

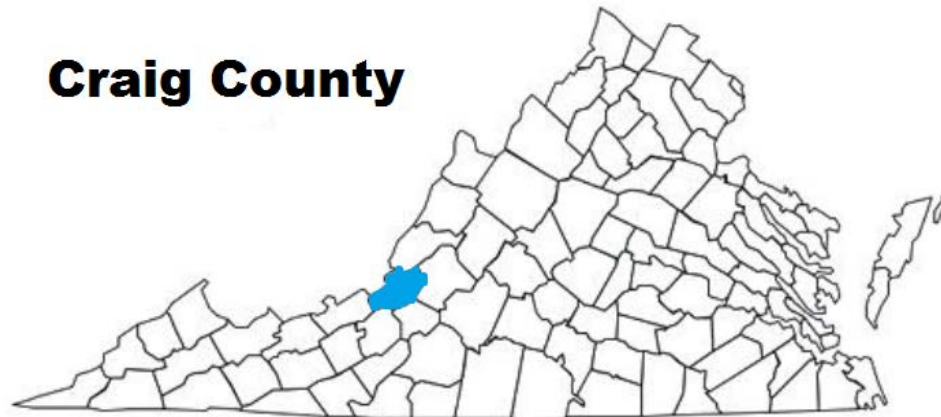


Virginia Cooperative Extension

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Situation Analysis Report



Craig County

2018

UNIT Extension Staff

G. Andrew Allen III, UC, Extension Agent, ANR

Enola Ross, Unit Support Staff

UNIT Extension Leadership Council

Kathi Toelke
Ralph Bradley
Carolyn Fleming
Ann Harrell
Patricia K. Johnston
Lane Keffer

Sue S. Bostic
Robert R. Collins
Carter Fleming
James Harrell
Frank Keffer
Robin Lipps

Jean Bradley
Kirstann Edwards
Ben Flinchum
Shawn Hildebrand
Mary Keffer
Woody Lipps

Introduction

Virginia Cooperative Extension offers need based programs based on information from the public in each county. A needs assessment and situation analysis are completed every five years. A survey was mailed to citizens of Craig County in the fall of 2018 to determine what type of programming will be needed in the next few years. The survey included open questions to allow individuals to bring up needs that they saw, and a chart of questions that were rated from 1 to 5 according to importance. This information was used to rank the importance of each topic.

Unit Profile

Craig County is located west of Roanoke, and North West of Blacksburg. Giles and Montgomery Counties to the south, Alleghany and Botetourt to the north, and West Virginia to the west. The population was estimated to be 5,062 in 2017, and 5,175 in 2010, for a loss of 2.2 percent. It is a mostly rural county with New Castle being the only incorporated town. More than half of the county is owned by the National Forest. There are 2930 homes with a median value of \$164,800. Median household income of \$53,526. It is estimated that 370 people live and work in the county, 247 commute into the county to work, and 1697 people live in the county but commute to work outside the county. About 1059 commute to the Roanoke and Salem area, the others to adjacent counties or farther. Average commute time is estimated at 37 minutes. There are no stoplights in Craig County. All the traffic entering, leaving, and travel through the county is on two lane highways. Poverty rate is estimated to be 11.1 percent. Paint Bank on the western side of the county has become a popular tourist area with the Paint Bank Store, Swinging Bridge Restaurant, Tingles Mill, Depot Lodge, and Hollow Hill Buffalo Farm. Crossing east over Potts Mountain brings you to Johns Creek, then to New Castle with Meadow Creek and Sinking Creek Valleys to the south, Lower Craig Creek and Barbers Creek to the north, and Uppers Craig Creek to the east. The Appalachian Trail crosses route 42 in the sinking creek valley to the south, and near Dragons Tooth to the north near the Roanoke County line. Ninety-eight percent of the population is white, 0.4% black or African American, 0.4% American Indian, 0.2% Asian, 0.8 more than one race, and 1.5% have some Hispanic or Latino heritage. Four and a half percent of the population is under 5 years of age, 18.5% under 18 years old, and 22.5% over 65. Female out number males slightly at 50.4%. While 73.4% of the households have a computer in the home, only 60.3 have internet. High School graduates make of 90.6% of the population over 25, and 19.2% have a Bachelor's degree or higher. There are 207 farms, using 46,625 acres, for an average farm size of 225 acres, which generates \$4,886,000 in income. There are 7,427 cows, 898 layers, 206 horses, 191 sheep, an unknown number of bison, and 3 camels in the county. It is estimated that 7995 acres were used for hay, 254 acres of corn raised for grain, and 201 acres grown for silage.

Community and Resident Perspectives

The community was generous with its responses for community needs. Many comments about agriculture needs such as farming methods, marketing, insects, land-use taxation, alternative farm products and methods, and environmental issues. Youth activities were mentioned often showing the value and need for 4-H, as well as technical education. Community issues such as care for the aging, employment, safety and health were addressed. Comments about issues that would improve the quality of life in the county.

When asked to rank issues in a provided list Agriculture production and profitability ranked the highest, with agriculture sustainability, preservation, water quality, environmental protection, and land use following close behind. Slightly lower on the list were farm land transition, tourism, local food, livestock management, timber development and wood products.

The community has always show an interest in 4-H and youth development. A small rural community usually offers a very limited number of youth programs, so the activities offered by 4-H are greatly appreciated. Many adults brag about their 4-H activities and awards.

Priority Issues

Agriculture

Agriculture brings over \$4,800,000 in revenue to the county. Helping farmers identify profitable activities and programs to existing or addition products is very important. But it is also important to do this in a way to protect the environment and water quality is also important. Programs on agriculture production, business management, livestock, forages, alternative crops, water quality, and environmental issues are all within the scope of Virginia Cooperative Extension's mission. As with any business farmers need information about new or changing production techniques to remain current and competitive.

4-H and Youth

The community is very interested in young people. 4-H programs in the schools, community clubs, and other youth activities and completions are very important. Schools offer the opportunity for agents to get to know young people and build relationships and skills. Virginia Cooperative Extension is channeling more efforts into S.T.E.M. programs and teaching materials. Community and special interest clubs provide opportunities for young people to build skills and develop confidence. 4-H camp remains very popular, and provides a fun place to educate young people with many worthwhile and useful life skills. Competitions encourage young people to perfect their skills and showcase their abilities. Developing good skills in young people develops productive adults in the future. Volunteer adult leadership is vital to growing strong community or special interest clubs. Volunteers may have special skill or receive training on projects needed by young people. Young people that see accomplishments in one area may develop confidence to tackle new more difficult projects.

Tourism

Craig County is a very appealing place for outdoor activities. Tourism brings income to the community. With a high percentage of the land area in National Forest there is potential for many outdoor activities. Agriculture tourism has become more appealing as more of the population live in cities and suburbs. Individuals are looking for outdoor opportunities. Virginia Cooperative Extension has information and resources to help individuals interest in Agriculture tourism.

Community Development

Changes are constant. Resilient communities are able to adapt and change to take advantage of new opportunities. VCE has the opportunity to work with community leaders to find opportunities and address changes

Appendices

