

FLORIDA'S GREAT NORTHWEST APPOINTS A NEW PRESIDENT

Don Kirkman Chosen to Lead the 16-County, Regional Economic Development Organization

(Destin, FL) Dec. 15, 2010 – Florida’s Great Northwest, the 16-county, regional economic development organization of Northwest Florida, is pleased to announce the appointment of a new president, Don Kirkman. At the organization’s board meeting in December, the Board of Directors voted unanimously to hire Kirkman following a nationwide search. Kirkman will take the helm on Jan. 1 and operate out of the organization’s Destin, Fla., corporate office.

A seasoned economic developer, Kirkman most recently served as president and CEO of the Piedmont Triad Partnership in North Carolina, a 12-county economic development organization. He was chosen because of his extensive background in regional economic development including marketing, business recruitment, government relations and fundraising.

“Don is the ideal person to lead Florida’s Great Northwest in fostering strong public/private relationships and engaging key partners to brand and market the region and to help diversify our regional economy,” said Jeff Helms, Practice Manager and Vice President of PBS&J and Florida’s Great Northwest Chairman of the Board. “For the past 10 years, Don has been the president of an organization recognized as one of the top regional economic development groups in the country. His past experience makes him a perfect fit for Northwest Florida and will allow Florida’s Great Northwest to achieve its strategic goals.”

“By joining the Florida’s Great Northwest team,” said Kirkman, “I will have the opportunity to work with public and private partners that are poised to further distinguish Northwest Florida’s strengths and assets. Together we will work to grow and diversify the economy of Northwest Florida and make Florida’s Great Northwest one of the nation’s premier regional partnerships for economic and workforce development.”

Kirkman received his B.A. and J.D. degrees from the University of North Carolina. He practiced law for 10 years in New York City and Morehead City, North Carolina before becoming Executive Director of the Carteret County, North Carolina, Economic Development Council, a position he held for 10 years. He was hired as President and CEO of the Piedmont Triad Partnership in 2000.

During his tenure with the Piedmont Triad Partnership, Kirkman wrote a successful proposal for a \$15 million U.S. Department of Labor Workforce Innovation in Regional Economic Development (WIRED) grant. In addition, the organization was recognized as one of the Top 10 Economic Development Groups in North America by *Site Selection* magazine for 2005, 2006 and 2007.

Kirkman has published several articles and is a frequent guest speaker. He is a Certified Economic Developer (CEcD) and a former President of the North Carolina Economic Developers Association.

Florida’s Great Northwest provides regional leadership in economic and workforce development, serving 16 counties in Northwest Florida from Pensacola through Tallahassee. Its primary mission is the creation of a diversified and sustainable economy in Northwest Florida that creates nationally and globally competitive advantages for the development of key industry clusters, increases the income and prosperity of workers and families and preserves the region’s vibrant quality of life.