

## BRAC's impact continues to deepen

Task force officials say Harnett not nearly prepared for influx of population, students.

By Tom Werner  
Editor

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission Task Force issued a summary report to a crowd of several hundred people in Fayetteville last week and Harnett County officials heard they have more work to do, especially in the area of education, to get ready for the mass movement of troops in the area.

The Base Realignment and Closure Commission, or BRAC, Task Force has been working for several years to help 11 counties around Fort Bragg get ready for the troops that will come with the movement of the U.S. Army Forces Command, or FORSCOM and Reserve Command, from the Atlanta area to Fort Bragg. The movement is now under way and is expected to bring more than 40,000 people to the local area between 2006 and 2013.

**Big GRP increase**  
The economy in western Harnett County will feel a major impact with the gross regional product, or GRP, for the 11-county region is expected to increase by \$1.1 billion. The GRP is similar to the gross domestic product at the national level. The \$1.1 billion number estimates the amount of money added to the local economy between 2006 and 2013. All of the estimates are based on a year-long study of the Fort Bragg area.

In Harnett County, the impact is going to be felt the most in the local school system. In the 11-county BRAC study region there are expected to be more than 7,000 additional children in the different school systems.

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McNeill



Honeycutt

## BRAC

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According to Harnett County Commissioner and task force member Tim McNeill, that will create approximately \$130 million in new school needs in Harnett, mostly in the southern and western areas of the county.

### Schools' challenge

Harnett County Superintendent Dan Honeycutt said the problem of finding enough seats in local classrooms will not be easy.

"It is definitely a daunting challenge," Mr. Honeycutt said.

Mr. McNeill said the Harnett County School Board will need to build a new elementary, middle and high school to deal with the growth. He said the county is going to need help.

"The schools are the most critical issue and we are working on it as hard as we can," Mr. McNeill said. "We are trying to get some federal aid and exploring every avenue we can find."

Wayne Freeman, president of Training and Development Associates, which was hired to study the issue, said Harnett County is at the tier one level, which means the county will receive the brunt of the impact.

In addition to schools, there are expected to be major impacts on traffic, water and sewer infrastructure and housing.

Mr. Freeman said Harnett

County is prepared in some ways. "Harnett County can be a model for others to follow because there is a countywide water system in place," Mr. Freeman said.

### Infrastructure improvements

Mr. McNeill said improvements to the water and sewer system now in the process of being implemented will help.

"We should be OK as far as water and sewer goes," Mr. McNeill said. "There are some other areas, like roads and transportation, that we need to look at, but we are working to address those issues."

He said the North Carolina Department of Transportation is also already looking at improving roads, including making Ray Road in Anderson Creek four lanes.

The county has already felt some of the impact in the area of housing, with the new Linden Oaks subdivision, built for military families, on N.C. 87.

LI Gov. Bev Perdue spoke to the group of leaders from all 11-counties and municipalities throughout the region. She said she is proud of the work the BRAC committee is doing.

"We envision what you are doing as an example for how to deal with the growth of the military," she said. "You have a small city coming to that area and you are giving a good example by the way you are dealing with it."

All of the growth in the area is

a result of the recommendations of the Base Closure and Realignment Commission of 2005. The Army is also taking over operations at Pope Air Force Base as a result of the commission's recommendations. Two major units are also leaving the area.

### Local representation

In addition to Harnett County's representation on the task force include Cumberland, Sampson, Lee, Moore, Scotland, Hoke, Bladen, Lee, Moore and Montgomery.

Also attending locally were Lillington Town Manager Tamey Burns, who is on the task force board of directors, Joseph Jeffries and Mark Locklear from the Harnett County planning office and Larry Smith from Harnett County Emergency Management also attended.

Dunn was represented at Tuesday's meeting by Edith Elmore, Sharon Stevens, Bill Lanter, Vicki Martin, Chuck Turnage, Billy Addison and Chamber of Commerce Director Tamey Williams. Erwin Mayor Patsy Carson said she intended to attend Tuesday's meeting but had another commitment. She has been active in BRAC activities in the past.

Costs did not have a representative Tuesday, but participated in preliminary meetings.

An Angier Chamber representative said they were unable to attend.

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