



**Virginia Cooperative Extension**

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# Situation Analysis Report

## Pittsylvania County

# 2013

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## Introduction

The Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE)-Pittsylvania County Office conducted a Situation Analysis in the fall of 2013. The process began at the quarterly Extension Leadership Council (ELC) meeting in September where staff and ELC members examined the Unit Profile data sets provided by VCE and identified key data. Over the course of the next two months, staff utilized the Community Survey developed by VCE, adapted it, and disseminated it within the community. The survey was handed out at the following venues: several meetings hosted by VCE, the Annual Meeting of the Pittsylvania Soil and Water Conservation District, and electronically to six e-mail lists targeted at both youth and adults. Approximately 230 surveys were disseminated and 70 were returned. Staff used the surveys to identify trends and categorize them as “Important Issues” or “Most Important Issues” within the three categories of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Youth Development, and Community, Family and Personal Issues. All comments shared on the surveys were also shared verbatim with the group on a hand-out. During the November ELC meeting, members discussed the issues within each category and decided to move some issues around between “Most Important Issues” and “Important Issues.” The “Most Important Issues” were then posted and each member present was given 10 votes each to select our key issues which are the priority issues for the final report.

## Unit Profile

Pittsylvania County is located in the southern Piedmont plateau of Virginia and borders North Carolina to the south, Halifax County to the East, Henry County to the West, Franklin County to the Northwest, and Campbell County to the North. Pittsylvania County is the largest county in Virginia with a land area of approximately 629,000 acres. Elevation ranges from 400 to 800 feet above sea level with the highest point being Smith Mountain at 2,043 feet. The county seat, Chatham, is 140 miles from Richmond, 68 miles from Roanoke and 50 miles from Lynchburg.

The population in Pittsylvania County has continued to grow and between 2007 and 2011, Pittsylvania County gained 2,254 residents. When taking a closer look at the age groups within the population, there was a drop both in children ages 9 and under and between the ages of 25 and 44. The major increase in population was found in residents ages 55 and over. This group grew by 3.9% and that number is evident as there are many retirees moving into the area.

Race demographics have remained fairly constant with the White and African American populations comprising the largest percentage, and a slight decrease in the percentages of all other races.

Although the population has increased and there has been an increase in both the number of households making \$50,000+ and the median and mean incomes, the number of houses vacant has increased by 3.2%. It is also disheartening that even though incomes have increased in the county, there are so many children living in poverty. In fact, with 19% of the population in Pittsylvania County being below the poverty level, the county's percentage is

much higher than the state and national levels. Another struggle for youth in the community is that 32% of them live in single-parent homes.

Education has been an area of remarked improvement within the county. The high school graduation rate has increased by 24% since 2010 and the number of students attending some college has risen by 38%. There has also been a slight increase in the number of children enrolled in preschool.

Pittsylvania County has been a targeted area of Virginia with regard to chronic health problems, obesity, and lack of exercise. In 2013 19% of residents reported poor or fair health, adult obesity is at 29% and physical inactivity mirrors that of obesity. These factors are further defined by limited access to recreational facilities, limited access to healthy foods, but easy access to fast food restaurants. In other areas of health concern, the teen birthrate has dropped slightly, but it is disturbing that sexually transmitted diseases are on the rise.

Agriculture continues to be an important part of Pittsylvania County's landscape and economy with Agriculture and Mining making up 11% of the businesses located here. Boasting 1,356 farms and 274,289 acres in farmland (according to the 2007 Census of Agriculture), Pittsylvania County ranks 9<sup>th</sup> in the state in overall agricultural production. It is still a major economic driver, generating \$62.6 million in the local economy each year.

## **Community and Resident Perspectives**

As explained in the introduction, community surveys were distributed through various groups in the county to obtain feedback from residents. The following are the results of that survey divided into Agriculture, Youth, and Community sub-categories:

### **Survey Results and Comments:**

#### **Youth**

##### Most important issues

- \*Careers
- \*Life Skills
- \*Science and Technology

##### Important issues

- \*School Dropouts
- \*Teen Community Involvement
- \*Teen Leadership
- \*Youth Activities
- \*Youth Violence

##### Comments

- \*Life skills/decision making
- \*Youth volunteers, activities, community involvement

\*With the lack of regard for education here, why would anyone want to locate a business here?

\*Youth activities: getting the youth more involved in agriculture will hopefully encourage them to go into the agriculture field as well as appreciate farmers a lot more than they would normally do.

\*Before/After School: this impacts all other factors (dropout rate, volunteerisms, teen pregnancy)

\*Teen community involvement: I feel that this is a very important to Pitt Co. because of the agriculture background in this county. Is largely influential in many lives, but it seems that today's youth are clueless to the importance of the farmer. I feel that with more youth involvement, these youth could learn about Ag jobs not directly related to the farm.

\*Science and Technology

\*Volunteerism, youth involvement/leadership

## Community

### Most important issues

\*Energy

\*Finance

\*Food Safety

\*Leadership

\*Local Government

### Important issues

\*Nutrition

\*Parenting

### Comments

\*Food safety/preservation

\*Finance/money management

\*Energy, health, small business

\*The lack of parenting affects everyone.

\*Food, health, energy

\*Solar energy has huge potential and should be encouraged and pursued. I am strongly opposed to uranium, especially in Pittsylvania County.

\*Small business/entrepreneurs

\*Food safety/preservation, energy

## Agriculture

### Most important issues

- \*Production/profitability
- \*Animals/Livestock
- \*Public Awareness of Agriculture
- \*Environment
- \*Wildlife

### Important issues

- \*Sustainability
- \*Food Safety
- \*Pests/Pesticides
- \*Energy
- \*Land Use

### Comments

- \*Animals/Livestock, energy and food safety & preservation
- \*Agricultural production, profitability and marketing will take care of sustainability
- \*Local food systems, environment, energy
- \*Without a clean environment no amount of money will yield a good life.
- \*Wildlife protection and water quality are extremely important.
- \*Sustainability, energy, production
- \*Help make landowners aware of the various options for product marketing, farm transition and land use. Many folks simply don't know what their options are.
- \*Farm transition: as older farmers begin to transition into retirement and transfer farms to younger generations, Pitt Co must be proactive in ensuring the agricultural survival. Too many farms are being sold and parceled out. Education and assistance on this transition is needed.
- \*Public awareness of Ag: Pitt Co is the largest county in VA, yet our public is losing its education of agriculture. It is taught in our schools, but adults must be educated also.
- \*Marketing, Land use
- \*Alternative agriculture, animals/livestock, pests/pesticides, energy, natural resources.
- \*Animals/livestock, water quality
- \*Animals/livestock
- \*Marketing: you need to keep up and manage the marketing. It's a major factor due to how everything is working. Animals & Livestock are a big part of this county as well as this country. It's a big part of peoples' lives.
- \*Marketing: county goods availability (farmers, CSA, dairies), Alternative Agriculture
- \*Marketing, production/profitability, sustainability
- \*Animals/livestock: young people need to know how to break into the business and need to learn the ins and outs.
- \*Water quality, food safety/preservation
- \*Public awareness of agriculture
- \*Water quality, land use and environment: constant awareness without youth and general population.

## Priority Issues

Based on the unit profile data, community surveys, and perspectives of the ELC members, the following top priority issues were identified for Pittsylvania County. Some of these issues are and can continue to be addressed through VCE resources. Others are outside the scope of VCE resources and may be addressed by other agencies and groups within the county. These issues are classified accordingly and are listed in priority order within classifications.

### **Issue 1: Agricultural Production and Profitability**

As referenced in the Unit Profile, the agricultural industry is a multi-million dollar industry in a region that is struggling to bring in other types of industry, so it is important to support and keep the economic driver strong in our region. One person surveyed provided the comment that “Agricultural production, profitability and marketing will take care of sustainability.” ELC members felt that it was most important for VCE to provide programming and tools to support the agriculture industry.

This continues to be a top priority that is constantly addressed by VCE resources in Pittsylvania County, as well as other agencies and groups in the county such as Young Farmer groups, Pittsylvania County Farm Bureau, Pittsylvania County Agricultural Development Board and the Director of Agricultural Development for Pittsylvania County. VCE will continue to partner with these groups to strengthen the agricultural economy in the county.

### **Issue 2: Small Business**

Small Business development and support emerged from several surveyed in the comments section and the ELC felt that it was a high priority for several reasons. First, they felt that small businesses are economic drivers in the local economy and that if we support small businesses, then we are supporting our economy. Secondly, it is felt that there is not enough being done to cultivate and sustain small businesses within the community. Lastly, it was also emphasized that farms are small businesses and should be treated and trained as such.

There are some VCE resources that could be utilized to address this issue on the surface layer, but the local offices lacks the trained staff to provide the support needed to fully support this issue. There are resources dedicated to this issue in the adjacent city of Danville. There are several resources to be found there such as the Longwood Small Business Development Center, The Dan River Business Development Center which serves as a small business incubator, and The Launch Place who provides many different types of support to emerging small businesses. The Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce is also a great resource for small businesses through their networking and educational opportunities.

### **Issue 3: Public Awareness of Agriculture**

The importance of agriculture in Pittsylvania County has been reiterated numerous times in this report and it surfaces here again. This issue also arose in strategic planning sessions conducted by the Pittsylvania Soil and Water Conservation District and an internal planning session of the Pittsylvania County Agricultural Development Board. Many comments were voiced on the community surveys concerning this issue and addressing the education of both youth and adults. One respondent commented that “Pittsylvania County is the largest county in Virginia, yet our public is losing its education of agriculture. It is taught in our schools, but adults must be educated also.” Another said that “getting the youth more involved in agriculture will hopefully encourage them to go into the agricultural field as well as appreciate farms a lot more than they normally would do.”

VCE addresses this topic to some extent through their participation and involvement in various programs such as Ag Day hosted by PSWCD for all 4<sup>th</sup> graders in the county, the Pittsylvania Caswell Junior Livestock Show and Sale, and articles for the Ag Chat column in the local paper. To truly address this concern, VCE must partner with other agricultural related groups and agencies within the county to work together towards a common goal.

### **Issue 4: Nutrition/Health**

As indicated by the data in the Unit Profile, Pittsylvania County has an epidemic of residents who are obese and in poor health. Having a population with 29% of the adults being obese and 19% of the adults reporting poor or bad health is a true indicator that nutrition/health is an important issue that needs to be addressed.

This is certainly an area that can be addressed by VCE resources and would be better addressed if there were a Family and Consumer Sciences Agent located in the county to expend time on addressing this need. It has been eight years since an FCS Agent was located in the local office. There are many different groups and coalitions working to address this concern in the Dan River Region, but it appears that most of the work is actually being done within the city of Danville, so there needs to be a strengthened effort within the county where there are more obstacles such as lack of recreational facilities and limited access to fresh, healthy foods.

### **Issue 5: Life Skills for Youth**

To our ELC, this issue was quite an obvious issue that should be shared by all units within the state. There can never be too much work done to support developing the youth in the area and helping them to enhance critical thinking skills, decision-making skills, and other life skills.

This is currently being addressed by VCE through 4-H Youth Development, but there are many areas to expand this type of work and many partner organizations in the county that VCE can work with to increase its reach.

## **Issue 6: Careers for Youth**

As there are more youth from the county attending college and there are more efforts to bring high paying jobs in the area of technology into this area, it is important to educate young people about their career options. There are more youth attending college after graduation, but personal testimony from members indicates that many of them know they should further their education, but still do not have a clue about what type of job they would really like to have or that they are suited for.

This is an area of opportunity for VCE programs in the area of 4-H Youth Development. Currently there are talks of partnering with PSWCD to conduct an agricultural career fair for students enrolled in agricultural education in the four county high schools. Broader career areas need to be explored by high school age students. This could also be addressed by a number of other organizations such as Pittsylvania County Schools, Community Action, Boys and Girls Club, and The Institute for Advanced Learning and Research.

## **Issue 7: Teen Community Involvement**

This issue showed up several times in the comments on the community survey, but its importance was reiterated by members of the ELC. Members serve in many local volunteer organizations and expressed their difficulty in finding young people who were interested in volunteering their time. This is particularly important in our county where we rely heavily on volunteers to serve on the local fire departments and rescue squads.

To some extent this can be addressed by VCE through 4-H Youth Development programs that are conducted within the county. Most 4-H clubs in the county require community service from the club members. This is an issue that should be addressed by many different groups within the county.

## **Additional Issues**

In addition to the top seven issues that were identified by the ELC, there were a few other areas of concern that merited mention. In the area of Agriculture, additional concerns were voiced about wildlife management and overregulation in the area of environmental regulation by the government. Science and technology rated as a major concern in the area of Youth Development and local government had high marks in the area of Community.



# Appendices

## Pittsylvania County Community Survey

We appreciate your time in completing this survey. The purpose of this survey is to gather information about issues in Pittsylvania County. Please take a couple of minutes to share your opinions. The results of the survey will help in shaping Virginia Cooperative Extension programs in Pittsylvania County. The survey is completely anonymous. If you are not completing the survey in person, please return to Virginia Cooperative Extension-Pittsylvania County located at 19783 US Hwy 29 S, Suite C, Chatham, VA, before November 15<sup>th</sup>.

Please rate the importance of the following issues in Pittsylvania County

	Very <u>Unimportant</u>	Somewhat <u>Unimportant</u>	Neither Unimportant nor <u>Important</u>	Somewhat <u>Important</u>	Very <u>Important</u>	No <u>Opinion</u>
<b><u>Agriculture and Natural Resources</u></b>						
Marketing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Production/Profitability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sustainability/Preservation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Alternative Agriculture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Animals/Livestock	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Farm Transition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public Awareness of Agriculture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Horticulture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Invasive Species	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Food Safety/Preservation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local Food Systems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pests/Pesticides	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Energy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Natural Resources	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Production/Profitability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Land Use	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wildlife	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Water Quality/Quantity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please turn over to  
complete survey →

**Youth Development**

Before and After School Issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Careers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Child Development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Life Skills/Decision Making for Youth	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School Dropout	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Science and Technology	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teen Community Involvement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teen Leadership	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Youth Activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Youth Violence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Youth Volunteers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Personal, Community, Health & Home Issues**

Aging Population	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Chronic Disease	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Consumer Issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dependent Care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Energy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Finances/Financial Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Food Safety/Preservation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Health	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Housing/Home	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Long Term Care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nutrition	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Obesity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parenting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Science & Technology	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Small Business/Entrepreneurs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Leadership	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community Planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Community Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Local Government	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

For the issues that you rated Very Important, please select the top 2-3, list those below and provide any additional information about why you feel they are important for Pittsylvania County and what you think might be done to address them.