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# Situation Analysis Report

## Surry County

# 2013

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## Introduction

In 2013 staff of the Surry County, Virginia Cooperative Extension Office updated the Situation Analysis Report. This report was led by the Extension Leadership Council (ELC), with input from other stakeholders and area residents. Data and information from these activities was analyzed by the staff and ELC and priority issues were identified. These priority issues will not be changed, but different ways of implementing them will be explored, and what renewed direction of Extension Programming will be addressed. This report will serve as an updated version of the “2013 Situation Analysis”.

## Unit Profile

Established in 1652 Surry County is one of Virginia’s original counties. Surry is located in Southeastern Virginia, South of the James River, between the Richmond, Petersburg, Hopewell, (Tri-Cities), and the Tidewater/Hampton Roads Metropolitan Areas. Tidewater is composed of the cities of Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Hampton, Newport News, and Williamsburg. Surry is considered rural and local residents usually travel to one of these areas for work, shopping, and entertainment.

2011 Census data indicated Surry’s population at 7,026 residents. Population by race is 50.98% White, 47.32% Black or African American, .95% Hispanic, and .89% some other race. The public school system has 900 students in K-12. Private schools in neighboring Sussex and Isle of Wight educate 255 Surry Residents with 120 students home schooled. There are also 412 students enrolled in college or grad school.

Surry is generally considered an agriculture and forested county with over \$47 million in farm and forest products sold annually. The other three largest employers are (1) Dominion Virginia Power, (2) Surry County Public Schools, and (3) Surry County Government. Since employment opportunities in the county are limited most residents commute out of the county for employment. County residents commute to Isle of Wight, Williamsburg, The Tri-Cities, or the Tidewater areas for employment. Demographically, only a small percentage of the college educated (Bachelor Degree or above) young adults return to the county because of the lack of salary competitive employment opportunities. The unemployment rate for Surry County has increased from 3.4% in 2007 to 7.8% in 2012 with the state average in 2012 of 6.2%. The majority of the businesses in the county employ less than four employees. The Median household income is \$53,505 compared with \$62,391 for Virginia. However the Mean household income is \$59,424 compared to the state mean of \$84,353. Surry has 20% of its children living below the poverty level while Virginia has 16% of its children living in poverty.

Agriculture census data indicate there are 127 farms in the County with an average farm size of 355 acres compared to Virginia average of 180 acres. Net farm income was \$67,304 which was six times the state average of \$11,300.

## **Community and Resident Perspectives**

At the initial Situation Analysis meeting the ELC discussed the demographics found in numerous unit profile resources referencing the County. For the 2013 situation Analysis it was noted that many aspects of the county demographics had not made significant changes since 2007. A survey sent out electronically as well as 400 hard copies were sent to citizens 16 and up for input. The survey was also shared with the Surry Chamber of Commerce, the Peanut Soil and Water Conservation District, and posted on the Surry County, and VCE Website's. The survey was open for six weeks to allow adequate response time.

Serving as a focus group the ELC and Unit Staff discussed local demographics, the unit profile, and material collected from the surveys. This information was used to identify five priority issues. At the February 2015 ELC meeting, members reviewed the updated documents and appropriate revisions were made.

### **Priority Issues**

#### **Issue 1: Life Skills / Decision Making**

As youth in the 18-25 year old range move into the job market their decisions on educational opportunities have a profound effect on their workforce readiness, their earning capacity and quality of life as they become productive citizens. By partnering with the Surry Resource Coordinator, this age group will have the opportunity to take advantage of various trade and job opportunities if they do not want to pursue higher education or a military career.

#### **Issue 2: Teen Leadership / Leadership**

While the 4-H Program emphasizes the importance of leadership development for youth ages 9-18, this issue is beyond one that 4-H can address alone. This issue can be emphasized by other organizations and civic groups in the county. These include Surry County Office on Youth, Boy and Girl Scouts, area churches, and local school systems.

#### **Issue 3: Youth Activities / Youth Violence**

This Issue is one of the more recent trend concerns. VCE, The Office on Youth, local law enforcement, and local schools have targeted opportunities to work with youth on issues such as drug, alcohol, tobacco awareness, bullying prevention, teen pregnancy, and violence and gang intervention.

#### **Issue 4: Agriculture Production and Profitability**

Because agriculture, agribusiness, and forestry are the largest industries in Surry County the profitability and sustainability of these industries are of paramount importance. VCE assists agriculture producers in tried and true production practices as well as research on new cutting edge technology. Workshops, crop field days, crop production meetings, monthly newsletters and mass media will be used to relay the latest research based information to local citizens.

## **Issue 5: Alternative Agriculture**

Since Surry County is considered a “Food Desert” there is many opportunities for small, limited resource growers to explore alternative agriculture enterprises. The Agriculture and FCS Agent will work cooperatively to educate citizens about the profitability of fresh, wholesome crops that can be produced and consumed locally. These may include community gardens, container gardens, and alternative cropping systems such as plasti-culture, irrigation, aquaculture, or organic crops. The FCS component will address thrifty shopping, as well as harvest, storage, and preparation of local foods to promote a healthy diet and active lifestyle.