number of unemployed state residents was 43,800 and total unemployment was down 1,800 over the year. Total nonfarm payroll employment added 2,300 jobs, with a gain of 3,800 in the service-providing sector, overpowering a decline of 1,500 in the goods-producing sector.

AEP to install carbon capture on two existing power plants

American Electric Power will install carbon capture on two coal-fired power plants, the first commercial use of technologies to significantly reduce carbon dioxide emissions from existing plants. The first installation on Mountaineer Plant in New Haven is expected to complete its product validation phase in 2008 and begin commercial operation in 2011.

"AEP's carbon capture initiative furthers our goal of developing new technology that allows us to increase the use of West Virginia coal, while reducing the impact of greenhouse gases. It's fitting that a West Virginia power generation plant will be the first one retrofitted with this new technology and I commend AEP for taking the lead in reducing these emissions," said Gov. Joe Manchin. "Combined with the scrubber technology the company is installing on its coal-fired plants across the country, the carbon capture program is enhancing our state's ability to meet our country's energy demands."

Biotech company to manufacture lab device in Morgantown

A company founded in 2002 by West Virginia University researchers to commercialize new scientific technology is launching its first product line. The Protea Explorer System, a \$30,000 device developed at Protea Biosciences in Morgantown, allows scientists to complete a week's worth of work in three hours. It is expected to be in heavy demand among the 12,000 pharmaceutical, biotech and academic laboratories around the world where protein research is conducted. The device integrates the complex steps of protein analysis, said Protea CEO Steven Turner, and provides results in a few hours. In addition to the vast increase in speed, the enclosed system protects samples from contamination and allows better results from small quantities of biological materials.

The new devices will be manufactured at Protea's facilities near the Morgantown airport. "We have 10 employees in Morgantown, and I expect that to double in the next six months," Turner said.

State Small Business Development Center names new director

Mary Elizabeth "M.E." Yancosek Gamble has been named director of the West Virginia Small Business Development Center (WVSBDC). Formerly the small business developer for Loudoun County, Va., and regional director for the WVSBDC in Fairmont, Yancosek Gamble has extensive experience in training, marketing and organizational communication. She has degrees from California University of Pennsylvania and Marshall University and she owns Yancosek Gamble LLC.

Sitel to add 150 jobs to Huntington facility

Following a recent merger and expanded partnership with XM Satellite Radio, Sitel Corp. will hire about 150 new employees for its Huntington facility. In January 2007, Sitel merged with ClientLogic, a leading global business process outsourcing provider. Sitel also recently announced the expansion of its partnership with XM Satellite Radio to continue providing customer service, technical support and customer retention services for XM's 7.6 million subscribers in the U.S. and Canada.

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Entrepreneurship Week USA celebrated at Capitol

West Virginia entrepreneurs, community leaders, educators and young people honored Entrepreneurship Week USA from Feb. 24 to March 3. The event encouraged the next generation of entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship Day at the Capitol featured a lemonade stand project for which fifth-grade classes carried out business plans they developed for their stands. A reception at the Governor's Mansion acknowledged entrepreneurs' contributions to the state's economy and allowed business owners to network with their legislators. West Virginia: A Vision Shared hosted the events.

New asphalt plant to locate in Mingo County

Appalachian Paving will locate its new asphalt and concrete plant in Mingo County. The new plant is expected to bring 20 to 25 new jobs to Tug Valley. Plans call for the new operation to be based in Belo Industrial Park.

Three communities receive funding for infrastructure improvements

The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection helped three communities successfully apply for financing from the Clean Water State Revolving Fund. The funding program recently committed more than \$13 million to Logan in Logan County, Fairmont in Marion County and the Putnam Public Service District in Putnam County for the future construction of sewage treatment facilities. The low-interest loans will be repaid during the next 20 to 40 years. Construction will start after all regulatory approvals and permits are obtained.

First Ashley Furniture HomeStore in West Virginia opens

The first Ashley Furniture HomeStore in West Virginia opened in March at Southridge Centre in Charleston. The Southridge Center Ashley HomeStore is larger than 45,000 square feet and will employ 45 people when fully staffed, reports owner Bob Young. The independently owned Ashley stores sell furniture produced by Ashley Furniture Industries. Unlike traditional furniture stores, Ashley stores do not keep inventory. Instead, customer selections are ordered and then filled from the store's warehouse.

Morgantown named a "Distinctive Destination" by National Trust for Historic Preservation

The National Trust for Historic Preservation recently named Morgantown one of its Dozen Distinctive Destinations for 2007. Morgantown was selected from among 63 destinations in 27 states. The prestigious annual designation recognizes communities in which residents have worked to preserve the historic and scenic assets of their towns.

Snowshoe Mountain and Sawmill Village to construct new trails at region's premier ski resort

Snowshoe Mountain and premier residential development company Sawmill Village will construct two new ski trails at the Pocahontas County resort in West Virginia. The new slopes will increase the number of Snowshoe's ski trails to 59. The deal includes an investment of roughly \$1 million for construction of the two trails, which will be adjacent to the Sawmill Village development in Snowshoe's South Mountain area.

One trail will be for expert skiers and snowboarders, while the other will be an intermediate trail. Despite relatively warm temperatures early in the season, skier visits for the 2006-2007 ski season increased three percent over the previous year. The season ended April 1.

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New housing bonds remove biggest obstacle to first-time home ownership

The West Virginia Housing Development Fund has completed a \$60 million bond issuance, which will make available to qualified West Virginia homebuyers 100 percent mortgages with no down payment. The \$60 million will be available to fund mortgage loans for more than 600 qualified West Virginia applicants. The money is available through 70 of the state's lenders that participate in the program. Applicant income and home price limits apply and vary by county.

"The sale of West Virginia Housing Development Fund AAA-rated bonds will allow us to provide West Virginians with very affordable 30-year mortgages, and mortgages that don't require a down payment," said Gov. Joe Manchin, who is chairman of the Housing Development Fund's board of directors. "This program removes the biggest obstacle to home ownership, a down payment."

Yeager Airport to add more flights to Atlanta

Starting in June, Delta Connection will offer five daily flights to Atlanta and three to Cincinnati seven days a week, said Yeager Airport executive director Rick Atkinson. Currently, the airline offers that many flights three days a week. For bargain hunters, the beefed-up flight schedule "will make more seats available for low-fare status," Atkinson said. The flights will mean an extra 388 departure seats each week.

Spring turkey season starts April 23

West Virginia's spring turkey season opens April 23 and runs through May 19. The state Division of Natural Resources (DNR) Wildlife Resources Section reports that the 2006 spring gobbler harvest was 11,735, up 7.1 percent from the previous year.

The first big game season of the year, spring gobbler season is growing in popularity. The National Wild Turkey Federation estimates that turkey hunters spend about \$800 each year on their sport, including licenses, permits, firearms, hunting gear and travel-related expenses, contributing significantly to the estimated \$360 million economic impact of all hunting seasons in West Virginia each year.

West Virginia Small Business Development Center helps 382 clients in March

The West Virginia Small Business Development Center (SDBC) provided 663 hours of counseling and training to 382 clients last month. The SDBC has provided 4,168 hours of counseling and training to 1,819 clients this fiscal year beginning Oct. 1, helping to create or retain 204 jobs. SDBC staff trained 200 people at 19 events in March and trained 1,102 people this fiscal year. Nine loans totaling \$365,000 were approved in March. Forty loans totaling more than \$4.8 million have been approved fiscal year-to-date. New customer satisfaction was 100 percent in March and for the year.

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