



Situation Analysis Report

Charlotte County

2013

Charlotte County Extension Staff

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Introduction

Charlotte County has an informal Extension Leadership Council and a 4-H Leadership Council. The groups worked together with staff to update the 2013 Situational Analysis for the Unit report. Information was collected through 4-H leadership council meetings, informal discussions with ELC members and residents and one on one data gathering conversations between clients and extension staff.

Unit Profile

Charlotte County is a rural county that lies in south-central Virginia. The Roanoke/Staunton River and Buggs Island Lake form the county's southwestern boundary. The area is known for its strong agricultural heritage and its rich forest resources. The county contains 475 acres and has a population density of 26 people per square mile. The county is located 90 miles southwest of Richmond, the state capital; 192 miles southwest of Washington, D.C.; and 98 miles northeast of Raleigh, N.C. and is bordered by the counties of Mecklenburg, Lunenburg, Halifax, Campbell, Prince Edward and Appomattox. There are four incorporated towns in Charlotte County: Keysville, Charlotte Court House, Phenix and Drakes Branch.

Community and Resident Perspectives

Since the 2013 situational analysis was conducted, very little has changed as far as demographics are concerned. However, based on the responses from the surveys, there have been some significant changes in the overall community status and the direction of agriculture in the county since the last analysis was conducted. With assistance from key ELC members and community leaders, surveys were conducted thru one –on – one interviews and group discussions to identify the top priorities facing the county in the next four years. Two of the most significant changes were the overall economic health of the county and the explosion of smaller scale non-traditional agriculture. The issue of families struggling to make ends meet was one of the top identified problems discovered thru our 2013 survey. The results indicated that family's disposable income for non-essential activities was far less than four years ago. County school principals report that over 90 backpacks containing food items are being distributed on weekends; many more needy students have probably been missed. Traditional agriculture, made up of tobacco, grains, dairy and beef, are still the mainstay of the agriculture economic picture, however, nontraditional Southside Virginia crops are becoming important factors to the County's agricultural economy. In addition to these identified issues, environment/water quality issues were identified as an existing concern. Charlotte County's top identified issues, with the overall economic position included in all three, can be grouped into three categories: Local Food Systems, Youth development, and Environment/Water Quality.

Priority Issues

Local Food Systems

Priority issues identified under this category included: Alternative Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing, Food Safety, Chronic Illness, and Agriculture Profitability.

Extension will address this issue thru a multi-program area approach that will contain both a youth and adult component. Programming will include educational efforts that will address the whole scope of local foods, from on farm production to new enterprise development. From marketing and market development to consumer education that will include health and economic related issues as it relates to local foods.

Youth Development

Priority issues identified under this category included: career preparedness and financial education, after school activities and safe places, life skills training, and positive role models.

Extension will address this issue thru working with other youth oriented programs and agencies. Extension will train adult volunteers to lead clubs and special interest groups that will provide after school and weekend programming for youth. Extension will work with schools to provide school enrichment, after school curriculum and programming help. Grant monies and partnerships will be sought to increase programming efforts and capabilities.

Environment / Water Quality

Water quality is a growing concern for our area as well as throughout the country. Many of our waterways are impaired and the quality of our groundwater is becoming a concern.

We will address water quality thru a comprehensive approach. We will continue to educate our agricultural producers on best management practices and provide assistance to our partner agencies such as NRCS and the Soil and Water District. We will conduct rain barrel workshops that will target homeowners and the public to increase their awareness of water issues. In addition, an educational process will be implemented through various youth educational efforts including field days, field schools, classroom projects, and day camps. These events will be a cooperative effort between 4-H, ANR, Soil and Water District and the school system.