



# Virginia Cooperative Extension

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## Situation Analysis Report



## Isle of Wight County

# 2013

### Isle of Wight Extension Staff

Janet Spencer, Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Agent

Celia Brockway, 4-H Youth Extension Agent

### Isle of Wight Extension Leadership Council

Rachel Chieppa  
Mary Catherine Foster  
Pinky Hipp  
Felicia Scott  
Chuck Griffin  
Kevin Goerger

## **Introduction**

Isle of Wight County conducted a comprehensive situation analysis during the calendar year 2013. The situation analysis process was led by the Extension Leadership Council (ELC) and involved the development of an Isle of Wight County Unit Profile as well as collecting community and resident perspectives on issues and problems in the county. Data and information from these activities were analyzed by the ELC and priority issues were identified.

## **Unit Profile**

Isle of Wight County is located in Southeastern Virginia, approximately 75 miles from Richmond.

Data indicates that the population age of 45-84 increased by 18% over a four year period, while the population age of 20-44 decreased by 12.75%.

In a five year period, the total number of farms in Isle of Wight County decreased, as did the total land acres in farm production. However it is interesting to note that the number of farms with 10-179 acres increased by 23%, while the number of farms with 180-999 acres decreased by 45%.

The unemployment rate in Isle of Wight County increased from 4% 2010 to 6.5% in 2013.

Even with an increase in the unemployment rate, the mean household income increased by 9.2% in the same three year period.

The number of children who live in poverty in Isle of Wight increased from 11% in 2010 to 16% in 2013.

On a positive note, the teen birth rate decreased by 10% from 2010 to 2013.

## **Community and Resident Perspectives**

The ELC met two times during the situation analysis process. At the first meeting, an overview of the situation analysis process was discussed. A community survey was developed and ways to disseminate the survey were discussed. It was decided that the survey should reach as many residents in Isle of Wight as possible. Information on the situation analysis process and the Community Survey was published in the local paper, as well as posted on Isle of Wight County's government webpage. The information was also sent out to various mailing lists, including 4-H leaders, members of the agricultural community, Isle of Wight county employees, and local civic organizations. At the second and final meeting ELC meeting, key findings from the unit profile and results from the community survey were presented and discussed. The top priorities for Isle of Wight County were then identified, including those that could be addressed with current VCE resources and those that were outside the scope of current VCE resources.

## Priority Issues

### Issue 1: Youth Development

The most pressing issue identified in Isle of Wight County was Youth Development. This was primarily determined as a result of both qualitative and quantitative survey responses. Of the 43 individuals who responded to the question “In your opinion what three major issues are confronting Isle of Wight County,” 19% of the responses involved youth issues. Overall, the consensus amongst these responses was that more accessible and affordable youth activities are needed. While not every individual suggested a specific activity topic, the need for youth to learn good decision-making was prevalent. The responses to the survey matrix quantitatively confirmed these needs. The matrix had a total of 38 issues to be ranked from “Very Unimportant” to “Very Important.” Within the top one-third of the issues rated “Very Important,” over half were related to youth development. The topic with the greatest number of “Very Important” responses was “Child Development.” “Life Skills/Decision Making for Youth,” “Youth Activities,” and “Youth Violence” were also within the top one-third. Tallying the responses in another way, when combining the rankings that were “important” and “very important” for any given topic, youth development was a common theme. “Child Development” was ranked highest in importance, “Parenting” was second, and “Youth Violence” was fifth.

Going beyond the Isle of Wight Community Survey, the statistics reveal there was a 21% decrease in children ages three and four enrolled in nursery school/preschool between 2007 and 2011. While the portion of kids enrolled in school within this age group is greater than the state or national average, the decrease leads us to wonder why it is happening.

According to the Isle of Wight County Public School Report Card provided by the Virginia Department of Education, there has been a rise in misconduct amongst students. While “Weapons Offenses” have been cut in half since the 2010-2011 school year, several other categories have increased: “Offenses Against Students” (39% increase), “Offenses Against Staff” (50% increase), “Other Offenses” (44% increase) and “Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Offenses” (120% increase). Although, it should be noted that overall misconduct has decreased by 2% since the 2010-2011 school year.

As a result of finding this issue, Isle of Wight VCE will work toward creating a partnership with the local school district in an effort to implement character enrichment programs. In addition, more youth programs that are accessible and affordable are being developed.

### Issue 2: Health and Nutrition

Health and Nutrition was identified as the second most pressing issue in Isle of Wight. According to health information collected in 2013 for Isle of Wight County, 31% of adults living in the county are considered obese and 28% are physically inactive. Both of these factors can lead to very serious health issues, including diabetes, which saw a 10% increase in the county from 2010 to 2013. Along with the issue of health, is a concern over safe food supplies. Several outbreaks in recent years of food-borne illnesses associated with fresh fruits and vegetables have increased consumer awareness of food safety.

Currently, VCE does not provide programming specifically targeting these issues, however there is an opportunity for multi-disciplinary programs to address these concerns. The ANR Extension Agent and the 4-H Youth Development Agent can work together to develop programs to address these concerns targeting both the adult and youth populations in the county. VCE can work closely with local partners, such as schools, social services, and community organizations to deliver these programs.

### **Issue 3: Local Government**

Local government was identified as the third most pressing issue in Isle of Wight County. Specifically, citizens of Isle of Wight are concerned with past and current leadership of local government officials. A large portion of the comments collected from the Community Survey revolved around decisions made by local government (Board of Supervisors), internal conflicts among these officials that affect decision-making, and budgetary concerns. This issue is outside the scope of VCE to address but should be addressed.

### **Issue 4: Water Quality/Environment**

Water Quality/Environment was identified as the fourth most pressing issue in Isle of Wight County. These issues range from nutrient runoff from farms and lawns into local waterways to drinking water concerns.

Currently, VCE partners with many agencies, including the Soil & Water Conservation District and Natural Resources and Conservation Services to provide educational materials and programs to educate producers on best management practices to minimize nutrients and pesticide run-off from the fields. We also provide educational outreach to local school systems to educate youth on the importance of soil, water, and our environment. Additional VCE programs that could be provided in Isle of Wight County include urban nutrient management clinics, drinking water testing, and best management practices for homeowners to reduce their environmental footprint.

### **Issue 5: Agricultural Profitability and Sustainability**

Agricultural profitability and sustainability was identified as the fifth most pressing issue in Isle of Wight County. Agriculture represents a large portion of Isle of Wight County, with approximately 73,461 acres in farm production. Currently, VCE is offering programs to address several of these concerns. Commodity production meetings are held annually to provide farmers with up to date information on production techniques that will increase the overall profitability of their farming operations. Virginia Cooperative Extension also hosts precision agriculture meetings to showcase new technologies that are designed to increase farm production and efficiency. Virginia Cooperative Extension also works closely with niche producers in the county, such as fruit and vegetable producers, aquaculture, and value-added agriculture. Livestock is wide and varied in Isle of Wight, ranging from typical beef cattle and hog operations to alpaca farms. The local VCE office will develop programs to address profitability and sustainability of these operations, as well as continuing existent programs.