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Powhatan County 2023 Situation Analysis Report

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Figure 1. View of rural Powhatan County. (Rachel Henley, Virginia Cooperative Extension)



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Ranking	Issue/Need	High Effort %	Very High Effort%	Total
1	Protecting water quality	20	34	90.0%
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Figure 2. Top 5 Priority Issues/Needs for Powhatan County.

Introduction

Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) builds relationships within the Commonwealth's counties and cities, collaborates among partnerships, while providing education to individuals, businesses, and communities. Issues, problems and needs of the people in specific localities guide individual VCE unit programming. In an effort to identify key issues facing Powhatan County citizens, an updated Situation Analysis was necessary as the last assessment conducted locally was in 2018. Powhatan's Extension Leadership Council (ELC), which includes community volunteers and unit staff, implemented the four-step process to determine what issues or problems are major public concerns. Existing data gathered from various national and state sources (U.S. Census, Ag Census, Virginia Labor Market, etc.) was incorporated into Powhatan's Unit Profile.

Organizing for action was the first step in conducting a Situation Analysis and took place during the ELC meeting in March 2023. This involved an overview of the process presented by Cathy Howland, Powhatan Extension Unit Coordinator. Tony Hackenberg, ELC Chair, discussed what an ELC is charged to do and how it relates to the situation analysis. Next, ELC members received a draft of the survey questions which they discussed at the June 2023 ELC meeting. A sub-committee, including both ELC volunteers and staff, was selected to begin work on updating the analysis and various methods were identified to gather data during the summer of 2023.

Following the ELC meeting, staff finalized the survey per the ELC's recommendation which was to include a question regarding the type of employment held by the individual completing the survey. Next, the survey was distributed by email and social media, as well as hard copies printed for those without digital capabilities. In addition, printed flyers were posted within gathering sites countywide including the public library, parks and recreation building, senior meetings, local farmer's market and the Powhatan County administration building. A QR code was included on all flyers so participants were still able to access the survey through an electronic option. The sub-committee met in November 2023 to review surveys. Results of the survey data were compiled and analyzed by the sub-committee to identify priority issues to guide Extension's educational program efforts. A Unit Profile was provided by Virginia Cooperative Extension and incorporated into the final product. Finally, the committee presented the updated Situational Analysis during the December 2023 ELC meeting.

Data used in the Situation Analysis was obtained through VCE, Powhatan County Demographic and Economic Profile, Powhatan's 2021 Comprehensive Plan, and Virginia Employment Commission Community Profile: Powhatan County. Other sources of data included census information and statistics from the United States Department of Agriculture and Virginia Department of Health. This report is a result of the sub-committee's work.

Unit Profile

Overview

In May 1777, the Virginia General Assembly created the County of Powhatan out of land from the eastern portion of Cumberland County between the Appomattox and James Rivers. In 1850, a small portion of Chesterfield was annexed, creating what today is the 272 square mile county of Powhatan. See most recent Powhatan County logo which reflects both rivers in blue on either side of Powhatan County, Figure 3.

In Virginia, there are nine counties bearing American Indian names. Only one, Powhatan, is named for an American Indian Chief. "Chief Powhatan," father of the famous American Indian princess, Pocahontas, was one of the greatest, and is today one of the most well-known, of the American Indian Chiefs. Throughout its history, the county's economy has been based on farming, including the cultivation of crops, timbering, and livestock production. The economy was traditionally linked to river traffic, especially along the James River. Bateau boats were used on the river and the Kanawha Canal to transport goods to and from the area. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, highways and railroads became the primary means of transportation.



Figure 3. Powhatan County Logo. (Powhatan County)

Bordered by Chesterfield County to the east, Amelia County and the Appomattox River to the south, Powhatan is bordered to the north by Goochland County and the James River, while Cumberland County sits to the west. The eastern tip of the county is approximately 15 miles west of the downtown area of Richmond City. The county, which occupies 174,080 acres, is located in the Lower Piedmont Physiographic province of Virginia. The landscape features gently rolling hills with elevations ranging from 150 to 400 feet above sea level. Drainage is provided by the Appomattox and James Rivers.

Demographics

According to the United States Census Bureau, the 2023 population in Powhatan County is estimated at 31,489 - a 3.8% population increase since April 2020. A 2019 report by Weldon Cooper Center projects the population will hit 34,440 by 2030, or 13% within a 10-year span. Population growth in Powhatan County has observed a steady climb since 1990 when it totaled 15,328. Within the next 10 years, the population jumped 46% in 2000, followed by another 25% in 2010. Population density per square mile was 117 in 2020, while it was 108 in 2010.

Gender distribution in the region is as follows: 47.9% female and 52.1% male. Persons under 18 years are 18% and those under 5 years are represented by 4.3% of the population. Racial demographics for Powhatan as of 2021 resulted in the following: 88.4% white, 8.6% African American (down from 10.05% in 2019), 1.8% for those who identify as belonging to two or more races, 0.7% Asian alone, and 0.4% American Indian and Alaska native alone. An estimated 2.7% of Powhatan's population was Hispanic or Latino.

Households

Powhatan continues to serve as a bedroom community for the greater Richmond area, commuting to work outside of Powhatan. The mean travel time to work for workers 16 and older was 32.8 minutes. An estimated 60.3% of residents identify that they work in the following industries: 21.3% Construction; 20% Government; 10.7% Retail Trade; and 8.3% Accommodation and Food Services. Powhatan County's unemployment rate in 2023 was 2.9%.

This is a decrease from 2.5% in 2021, however is 1.0 percentage point under the state unemployment rate of 3.9%.

The family living arrangement in the time period of 2017 to 2021 was 2.60 persons per household. Median household income was \$85, 179 in 2016. From 2019 to 2021 it increased 13.8% from \$89,090 to 101,395. Nearly 51% of households have an income of \$100,000 or more. As of July 2022, the Census Bureau estimated there were 11,077 owner-occupied housing units in Powhatan with an estimated 2.6 persons per household. The median value of single-family dwellings (2018-2022) was \$356,500. For the same time period the median mortgage payment for a homeowner was \$1,902 per month and median gross rent was \$1,170 per month. Children in single parent households was 12% in 2023, compared to 24% in Virginia.

Median household income in 2022 for Powhatan County was \$108,089. In 2021, the median household income in Powhatan was \$101,395 compared to Virginia's income of \$80,963. The percent of people living in poverty was 5.6% during this period. In February 2020, Powhatan County had an unemployment rate of 2.4 percent, the lowest rate since 2007. This rate was below the state (2.8 percent) and national (3.7 percent) unemployment rates. Many residents leave Powhatan County for work. Based on 2018 commuter data: 2,134 residents live and work in the county; 11,359 residents leave Powhatan daily for work, with most commuting to the City of Richmond, Henrico County, or Chesterfield County; 4,601 workers commute from other localities to Powhatan County, with most commuting from the City of Richmond, Chesterfield County, and Henrico County. Powhatan County Public Schools is the largest employer in Powhatan.

Education

Data indicated of those individuals 25 years of age or older living in Powhatan, 91.4% graduated from high school. Those with a bachelor's degree, or higher, are 31.1% of the population. Those with some college studies were 62% in 2023.

According to Virginia School Quality Profiles, all Powhatan County public schools were accredited during 2022 to 2023. The total enrollment of all five schools is 4,251 students. There are 1,412 students at Powhatan High School and 971 at Powhatan Middle School. The three elementary schools have a total of 1,868 students. The percentage of children enrolled in Head Start, Powhatan's public school preschool program, for youth ages three to four, dropped to 47.3% in 2021 compared to 54.9% in 2019. Within the high school, minority enrollment is 14%, while 17% of the student body are economically disadvantaged. A total of 14% of high school students in Powhatan take advantage of the free lunch program. The student to teacher ratio is 13:1.

Powhatan County is home to one private Catholic school, Blessed Sacrament Huguenot, with a total enrollment of 467 students. This includes a preschool, lower, middle and high school. There are also many homeschool families in Powhatan County.

Powhatan's Health

Powhatan County offers a variety of community facilities and outdoor recreation areas. Powhatan Parks and Recreation Department has several outdoor recreational areas within the county available to residents: Fighting Creek Park, Village Park, Turner Complex pavilion (behind Turner field), Village Complex Aces Diamond outfield, and Pocahontas Landmark Center Pickleball Courts. There are also walking trails in Fighting Creek Park as well as through the Powhatan Village. Powhatan YMCA, Powhatan Public Library, Powhatan Department of Social Services, Powhatan Free Clinic, Goochland/Powhatan Community Services Board, General District Court, Powhatan Fire and Rescue, Senior Connections, Community Matters for active adults, and many other opportunities are accessible to county residents. Powhatan County is also home to the Powhatan State Park which is situated along the James River.

Adult obesity increased by 4% between 2021 and 2023. This is nearly one-third of the population. However, physical inactivity dropped from 28% to 19% and adult smoking also declined from 18% to

16% though still higher compared to 14% in Virginia. Teen birth rate per 1,000 females (ages 15 to 19) dropped from 9 to 7.

Unemployment was up slightly in the last two years to 2.9%. Powhatan's unemployment rate was lower by a full percentage point than the overall state average of 3.9%. Children living in poverty has been consistently at 7%, which is well under the state and national average. Children living in single parent households rose to 12% in 2023, compared to 8% two years ago. Powhatan's rate for single parent households is close to the current state average of 13%.

Agriculture

The 2017 U.S. Census of Agriculture for Powhatan showed an 8% increase in land in farms since the 2007 U.S. Census of Agriculture, a drastic reverse from the previous five years which saw a 45% decrease. The market value of products sold has increased by 15% with over \$10 million sold in 2012. The Census also showed a shift in farm size. In 2007, farms totaling within the range of 10 to 49 acres had the highest number of farms. By 2012, Powhatan farms reflected equal amounts with the majority of farms in the 10-49 acre and 50-179 acre ranges.

There are numerous small farms currently in Powhatan, yet just as many large-scale farms within the County. This makes for a very diverse agricultural industry. There are approximately 250 farms in Powhatan County based on the 2012 Census of Agriculture data. There has been an increase in the market value of farms, as well as the market value of their equipment and machines. The 2012 Agriculture Census also showed that 196 males and 54 females engaged in production agriculture. Based on Census data for Powhatan County between 2007 and 2012, there has been a shift from 35% who indicated farming was their primary occupation to 48%.

The increased development of the equine industry generates much economic value at the local level. Powhatan has many equine operations where the owner obtains his or her main income from the business. Based on the USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) in 2008, almost half of Virginia's horses were used primarily for pleasure riding in 2006. The Powhatan State Park, Powhatan Wildlife Management Area, and Belmead Stables at St. Francis/St. Emma are three great opportunities that bring in recreational horseback riders to the county. There are many lessons, training, breeding and boarding horse barns in the county as well. Based on the 2008 NASS statistics, Powhatan has somewhere between 1,000 and 2,499 horses.

Traditional agriculture operations still center on cow/calf, row crops, vegetable production and nurseries. There is limited production in dairy and poultry; however, the State Farm Department of Corrections moved their dairy herd and milking barn from Goochland across the river to Powhatan in 2015 along with the Grade A milk processing plant inside Powhatan Correctional in 2011. This facility takes in Virginia Tech's milk every other day and then ships processed milk to be used in some of Virginia Tech and Radford University's dining halls. There has also been an increase in the specialty crop area including organic, value added products, and more.

The 2022 U.S. Census of Agriculture will be available in early 2024 to reflect a more accurate representation of Powhatan County's agriculture and the changes since 2017.

Community and Resident Perspectives

As indicated in the introduction, the process used to identify key issues in the community included information gathered from several sources. In addition to the survey results, these sources included The National Citizen Survey (NCS) conducted by Powhatan County in 2018, Powhatan County 2021 Comprehensive Plan, and ELC subgroup discussions.

Key findings of The NCS indicated that Powhatan residents enjoy a high quality of life and plan to remain in the community. Further, residents noted that safety is a priority for Powhatan's future, as well as preserving open space and agricultural areas. With respect to housing development, the surveyed residents noted a definite divide on preferred housing types and the amount of emphasis the County should place on encouraging private sector development.

Key themes noted in Powhatan County’s Comprehensive Plan included the following: 1) Maintain Rural Character; 2) Provide Excellent Public Services (public safety, education, recreation, sewer, water, and transportation); 3) Maintain Fiscal Sustainability; and 4) Acknowledge and Accommodate Reasonable Pressures for Growth (planned growth can be accommodated without compromising other aspects of Powhatan life that are most valued).

In addition, VCE also surveyed a representative sample of Virginia residents across the Commonwealth between February and March 2023. Respondents were presented with a series of issues and asked to determine the level of effort VCE should allocate to each need. VCE’s statewide survey showcases Virginians’ perceptions of issues. See table Figure 3 (below) for the top 10 ranked issues the Powhatan ELC sub-committee pulled from Powhatan County’s final survey results.

There were several of the same issues that warranted high or very high effort from VCE and Powhatan County, however, the majority were different. “Protecting water quality” ranked as the number one issue in both the Powhatan County survey (90%) and the statewide survey conducted by VCE (75%). The second issue that both surveys had in common involved “strengthening of the local food system.” The state had this ranked in fifth place (67%), while the local survey ranked it third (76.7%). “Ensuring safe, high quality foods” was ranked 2nd for the state, but 13th in Powhatan. However, the local sub-committee agreed this issue with 73%, along with “ensuring safe food handling” at 65%, could be addressed more adequately in Powhatan if a family and consumer sciences position was added to the local staff.

Ranking	Issue/Need	High Effort %	Very High Effort%	Total
1	Protecting water quality	20	34	90.0%
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3	Strengthening local food system	23	23	76.7%
4	Helping youth develop leadership, citizenship, and other life skills	23	22	75.0%
5	Assisting farmers and forest landowners in production and profitability	23	20	71.7%
6	Reducing misuses and overuse of pesticides and fertilizers	18	25	71.7%
7	Protecting air quality	18	24	70.0%
8	Assisting forest landowners with sustainable management practices	19	22	68.3%
9	Getting more adults involved in mentoring youth	25	16	68.3%
10	Promoting agricultural, natural resources, and environmental literacy	21	20	68.3%

Figure 3. Top 10 Issues/Needs for Powhatan County

Community Issues

The process of identifying the priority issues for Powhatan’s Situation Analysis involved a discussion among the ELC sub-committee members who were tasked with this decision. The committee consisted of both Powhatan Extension staff and ELC volunteers. The participants reviewed more than 50 needs addressed in the survey, and then discussed specifically those ranked with high or very high effort that were also within the top 10. Next, they identified those needs considered to be the priority issues in Powhatan that the Extension staff would focus upon over the next five years. Although the majority of these priority issues were those most people identified, there

were several included in the top five that were pulled up based on several factors. One major discussion point involved whether or not the Powhatan Unit was equipped to make an impact on, or has the most community partnerships/collaborations to tackle the issue(s). See the Top 5 issues identified below in Figure 4.

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Figure 4. Priority Issues Identified for Powhatan County.

Although the issue involving “Promoting agricultural, natural resources, and environmental literacy” was ranked in 10th place for Powhatan, the committee observed that this received a 68.3% overall but was within 3% of the 5th place issue which was very similar to a higher-ranking issue. The Powhatan Unit has focused on this issue for many years both with adults and youth. In fact, the public and private schools consistently request support from staff to assist with programs in these areas. Specifically, within agricultural literacy where the Unit develops a Farm Day program annually for the 3rd grade classes. This has received local acknowledgement and serves as a great example of an interdisciplinary program - involving ANR, 4-H and FCS programming. Currently, the Powhatan Unit has one 4-H Extension agent and one Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) Extension agent. However, the ANR position will be open as of January 31 and a replacement is being sought.

Future Programming to Address Community Issues

The following provides a summary of how the Powhatan Unit plans to address the selected priority issues. Currently, the Powhatan Extension office is without an ANR agent but potential plans in the area of agriculture are included. Partnerships among surrounding county ANR agents will be utilized until a permanent hire is made.

Issue 1: Protecting water quality

Improving water quality in Powhatan County has been an issue for many years. Powhatan staff will continue to offer an annual well water testing program and maintenance of a healthy septic system in partnership with the Goochland Extension office, Powhatan Health Department, and Monacan Soil and Water Conservation District. In addition, Powhatan’s ELC will continue to provide several scholarships for low income families seeking well water testing. In an effort to increase the number of residents participating in this program, Powhatan Extension staff will promote the program earlier in the year and reach out to Powhatan’s Free Clinic and Rotary Club for support. Both of these programs will also have an educational program for residents to gain a better understanding on how to develop change in these areas. Powhatan’s 4-H Extension agent will partner with the Powhatan County Public Schools STEM coaches to provide 4-H in-school enrichment programs, such as MWEE, or Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences, and stations at Farm Day. These opportunities can provide youth with hands-on experiences to increase awareness of the importance of good water quality. Community events, such as Powhatan Earth Day Celebration, are also areas the Extension office can provide opportunities for residents to gain education through interaction with Master Gardener volunteers that can bring about change.

Issue 2: Preserving farm and forest land

In order to preserve farm and forest land, it is important for residents to be educated in their part of this important issue. Powhatan residents consistently ask that the county maintain a rural appearance and lifestyle. However, this can be difficult if no one understands programs that can assist in this area. To increase the number of acres in agricultural land, it is important for Powhatan Extension to partner with the local government in providing education to the landowners as well as new residents moving west. One way this change can be accomplished is partnering on committees such as the local AFD, Agricultural Forestal Development program, Powhatan Farm Bureau and Monacan Soil and Water Conservation District, to support and educate the landowners. Providing information through the local newspaper is another way to educate the community as a whole. Program partnerships with VCE forestry Extension agents, as well as the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDF), will also provide additional areas to reach out to the community with educational programs. Through the public schools, Extension will distribute tree seedlings through the STEM program, along with educational materials for families, to increase awareness of forest land. This can be a partnership with the schools, in addition to working with district forestry agents and VDF.

Issue 3: Strengthening the local food system

Strengthening the local food system in Powhatan County is a need that Extension will focus on heavily through partnerships with Powhatan County Economic Development, Powhatan Village Farmers Market, Powhatan Farm Bureau and Monacan Soil and Water Conservation District. Powhatan County is considering taking over the management of the local farmer's market and Extension plans to serve on the committee to bring education to the residents and vendors related to food systems. In addition, Powhatan ELC would like to add a part-time position to bring a Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) Extension Agent back to the community focused on nutrition and finance. The unit office has been without this role for the past two to three years and many opportunities are coming available for this specific expertise. Parks and Recreation, as well as Community Matters - a weekly program that targets actively aging adults, are seeking strong educational programs from Extension in the areas of food safety, nutrition and finance. This individual could also provide education regarding the local food system. Powhatan 4-H will work with the local public school system to educate about the importance of growing a strong food system with increased produce being purchased from local producers. This is also an area that students in the county schools, as well as private and homeschool audiences can participate in nutrition education programs that can eventually reflect change in behaviors. Through Farm Day, part of the nutrition education for students could be provided during this event as well. Master Food volunteers and potential FCS agent will provide nutrition education programs that will support the local food system, as well as engage residents in food safety which was also a high-ranking issue in the survey.

Issue 4: Helping youth develop leadership, citizenship and other life skills

Virginia Cooperative Extension offers a wide range of programs that impact positive youth development through the 4-H program. Quality programming through the local 4-H clubs will continue to assist youth in developing leadership, citizenship and many other life skills. Parliamentary procedure utilizes officers through the 4-H clubs which provides the youth a first-hand experience as leaders and good citizens. As part of the 4-H club development, youth will be provided opportunities to grow as leaders and citizens by participating in statewide events such as 4-H Day at the Capitol and 4-H Congress. These experiences as a whole program provide youth with options to be exposed to and develop many other life skills too. Through the 4-H camping program, teens participate in a six-month leadership program with hands-on learning provided by 4-H faculty. During the week of 4-H camp, caring adult volunteers and staff help youth develop a wide range of life skills such as responsibility, decision making, caring for others, citizenship and so much more. ANR and 4-H agents, along with adult volunteers can help youth develop many life skills through educational programs within the cattle working program, livestock/dairy judging and more. Partnerships will form among the local Farm Bureau, Monacan Soil and Water Conservation District, surrounding unit offices, Powhatan Public Schools and local producers to help youth develop life skills.

Issue 5: promoting agricultural, natural resources, and environmental literacy

Powhatan Unit will promote agricultural, natural resources and environmental literacy among residents of this community. There are many opportunities to develop new, and continue existing, programs in Powhatan County to promote these specific areas. Without the collaboration among the following partners, it would be difficult for Powhatan Extension to educate for this change: local Farm Bureau, Powhatan Economic Development staff, Monacan Soil and Water Conservation District, surrounding unit offices, Powhatan Public Schools, Powhatan Public Library and local producers. Powhatan Extension will partner with the local Economic Development staff and farmers market manager to create opportunities to promote agriculture so residents gain a better understanding of its importance. In addition, social media will be a large part of making this happen with featuring producers, their lifestyle and products. Farm Day and embryology are two programs that take place within the public schools to promote agricultural literacy. Powhatan Extension also is a partner with the local Earth Day Celebration that brings more than 20 environmentally-friendly organizations together to educate residents on how they can make behavior changes - activities in the schools will take place in the months leading up to the Celebration so that youth also gain insight. Master Gardener volunteers will continue providing educational programs that will increase knowledge about these important areas - such as composting workshops, Gardening 101, native plants and more. Huguenot Beekeepers Association volunteers will continue to provide Beekeeping 101 and share the importance of beekeeping to agriculture. These two groups of volunteers, along with the James River Master Naturalists, promote these areas year-round and also participate in the Earth Day celebration.

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