

Appalachian Regional Commission ^[1]

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by Wiley J. Williams, 2006



Logo of the Appalachian Regional Commission. Image from the Appalachian Regional Commission website.

^[2]The Appalachian Regional Development Act—the first of President Lyndon B. Johnson ^[3]'s Great Society measures to be passed by Congress—was signed into law on 9 Mar. 1965. The act created the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), a federal-state-local partnership designed to help the Appalachian region emerge permanently from backwardness and poverty. The region was initially defined as all of West Virginia and parts of Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia; by 1967 selected counties in New York and Mississippi had been added, bringing the total to 399 counties.

The primary purpose of the ARC was to assist in the preparation of coordinated economic development plans for the region, which included 29 counties in western North Carolina ^[4]. The commission received special federal financial aid (in addition to other congressionally authorized and state and local funds) to help the area obtain the primary public facilities needed for economic expansion, such as roads and health facilities. The ARC also aided in restoring natural resources ravaged by neglect and misuse, such as timber and water resources and land ruined by strip mining or poor agricultural practices.

The ARC greatly influenced the economy and culture of western North Carolina. In mid-1968 Senator Sam Ervin Jr. ^[5] reported that in the commission's first three years, the 29 western counties had attracted more than \$68 million in facilities and services. According to Ervin, the ARC was "one of the few federal programs which recognizes that the ultimate solution of Appalachian problems lies with the economy's private sector." In North Carolina, he noted, it funded interstate highways ^[6] and local access roads, high school vocational education ^[7] facilities, hospital inpatient and outpatient facilities, public libraries ^[8], community colleges ^[9], industrial education centers, sewage treatment plants, and airport facilities. Later, as the funds for nonhighway or social service programs exceeded those for roads, ARC-approved grants were applied to job development programs, medical and dental care, day-care facilities, family planning information, housing improvements, and the Smart Start ^[10] program of Governor James B. Hunt ^[11]. By the mid-1990s, on the eve of the ARC's thirtieth year, North Carolina's Appalachian counties had received more than \$351 million.

Reference:

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Additional Resources:

Appalachian Regional Commission official website: <http://www.arc.gov/> ^[2]

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"arc_header_left.jpg." Appalachian Regional Commission. http://www.arc.gov/images/home/arc_header_left.jpg [16]
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21st Century (2001-present) [17]

Economics and Economic Development [18]

Governmental programs [19]

Post War 20th Century (1946-2000) [20]

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1 January 2006 | Williams, Wiley J.

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[1] <https://ncpedia.org/appalachian-regional-commission> [2] <http://www.arc.gov/> [3] <https://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/lyndonbjohnson> [4] <https://ncpedia.org/our-state-geography-snap-mountain> [5] <http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/exhibits/penalty/ervin.html> [6] <https://ncpedia.org/highways> [7] <https://ncpedia.org/education-vocational> [8] <https://ncpedia.org/public-libraries> [9] <https://ncpedia.org/community-colleges> [10] <http://www.smartstart.org/> [11] <https://ncpedia.org/hunt-jr-james-baxter-research> [12] <https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/2009-2012-appalachian-development-plan/3279778> [13] <http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entry.php?rec=28> [14] <http://www.irp.wisc.edu/newsevents/workshops/2011/participants/papers/12-Ziliak.pdf> [15] <https://www.worldcat.org/oclc/79629309> [16] http://www.arc.gov/images/home/arc_header_left.jpg [17] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/21st-century-2001> [18] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/ec> [19] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/governmental-prog> [20] <https://ncpedia.org/category/subjects/post-war-20th-cen> [21] <https://ncpedia.org/category/authors/williams-wiley-j> [22] <https://ncpedia.org/category/origin-location/mountains> [23] <https://ncpedia.org/category/entry-source/encyclopedia->