



Agriculture Economic Development Advisory Board 2008 Report

In Bedford County, the total economic impact of agriculture and forestry was \$135,731,096.00 and the combined industries accounted for 2,889 jobs, (2007 Data). The Agriculture Economic Development Advisory Board, (Ag Board) addressed many Ag related issues during 2008. The following is a summary of the work of the Ag Board during the year.

Marketing and Production

County Agriculture Web Page

Our Bedford County Agriculture Web Page, www.co.bedford.va.us/ag has been very well received. It has become the place on the internet where people can go to find out what is going on in the county's agriculture community; purchase the county's agriculture products and get information about agriculture issues.

Review of Horse Slaughter Bill

The AG Board reviewed information on the American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act and companion bills, S3311/H.R. 503 that was to go before the United States Congress. After review, the Ag Board felt passing this bill would have a huge negative impact on livestock production in this country. Members of the Ag Board wrote letters to representatives Goode and Goodlatte voicing opposition to this bill and stating the reasons for our opposition.

Coyote Control

Upon request from county livestock producers and the Board of Supervisors, the Ag Board researched ways to control the Coyote problem in the county. We received information on the many different ways surrounding counties were dealing with the problem. The Ag Board invited Chad Foxx, USDA Wildlife Services Specialist to speak to our group. After much research, the Ag Board advised the county to instruct residents to use the USDA Wildlife Services to control the predator problem because bounties were found to be ineffective.

Pittsylvania County Ag Complex

The Ag Board received a request from Pittsylvania County for support of their multimillion dollar, multi-purpose Agriculture Complex. After discussion the board felt the project had merit but did not think Bedford County could give any monetary support at the time. Since that time our board has given verbal support of their project and they have given the same to our College Agriculture Curriculum Project.

Virginia DEQ Meeting

The Chairman of the Marketing and Production Committee attended the state DEQ fieldmen's meeting. Bio-solids use, management and regulation were discussed in depth by Dr. Orvis, an Environmental Scientist.

Moneta Farmer's Market

Ms. Mantana Heim spoke to the Ag Board about the Moneta Farmer's Market that was being held at the Moneta Public Library. She informed the board of some of the problems the market had faced and asked for the county's help. The board agreed to publicize the market for both vendors and consumers on the county's agriculture web page.

Virginia Agribusiness Town Hall Meeting

Members of the Ag Board and its advisors attended the Virginia Agribusiness Council's Town Hall Meeting on August 15th, 2008. The meeting was held at the Lynchburg CVCC campus. After the success of these meetings the Virginia Department of Agriculture has started having meetings for county agriculture representatives to get together and share ideas on agriculture development.

Governor Kaine's News Release on Agriculture

In October the Ag Board reviewed a news release from Governor Tim Kaine unveiling a new comprehensive study, revealing that Virginia agriculture and forestry contribute about \$79 billion annually to Virginia's economy. Governor Kaine said, "The agriculture and forestry sector is an economic engine that drives much of the economic activity in other Virginia industries, such as manufacturing, retail and wholesale trade, as well as public and private services."

The study found that agriculture accounts for more than \$55 billion of that \$79 billion total, and forestry contributes more than \$23 billion each year. If you take into account other areas of activity such as recreational opportunities, wildlife habitat, ecosystems services, agri-tourism, wine tourism, horse events, and agricultural festivals that were not part of the Cooper Center study, the total impact would be several billion dollars more than \$79 billion.

More than 500,000 people, or one of every 10 employed Virginians, is either directly or indirectly working in this sector of our economy. More than 144,000 of those jobs are related to forestry, and more than 357,000 are related to agriculture. In 2006, Virginia's farms generated an

estimated \$2.7 billion in cash receipts, and forest landowners received nearly \$350 million for harvested timber.

The Ag Board voted to send a letter along with a copy of the news release to the Chairmen of the BOS and the School Board and copy members of both boards and Dr. Blevins.

CVCC Bio-Energy Project

The Ag Board has been contacted by CVCC about assisting in a Bio-Energy Project, which could lead to outdoor laboratories on county-owned property. CVCC's energy projects would be designed to complement the basic agriculture curricula currently being developed.

Beef Grant Distributed to County Farmers

One of the grants sought and supported by the AEDAB was the Central Virginia Beef Initiative Expansion Project. This program provides a cash match up to \$3000.00 per qualifying farm to make improvements in the areas of genetics and/or handling facilities. The program was initially funded for Appomattox, Buckingham, Campbell and Cumberland counties in 2007. At the request of Bedford County, a phase two grant was submitted to include Bedford as well as make additional dollars available for the original 4 counties. This grant was funded in the amount of \$186,750.00, with approximately \$114,000.00 allocated to Bedford County. The Bedford Extension office has primary responsibility for managing the program locally including processing applications, making site visits, consulting on best practices and certifying project completion. As of December 31, 63 producers have been certified in beef quality assurance, 37 farms have been approved for funding, and 31 projects have been completed. Of the 31 projects, 22 farms installed handling facilities, 4 farms made genetic improvements through bull and/or heifer purchases, and 5 farms installed handling facilities and made genetic improvements. The program will be active through mid 2009.

Land Protection and Conservation

Citizens for Land Preservation Meeting

Members of the Land Protection and Conservation Committee along with the Bedford Farm Bureau President, Bill Nance, met with the Bedford Citizens for Land Preservation to discuss issues pertaining to the Comprehensive Plan.

Representative from Kent County, Maryland

The Ag Board invited a representative from Kent County, Maryland to come and speak to the board and visit with staff. Kent County was recognized by Progressive Farmer magazine as one of the top ten rural counties in which to live. It is known for its land conservation efforts while being located near several large cities. Ms. Carla Gerber, Community Planner for Kent County

came and spoke on September 3rd about how Kent County balanced agriculture, development and county government. She stated that the county's zoning ordinance is its most important tool for managing development while preserving a viable agriculture industry.

County Agriculture Zoning

Upon request for input from the county Planning Commission, the Ag Board along with staff held a special meeting to discuss the county's zoning ordinance as it pertains to agriculture. After much discussion the Ag Board came up with a resolution that recommends several methods of protecting the county's open agriculture land while managing inevitable development. The Chairman of the Land Protection and Conservation Committee made a presentation to the BOS explaining the Ag Board's view on the matter.

Purchase of Development Rights

The Ag Board has discussed Purchase of Development Rights several times during the past year. We continue to look for funds that may be available to the county to help create a PDR program in the county.

Education and Events

\$480,000 in Grants Awarded for College Ag Curriculum

After being awarded the \$75,000 grant from the Virginia Tobacco Commission for the purpose of hiring a researcher/developer for agriculture classes at the local community college and through many painstaking interviews the Ag Board hired Stephanie White as the Project Manager. Mrs. White has been working with individuals on the local, state and even national level to get an agriculture curriculum developed to be offered at CVCC and upon request of the Tobacco Commission, at two other Community Colleges as well. During that time she also prepared Phase II of the grant, which was recently awarded. The Phase II grant totaled \$401,375.00. Agriculture related classes are scheduled to begin in the fall of 2009 at CVCC in Bedford as well as Community Colleges in Martinsville and Abingdon. The director of the Tobacco Commission said, "This project will impact agriculture and former tobacco farmers for generations". Phase III of the grant will be applied for in 2009.

Sedalia Country Fair

The Education and Events Chairman met with leaders of the Sedalia Fair to obtain information about the fair and see what, if anything the Ag Board and/or county can do to assist in its continued success.

Ag in the Classroom Program

Members of the Ag Board and staff met with Karen Davis the director of the Virginia Farm Bureau's Ag in the Classroom program. Ag in the Classroom is a national program that provides

and trains teachers to teach students about agriculture in a SOL format. Bedford County Schools had approximately 70 elementary school teachers participate in the program this year. The school system has been receptive to the program and the Ag Board hopes the program can be implemented countywide in the future.

Red Barn Project

Michael Stokes, Bedford Parks and Recreation Director made a presentation to the AG Board about the Red Barn Project. After the slide show and discussion, Mr. Stokes asked for the Ag Board input. Several members of our board have attended the special Red Barn meetings.

Farm Bureau Annual Meeting

Several members attended the Bedford County Farm Bureau's annual meeting. Stephanie White, Ag curriculum coordinator was the feature speaker.

Vocational Agriculture

The board has discussed several times the importance of our Vocational Agriculture classes at Staunton River and Liberty High Schools. The Ag Board feels these classes should remain. The Ag Board would like to see additional agriculture related classes offered at Jefferson Forest and the county's middle schools in the future.

BSTC Horticulture

Members of the Education committee have attended the BSTC Horticulture Advisory Committee meeting throughout the year. These board members report at the regular monthly meetings.

Agriculture Brochure

The Ag Board is in the process of developing a brochure to promote the county's agriculture products and Ag Tourism in the County. The brochure will be available at the Welcome Center and throughout the county.

Carbon Credits

The Ag Board discussed what Carbon Credits are and the possibilities of Bedford farmers selling them. This will be addressed more in the future.

Warm Season Grasses

Committee members attended a seminar on Warm Season Grasses that was held in the Bedford County Administration Building. The event was sponsored by Virginia Tech and the Extension Service.

Other Activities and Actions

Historic Barns Project

The Ag Board voted to support the Bedford County Farm Bureau's Historic Barns Project. The board feels this is an important part of our county's heritage and has educational value.

Invitation to the Secretary of Agriculture

The Ag Board invited Virginia Secretary of Agriculture Todd Haymore to visit Bedford County during his travel to speak at the Virginia Cattlemen's Association Annual Meeting to be held at the Hotel Roanoke February 15th, 2008. He accepted the invitation, but later cancelled as he did not get to attend the Cattlemen's meeting. He said he would stop in Bedford in the future.

Visit to Franklin County

Ag Board representatives were invited to attend a meeting in Rocky Mount where members of the Franklin County Ag community were trying to form an Ag Board in the county. The Ag Board Chairman and the Bedford County Extension Agriculture Agent attended the meeting and spoke to the group about what had been done in Bedford County.

Stewardship Plan

Members of the Ag Board worked with Todd Kready, Bedford County Forester to produce a Stewardship Plan for the Falling Creek Park property and the surrounding property that is owned by the county. This report will be helpful as the county decides future uses for the property. This is believed to be the first Stewardship Plan ever done for county property in the state. While these reports usually cost hundreds or even thousands of dollars, this report was done at no charge to the county.

Help for Charlotte County

The Charlotte County Board of Supervisors requested that a representative from the Ag Board give information on our board as they consider forming their own Ag Board. The Chairman went and made a presentation to the Charlotte BOS. Shortly thereafter they formed their own Ag Board using Bedford's as a model. The Ag Board Chairman and the Education & Events Chairman made a second trip to Charlotte County in August to meet their newly formed Ag Board and answer any questions they had.

Guest Speakers during the year included;

- Chad J. Foxx, USDA Wildlife Services Specialist
- Greg Eaton, President of Bedford Citizens for Land Preservation
- Michael Stokes, Bedford Parks and Recreation Director
- Mantana Heim, Moneta Farmer's Market

- Ms. Carla Gerber, Community Planner, Kent County, Maryland
- Robert Lowry, Director, CVCC, Bedford Campus
- Stephanie White, College Ag Curriculum Coordinator
- Todd Kready, Bedford County Forester, DOF

AEDAB in the Press

During 2008 several articles featuring the Bedford County Agriculture Economic Advisory Board have appeared in the Roanoke, Lynchburg, Charlotte and Bedford Newspapers.

The Virginia Wildlife magazine will run an article in the spring 2009 on Bedford County. They interviewed several Bedford County residents about conservation efforts in the county. Ag Board members were involved and several were interviewed for the article.

AEDAB Future Plans

- Increase awareness and promotion of **Bedford grown products** and develop a **Bedford Produced Brand**
- **Promote the Farmers Markets** in the county
- Do more to help and **promote our Equine** community
- **Research developing a large multi-use facility** to hold large agriculture and non-agriculture events
- **Explore establishing a Bedford County Fair** (and work with and promote current fairs and festivals in the county)
- Continue to **work closely with Farm Bureau** on programs like **Ag in the Classroom and their Historic Barns Project**
- **Work with Bedford Tourism** to encourage and promote Ag related events and attractions including the Wine Trail
- Expand the **Bedford Agriculture Web Page** as needed
- Continue to **look for programs, grants and alternative resources** like Bio-solids to help Bedford County producers offset the rising cost of doing business
- Continue to investigate programs and policies to **protect and preserve our county's farms and farm land**
- **Work closely with the Planning Commission** and staff and give our views on Ag related issues when needed
- Continue to promote the **Ag Curriculum at CVCC in Bedford**, and work with other CC's throughout the state as needed
- Encourage **expansion of Ag Education** in our county school system.
- Work with **CVCC on their Bio-Energy Program** where it positively affects Bedford and Bedford Agriculture
- Find ways to better **educate the public** on the importance of Agriculture to our county
- **Work with other counties**, their Ag boards and/or Ag directors to share ideas, network

- resources, and give this region's Ag community larger markets and a stronger voice
- **Work closely with Bedford Staff, the Planning Commission, the School Board and the Board of Supervisors** to continue to make the county's agriculture community a strong and viable part of our county's economy today, and in the future
 - Hire a part-time **Agriculture Economic Development Director** sometime in the future

This report was compiled and presented to the
Bedford County Board of Supervisors by the
Agriculture Economic Development Advisory Board
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