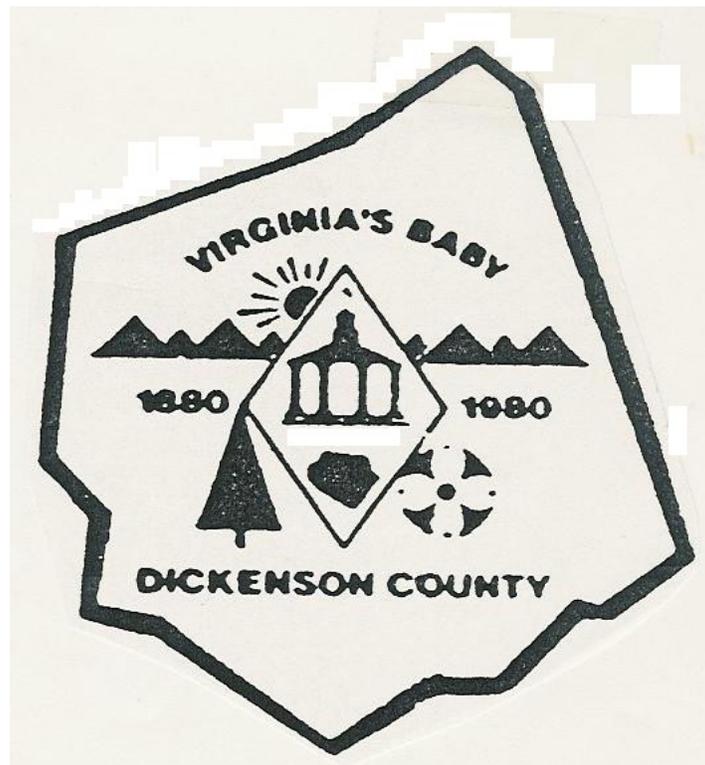




# Situation Analysis Report



## Dickenson County

# 2013

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## Introduction

The Dickenson County Unit of Virginia Cooperative Extension conducted a comprehensive situation analysis during the fall of 2013. Using the Situational Analysis of 2004 as a baseline for the 2013 analysis. The purpose of the situational analysis was to provide the Extension unit with current information to use in developing educational programs for the community and identify key issues facing the community. The situation analysis process was led by the Extension Leadership Council. The process involved the development of a Dickenson County Unit Profile, as well as, gathering resident perspectives on issues concerning the county. Information was analyzed by the ELC and priority issues were identified.

The ELC has identified the resources that we have in the county to help in developing the situation analysis. ELC members and VCE staff collected data from many different sources including the 2004 Situation Analysis, the 2010 U.S. Census, the Virginia Department of Health, the 2007 Census of Agriculture, the Centers for Disease Control, Virginia Department of Forestry, Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy, Industrial Development Authority and Dickenson County Chamber of Commerce. This data was analyzed and summarized to form a unit profile for Dickenson County. In order to obtain a variety of resident perspectives, it was decided to conduct surveys and key informant interviews throughout the county to obtain the greatest variety of resident perspectives. The ELC and VCE county office are to constantly be alert to county VCE educational program needs that might arise.

## Unit Profile

Dickenson County, Virginia's youngest county, was formed in 1880 from Russell, Wise and Buchanan Counties. Dickenson was named for William J. Dickenson, a delegate from Russell County to the General Assembly, who played a major role in the formation of Dickenson County. This action was taken as a result of demands from the people living in the area that they be represented by a county government closer to the people. The record of the early settlers who came into the area shows most of them to have been of Scotch-Irish descent.

The development pattern of Dickenson County has been shaped since the beginning by the physical features of the area. The rough mountainous terrain forced the early settlers to locate along the county's stream beds. The best farm land was to be found along the flat stream bottom lands, and the streams also provided a good water supply. The first settlements in Dickenson County were Sandlick, Holly Creek (Clintwood) and Nora, all located along streams of the area. Other major settlements in the county, including Haysi, Clinchco, McClure and Trammell, are also located along streams.

## Economic Foundations

Southwest Virginia began to be settled about 200 years ago. Farmers migrated across the Appalachian Valley from the Atlantic Coast, and because of the climate, natural abundance of grassland and a supply of water, these people soon made agriculture the backbone of the county.

Agriculture was important in Dickenson County in the days of the early settlers. In 1935, approximately 122,907 acres of the county, or 57 percent of the total area, were in farms. In 1969, only 20,801 acres were in farms. Even when farming was at its peak in the county, very little in the way of commodities for sale outside the county was produced. The farms were devoted mainly to the self-sufficient type of farming activities.

Until 1915, very few products were shipped out of the county to be sold. The rugged terrain and the lack of adequate transportation lines made it difficult to ship out the county's lumber. In 1915, the Carolina, Clinchfield and Ohio Railway opened the first rail line into the county. For the first time, the people had access to the markets in the east.

Until the development of the railroad, coal was mined only on a small scale and was used only by the local people. The lumber industry was in much the same situation. With the completion of the railroad, the lumber and coal companies, who had purchased mineral rights during the late 1800's, moved in and began to develop their rich holdings.

The period between 1910 and 1920 saw Dickenson County's population increase 47.2 percent as people moved in to work in the new coal mines and with the new lumber companies. During this time, the mining towns of Trammel, Clinchco, Haysi and Splashdam sprang up along the railroad, and the communities of McClure and Fremont were created as extensive timber operations began close by.

The county continued to grow until the 1950's when the mining companies began using more machines during the mining process. As mining employment declined, the county began losing population. Most of the lumber companies had exhausted their timber by 1946. The decline of this industry also caused many people to leave Dickenson County.

As the coal industry continued to decline during the 1960's, Dickenson County's population continued to decline. During the 1970's, coal production increased along with Dickenson County's population.

In the 1980's a "bust" period was again upon the area, as the boom of the 1970's quickly dwindled. The 1980's also saw a "second generation" of mechanization in the coal industry, increasing coal production but further reducing the manpower needs. Population declined once again and over the next decade employment reached double digits and the County's population was reflective of employment. The transition of the 1990's saw dramatic shifts in the County's local economy with the world economy changing throughout this decade. Pittston Coal Corporation owned the largest mineral reserves; their announcement of its intent to sell its holdings in mineral resources spurred the formation of a new company, Alpha Natural Resources. They acquired all mineral rights from Pittston while Forestland Group acquired the majority of surface property owned by Pittston. These acquisitions coupled with two specific events in history, the Iraq War and Hurricane Katrina, drove crude oil prices to record highs, in turn driving the cost of coal and natural gas to market highs also. This, coupled with the world demand for fossil energy fuels, saw the resurgence of the coal, natural gas, and even the timber industry. By the 2003/2004 period, the expansion of new mining activity, coupled with trucking and vendor activity revitalized the coal economy and unemployment was under 5%.

## Topography

Dickenson County, with an area of 335 square miles, lies mostly in the Big Sandy Basin, a bowl-like depression in the Appalachian range of mountains spreading from the crest of Cumberland Mountain southeastward across the narrow valleys of Pound, Cranesnest and McClure Rivers to the top of Sandy Ridge. It is bordered on the Northwest by the State of Kentucky; on the Northeast by Buchanan County; on the Southeast by Russell County; and on the Southwest by Wise County.

Elevations in general vary from 1,200 feet above sea level along the Pound River in the Northwestern part of the county to 3,137 feet at Jessee Gap on the Northwest border.

Pine Mountain, the crest of which forms the Dickenson County and Kentucky border, is the county's most prominent topographic feature. Two other ridges are important topographic features in Dickenson County. Sandy Ridge, which parallels the Dickenson and Russell County boundary, and the northerly-trending Big Ridge, which extends from Sandy Ridge and also serves to divide the Cranesnest and McClure Rivers.

The dramatic Breaks of the Cumberlands is a Dickenson County topographic feature that must not escape mention, for it forms the deepest gorge in the United States east of the Mississippi River. The northerly flowing Russell Fork has carved itself into the sandstones and shales to a depth of nearly a thousand feet (305 M.) leaving nearly vertical walls.

## Natural Resources

Dickenson County lies in Big Sandy River Basin. The principal streams of the county are Pound River, Cranesnest River, Caney Creek, McClure River, Lick Creek and Russell Fork. These are headwater streams, and the area drained is not sufficiently large to provide other than moderate supplies of surface water.

The streams in Dickenson County are tributaries to two great drainage systems. Those on the south side of Sandy Ridge flow into the Clinch River, which joins the Tennessee, a river that flows as far south as Alabama before turning west and north to the Ohio River. Streams north of Sandy Ridge are tributaries to Russell Fork of the Big Sandy River and reach the Ohio by a direct northerly route.

Although even small tributaries contain some running water during most of the year, none of the streams have a very large flow. The rainfall of the region is exceptionally great, but the sandy soil, dense growth of trees and brush and high stream gradients all work to prevent serious flooding.

In 1966, the John W. Flannagan Dam was completed on the Pound River. This is a flood control, water quality control, and recreation project constructed under the supervision of the District Engineer, Huntington District, Corps of Engineers, U.S. Army. The project provides for a flood control pool of 95,000 acre-feet storage, a seasonal pool (low flow augmentation) of

16,500 acre-feet, a water quality control pool of 38,600 acre-feet, and a minimum pool (winter) of 12,000 acre feet. At minimum pool elevation 1,315, the project will have 310 surface acres extending six miles upstream from the dam.

Stream gauging stations have been maintained on Russell Fork at Haysi and Pound River near Haysi since 1946. The water is moderately hard with comparatively high sulfate content owing to drainage from coal mines. Records of temperatures and water quality data are available for these gauges. Flow duration and high and low-flow sequence data are also available for these gauges.

Coal mining operations have seriously damaged the supply of groundwater in Dickenson County. Underground aquifers have been depleted and only a small amount of groundwater is still available.

Commercial forest land occupies 182,045 (86%) of the total land area of 212,077 acres. Ownership of the forest is mainly in the hands of private individuals and corporations. Approximately 167,718 acres or 92% is owned by non-industrial forest land owners. Public ownership accounts for 8% or 14,279 acres.

The forest has approximately 218,974,000 cubic feet of growing stock (standing trees). About 92% of this is hardwoods and the remainder is softwoods. A large percentage of the hardwoods are red and white oaks, yellow poplar and smaller amounts of hickory, red maple, beech and ash. The softwoods are mostly hemlock, and white pine with some yellow pine species scattered over the county. Almost 70% of the timber is classified as saw timber size (11.0 DBH for hardwoods; 9.0 DBH for softwood). This indicates that a good percentage of the timber is nearing maturity with some of it already mature.

The chief natural resources in Dickenson County are coal and natural gas – many beds of high-grade coal. Dickenson County is the third leading coal producing county in Virginia behind Buchanan and Wise Counties. In 2012, Dickenson County produced 4,015,002 tons of coal.

Dickenson County is the second leading county in the state (behind Buchanan County) in the production of natural gas with 2,144 wells producing a total volume of 48,262,194 in the year 2012.

Exploring minerals further, there are also deposits of high grade silica sand in Dickenson County. Soils throughout the county were derived mostly from sandstone and shale and both occur in nearly all regions of the county. Soil depths vary from two to three feet in residual soils to more than five feet in colluvial soils. Soil acidity levels range from 4.5 to 6.5. Natural fertility is low. Water holding capacity is moderate to low depending on soil depth. Response to proper management is good.

By examining the topography and the natural resources one can assume that the county's welfare depends heavily on these resources to provide a standard of living for her citizens.

The 2010 Census showed a population of 15,903 for a 2.3% decrease since 2000. The 2000 population of 16,351 shows a 6.84% decrease since the 1990 population of 17,552. This is comparable with surrounding counties. During the period April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2012, Dickenson County's population decreased by 1.4% compared with an increase in the state of Virginia of 2.3%. The breakdown of the 2010 Census population figure of 15,903 includes 3,718 individuals up to 19 years old, 9,622 individuals age 20-64, and 2,663 individuals age 65 and over. The county remains mostly rural with less than 50 people (48.8) living per square mile.

The median age of Dickenson County residents has increased in the last decade from 39.7 to 43.6 years of age.

The racial composition of Dickenson County has shown a slight increase in the last 10 years with the white population representing 98.56% of the total county population compared to 99% in the years 1990-2000. The remaining 1.44% is represented by black, Hispanic, Latino, American Indian and Asian population.

The median household income (2007-2011) in Dickenson County was \$30,556 which is 51.73% less than \$63,302 for the state of Virginia. Persons below poverty level in Dickenson County (2007-2011) was 21.3% compared to 10.7% for the state of Virginia. In 2013, 27.37% of Dickenson County's population received Medicaid compared to 13% for the state of Virginia. In 2002, 19% of Dickenson County's population received Medicaid compared to 7.1% for the state of Virginia.

Death rates from several common causes are higher in Dickenson County than in Virginia – e.g. diseases of the heart (+23%), chronic lower respiratory disease (+49%), unintentional injury (+98%), cancer (+5%), pneumonia and influenza (-69%), diabetes mellitus (+25%), chronic liver disease (104%), suicide (+79%), septicemia (+20%), and nephritis and nephritis (+15%). Death rates from stroke (-18%) and Alzheimer's disease (-62%) are lower in Dickenson than in Virginia overall. The total pregnancy rate among women aged 15-44 in Dickenson County is 39% lower than in Virginia. The teenage pregnancy rate is 22% lower than in Virginia. Women in Dickenson County are 3% more likely to get prenatal care during the first trimester than women in Virginia. Babies born to residents of Dickenson County are 1% more likely to be of low birth weight, but 17% more likely to die in the first year of life than babies born to residents of Virginia as a whole.

The population of Dickenson County is less prosperous than the population of Virginia. There are 21.3% of persons below the poverty rate in Dickenson County compared to 10.7% for the state of Virginia. Given the relative poverty and poor health status of the population, it seems clear that the people of Dickenson County stand to benefit from increased and sustained access to primary care.

## **Income**

The gap continues to widen as the state income per capita continues to out-distance Dickenson County. Unable to lessen the gap, the county continues to suffer with a failing

economy. The burden falls on the individual citizens as unemployment continues to slow down income. Approximately 21.68% of the county residents (3,402 people in 1,694 families as of October 2013) receive SNAP benefits with 71 families receiving TANIF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) in October 2013. The per capita income in Dickenson County (2011 dollars) was \$17,089 as compared to the figure for Virginia of \$33,040.

## **Housing**

During the time period 2007-2011, housing units in Dickenson County numbered 7,532 (78.2%) which was higher than the Virginia rate of 68.4%. The number of households in Dickenson County was 6,183. The median value of housing units in Dickenson County (\$71,800) was much lower than the median value for Virginia (\$254,000).

## **Unemployment**

With unemployment far exceeding the state average, Dickenson County has suffered from chronic double digit unemployment for the last two decades. Unemployment as of August 2013 was 10.5% with a statewide unemployment rate of 5.6%

## **Local Government**

Dickenson County is divided into five Magisterial Districts with an elected representative from each serving on the County Board of Supervisors, which is the county's governing body. The Dickenson County Board of Supervisors follows the traditional form of government and appoints a County Administrator who carries out the policies of the Board.

The incorporated Towns of Clintwood, Haysi and Clinchco are governed by a mayor and town council members elected by the qualified voters of the respective towns.

## **Services Provided**

Dickenson County is served by volunteer fire departments located in Clintwood, Haysi, McClure River, and Sandy Ridge. Together these fire departments have 168 volunteer members.

Public safety in the county is provided by the Sheriff and 10 deputies, 4 investigators, and 3 resource officers. The Town of Haysi has 2 full time and 2 part time officers, and the Town of Clintwood has 3 full time and 2 part time officers. Five Virginia State Troopers also patrol the county.

Dickenson County, along with the counties of Russell, Tazewell, Buchanan, and the Towns of Clintwood, Clinchco and Haysi, belong to the Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission, a regional planning organization whose function is comprehensive planning for future growth.

## Utilities

Appalachian Electric Power supplies electricity throughout most of the county. A small portion of the Sandy Ridge area is served by Old Dominion Power Company.

All of Dickenson County is served by Verizon Telephone Company. Digital telecommunication service is available throughout the county. Long distance service is provided by several different companies including AT&T, MCI, Verizon, Sprint, etc. Wireless telecommunication is available through such providers as Verizon and Appalachian Wireless. Internet service is available in the county from providers such as Comcast and Verizon, including wireless service provided by DCWIN.

## Local News Media

Dickenson County has one local newspaper which is printed weekly. The *Dickenson Star* is distributed each week on Wednesday. The paper has interesting and well-written articles about events which affect the county. Dickenson County receives daily newspaper service from Bristol Herald Courier, Bristol, VA-Tenn.; Bluefield Daily Telegraph, Bluefield, Virginia; Roanoke Times, Roanoke, Virginia; and Kingsport Times, Kingsport, Tennessee. The Coalfield Progress out of Norton, Virginia is a bi-weekly newspaper. The Wall Street Journal is also available within the county.

The WDIC Broadcasting Company is the only radio station located in Dickenson County. The radio station is located on Big Ridge between Clinchco and Clintwood. The station broadcasts 24 hours a day, seven days a week. These times range from 5:15 p.m. to 7:45 p.m.

Dickenson County is served by Comcast Cable Company to meet the needs of the residents. Satellite television is provided by Dish Network and Direct TV.

## Finance

Dickenson County has five local commercial banks with the following assets as of 2013: Wells Fargo, \$1.3 trillion; First Community Bank, \$2.6 billion; Branch Banking & Trust, \$177.9 billion; New Peoples Bank, Inc., \$699.6 million; Farmers and Miners Bank, \$133.4 million.

The Industrial Development Authority of Dickenson County was formed on October 2, 1979, for the purpose of providing a mechanism whereby the local financial institutions can be assessed, and to provide meaningful assistance to industrial clients' financial requirements. It has a membership of seven, who are appointed by the Board of Supervisors. Meetings are called at the discretion of the Chairman of the Industrial Development Authority.

The Coalfield Economic Development Authority offers another form of financing for industry wishing to locate within the county. Funds are obtained through the severance tax levied on coal and gas extracted within the county. Each county in the Coalfield Economic Development Authority maintains the funds generated within their county. The funds are then available for industrial development in that county. Issuances of these funds are at the discretion of the

Coalfield Economic Development authority Board. The Board can issue money in the form of loans or grants and has the ability to set interest rates on these loans.

## **Schools**

The Dickenson County School System is fully dedicated to meeting the educational needs of all students to the maximum extent possible. The identified gifted and/or talented are offered programs of instruction in various areas to meet the interest and ability levels of all, i.e. math, computer programming, poetry, creative writing, vocational, drama, and the magnet school for the gifted. Other courses are implemented as needed.

Appropriate special educational programs are provided for all identified handicapped students from birth through twenty-one, inclusive.

Services are available for those who are mild to severe and profoundly handicapped. Classes include physical handicapped, learning disabilities, speech and language, mental retardation, emotionally disturbed, hearing impaired, visually impaired and pre-school handicapped. Other programs are implemented as needed. In the event services are unavailable in the county, regional or state programs are explored or private contractors are sought. Remedial classes are offered throughout the county for students needing additional assistance in reading and mathematics.

On the average, 53% of Dickenson County students pursue some type of post-secondary education.

Dickenson County is served by the Dickenson County Career Center located at Clinchco, which is a central location for all three high schools of the county.

The 4-H program – reaching approximately 1001 youth aged 9-19 – utilizes approximately fifty-five teachers as volunteers in delivering supplemental educational opportunities to youth as project leaders. Approximately 888 youth are junior members (less than 14) with the remaining 113 enrolled as senior members (14-19). Although primarily in-school clubs, the program also includes one community 4-H Saddle Club organized for providing another avenue for educating youth.

## **Medical Care**

Dickenson Community Hospital (formerly Dickenson County Medical Center), located in Clintwood opened in November 2003. It is the largest medical facility in Dickenson County and is licensed for 25-beds but operates as a 1-bed critical access not-for-profit hospital owned by Norton Community Hospital. A recent expansion included a 5,700 square foot physician office building on the hospital campus. Radiology and laboratory services are also available. Dickenson Community Hospital is part of **Mountain States Health Alliance (MSHA)**, formed in 1998, which is the largest health care system in Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia.

In addition, many county residents utilize medical facilities in surrounding areas including hospitals in Abingdon, Richlands, Grundy, Bristol, Wise, Norton and Pikeville, Kentucky, and Kingsport, Tennessee.

Dickenson County has one nursing home, the Heritage Hall Health Care Nursing Home, which is located in the Town of Clintwood. Heritage Hall offers short-term skilled nursing and therapy, as well as extended care for residents who want to make their home there. They have full-time occupational, speech and physical therapists on staff and offer both outpatient therapy and inpatient rehabilitation. They are licensed by the Virginia Department of Health. The nursing staff is experienced in providing in-depth intermediate care for residents including skin care, rehabilitation, and mobility enhancement. In addition, the home is located near the Dickenson Community Hospital which provides easy access to emergency care.

## **Community and Resident Perspectives**

### **Agriculture**

The following issues were identified in the situation analysis process from key informant interview responses, community survey and the ELC as a focus group.

1. Animal Health
2. Livestock Value Added Marketing
3. Land Availability
4. Vegetable and Fruit Production
5. Water Quality

Dickenson County agriculture consists of small scale, part-time producers who have other employment or are retired.

The 1987 Census reported 120 farms with approximately 10,000 acres vs. the 2002 Census which reported 117 farms with 11,761 acres. The 2007 census reported 170 farms with 14,342 acres.

The majority of these farms are on upland soils located along the tops of ridges in Dickenson County. Some forage and hay are produced in bottom land near rivers and streams. The enterprises consist of beef cattle, forage crops, sheep and goats, horses and vegetable gardening activities. Additional horticultural crops on a limited scale consist of apples, and some vegetable production that is marketed locally.

There are an estimated 800 head of horses, primarily pleasure, which engage in trail riding and horse shows. There are approximately 500 head of sheep and a limited number of hogs. There seems to be an increase in interest and number of goats which are primarily being used for brush control around the farm. It is estimated that there are 500 head of goats in Dickenson County. Beef production has increased in Dickenson County due mainly to using reclaimed mined land for grazing in the last 20 years. It is estimated that Dickenson County has 2000 cows and calves.

Advisory members of Extension programs and key leaders highly recommend that the Extension Service continue to provide helpful information to livestock owners and producers in Dickenson County.

One area that is of keen concern to local advisory members is animal health. Dickenson County has no veterinarian and the closest one is 1 - 1 ½ hours driving time from the county seat. As a result, livestock owners attempt to care for animals on a limited basis and get assistance from a professional veterinarian when practical to do so.

Total Land	- 212,480 Acres
Land in Farms	- 14,342 Acres
Average Size of Farm	- 84 Acres

Small acreages of corn are grown on the farms for feed purposes. Nearly all grains are fed to hogs, cattle, sheep and goats. Very small amounts are marketed locally.

Hay crops and pastures amount to approximately 8,000 acres of land. Due to the terrain and slope of the land, Dickenson County is more suitable for forage productions of hay and pastures. Pasture and hay lands are not producing what they are capable of due to lack of management practices.

Extension will continue to conduct educational programs on forage management, weed and brush control using animals and pesticides. The Extension Advisory Committee feels it is important to provide these educational services to land owners and livestock producers in Dickenson County.

Due to limited farm size, steepness of slope for good air drainage, and frost-free growing season of about 175 days with an average precipitation of about 44 inches, Dickenson County is ideally suited for producing small fruits, vegetable gardening, and apple production.

It is estimated that 5,000 households are engaged in some form of gardening activities. Many families desire to produce fruits and vegetables for home use because of the superior quality of the fresh, home grown products and because this production provides a means of reducing expenditures for such items. Commercial production of small fruits and apples contribute income to those people involved with this type of agriculture enterprise. Controlling diseases, insects, weeds, and fertilization are management practices that enhance production of fruits and vegetables. Many home gardeners lack necessary knowledge in using pesticides and cultural practices in gardening programs.

## **Youth Development**

The following list ranks survey and key informant responses as they relate to concerns facing Dickenson County's youth.

1. Drugs & Alcohol Abuse
2. Lack of jobs
3. Nutrition and Wellness
4. Lack of extracurricular activities
5. Lack of transportation

Additional comments from surveys included:

- Need to encourage more interest in youth activities outside of school hours.
- There is a lack of transportation to and from activities within the rural community.
- Parental support needs to be encouraged.
- Due to county's economy, parents lack funds for activity fees.
- Teen activities are needed, provided by a recreational center and movie theater.

Current assets and strengths for youth include:

- 4-H Programs ( Including summer camp )
- Church Group Activities
- Boy Scouts / Girl Scouts
- Skating Rink
- Local swimming pools for summer months
- After school sports.
- Marching/concert/pep bands at the two high schools

## **Family and Community**

Survey responses and key informant responses to open ended questions were very similar. The top issues were as follows in priority order:

1. Replace the FCS position in Dickenson County
2. Drugs and alcohol abuse
3. Job Security

The issue of job security is due in part to our community history with the coal industry. In the past, the main source for revenue was the coal mines located throughout the county. As those mines begin to fade away, we are faced with finding new ways to supplement our work force. Comments from key informant interviews showed this was a main concern of the community. As our survey was conducted with a diverse group of participants, we feel this accurately represents our county. It was of a popular opinion that to increase our workforce, we must be willing to embrace the technology industry and recruit such businesses, as well as, exploring the possibility of recruiting more companies from the manufacturing industry.

The issue of drug and alcohol abuse was listed as the highest priority issue. Recent drug trafficking in the county has increased and is causing anxiety for parents with school age children. Our informants feel if a better range of programs and activities were offered for their children it would act as a deterrent to drug and alcohol abuse. It is their desire to see better

educational programs placed within the school system and the community. The general education of our students ranked at the top of the list of concerns, as well as, providing a way for our children to plan for their future so that they may remain in Dickenson County.

Another cause of anxiety for our community is the rising number of family's who find themselves with a loss of income due to company downsizing, outsourcing of jobs, and on the job injuries.

## **Priority Issues**

### **Agriculture**

Extension Leadership Council members making up the agriculture advisory group consisted of a farm supply dealer, an officer and leader of a local horse association, an officer of the Coalfield Beef Cattle and Land Use Association, a District Conservationist, a retired agriculture education instructor and a farmer.

### **Priority 1 – Livestock**

#### **Issue #1: Livestock Health**

Dickenson County does not have a practicing veterinarian located within the county. With the closest large animal veterinarian being a 1-1 ½ hour drive for farmers, Extension will emphasize educational programs on health care, vaccination programs, internal and external parasites and overall animal health issues associated with cattle, horses, goats and sheep.

#### **Issue #2: Livestock Value Added Marketing**

Dickenson County does not have a livestock market. Producers must travel 1 ½ hours to market livestock. Extension staff can and will continue to explore various marketing opportunities. The Coalfield Beef Cattle and Land Use Association has had some members cooperatively market Virginia Quality Assured animals together in order to receive premium prices over the feeder calf sales. VCE can assist producers in making the necessary improvements to their livestock in order for them to participate in these value added sales. These improvements would include genetic improvements, vaccination programs and various management decisions that must be made in order to improve marketability. The Coalfield Agriculture Center has been constructed using many different funding sources to help with value added marketing and Extension educational programs.

#### **Issue #3: Land Availability**

With the recent purchase of over 50% of Dickenson County, or 137,500 acres of former Pittston Coal Company property by The Forest Land Group, some additional hay land and pasture may be available for livestock production. VCE can and will conduct educational programs focusing on soil fertility, forage varieties, management programs, hay production, pasture management and weed and brush control for livestock production.

#### **Issue #4: Home Vegetable and Fruit Production**

VCE currently provides educational meetings designed to provide good cultural practices, varieties and pesticide recommendations and uses for fruit and vegetable producers of Dickenson County. The ELC has recommended that this issue be kept a top priority due to the amount of home food production and home canning conducted in Dickenson County.

#### **Issue #5: Soil and Water Conservation**

Agriculture Extension Agent serves on two soil and water conservation district boards that focus on conservation issues facing producers and citizens of Dickenson County. VCE can and will provide educational meetings and information to citizens of Dickenson County to educate them on soil and water quality concerns of the county. This is a high priority issue of the county because all public water comes from the John Flannagan Dam that is fed by two water sheds in Dickenson County.

#### **4-H Youth Program**

The 4-H Youth Advisory Group included a high school assistant principal, a retired elementary school teacher, a citizen with past 4-H involvement, an adult volunteer who leads a special interest 4-H club, and the director of Federal Programs for the Dickenson County Public Schools.

#### **Priority 2 – Youth Programs**

**Issue #1:** The lack of extracurricular activities in our area leads us to another major concern for citizens and parents. Drug and Alcohol Abuse is on the rise in our county. Many of our youth find themselves experimenting with illegal substances for lack of anything better to do or as an escape from current home situations. Often the Drug and Alcohol Abuse leads to teen pregnancy, poor nutrition, criminal involvement, and dropping out of the school system.

It has been and still is a focus of our 4-H Program to discourage county youth from the abuse of drugs and alcohol by working with local officials and groups in educating our youth about the dangers of such activities. The development of an active 4-H Teen Leader Association will provide activities directly to the teens in the communities. The teen activities will help increase the participation in all programming areas of 4-H and thus discouraging drug and alcohol use.

**Issue #2:** Lack of job opportunities for youth is an ever present problem in our rural community. Parents are concerned that most children throughout our county main source of entertainment and culture will come from sitting in front of their television sets. This is reflected in their overall health and well-being.

The 4-H Teen Leader Association addresses this concern in part by taking teens through an application and interview process that will provide experience for an actual

application/interview for an employer or an educational institution. As a 4-H Teen Leader, the youth gain leadership skills and experience working with other adults, peers and junior 4-H members that will teach them job skills. Although 4-H does not offer paid job opportunities, the experience gained will make the youth more attractive to potential employers.

**Issue #3:** Another concern for the youth of Dickenson County is health and nutrition education. Due to the current emphasis on the Virginia Standards of Learning, health and nutrition education is no longer part of the public school curriculum. Health and nutrition education is of vital importance to the well-being of the community for quality of life as well as for disease prevention.

This concern will be addressed at every opportunity of 4-H programming. Health and nutrition education will be incorporated in everything from cloverbud day camps, to in-school Healthy Weights for Healthy Kids program in the local middle school to 4-H Teen Leader activities.

### **Family and Community Sciences Program**

The FCS Advisory Team included the ELC as a focus group and community survey to compile the FCS top priorities for Dickenson County.

### **Priority 3 – FCS Position in Dickenson County**

The Dickenson County FCS position is currently vacant.

The Dickenson County VCE office will work closely with local government, District office, and State VCE offices to pursue and obtain funding for a FCS position in Dickenson County.