

Section 2 The Coastal Plain Region

INTRODUCE

Outline

- A. Tobacco Towns
- B. Carolina Bays
- C. The Sandhills

Materials

Textbook, pages 12-17

Teacher CD-ROM

Blackline Masters

Transparencies

www.mystatehistory.com

Online textbook

Smart Reading, pages 88-91

Getting Started

The Coastal Plain region has the richest soil in North Carolina. Ask students what advantages they think this rich soil brings to the region.

TEACH

Economics Activity

As they read this section, have individuals or groups make a mobile for the Coastal Plain region of North Carolina with pictures of major crops, minerals, other resources, and top industries or businesses. Display the mobiles as you cover the chapter.

Reading Strategies

Reinforce students' summarizing skills by having them summarize information from one or more passages in this section on index cards. Tell students that they should use these cards to help them study. Use pages 88-91 from the Smart Reading book for this activity.

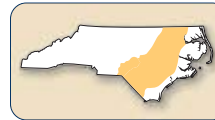
Section 2

The Coastal Plain Region



As you read, look for:

- the features of the Coastal Plain region
- types of traditional communities in the Coastal Plain
- the Carolina bays and the Sandhills
- vocabulary terms **crossroads hamlets, tobacco towns, Carolina bays**



The richest soil in the state is to be found in many areas of the Coastal Plain. The region takes up about a third of the area of North Carolina. It slants from the northeast to the southwest, going all the way from the Virginia border to the South Carolina line. The Plain averages about a hundred miles in width. It has two central characteristics: (1) its flat-



12 Chapter 1: The Lay of the Land

Objectives

There are no specific objectives for this section.

Teacher Notes

ness and (2) its soil, both of which contribute to its role as the chief farming region of the state.

The rivers of the Coastal Plain generally flow southeasterly. Most flow into the sounds of the Tidewater region. The Roanoke, Tar, and Neuse are the major rivers that do so. The Cape Fear River, which rises in the Piedmont, is the longest river entirely in North Carolina. The river flows past Fayetteville and Elizabethtown before it reaches Wilmington and the Atlantic Ocean.

Great stretches of the Coastal Plain seem to go on forever, since in many areas large fields, sometimes several miles across, have been cleared for farming. Through most of the region's history, farms were scattered out across the landscape a half mile or more apart. This has made the area seem the most rural in the state. Traditionally, its residents have lived in two types of communities, the rural crossroads and the small tobacco town.

Crossroads hamlets dot the region. Often they have had a store or two, or a school or church, that provide goods and services to the nearby farmers, who have neither the time nor the money to go to town frequently. These community centers are generally named for local residents, like Ballard's Crossroads near Farmville or Hill's Crossroads near Wallace.

Opposite page, above: The Neuse River at Smithfield. Below: Ballard's Crossroads is a typical gathering place on the Coastal Plain. Bottom: Cotton has recently made a rebound as a moneymaker for farmers on the Coastal Plain. This field is near Jackson in Northampton County.



Research Activity

Have students choose one of the rivers in the Coastal Plain region, research it, and list 10 facts they learned. Have them put their facts on a poster board for display in the classroom.

Class Discussion

Ask the students what they think it would be like to live in a crossroads hamlet (i.e., Would their lives be any different? What are the advantages and disadvantages of living in such a place?). If students happen to live in a crossroads hamlet, ask them the same questions about living in a big city.

Using Photographs and Illustrations

What can you tell about life in the Coastal Plain region, based on the pictures on this page?

Writing Activity

Using writing teams, have students go through magazines and cut out pictures that indicate something about North Carolina (flowers, waterways, fauna, industry, agriculture, coast, storms, etc.). They can also cut out photos of people and any other photographs that they simply like. Then have each group select three photographs related to North Carolina and three pictures they particularly like. After each team selects their pictures, instruct them to write a story about North Carolina that includes the pictures. They should read the stories to the class and show each picture as it matches the story line.

Teacher Notes

Technology Activity

Using the Internet, find out the populations of Rocky Mount, Greenville, Wilson, and Goldsboro in the mid-1900s at the height of tobacco production. Make a chart comparing the four cities' populations.

Multidisciplinary Activity

Art: Based on information in the text, and using materials of their choice, have each student create a model of a traditional tobacco barn.

Writing Activity

Tell students to imagine that they lived in a tobacco town in the mid-1900s. Have them write a page in their journals describing a day in their lives during the height of the tobacco harvest.

Using Photographs and Illustrations

Top: Ask students why the railroad was so important to the tobacco towns that the tracks might run down the middle of Main Street.



Top: Railroads still run down the middle of Main Street in Rocky Mount, a famed tobacco town of the twentieth century. **Above:** Bright-leaf tobacco has a distinctive golden hue. **Opposite page, below:** Singletary Lake State Park is located around a Carolina bay.

Tobacco Towns

Tobacco towns have been a part of the Coastal Plain since it was first settled in colonial days. In the twentieth century, the popularity of cigarette smoking caused these towns to grow. People in the towns focused their activities around the raising of tobacco. Rocky Mount, Greenville, Wilson, and Goldsboro provided marketing outlets for the largest tobacco-growing region in the world. Each of these towns had more than a half dozen tobacco warehouses—

large cavernous sheds where harvested tobacco was stored until purchased by cigarette companies. Everyone from bankers to farm equipment dealers scheduled their business around the tobacco harvest. On the special market day, an auctioneer sang out the bids as he and the buyers went up and down the rows of tobacco stacks. At the height of tobacco production in the mid-1900s, almost every town in the Coastal Plain, from Fairmont on the South Carolina border to Henderson near Virginia, had at least one warehouse.

The traditional tobacco barn, a tall, thin square of logs or planks, was to be seen everywhere on the Coastal Plain. This tobacco was flue-cured, dried for the market with low levels of heat that made it mild enough for

Teacher Notes

cigarette smoking. Recently, however, computer-controlled “barns” made of insulated metal and plastic are used for drying. The old tobacco barn is becoming as much a thing of the past as the log cabin. Recent hurricanes have damaged thousands of them; only a few have been repaired. In addition, every year fewer and fewer Coastal Plain residents grow tobacco. Two factors are the cause of that decline: (1) health risks associated with smoking and (2) the cutoff of government payments that guaranteed farmers they would eventually be able to sell their leaf at a profit.

Before there were tobacco fields, the longleaf pine was the most common sight on the Coastal Plain. Geographers think that more than ten million acres of pine forest covered the region. The tree gradually disappeared from the landscape. At first it was cut down for lumber and for making tar; later the land was cleared for growing tobacco and other crops. In the twenty-first century, better management of resources has stabilized the tree. Today it is mostly found in the southern part of the Coastal Plain, particularly in the Bladen Lakes State Forest near the Cape Fear River. Because of its historical importance to North Carolina, the longleaf pine is the state tree. The tree that often grows in the midst of pine forests, the dogwood, provides the blossom that is the state flower.

Carolina Bays

The longleaf pine grows around some of the biggest curiosities in the state. In the southern part of the Coastal Plain are hundreds of elongated depressions in the ground called **Carolina bays**. They range in size from a half mile to two miles long and about a mile wide. No one can figure out exactly why they are there or how they were created. Some, like White Lake or Singletary Lake, are filled with water. Others resemble the surface

Did You Know?

The longleaf pine was so named because its needle can be as long as fifteen inches.



Critical Thinking

Have students list five ways in which trees and plants play an important role in our lives. What might happen in the Coastal Plain region if the longleaf pine became extinct?

Tar Heel Trivia

The longleaf pine was named the state tree in 1963.

Economics Activity

How has the decline in the number of Coastal Plain tobacco farmers impacted the region’s economy?

Class Discussion

Ask students why they need to know about the state’s flora and fauna. How do they make a difference in our lives?

Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

Ask students to name as many of the towns in your county as they can. Then, discuss the possibility that the geography of the county played a great part in where some of these towns were located. Was a town located on an early river route? Was the county seat chosen because it was centrally located? Did a town develop near a mountain path or trail? Use this discussion to help students understand that geography sometimes dictates locations, types of economy, and even the size of cities and towns.

Teacher Notes

Critical Thinking

Ask students how they think the Carolina bays developed. They can choose an explanation that is in the text or come up with their own idea. Whatever they choose, they must support their ideas with well-developed reasoning.

Geography Activity

Remind students that North Carolina's resources include all air, land, and water resources. Ask students to identify some of the natural elements that have contributed to the state's growth.

Class Discussion

Talk about ways that North Carolinians have used a region's possible disadvantages (e.g., poor soil in the Sandhills) into advantages (e.g., using that land for golf courses and military training). Ask students to consider similar types of thinking in relation to their school, neighborhood, or town.

Differentiated Instruction – For Gifted and Talented Students

Ask students to do further research on the Sandhills region to discern what other possible uses the region's land might have.

Below: The sandy soil of the Sandhills lies between the sandy loam of the Coastal Plain and the clay of the Piedmont. **Bottom:** Vast longleaf pine forests once covered the Coastal Plain. These woods are at Weymouth Woods-Sandhills Nature Preserve near Southern Pines.



of pocosins—mucky part of the year, dry the other. Quite a few have been drained and plowed up to make rich farmland.

Scientists still argue about their origin. For a long time, it was argued that an ancient shower of meteors fell from outer space and made the holes. This idea came from the fact that the bays are all lined up, as if some giant flung water into the sand of a huge beach. The problem with that idea is that no one has found evidence of meteorites—what's left after the meteor explodes. The other idea is that the bays are sink holes. That is, they are areas of ground that are above bodies of water and thus sink down when the water table changes. But no one has proven that idea, so it is still an open question. What is unquestionable is that they provide some of the richest soil and best animal habitats in the state.

The Sandhills

To the northwest of the Carolina bays are the **Sandhills**. These concentrations of rolling sand ridges are left over from an ancient change in the shoreline of the Atlantic Ocean. They have, by far, the poorest soils in the state, since the sand allows all the topsoil nutrients to drain away. Where they are the most concentrated, the Sandhills shine whiter than the whitest beach on a summer day. They were put to two good uses during the twentieth century: (1) golf courses in places like Pinehurst, where the World Golf Hall of Fame is located;

Teacher Notes



Above: Golfers from around the world come to Pinehurst. The Golf Hall of Fame was originally located in the village.

and (2) Fort Bragg, the huge military installation near Fayetteville, originally designed to be a training ground for artillery. It was thought during the world wars that the missiles would land without much damage in the deep sand. Today, Fort Bragg is home to one of the most important units in the United States Army, the 82nd Airborne Division.

The Coastal Plain has long attracted people of different ethnic backgrounds who came to take advantage of its dark soil and other resources. Many white residents are descendants of colonial settlers from Virginia or South Carolina. The first concentration of African American slaves was in the area along the Cape Fear River. When tobacco became important, African Americans from other parts of the state moved into the region. Many recent migrants from Mexico and other parts of Latin America have moved to the Coastal Plain to work the land. The most distinctive people of the Coastal Plain are the Lumbee of Robeson County. They form the largest population of Native Americans in the state.

It's Your Turn

1. What are the two types of traditional communities in the Coastal Plain?
2. What are the Carolina bays?
3. Where are the poorest soils in the state?

Cooperative Learning

Divide the class into two teams: environmentalists and developers. Have the two sides develop arguments for developing a golf course in the Sandhills (the developers) and for preserving the region's natural environment (the environmentalists). Then have the two sides participate in a debate.

Research Activity

Have students do further research into the 82nd Airborne Division. Specifically, have them find out what this unit does, when it was created, and approximately how many people it has.

Multidisciplinary Activity

Art: Have students make a collage of the different ethnic groups who live in the Coastal Plain, using materials of their choice.

Lesson Closure

Have students take turns listing things they learned from this section, using "Coastal Plain" as a guide (i.e., write "Coastal Plain" downward on a piece of poster board and fill in students' responses next to the appropriate letter).

ASSESS

It's Your Turn

1. Crossroads hamlets, tobacco towns
2. Elongated depressions in the ground
3. The Sandhills

Teacher CD-ROM

You can use the ExamView software on the CD-ROM to create quizzes for each section of the chapter.

Blackline Masters

You may want to use North Carolina's Geographic Regions: Summarizing Main Points, page 8, as a review of Section 2. Students can keep the blackline master for use at the end of Sections 3-4.