



**Virginia Cooperative Extension**

Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

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

# Situation Analysis Report

## Charlotte County

# 2018

### UNIT Extension Staff

Darla Marks, Unit Coordinator, 4-H Youth Extension Agent  
Joanne Jones, Agriculture & Natural Resources Extension Agent  
Tracey Smith-Gregory, FNP Program Assistant  
Diane Haley, Unit Support Staff  
Eli Price, 4-H Program Assistant

### UNIT Extension Leadership Council

Natalie “Pepper” Garnett  
Barbara Chiles  
Amy Carwile  
Linda Woodfin  
Lisa Barker

Jean Elliot  
Brick Goldman  
Carole Simpowski  
Lori Barron  
Bobby Long

## Introduction

Charlotte County has an informal Extension Leadership Council and a 4-H Leadership Council. The groups worked together with staff to update the 2019 Situational Analysis for the Unit report. Information was collected through 4-H leadership council meeting, surveys, informal discussions with ELC members and residents and one on one data gathering conversations between clients and extension staff.

## Unit Profile

Charlotte County is a rural county that lies in south-central Virginia. The Roanoke/Staunton River and Buggs Island Lake form the county's southwestern boundary. The area is known for its strong agricultural heritage and its rich forest resources. The county contains 475 square miles and has a population density of 26 people per square mile. The county is located 90 miles southwest of Richmond, the state capital; 192 miles south west of Washington, D.C.; and 98 miles northeast of Raleigh, N.C. and is bordered by the counties of Mecklenburg, Lunenburg, Halifax, Campbell, Prince Edward and Appomattox. There are four incorporated towns in Charlotte County: Keysville, Charlotte Court House, Phenix and Drakes Branch.

## Community and Resident Perspectives

Since the 2013 situational analysis was conducted, very little has changed as far as demographics are concerned. However, based on the responses from the surveys, there have been some changes in the overall community status and the direction of agriculture in the county since the last analysis was conducted. Two of the most significant changes were the overall economic health of the county and the explosion of smaller scale non-traditional agriculture. The issue of families struggling to make ends meet was one of the top identified problems discovered thru our research. The results indicated that family's disposable income for non-essential activities was far less than in the past. County school principals report that over 90 backpacks containing food items are being sent home on weekends; many more needy students have probably been missed. There is a need for 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce to bring industrial jobs to the county. There is a digital divide at all levels. Traditional agriculture, made up of tobacco, grains, dairy and beef, are still the mainstay of the agriculture economic picture, however, nontraditional Southside Virginia crops are becoming important factors to the County's agricultural economy. In addition to these identified issues, environment/water quality issues were identified as a concern. Charlotte County's top identified issues, with the overall economic position included can be grouped into four categories: Local Food Systems, Youth development, Environment/Water Quality and Digital Literacy/Digital divide.

## **Priority Issues**

### **Local Food Systems**

Priority issues identified under this category included: Alternative Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing, Food Safety, Chronic Illness, and Agriculture Profitability.

Extension will address this issue thru a multi-program area approach that will contain both a youth and adult component. Programming will include educational efforts that will address the whole scope of local foods, from on farm production to new enterprise development. From marketing and market development to consumer education that will include health and economic related issues as it relates to local foods.

### **Youth Development**

Priority issues identified under this category include: career preparedness and financial education, after school activities and safe places, life skills training, and positive role models.

Extension will address this issue thru working with other youth oriented programs and agencies. Extension will train adult volunteers to lead clubs and special interest groups that will provide after school and week end programming for youth. Extension will work with school to provide school enrichment, after school curriculum and programming help. Grant monies and partnerships will be sought to increase programming efforts and capabilities.

### **Environment/Water Quality**

Water quality is a growing concern for our area as well as throughout the country. Many of our waterways are impaired and the quality of our groundwater is becoming a concern.

We will address quality thru a comprehensive approach. WE will continue to educate our agricultural producers on best management practices and provide assistance to our partner agencies such as NRCS and Soil and Water District. We will conduct rain barrel workshops the will target homeowners and the public to increase their awareness of water issues. In addition, an educational process will be implemented through various youth educational efforts including field days, field schools, classroom projects and day camps. These events will be a cooperative effort between 4-H, ANR, Soil and Water District and the school system.

## Digital Literacy and the Digital Divide

Literacy including digital literacy is a concern for many rural counties across America. Jobs are fewer for youth to stay in rural areas.

We will address digital literacy skills by working with grant funding and volunteers to provide coding and technology workshops in school settings, for adults and farmers. Increasing the knowledge base of available technology, hopefully increasing the technology knowledge and decreasing the divide.

