

## **Georgia Association of Regional Development Centers Hold First Economic Development Workshop**

**Young Harris, GA** -- The Economic Development Committee of the Georgia Association of Regional Development Centers held their first workshop at the Brasstown Valley Resort in Young Harris on May 8-9, 2006.

The committee is made up of economic development staff members and Executive Director representatives from throughout Georgia's sixteen RDCs. Chairman Terry Christie welcomed the group at a special reception on the first night, noting that the session held 100% attendance.

The reception also heard remarks from Craig Lesser and Gretchen Corbin, Georgia Department of Economic Development, Stone Workman, USDA Rural Development, Rope Roberts, Georgia Power, Randy Cardoza, Atlanta Gas Light, Inc., and Phil Paradice and Lee Mertins from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration.

Commissioner Lessor had warm words to offer concerning the partnership opportunities between his agency and RDCs. "We are all working toward the same goal," added Lessor, indicating that the effort should continue with staff contact Gretchen Cowart, director of Regional Project Managers for DECD. Cowart is expected to present at a meeting of the Economic Development Committee in July.

### **Facilitated Direction and the Economic Development Administration**

Economic Development staff also attended a four-hour facilitated session with officials from the Tennessee Valley Authority, producing a program of work for the coming year that identifies Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats for all RDCs. The group decided that the work performed by staff needed to be communicated in a more effective manner to statewide policy groups and legislators. The consensus was to produce a definitive document indicating tangible improvements made to Georgia through direct economic development work by RDCs, aggregated over a statewide area.

On the second day Phil Paradice and Lee Mertins from EDA instructed the group on changes to the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) guidelines and board composition. The CEDS represents the cumulative source of economic development planning efforts for each planning organization, and serves as the document that guides these efforts for the designated Economic Development District.

The Economic Development Committee adjourned the workshop with a report of recommendations to Board Policy Officials and Executive Directors. This body agreed on the plan of action, and the Committee will also discuss the cumulative report of accomplishments at its next meeting.