



# Virginia Cooperative Extension

Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

[www.ext.vt.edu](http://www.ext.vt.edu)

## Situation Analysis Report



## Pulaski County

# 2013

### Pulaski County Extension Staff

Susan D. Burkett, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent  
Christopher M. Lichty, 4-H Youth Extension Agent  
Scott McElfresh, Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Agent  
Cynthia Hurst, 4-H Program Assistant  
Mary Rupe, Unit Administrative Assistant

### Pulaski County Extension Leadership Council

Anthony Akers  
Greg Brown  
Mary Burton

Carolyn Dunford  
Pat Huber  
Andy Hullender

Joe Meek  
Chuck Price  
Deborah Ring

Susan Roop-Dalrymple  
Al Smith  
Peggy White

## Introduction

Pulaski County conducted a comprehensive situation analysis during the calendar year 2004. The situation analysis process was led by the Extension Leadership Council (ELC) with input from three subject matter advisory groups. A Pulaski County Unit Profile was developed with community and resident perspectives compiled on county issues and problems. Data and information from these activities were analyzed by the ELC with priority issues identified.

In October 2008, an updated situation analysis was completed and results shared with the community. In 2013, the ELC met twice during the situation analysis process. At the first meeting an overview of the situation analysis process was presented. An initial situation analysis plan was developed that included tasks and timelines for ELC members and VCE staff. Based on this, the unit profile was developed using the data set from the VCE Situation Analysis Resource website and other Pulaski demographics data. This information was compiled by VCE staff and reviewed by ELC members and local community leaders.

## Unit Profile

Pulaski County is a rural county located in Virginia's New River Valley. Pulaski is part of the Blacksburg/Christiansburg-Radford Metropolitan Statistical Area. It is located on Interstate 81 about an hour southwest of Roanoke. Census data from 2011 indicated a population of 34,900.

In Pulaski County, 30% of the residents were between 35-54 years of age in 2011 compared to Virginia's 15%. Also, 17% of Pulaski's **population were age 65 and older**. This high percentage leads to further questions about available housing, health care facilities and senior recreation activities in the county.

The **number of uninsured people** in Pulaski has risen from 12% in 2010 to 16% in 2013.

The **racial composition** of Pulaski County is 92% White, 5% Black and 1% Hispanic compared to 71% White, 20% Black and 8% Hispanic in Virginia.

In Pulaski County, the population age 25+, who have completed a **bachelor's degree or higher**, is 15% as compared to 34% in Virginia.

The **median household income** in 2011 was \$40,987 in Pulaski County compared to \$62,391 in Virginia. The percentage of population from Pulaski County **living below poverty level** between 2007-2011 was 15% compared to 11% in Virginia.

In 2013, the **unemployment rate** in Pulaski was 7% compared to 6% in Virginia and 5% nationally.

In Pulaski County, 44% of children were **eligible for free lunch** compared to 31% overall in Virginia.

**Morbidity** among Pulaski County population in 2013 due to poor or fair health was 26% compared to 10% nationally. Also, morbidity because of low birth weight was 10% compared to 6% nationally.

**Pre-mature death** was 9,635 in Pulaski with 6,362 in Virginia and 5,317 nationally.

Pulaski County in 2013 has **adult obesity** data showing 27% adults compared with 25% nationally. Sixty seven percent of Pulaski County restaurants are fast food compared to 27% nationally.

Data on **teen birth rate** indicated that Pulaski County population was 50 individuals per 1,000 in comparison with 32 in Virginia and 21 nationally.

In Pulaski County, 24% of **children live in poverty** with 18% in Virginia and 16% nationally.

Data on **adult smoking** indicated that in Pulaski County 33% of the population smoke compared to 18% Virginia and 13% nationally.

**Physical inactivity** in Pulaski County was 25% compared to 21% nationally.

**Inadequate social support** in Pulaski County was 28% with 18% in Virginia and 14% nationally.

Data stated that children in **single-parent households** in Pulaski County was 36% with 30% in Virginia and 20% nationally.

**Death rates** in Pulaski County were higher due to heart diseases, cancer, unintentional injury, brain/blood issues and kidney disease when compared to Virginia.

### **Agriculture and Natural Resources Profile**

In an unofficial survey conducted in the County in 2012, the top 3 programs of interest to Pulaski County residents were Farm and Fence Laws, Pasture Improvement, and a Hands-on Profitability class. The top 5 issues concerning producers in the county were as follows: Pasture/Crop Management, Farm Profitability, Soil/Water Conservation, Water Quality, and Animal Health.

The most recent survey data available is from the 2007 Census. The data collected by USDA in their 2012 Census of Agriculture is still being compiled and not available. Between the 2002 and 2007 surveys, we saw the total number of farms decrease from 448 to 415, a loss of 5,465 acres. The average farm size in Pulaski remained about the same, increasing from 181 to 182, slightly larger than the state average for Virginia at 171. Many of our midsized to larger sized farms (180-999 acres) were where the decrease in farms occurred. There was a large decline in cropland going from 37,277 acres in 2002 to 21,091 acres in 2007. The market value per farm increased from 2002 at \$460,397 (\$2,244 per acre) to \$663,147 (\$3,647 per acre) in 2007. This is comparable to the 2007 Virginia average per acre of \$4,213 and the

national average of \$1,892. The cattle inventory increased from 24,260 in 2002 to 29,501 in 2007, roughly 1.8% of the state's inventory. There is not enough data to project growth or decline in hogs, chicken and grain crop production.

## **Educational Profile**

From the 2011 survey data, there were 5,272 youth Pre-K – 12<sup>th</sup> grades enrolled in school programs. The breakdown of youth is as follows: 4.72% of youth in Pre-School, 4.82% of youth in Kindergarten; 43.99% of youth in grades 1-8; and 22.6% of youth in grades 9-12. From the population of 25 years and over 80.5% have attained a high school degree or higher, while 14.7% have attained a bachelor's degree or higher. And as of the 2011 survey, 1,652 residents were enrolled in college or graduate school.

## **Family and Consumer Sciences Profile**

On October 22, 2013, the Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) Advisory Council met to identify top family and community needs in Pulaski County. The top issues identified as priorities FCS programs should address were (not in rank order): 1. Healthy Lifestyle, 2. Nutrition, 3. Financial Management, 4. Quality Child Care and 5. Aging.

The issues of **Healthy Lifestyle and Nutrition** are related and includes topics such as eating right, exercising, getting enough sleep and stress management. In 2009, Virginia's obesity rate was 25.5% and has risen to 29.2% in 2012 – a 3.7% increase over a 3-4 year period. More urgently is the fact that Southwest Virginia still has the highest obesity rate in the state at 34.6% with Pulaski having a rate of 27%. It has been stated that obesity-related conditions include heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and preventable death. Pulaski statistics show higher rates of death due to these obesity related conditions. Nutrition/health education and exercise will be encouraged and promoted within all age groups, private industry and institutions in Pulaski County. School nutrition programs (4 lesson series) will continue to be offered to second and third graders throughout the New River Valley as well as nutrition, health and wellness programs for middle and high school students.

**Financial Management** was also identified as a priority issue that needs to be addressed through FCS programming. In 2013, the unemployment rate in Pulaski was 7% compared to 5% nationally. Between the years 2007-2011, 15% of Pulaski's population was living below the poverty line as opposed to 11% in Virginia. Based on the statistics, Pulaski County exceeds the state averages for unemployment, children in poverty and number of children in single parent households indicating a need for financial management programs. A group of extension financial volunteers has been formed to identify and address financial needs in Pulaski County.

The issues of **affordable, quality child care** were identified by the FCS advisory council. A need for parenting education, after-school activities for children, positive adult role models, and training for family and center based providers was also noted. Many respondents identified transportation as being a major obstacle for families to participate in after-school activities, sports, etc.

Another identified priority issue was **aging**. It was discussed that there are a lack of resources available in the area about aging. Similar to childcare, there is limited accessibility to affordable elder care. Pulaski population statistics state that 17.5% of the population is aged 65 and older opposed to Virginia's 12.2%.

## **Community and Resident Perspectives**

To access community needs to be addressed by the Pulaski Extension Unit, there were surveys generated to 4,500 households, input collected from the three subject matter advisory groups, our local ELC and a focus group comprised of key community leaders.

In November 2013, approximately 4,500 surveys were distributed to Pulaski County residents with their water/utility bills (approximately 1,400 household) The Pulaski Extension staff collected demographical data in November 2013 using numerous resources and data bases suggested by Virginia Tech. The collected material, along with the survey results was distributed to the ELC and a focus group comprised of five Pulaski County residents. These residents reviewed and analyzed the survey data and developed a list of four major issues Extension should address.

The Unit Staff met with key members from advisory committees and previous surveys to receive input which then led to a meeting comprised of 5 community leaders from the following organizations and agencies (in alphabetical order): Agency on Aging, Agriculture Business, Department of Social Services, New River Community College, New River Health Department. This Focus Group identified 12 community issues from the survey that could not be addressed by Extension which are listed below:

## **Priority Issues**

Based on the unit profile and resident perspective data from above, the following top priority issues were identified for Pulaski County.

### **Issue 1: Healthy Living for Adults and Youth**

This was identified as the leading issue in Pulaski. Extension can provide educational programs and resources to improve nutrition/ health behaviors and increase physical activity levels of local adults and youth. This can reduce the incidence of disease, reduce obesity-related conditions, reduce absenteeism at work and school, and assist with maintaining a healthy weight to improve physical and mental health. Currently Pulaski exceeds Virginia health statistics in the areas of: heart disease, cancer, diabetes and cerebrovascular disease, adult smoking and overall health condition.

### **Issue 2: Farm Profitability**

Beef cattle are the leading agriculture commodity for Pulaski County. Producers face a multitude of challenges in deciding when to breed, how to deal with government regulations,

where to market and managing costs. Extension can provide research based information to help producers to better understand these challenges and make the best decision for their operation.

### **Issue 3: Educational Programs for Underserved Audiences**

The Pulaski County Extension Office will market Extension Programs through the use of Extension Newsletters, Newspaper and Social Media (our Office Website). These three areas were identified, by survey results and the Focus Group, as the top three ways for the community to receive information. Furthermore, Extension Office will work with Virginia Tech to ensure Office Website is current to include Community Calendar. Efforts will also be made to reach local ministerial groups to encourage their participation in Extension Programming.

### **Issue 4: Marketing of Extension Programs and Volunteer Recruitment**

As identified by survey results and Focus Group, the Pulaski County Extension Office will utilize newsletters, newspapers, local businesses and social media as outlets to market Extension Programs and Volunteer Recruitment. Extension employees will enhance this with face to face communications with donors, stakeholders and perspective volunteers. Focus Group sited that Face to Face interactions could be key to building/strengthening relationships with the community to include those unknown with Extension.