

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MARCH

Alfalfa-Pasture-Livestock School

APRIL

Livestock Committee Meeting

Agronomy Committee Meeting

MAY

Pasture Demonstration

Woodlot Demonstration

JUNE

Pasture Tour

Marketing meeting

JULY

Lamb drenching Demonstration

4-H Club Planning Meeting

AUGUST

Alfalfa Seeding Demonstration

Pasture Tour

Woodlot Tour

OCTOBER

Cattle sales

All Committee Meetings to Begin
Plan for 1957

NOVEMBER

Formation of the over-all County
Extension Service Board

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(9) To have an Alfalfa-Pasture-Livestock School in the early part of the year.

(10) To have an alfalfa seeding demonstration.

The long time objectives for Bath County Agriculture have not been completed because the farm committeemen are not well versed in our problems. We do believe that now that our farmers understand some of the problems faced we will proceed towards setting up our ultimate goals for 1960 and beyond.

In our committee work we have had the cooperation of our fertilizer dealers, seed houses, banks, Farm Credit Administration, Soil Conservation Service, Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation, our County Supervisors and other County Officials. There is no reason to believe but that these same agencies will continue to assist and cooperate with our continued planning. We do plan to take some surveys in 1956 to get a more complete picture of agriculture and where we are today.

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PUTTING THE PLAN TO WORK

Our program for 1956 and beyond in Bath County was started at a meeting of the leaders in the County. This was a dinner meeting and was financed partially by the bank in the area. From this meeting the people gave us the idea that our main problem was low income farmers. They also decided that this main problem would be combated through the formation of at least three committees this year. The committees have been organized and are as follows:

Forestry Committee

Agronomy Committee

Livestock Committee

The reports of these committees are included in this plan of work. Since our planning got started a little late to get the full benefit of it in 1956 we haven't had our general meeting which brings together all the committees in one group. It was thought at our committee meetings that we would have this general meeting after we had formulated our Home Economics Committee and our 4-H Committees. This means that this part of our program will have to wait until we are fortunate enough to have a Home Agent.

Our goals for our committees already set up are as follows:

- (1) To have at least three demonstrations in forestry management in 1956. These demonstrations to be placed in different parts of the County and will be visited by a tour in mid-summer if plausible.
- (2) To have at least ten farmers sign up under the ACP program for forestry improvement.
- (3) To plant at least 25,000 trees.
- (4) To increase our alfalfa acreage from 400 acres in 1954 to 600 in 1956.
- (5) To have at least two pasture demonstrations during 1956.
- (6) To increase the quality of our calves in the calf sales to better than 50% choce and fancy calves.
- (7) To increase the number of participants in our wool pool.
- (8) To increase the money value of the lamb crop sold by Bath County farmers.

the one segment of livestock farming in the County where our income could be increased this year, therefore, an intensive educational program will be started on all phases of sheep production. This part of our program will begin with the Livestock School in late March at which time we will have a specialist from the Animal Husbandry Department talk on the returns per ewe contest in Virginia. We will get some participation in this contest but it is the intension of the Livestock Committee to inaugurate a contest in the county.

Letters will be written to all sheep men at four different times during the year outlining a program at that time for controlling worms in ewes and lambs, Controlling navel ill in lambs, foot rot in ewes and lice and ticks on both ewes and lambs.

(3) Forego crop tour where farmers may see what the other fellow is doing.

LIVESTOCK

Livestock and livestock products make up more than 3/4 of our farm income. In 1955 we had about 6000 head of beef and dairy cattle, 7000 sheep and something over 2000 hogs. This was an increase of both sheep and cattle over preceding years and also an all time high for cattle and the highest point sheep have reached in the past ten years. With such a great stake in livestock production we must do a better job than we have done in the past. We can never increase the number of acres suitable for agricultural production therefore our only chance of keeping our standard for living on farms in Bath County is to increase the quality of our livestock and with it a higher per-unit sale price, or to increase the number of units kept on the same land.

We will start in 1956 to get every livestock producer on an improvement program. Since it is mighty easy to show a farmer by the use of the dollar mark then we will begin with the marketing angle by use of figures from our two calf sales and one yearling sale. Complete records will be used for the past three years to show farmers how their cattle sold with their neighbors cattle. After this has been shown to them we will analyze each farm to get at the faults involved. It is assumed that many of the faults will prove to be caused by poor bulls, cull cows, shy breeders, poor feed program, improper breeding time, and maybe some other, however, the above are the ones that will be worked on. We can do something about most of these problems this year.

It is intended that at least three beef cattle and sheep farms will be included in our farm tour which will be arranged for mid-summer at which time our entire program will be gone over with those attending.

Our sheep flocks give us a considerable part of our farm income each year through the sale of lambs and wool. Our Livestock Committee thought that this was

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AGRONOMY

Bath County farmers derive most of their income from pasture and hay crops through the sale of livestock, however some corn is sold as grain. Our row crop production is concentrated along the Cowpasture River which is east of the mountain. Much of our land is too steep and rough for crop production which accounts for the corn acreage being reduced from more than 4000 in 1939 to a little over 1200 acres in 1955.

Our small grain acreage was also negligible with only 1000 acres being seeded in 1955, 500 of which was wheat.

Bath County being located in what is known as the Alleghany Highlands, lies in what is often referred to as the Blue Grass Belt. All this means is that in summer we have cool nights and plenty of rainfall. Most farmers realize that we are in a natural grass country and consequently do very little to improve our pasture and hay situation. We depend on upland pasture and meadow hay. This is pointed up very forcefully by the fact that it takes twice as much hay land and twice as much pasture acreage to provide for our livestock than the average for Virginia. Our immediate needs are to increase corn yields and to reduce the number of acres required to graze and winter each head of livestock.

We are starting a program in 1956 to increase corn yield by proper land use, correct fertilization and planting of adapted hybrids. This program will be carried to the farmers through the press with weekly and monthly reminders, with quarterly letters and an Agronomy School. The forage program will be stressed in all of our contacts with the farmers throughout the year. Our program will start in late March with an Alfalfa, Pasture, Livestock School at which time our Agronomy Committee will outline their program for the year.

- (1) This program will include two pasture demonstrations, one on each side of the mountain, where pasture fertilization and management will be stressed.
 - (2) An Alfalfa Seeding Demonstration where the farmers will be invited to attend.
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forestry committee will visit them and decide if it is advisable to have a tour of these demonstrational areas during the 1956 growing season. If a tour is deemed wise, then it will be an all day meeting in which all farmers will be invited, with the program being handled by the West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company, U. S. Forestry Service, and Virginia Division of Forestry, WPI Extension Foresters and other interested people in cooperation with our Bath County Forestry Committee.

FORESTRY

Forestry probably means more to the people of Bath County than any other phase of agriculture. Many of our farmers derive a considerable portion of their income from forest products, while many of our rural non-farm people make all of their living from forest products.

The beauty of Bath County is known far and wide, and even though our summer climate is most desirable, the largest number of people come to the valley during April and October. In April they come to see the dogwoods bud and everything else that seems to thrive in our beautiful woodlands. In October they come to see the beautiful colors of the turning leaves on our mountains and hills. This is somewhat of an intangible asset, but we all realize that our catering to vacationers would be materially lessened were it not for our beautiful forest lands.

In the past most of our forestry work has been done on the lands owned by the Virginia Hot Springs Company. While the stake that the average farmer has in forestry is small, but when taken on a county basis, it looms rather large. Indiscriminate cutting of all trees when they reach the size for pulp wood helps the local populace to make a living this year, but it certainly decreased the chance of his children making a living from the same land.

The immediate needs are for the farmers to mark their timber so that cutting can be done in a business like manner. Educate timber cutters to cut some today and leave some for tomorrow. Get farmers and others conscious of the great stake Bath County has in forestry and forests. An educational program will be started in 1956 in which we will attempt to reach all farmers and other rural people who make their living from forest products. This program will consist of at least three timber improvement demonstrations on farms located throughout the county. Two demonstrations have already been set up, one for the Armstrong Community, which is in the north east part of the county, another just east of Warm Springs which is in the south central part of the county, while still another will be located in the west side of the county. After these demonstrations have gotten under way the

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are from 50 to 75 miles apart and separated by rugged mountain ranges with only one main route across them. There is very little in Bath County to weld the county together. The people use the roads that go up and down the valleys rather than crossing the mountains. Some of this is habit but most of it is expediency. Our agricultural program must suit the entire county and consequently it has to be varied.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Bath County is located in the western part of Virginia in what is known as the Alleghany Highlands. It is in the western tier of counties along with Highland and Allsghany. The topography of the County is extremely rugged with the main mountain ranges running from northeast to southwest and criss-crossed by spurs and smaller ridges.

The total area of the County is 550 sq. miles which is larger than the average Virginia County, however, more than half of our area is in George Washington National Forest and Douthat Park. The population center is in Warm Springs Valley where the main operation of the Virginia Hot Springs Company is located. In this valley, which runs through the center of the County from north to south is located the main attractions in the County which is the Homestead Hotel, the last of the Colonial Spas in Bath.

Of course, Warm Springs from whence came the name of the County, the valley, and the county seat is located within a short distance of the court house. Here 1200 gallons of health giving water per minute bubble from the ground in one huge spring, at a temperature of 98 degrees which never varies throughout the year. In this valley the Virginia Hot Springs Company maintains a 17,000 acre farming and forest operation. There are also many private estates owned mostly by wealthy yankees who come to the Valley either for the baths or our wonderful summer climate. Bath is vacation country. The main source of income is the Virginia Hot Springs Company, with an annual payroll of \$2,000,000, which caters to vacationers. Our population is doubled during the hunting season when the outlanders come to Bath for deer, turkey and bear.

There are 600 farms in the county with about 350 of them fully marned, however there are less than 300 full time farmers in the county and they are located either at the extreme north and south ends of Warm Springs Valley, on the Jackson River Valley, on the Burnsville plateaus or on the fertile bottoms along the Cowpasture River. Our farmers are spread out over our entire county area. Most of them

1956 PLAN OF WORK

BATH COUNTY

1956

M. Lester Dalten, County Agent

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