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**Uwharrie Region Selected for “Stronger Economies Together” Initiative**

RALEIGH, N.C., July 6, 2017 - USDA Rural Development and the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service at NC State University announced today that Anson, Montgomery, and Stanly Counties have been selected as a Stronger Economies Together Phase 7 (SET) region. Collectively known as the “Uwharrie Region,” these counties will now benefit from a focused initiative to explore regional economic advantages. The SET initiative will enable the Uwharrie Region to formulate an economic blueprint that strategically builds on the current and emerging economic strengths of that region. The Uwharrie region will be joining six other regions across five states participating in SET during 2017-2018.

 Launched by USDA Rural Development and the nation’s four Regional Rural Development Centers, the Purdue Center for Regional Development and their land-grant university partners, SET is now in place in more than 94 regions in 32 states. SET is intended to help strengthen the capacity of communities/counties in rural America to work together in developing and implementing an economic development blueprint for their multi-county region, one that strategically builds on the current and/or emerging comparative economic advantages of that region.

 For more information on the SET initiative in North Carolina, contact Brian Queen at 919-873-2072 or Brian.Queen@nc.usda.gov or Becky Bowen at 919-628-4317 or blbowen@ncsu.edu . To view information about SET nationwide, visit <http://srdc.msstate.edu/set/>.

 USDA Rural Development has 6 Area Offices and 14 sub-area/local offices across the state serving North Carolinians living in rural areas and communities. Area Office locations are in Asheville, Shelby, Lumberton, Asheboro, Henderson and Kinston. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting the USDA Rural Development web site at [www.rd.usda.gov/nc](http://www.rd.usda.gov/nc).

 The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service (NCCES) is based at North Carolina’s two land grant institutions, NC State University and NC A&T State University, in all 100 counties and with the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. NCCES gives our residents easy access to the resources and expertise of NC State University and NC A&T State University. Through educational programs, publications, and events, Cooperative Extension field faculty deliver unbiased, research-based information to North Carolina citizens. See <http://ces.ncsu.edu/> for more information.

 USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities and create jobs in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; homeownership; community services such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural areas. For more information, visit [www.rd.usda.gov](http://www.rd.usda.gov).

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