



**Virginia Cooperative Extension**

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# Situation Analysis Report

## Floyd County

# 2013

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## Introduction

The Floyd County Extension Leadership Council (ELC) conducted a comprehensive Situation Analysis in the fall of 2013. The process followed the guidelines, procedures and training provided by Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) personnel from Virginia Tech. The Floyd ELC opted to conduct a survey with the community at large. The survey developed by VCE was made available to Floyd citizens via Qualtrics, the Floyd Press, and printed copies supplied at area business establishments. A flyer, listing the options for accessing the survey, was also distributed to grades K-7 in the public school system. Paper copies of the survey results were entered into the Qualtrics system by local VCE support staff. Several members of the ELC met to review the data and develop a list of the top priority issues.

## Unit Profile

### Basic Demographics

Floyd County is a rural county located in Southwest Virginia located 30 miles southwest of Blacksburg and is one of the four New River Valley (NRV) counties (Floyd, Pulaski, Montgomery and Giles). In the four years between 2007 and 2011 there has been a 9% growth rate (2007 census; 14,756 and 2011 census; 15,156) a decrease compared to the time period 1990 and 2000 which experienced a 16% growth. A regional study identified Floyd to be the third fastest growing Planning District 4 (PD4) County, between 2000 and 2010. The number one area was Christiansburg (24.2%) followed by Montgomery County (12.9%). The Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) Floyd Community Profile (11/21/2013) predicts the population of Floyd to grow to 16,311 by 2030.

The ethnic composition of Floyd has changed since the 2004 Situational Analysis. Currently Caucasian is 96.4% (2004 - 96.71%), African American 1.9% (2004 - 1.99%) and Hispanic 2.6% (2004 - 1.39%). The data indicates an increase of the Hispanic population. The population by age reveals the median age for Floyd County as 43, an increase from 2000 when it was 40.5. The change is also apparent when comparing the breakdown by ages in 2000, the majority of Floyd County residents were 25 – 44 years of age (3,831), then 45 – 54 years of age (2,141) followed by ages 65-74 (1,115). In 2013 the greater percentage was 55-64 (2435) followed by 45-54 (2166) and 65-74 (2098) then 25-34 (1668). The PD4 Livability Initiative Study predicts the New River Valley's overall senior population will double by 2030. The Floyd male to female ratio continues to be about one to one (males 49.40% - females 50.60%).

### Economic and Employment

The household income per-capita in the past twelve months (2013 dollars) for Floyd was \$21,816 lower than the other New River Valley (NRV) counties (Pulaski \$23,987, Giles \$23,485 and Montgomery \$23,548). The median income (\$44,618) was also lower in Floyd than Giles and Montgomery. Although the percentage below the poverty level (12.7%) in Floyd is lower than the other PD4 counties it is greater than the state average (11.3%).

The majority of employment opportunities are outside of the county. The VEC Floyd Community Profile (11/21/2013) report that 1,828 people live and work in the area, 1,207 commute into the county to work and 5,423 commute out of the county. The number one employer is the Floyd County School Board, the second Hollingsworth and Vose manufacturing and third is the County of Floyd. The report listed 1,028 as the count for total businesses in the county in 2012.

The VEC study lists the Floyd unemployment rate for August 2012 as 6.7%, lower than the national (8.2%) but higher than the state (6.0%). The other NRV counties also are lower with unemployment rates of Pulaski 6.5%, Giles 6.0%, and Montgomery 5.6%.

## Education

Currently the Floyd County School system is reporting that at least 81% of the high school graduates have continued their education. The school enrollment numbers, ages K-12, for 2011 (2043) 2012 (2034) and 2013 (2097) indicate a very small increase. The 2014 census data reported a decrease, since 2014, in the percentage of those attaining a bachelor's or higher degree (18.4% to 16.0%). There are still a small number of Floyd students that do drop out of school. The Virginia Department of Education most recent school/school district report card reports the percentage of students dropping out the last four years. Floyd County is lower at (4.6%) than all neighboring high schools in the PD4.

## Health and Well-being

A growing national issue is obesity of both adults and youth. Obesity-related conditions include heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and certain types of cancer. The CDC stated that "...the medical costs for people who are obese were \$1,429 higher than those of normal weight." A recent Floyd County school survey indicated that 88% of youth do not meet their daily target for fruits and vegetables and 34% do not meet their daily target for physical activity. In 2007, the adult obesity rate was 26% and in 2013 the rate had increased to 27.2%. *The Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth's 2011 chart of State Prevalence Among Low-income Children 2-4 Years Old* places Floyd in the 15-20%. One CDC study indicated that nationally this number went down for the first time in recent years.

Another area of expressed interest is the well-being of children in the county. In 2007 16% of Floyd's children were living in poverty and 2013 statistics indicated an increase to 21%. Research also shows a correlation between children's well-being and living in a single-parent household. 16% of Floyd's children were living in single-parent households a rate lower than the state rate of 30%. Health statistics measures the teen birth rate at (per 1k female 13 – 19). Floyd's 2007 rate was 32 in 2007 and indicated a decrease in 2011 with a rate of 30. When compared to other rates Floyd was greater than Montgomery County (14), but less than Giles (44), Pulaski (50) and the state (32).

Substance abuse has become an issue in Floyd County and while it is a health issue it also creates challenges in the area of crime, workforce and the economy. Substance abuse

includes illicit drugs, prescription and over-the-counter drugs as well as alcohol. The Livability Initiative study found that in the “NRV, mortality rates from prescription drug abuse are 3X higher than the state average... 33% of children coming into foster care in the NRV were due to parental substance abuse issues. This is almost twice the state average.”

## **Agriculture and Environment**

Floyd ranks 30th in the state with a market value of \$34,701,000, for agriculture products - crop sales account for 39% of total market value & livestock sales for 61%. While 2012 agricultural data indicates an increase in acres of land in farms (128,872 to 144,657), average farm size (149 to 168A) and median farm size (50 – 179), new data indicates an increase in the overall number of small farms. Throughout the New River Valley, Floyd has experienced the least dramatic drop in farm size.

The PD4 Livability Initiative study lists the top NRV crops as; forage land (for livestock), hay, corn, wheat, rye, fruits and vegetables, cut Christmas trees, sod, nursery stock and short rotation wood crop. The primary farming operations for Floyd are beef, dairy, and nursery production. The study also indicates that “Floyd County averages much higher earnings per farm than the rest of the NRV” in relation to average market value of crop production.” Floyd’s average is between \$50,000 and \$40,000 while the next highest is Pulaski around \$30,000.

While the PD4 Livability Initiative reports currently 56% of the county’s homes are within an agricultural area and 40% are in rural residential locations, it also predicts by 2030 the numbers will shift to 42% in an agricultural area and 48% in a rural residential location. This change has potential to affect storm water runoff and water quality of rivers and streams and increase housing units relying on septic and well systems. Floyd County has a unique situation in that all our water begins in the county and flows out of the county, with no water flowing in. This creates additional concern about the impact residential and agricultural practices have on water quality.

## **Community and Resident Perspectives**

One hundred thirty-one surveys were opened of which 119 were completed. A review of the respondents revealed that 78% were female and 22% male. Twenty-eight percent identified themselves as being a college graduate and 25% as having some college for a total of 53%. The age range was somewhat equally spread between the ages of 30 and 65+, with there being slightly more in the 50 -59 category.

Floyd has experienced a large influx into the county in the last several years. When asked to list the years lived at current address the respondents ranged from more than 25 years at 23% to 16-25 years at 10%. The race and ethnicity responses indicated that 96% of responders were white, 2% African American and 3 % other with 1% identifying themselves as Hispanic. Responders were asked to identify which school district their current address was in. Of the 110 that responded, 52% were in Floyd, 26% in Check, 18% in Willis and 4 % in Indian Valley.

## Priority Issues

Based on the unit profile, resident survey responses and ELC discussion and response, the following top priority issues were identified for Floyd County. Some of these issues can be addressed through Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) resources. Others are outside the scope of VCE resources and will be referred to or pursued in partnership with the appropriate agency.

### Issue 1: Environment, Water Quality, Energy

Water quality and its potential environmental impact is a concern among residents in Floyd County. Floyd is unique in that all of the County's natural water sources originate within its land boundaries, no water flows into the county. Water from natural sources contains impurities. Some of these impurities adversely affect the usefulness and suitability of water, while others may improve its palatability. Due to increasing competition for water, and problems with maintaining water quantity and quality, many regulations govern how water supplies may be developed and used. Additionally, area residents continue to examine new methods to increase energy efficiency, energy conservation, and renewable energy.

(Survey comments included: concern for protecting streams from livestock, keep pharmaceuticals out of the water stream, educate residents as to best management practices, make greater use of our renewable energy sources)  
ANR, FCS, 4H

### Issue 2: Ag Sustainability & Preservation, Land Use, Farm Transition

There are a number of reasons why Virginia is losing working farm and forest land. Farmers are getting older, and according to the 2007 Census of Agriculture, the average age of farmers in Virginia is more than 58 years old. Since much of the farmer's retirement assets are tied up in the business, these assets will increasingly be liquidated to provide for retirement. Additionally, Farmers are not planning for retirement. A survey by VDACS in 2002 showed that most Virginia farmers either do not plan to retire at all or only plan semi-retirement. Of those farmers who plan to retire and transition their farm, only 30 percent have as yet identified a successor. Failure to plan for the transition of the farm can lead to the loss of farmland and the farming operation.

Additionally, the decrease in land in farms does not necessarily mean that the land was developed. It does, however, mean that the land is no longer in production, and therefore may be more vulnerable to development. When farmland is developed, the resulting fragmentation of the land base puts new pressures on farmers and foresters who now face a public that is increasingly divorced from agriculture, and who are not accustomed to the sights, sounds and smells associated with working farms and forests.

(Survey comments included: long term green spaces + sustaining income, no fracking, no uranium mining – teach youth)  
ANR, 4H

### **Issue 3: Health and Nutrition**

Obesity is an issue that challenges people across the United States and survey respondents identified it as the issue of importance when addressing health in Floyd. The statistics support that the obesity rate in Floyd County has increased. The causes of obesity are many; access to food, non-supporting environments, limited resources and poor nutritional practices. Many causes are best addressed by many approaches.

All three Extension program areas will share skills addressing topics such as making good health decisions, making the most of your resources and how to grow their own food. To make a difference in the overall health and nutrition of Floyd residents Extension will also pursue input and partnerships with local supporting agencies and organizations.

(Survey comments included: fight obesity – start at early age – provide evening and weekend nutrition classes – lean recipe – teach what well balanced not just tell to eat well balanced – exercise)

FCS, 4H, ANR

### **Issue 4: Ag Profitability, Production, Marketing**

The need to increase agricultural profitability has been identified by survey respondents and the Floyd Agricultural Task Force as a necessary step in assuring farm sustainability and reducing farmland losses to potential residential development. While production techniques are continually improved upon, Extension efforts to identify new marketing plans, develop profitable and sustainable marketing opportunities, and work in coordination with other supporting agencies will enhance Floyd's agricultural economy.

(Survey comments included: farm profitable so can quit work)

ANR

### **Issue 5: Child Development, Parenting**

While respondents identified parenting as being an area of concern multiple agencies are already addressing the issue in Floyd County. While Extension may not take the lead in parenting education in Floyd County we can be a part of the solution by providing cross-program opportunities that allow for parent and child participation which can help strengthen families. Agents will also periodically interact with local organizations and agencies to pursue any parenting programming partnerships.

(Survey comments included: life management skills)

FCS, 4H

## **Issue 6: Local Food Systems**

Local food markets typically involve small farmers and short supply chains. In these local systems, farmers perform many of the functions including marketing, storage, packaging, transportation, distribution, and advertising. According to the 2007 U.S. Census of Agriculture, most farms that sell directly to consumers are small farms with less than \$50,000 in total farm sales, located in proximity to urban corridors. Statistics further suggest that local food markets account for a small, but growing, share of U.S. agricultural production. For smaller farms, direct marketing to consumers accounts for a higher percentage of their sales than for larger farms. Barriers to local food-market entry and expansion include: capacity constraints for small farms and lack of distribution systems for moving local food into mainstream markets; limited research, education, and training for marketing local food; and uncertainties related to regulations that may affect local food production, such as food safety requirements. Additionally, community awareness and interest in local food production has led to increased participation and program contacts in Extension Home Food Preservation Programs. The apparent interest to know where one's food comes from, while ensuring adequate food handling and preparation, is a growing priority among respondents.

(Survey comments included: growing gardens, buying local, food preservation, processing facility)  
ANR, FCS

## **Issue 7: Life Skills/Decision Making, Youth Activities**

Local youth were identified as having a priority need for youth program resources. After-school activities, that expand life skills and improve good choices in decision making, may reduce dangerous outside influences that impact area youth lives. While income status, transportation, lack of volunteers, and parental involvement are just some of the limiting factors to such programs, County infrastructure and facility availability also plays a role in limiting youth programs. 4H activities and numerous new programs like Health Rocks may assist in steering area youth in proper decision making while providing youth with after-school options other than sports.

(Survey comments included: more to college – safe after school place/activities – know how to prep for first job/interviews/life skills – early childhood support essential for responsible adults – exploration and creative vs. drills from schooling)  
4H with occasional assistance from ANR and FCS

## **Issue 8: Community Planning, Local Government**

VCE currently works with local organizations and agencies; however, further efforts to collaborate need to be explored to better address concerns regarding which agencies provide what type of assistance to area citizens. Several factors exist, that once addressed, may bring about a better coordination between government agencies. A limited knowledge of organizations and agencies found within the County and the larger New River Valley, along with a misunderstanding of the workings of many organizations are two such factors.

While local Extension has limited control over this priority, Extension may serve as an educational resource to area citizens and government agencies alike by better marketing the Extension mission and programs conducted. Extension may furthermore look at its joint involvement and partnerships with local agencies and seek ways to better inform citizens of local government assistance and opportunities available. FCS, ANR, 4H

### **Issue 9: Conventional Ag vs. Alternative Ag**

One aspect of agriculture that continues to receive attention among both conventional and alternative systems is the need for farm sustainability. There is a rising discussion in Floyd County regarding the use of chemical inputs to supply fertility and pest control. While agriculture chemicals will continue to play an important role in Southwest Virginia agriculture, many farmers are looking at alternatives due to environmental, economical, or regulatory reasons. In a transition to farming systems more reliant on biological methods of production, low-input farming may serve as an intermediary step.

(Survey comments included: hop production, no GMOs, no animals move to fruit/vegetables & grain – organic no herbicides)

ANR