Business Facilities
The Source For Site Selectors
MARCH / APRIL 2025
BUSINESSFACILITIES.COM

MANUFACTURING: THE NEXT ERA 20

Manufacturing Focus 54

PLUS:

The Energy Puzzle 28
Water Resources 32
Life Sciences 64

The Marine Industry In North Carolina: Smooth Sailing Ahead

BY LISA ZASLOW-SEGELMAN

PERQUIMANS MARINE INDUSTRIAL PARK BRINGS OPPORTUNITY FOR BOAT BUILDERS AND MARINE BUSINESSES ALONG NORTH CAROLINA'S INNER BANKS.

Perquimans Marine Industrial Park provides prime waterfront infrastructure, making it an ideal hub for marine-related industries in North Carolina.

In the boat-building and marine industries, three words define the most crucial site feature—easy water access. North Carolina's latest economic development project, Perquimans Marine Industrial Park (PQM), offers exactly that—plus much more. Strategically located on the Perquimans River along North Carolina's Inner Banks, PQM provides prime waterfront infrastructure, making it an ideal hub for boat builders, marine-related industries, the local workforce, and the state's economy.

Situated just 65 miles south of Norfolk and the Port of Virginia, in the quaint town of Hertford, North Carolina, PQM has been a priority project for local governments for over a decade.

The first phase, completed in 2024, features a $7 million deep-water boat basin offering direct access to Albemarle Sound. Spanning 350 feet wide—more than twice the width of a football field—the basin accommodates large vessels with ease.

Designed specifically for the marine industry, PQM offers rare and valuable amenities, including:

- A 42-foot-wide industrial boat ramp, enabling large vessel launches
- A protected dockage area, shielding boats from harsh weather
- Convenient egress, allowing seamless movement in and out of the water
- Pad ready sites for manufacturing and repair facilities

Future plans include installing a travel lift, a specialized metal frame on wheels designed to lift boats in and out of the water—another major asset for marine businesses.

"The infrastructure is already in place as well," says Frank Heath, Perquimans County Manager. "Roads, reliable power, and water and sewer services are on site and ready to service any business that makes the park home."

PERQUIMANS COUNTY IDENTIFIED A NEED, AND FILLED IT

For more than 12 years, PQM has been a key initiative aimed at revitalizing Perquimans County's economy by attracting marine and marine-adjacent industries.

The county's economic challenges date back to the 1980s and 1990s, when the textile industry declined. Agriculture remained the mainstay, but officials saw untapped potential in developing the county's waterfront for commercial use.

Their efforts gained momentum in 2018, when ElectriCities of North Carolina completed extensive due diligence on the site leading to PQM's "Smart Site" designation, signaling the site's readiness for development. ElectriCities of North Carolina is a membership organization providing power supply and related critical services to more than 90 community-owned electric systems in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia.

PHOTO: BRIAN WATSON/PERQUIMANS COUNTY

ADVERTISEMENT

"North Carolina has a business-friendly climate for manufacturers, with lower taxes, affordable labor, and cost-effective electricity," says Carl Rees, Economic and Community Development Manager for ElectriCities of North Carolina. "We saw the site's potential and wanted to ensure others did too."

WANCHESE MARINE INDUSTRIAL PARK: A MODEL FOR SUCCESS

The concept for PQM was inspired by the success of Wanchese Marine Industrial Park, located 80 miles to the south on Roanoke Island. Opened in 1981, Wanchese began with 50 acres of land, a 15-acre man-made basin, and dedicated water/wastewater systems. Today, its buildings range in size from 3,200 to 30,000 square feet.

"No one else is digging an upland basin—probably because of the upfront costs and extensive permitting requirements. But the Perquimans basin is fully permitted, and Phase 1 of the basin is complete," says Bob Peele, Director of the Wanchese Marine Industrial Park. "The interest we've seen already will easily justify the investment in further expanding the basin."

For marine sites, roads matter, but direct water access and dock proximity to manufacturing facilities are critical.

"The key to a successful marine park is its infrastructure," says Ritchie Howell, Owner of Ritchie Howell Yachts, a custom sportfishing boat manufacturer and tenant at Wanchese.

Wanchese is home to a variety of marine industry tenants, including:

- Welding and machine shops
- Marine engine sales and repair businesses
- Cabinetry and upholstery workshops
- Boat detailing and cleaning services

"Having everything on-site—from a trawler supply house to a communications tower and yacht sales office—saves time and money," Howell adds. "It makes things easier for us and our customers."

Even after 44 years, all 33 lots at Wanchese remain leased to satisfied boatbuilders and support businesses. One of the park's biggest advantages is its high-power infrastructure, delivering 50 to 100 amps of power—essential for heavy-duty equipment.

"So much of the build process can't happen until the boat is in the water," says Howell. "Having ample power, close to the docks, is critical. Wanchese has it, and now Perquimans does too. I'm thrilled about this new park and all it brings to our industry."

Wanchese contributes approximately $103 million annually to North Carolina's economy—an impact Perquimans County hopes to replicate.

PQM'S UNIQUE ADVANTAGES

Beyond its infrastructure and accessibility, PQM boasts natural advantages:

- **Inland location:** Protected from coastal storm surges
- **Minimal tree coverage:** Easier construction and expansion
- **High ground elevation:** Reduced risk of flooding

"It's an extremely well-protected site," Howell notes. "Unlike other locations, there's no risk of wind-driven water pushing over docks and bulkheads."

The Town of Hertford and Perquimans County also offer quality of life benefits for local workers.

"Too many residents were spending one to one-and-a-half hours commuting for work," says Ashley Hodges, Hertford Mayor. "Now, they'll be able to work where they live in our beautiful waterfront community, reducing travel time and improving their quality of life."

PQM PHASE 1: SITES READY FOR PURCHASE OR LEASE

The first phase of PQM is officially open for business.

Of the 16.5-acre basin project, the first 4.5 acres have been completed, featuring:

- 1,100 feet of bulkheaded shoreline (700 feet on one side, and 400 on the other)
- Roads, reliable power, water, and sewer infrastructure that are fully operational

"This project is no longer just a 'field of dreams,'" adds Peele. "It's happening now. Perquimans County, the marine industry, and North Carolina will all benefit—starting today."

There is no fixed number of available lots, as space needs vary by manufacturer. However, all Phase 1 sites are available immediately.

For more information, contact:
W. Frank Heath, III, Perquimans County Manager
Ph: 252-426-8484
E-mail: frankheath@perquimanscountync.gov
Web: www.electricities.com/smart-sites/hertford-n-c/

AT A GLANCE: PERQUIMANS MARINE INDUSTRIAL PARK

A newly constructed inland basin makes PQM one of the most strategic industrial parks on the East Coast.

Key Features

- **Large Basin:** 350 feet wide, creating a safe harbor with protected waterfront access.
- **Ample Shoreline:** 4,600 linear feet of bulkheaded shoreline for industrial use.
- **Deep Water:** 10-foot water depth, accommodating large vessels.
- **State-of-the-Art Boat Ramp:** 40-foot-wide, industrial-grade ramp.
- **Workforce Benefits:** Reduced commuting times for local marine workers.
- **Recreational Perks:** Residents enjoy the Perquimans River year-round for boating, fishing, and water sports.