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Big Rock Sports finds a home in Richmond County

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A good meal at the Webb Farm and shooting clays at DeWitt's Game Farm, both in Ellerbe, left an impression on Wayne Decker, senior vice president of Big Rock Sports, which led him to return to Richmond County to build a 310,000 square foot distribution center for the East Coast.

The new center is "breaking ground" for a new era in Big Rock Sports distribution efforts, Decker said.

And according to Kenneth Robinette, chairman, Richmond County Board of Commissioners, it will hopefully lead to future expansion of the center and attraction of associated industries to the industrial park on U.S. 74 Bypass.

For Dale B. Carroll, deputy secretary and chief operating officer, N.C. Department of Commerce, it was the second Friday in a row he has been in Richmond County.

Last Friday he was here for groundbreaking of a \$600 million addition to the Richmond County Progress Energy Complex south of Hamlet.

He said the opening of the new center brought "true meaning to the term global supply chain logistics."

Wayne Decker, senior vice president of Big Rock Sports is presented a gift by Dale Carroll, deputy secretary of the North Carolina Department of Commerce.



Sheriff Dale Furr, (left) Dr. Sharon Morrisey of RCC and Emily Tucker, director of the Richmond County Chamber of Commerce, listen to the program.

Carroll said he, Gov. Beverly Perdue and N.C. Secretary of Commerce J. Keith Crisco recently have been crisscrossing the state announcing new industries.

He felt the opening of Big Rock was part of the creation of a new momentum in the state.

Rick Sago, Richmond County deputy manager and director of development, said the Commerce Department was an integral part of development of the Big Rock Sports project in the county as well as assisting in other county economic development.

Sago in his remarks also mentioned the term "global" regarding the distribution

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center's reach.

Big Rock Sports represents more than a \$10 million investment and the creation of 150 jobs in the county.

Carroll said the infrastructure the county has in place and the cooperation of local officials was instrumental in the siting of the center in Richmond County.

He said N.C. Southeast Economic Development Regional Partnership also played a role in the siting.

Robinette is a member of NCSE and said Big Rock Sports was the largest project ever put together by that partnership.

With the efforts of NCSE, the industrial park became a State Certified Site enabling shovel-ready development, he said.

"It was a perfect storm," Robinette said of the coming together of so many moving parts over the years which began when voters of Richmond County approved a \$3 million bond issue to create the 350-acre industrial park in the 1990s.

In his remarks, Decker mentioned Bill and Debbie Webb and Chris DeWitt and their hospitality on his early visit to the county.

The sporting venues are in keeping with the business of Big Rock Sports. He said he gained the feeling people in Richmond County believed in conservation and outdoor sports.

As an aside to the occasion, Decker said since his business was Big Rock Sports, he needs to work out with Andy Hillenburg of Rockingham Speedway — known as The Rock — about which should be "Little Rock" or "Bigger Rock."

Big Rock Sports at 310,000 square feet is about the size of over five football fields. Decker said the new distribution center would make Big Rock Sports dominant in its industry. The facility will be the industry's largest and most automated distribution center.

Robinette said the Big Rock Sports facility could expand to 50,000 square feet in the future.

Butch Farrah, chairman of the Richmond County Development Team, said the opening of the facility was a "bright spot" in a time when there as so much negative economic news.

"This is a blessing for Richmond County," he said.

The Sportsman's Times said the move to Richmond County "is further evidence of Big Rock Sports' commitment to provide unparalleled sales and service on a national and international basis, while retaining a regional product assortment focus."

Big Rock Sports is the parent company of All Sports, AWR Sports, CSI Sports, Henry's and MT Sports, wholesale sporting goods distribution centers located across the nation.

Collectively, Big Rock Sports' companies service more than 15,000 hunting and fishing retailers from coast to coast and internationally.

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