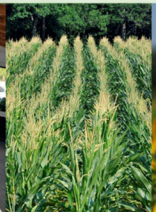


Moore County Working Lands Protection Plan

Adopted: August 21, 2012



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Moore County's agricultural lands are an essential element of the county's rural landscape. More than three-quarters of the land base is occupied by cropland, pastures and forests. This vast resource contributes greatly to the quality of life enjoyed by county residents, providing economic opportunities, environmental services and social benefits like scenic beauty, open space and rural character. The majority of the county's 800 farms are small, family-run operations; similarly, most of the forest tracts are held by families, yet these small entities combine to produce substantial quantities of agricultural and timber products. Moore County can boast being in the top ten counties in North Carolina for several activities: the production of saw logs – third in 2007; the production of broiler chickens – sixth in 2008; and the number and value of equine – eighth in 2009. Agriculture contributes greatly to the identity and pride of Moore County and residents have called for its preservation.

The purpose of this plan is to provide an assessment of the farm and forest industries in Moore County, identify their challenges and opportunities, and develop a set of strategies and actions that will protect the county's working lands and promote the agricultural economy. This plan was developed after intensive research was conducted involving statistical analysis, published reports, and surveys and interviews with local producers, business operators, residents, and agricultural support personnel.

Unfortunately agriculture faces a number of challenges that threaten the viability of family operations and erode the rural qualities they possess. Due to regional development in and adjacent to it, Moore County stands to be a destination for new residents for many years to come. Although growth and development are necessary and desirable, they can also be detrimental to farms and forests, fragmenting the working landscape and rendering important activities incompatible with residential land uses. Population growth and rural settlement may not be the greatest threats however, at least not on their own. Profits have become elusive in the world of global trade, and since farming is long, arduous work, many would-be farmers are following other career paths, leaving all of America with a potential shortage of willing and capable producers.

Despite the threats, there remains hope for the future of the county's farms and forests. There are numerous conservation programs available to landowners who wish to protect their natural resources and manage them for optimal productivity. The county administers one such program, Voluntary Agricultural Districts, as a way to raise the awareness of agricultural operations and help educate prospective home buyers about the many aspects of rural life so that conflicts can be avoided. Economic and business opportunities are also emerging, presenting farmers and forest operators alternatives to conventional enterprises. Local markets for food and environmental horticultural products, agritourism, agroforestry, and biofuels each offer a wide range of products and markets that may be profitable and appealing to existing and potential producers.

Meeting these challenges and exploiting these opportunities is difficult for individuals, so the future will depend on a community-wide effort. The mission of the goals, strategies and actions in the plan are to enhance the viability of the agricultural community for the benefit of all Moore County residents. Four goals are defined to achieve success: 1) a supportive operating environment; 2) an enhanced agricultural economy; 3) protected agricultural land; and 4) a continued succession of new farmers. The plan includes a set of goals, strategies and associated actions that are consistent with and supportive of the Farmland Preservation Trust Fund and intended to be implemented over the next several years. Although ambitious, the goals and mission can be achieved if there is strong leadership from the Moore County Agricultural Advisory Board and other community members, cooperation among stakeholders, and support from the Board of Commissioners.

The intent of this plan is neither to limit nor restrict landowners' rights and uses, nor promote the encroachment of Fort Bragg into the County of Moore. The plan is intended to serve as a guide for actions to provide landowners and residents an increased awareness of farmland preservation opportunities and agricultural awareness. Agriculture is important to the county and its economy and to the well-being of family farms. However, the ultimate decision of farmland preservation rests in the hands of the landowners of farms and forests.

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INTRODUCTION

While Moore County has a robust agricultural scene, the county is one of the top counties in the state for farmland loss. More than 800 farms manage nearly 45,000 acres of farmland to produce an array of crop and livestock products for local, national and export markets. Farming is primarily done on a small scale, but over 100 poultry farms combine to make Moore County one of the top ten producers of broiler chickens in North Carolina. Farmers and other families manage an additional 300,000 acres of forestland, much of it for timber and other forest products. Moore County is one of North Carolina's top ten producers of saw logs according to the USDA Forest Service Southern Research Station. Agriculture is important because the pastures, crop fields and forests that cover 85 percent of the county define the rural landscape, support hard working families, and provide numerous economic, environmental and social benefits to all of Moore County's residents.

Rural settlement is one of the leading threats to farms and forests. Land fragmentation, escalating property values and conflicts with non-farm neighbors, along with changes in product markets and an aging farmer population, are challenging the viability of the agricultural community. Small to midsize farms with more valuable crops will be the type of agricultural operations that will maintain the viability of the agricultural community in the county.

With more than three-fourths of the county's land base covered by farms and forests it could be easy to promote development and disregard the consequences to agricultural land. However, elected officials, community leaders and residents at large must remember that converting farm and forestland to urban uses is largely irreversible. Excessive losses of the county's working lands could significantly lower the production of food, timber and other marketable products; as well as the supply of rural amenities such as open space, watershed protection and rural lifestyles.² A means of protecting working lands is important to direct growth toward the most accommodating areas and away from highly productive farm and forest areas. Directing growth can be done through local land use

planning, zoning, infrastructure investment, such as water and sewer, as well as the strategic placement and particularly the expansion of existing schools.

Moore County residents value their farms and forests and the rural character they help define. They appreciate the entrepreneurial opportunities agriculture presents and the contributions farms and forests make to the environment, like storm water filtration and wildlife habitat. Residents also recognize the importance of agriculture to the quality of life they enjoy and want to see farms and forests protected and the rural character of their communities preserved.

Elected officials responded to the desires of residents by adopting the 1999 Land Use Plan and the Voluntary Farmland Protection Program Ordinance, which established the Agricultural Advisory Board and the Voluntary Agricultural District program. Despite these efforts, challenges continue to threaten Moore County's farms, forests and rural communities. To combat these threats and strengthen the long-term viability of the agricultural industry, elected officials and other community leaders will have to be persistent and work hard to maintain a supportive operating environment, enhance the agricultural economy, protect working lands, and cultivate farmers for the future.

Purpose of This Plan

The purpose of this plan is to provide an assessment of the agricultural industries in Moore County, identify their challenges and opportunities, and develop a set of strategies and actions that will protect the county's working lands and promote the agricultural economy. Although the industry as a whole is important to this effort, the plan is focused primarily on small and midsize, family-owned farms and forests. The strategies of this plan are intended to encourage long-term policies that support agriculture and provide specific programs that promote agricultural economic development and land protection. The plan has been written to satisfy the requirements of the N.C. Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Enabling Act ([N.C.G.S §106-735 et seq.](#)). The Act requires that a plan:

- (1) Contain a list and description of existing agricultural activity in the county.
- (2) Contain a list of existing challenges to continued family farming in the county.
- (3) Contain a list of opportunities for maintaining or enhancing small, family-owned farms and the local agricultural economy.
- (4) Describe how the county plans to maintain a viable agricultural community and shall address farmland preservation tools, such as agricultural economic development, including farm diversification and marketing assistance; other kinds of agricultural technical assistance, such as farm infrastructure financing, farmland purchasing, linking with younger farmers, and estate planning; the desirability and feasibility of donating agricultural conservation easements, and entering into voluntary agricultural districts.
- (5) Contain a schedule for implementing the plan and an identification of possible funding sources for the long-term support of the plan.

A direct benefit associated with the adoption of this plan in accordance with the Farmland Preservation Trust Fund enabling legislation, is that counties with an adopted plan will receive preference for project selection and an increase in funding. If a project is selected for funding, the county will have a reduced required local match to fund projects associated with the plan. Specifically, counties without an adopted plan will be required to match grant funds with a thirty (30%) percent local match; whereas, counties with an adopted plan will only be required to provide a fifteen (15%) local match. Funds available through the trust fund are in the form of grants. Projects must be submitted on a yearly basis and selected through a competitive review process. Projects may be funded by the trust fund when appropriations are made to the trust fund through the State's budget.

MOORE COUNTY AGRICULTURE

Land in Farms

Farmland provides many valuable benefits to the community and is the foundation of farm operations and the families they support. Farming, with a few exceptions, is land intensive, and the land is the foundation of a farm on which most decisions are based. Farmland is used to grow crops, graze livestock and support buildings and equipment. In most cases the land is also a farm's most valuable asset and one that is used to finance capital improvements like buildings and equipment. Because most farms are family owned, the land is also the most valuable asset of the household and the one that provides a safety net to protect the family from hardships like a major illness—it can be sold in whole or in part, or used as collateral for a loan.

Soil quality is an important factor in determining the success of a farm operation, affecting the type of crops that can be grown, inputs and cultivation methods, and potential yields. Soil scientists at the National Resource Conservation Service identify the characteristics of soils that are most productive for growing crops. The most capable soils for growing crops are located in the northern, central, and eastern areas of the county (see Map 1).

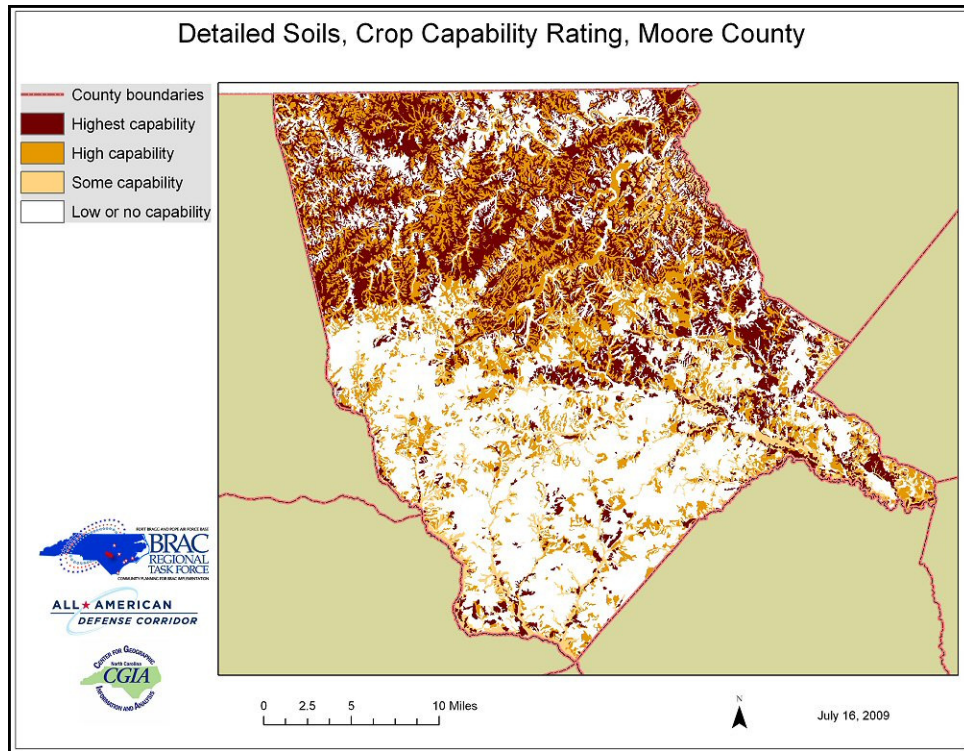
The soils in Map 1 show only the capability of the land to grow crops but does not indicate if the land is actively engaged in farming. Farmland occupies 80,075 acres, or 18 percent, of the county.³ How the farmland is used depends on several factors, one being the quality of the soil and another being the farm's enterprise, which is decided by the producer based on personal and economic factors. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) categorizes the use of farmland as cropland, pasture, woodland, or other uses.

Figure 1 shows the allocation of farmland in the county by land use. Woodland is the most common use of land on farms and can be used for timber, pasture, pine straw, other forest products, or it can be nonproductive—frequently the case along streams and property

boundaries. A third of all farmland in the county is cropland, which can be planted for production, used as temporary pasture or left idle. In 2007, 42 percent of the cropland was used as pasture or left idle while the rest was planted with crops; primarily hay and soybeans. Permanent pasture occupies 12,000 acres, and 6,300 acres are used for other farm-related activities.³ Typically, a proportion of permanent pastures move into successional acreage in which the land is allowed to grow up or transition into timber management. When this occurs, the land rarely goes back into pasture or row crop use and usually remains in timber. Farms are distributed throughout the county, as illustrated in Map 2, but contrary to intuition, there are many in the south where the soils are not highly rated for crop capability. The areas colored orange in Map 2 represent other farm uses and include pasture.

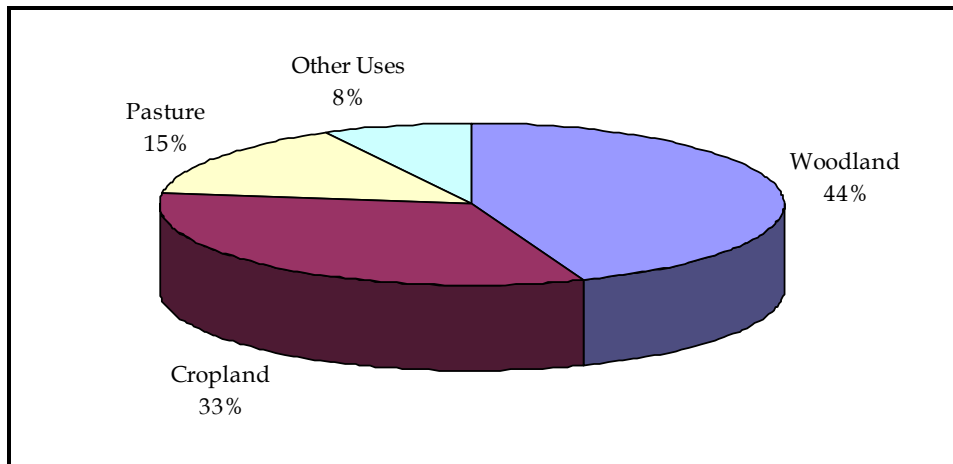
The majority of the farms in the county are smaller than 100 acres and half are smaller than 43 acres—by comparison, the median farm size in North Carolina is 50 acres. Figure 2 shows the distribution of farms and farmland by farm size. Farms that are smaller than 100 acres account for 75 percent of all the farms in the county, yet they account for only 27 percent of all farmland. The disproportion of farms to farmland is not unusual. Of all the farms in North Carolina, 69 percent have less than 100 acres and account for 16 percent of all the farmland in the state. Large farms, though much fewer in number, account for substantially more of the county's farmland. The 32 largest farms are each larger than 260 acres and together occupy 27,784 acres; they account for seven percent of all farms and about 35 percent of all farmland.³

Map 1. Productive Soils for Crops



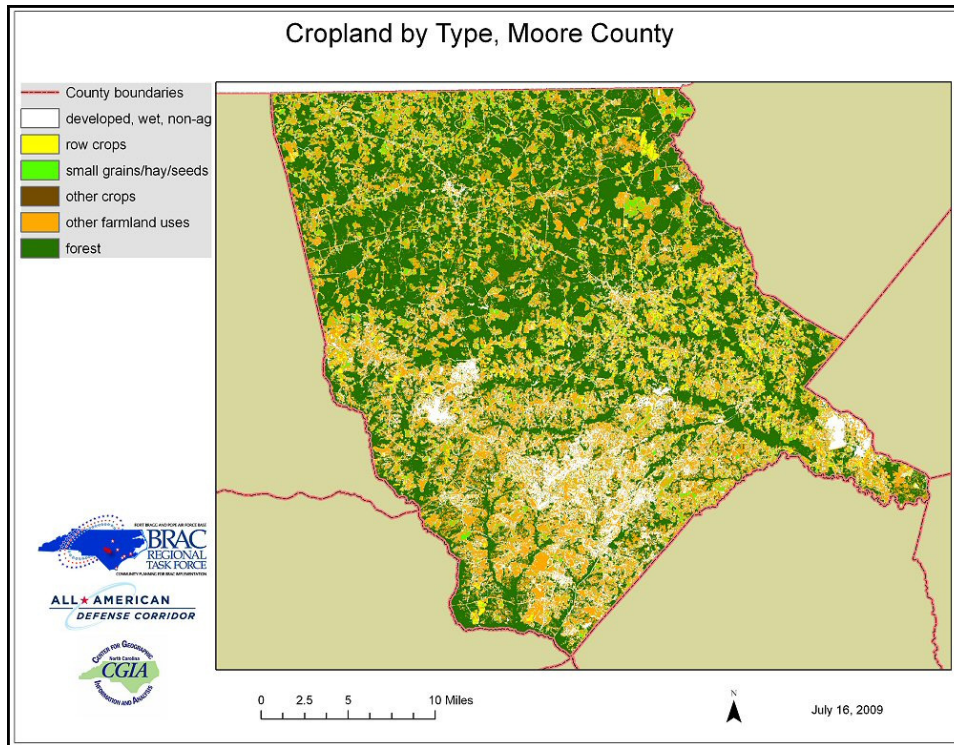
Source: USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service

Figure 1. Agricultural Land Use



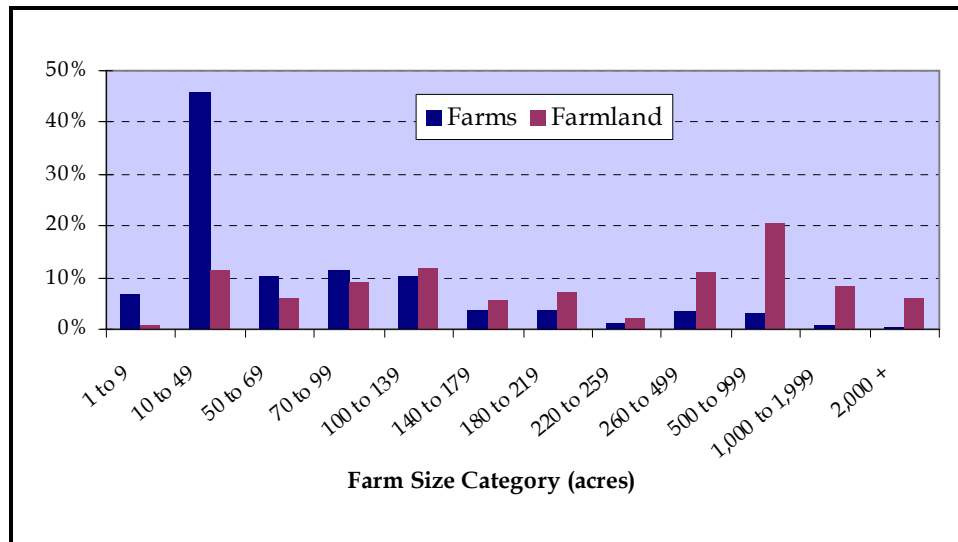
Source: 2007 Census of Agriculture

Map 2. Cropland



Source: USDA

Figure 2. Farms and Farmland by Farm Size



Source: 2007 Census of Agriculture

Farm Activities

The 2007 Census of Agriculture counted 804 farms in the county that raised a variety of crop and livestock products. Livestock activities, which are conducted on more than 450 farms and 20,000 acres, are summarized in Table 1. Over 300 farms operate cow-calf enterprises, making beef cattle the most common livestock activity. Moore County is a state leader in the production of broilers (chickens raised for meat), ranking sixth in 2008 by raising 35 million chickens.⁴ Broilers, along with the other poultry operations, accounted for 78 percent of the value of all agricultural products sold in 2007 (see Table 3). Hog farms, though relatively few in number, are the second highest producer of sales among livestock enterprises and the third highest overall. Moore is also one of the top equine counties in North Carolina. Two-hundred and fifty-seven farms reported inventories of 1,472 horses and ponies in the 2007 Agricultural Census, but they account for only a fraction of the total number in the county. The Rural Center reported in their [“North Carolina Equine Industry Findings and Recommendations Report”](#) an inventory of 7,920 equine in 2009 with a value of \$48 million; the eighth most in the state.⁵ Additionally, according to the 2007 Census of Agriculture, the market value of horses, ponies, mules, burros, and donkeys sold, including direct sales in Moore County, equated to a value of \$825,000; the third highest in the state.

Table 1. Livestock Activities

Livestock	Farms	Inventory	Number Sold
Beef Cattle	303	7,847	3,770
Horses & Ponies	257	1,472	154
Sheep & Goats	118	2,496	880
Broilers	97	6,808,147	33,434,200
Layers	64	21,363	(NR)
Mules, Burros & Donkeys	51	103	6
Ducks, Geese & Other Poultry	46	3,141	15
Bees (colonies)	27	306	106
Rabbits	14	56	(NR)
Hogs & Pigs	10	45,599	(NR)
Pullets	10	472	(NR)
Llamas	7	20	0
Alpacas	5	136	5
Dairy Cattle	3	12	(NA)
Turkeys	3	(NR)	(NR)
Bison	1	(NR)	0

(NA) = not applicable; (NR) = not reported

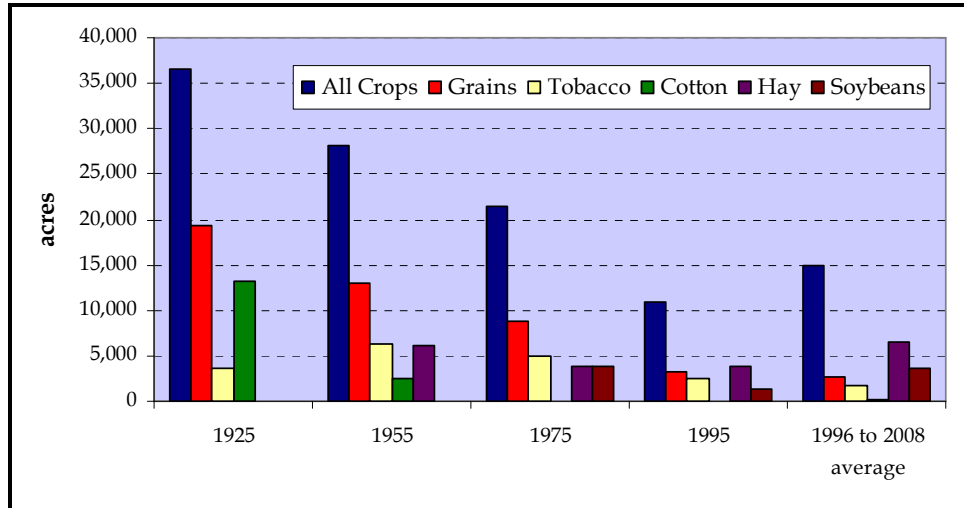
Source: 2007 Census of Agriculture

The USDA's Agricultural Statistics Service reports the annual activities of commodity crops. Figure 3 shows how harvested cropland has declined from a high of over 35,000 acres in 1925 to a near low of 10,930 acres in 1995. Corn, tobacco and cotton were the only major crops grown until hay production began in 1950. Farmers began planting other grains like barley, sorghum and wheat in 1971 and soybeans in 1972. Grains were the predominant crops grown through 1990, but since then hay has been the majority crop grown, followed by soybeans. Tobacco has been in decline since 2000, and 2003 was the last year cotton was planted.⁶

Table 2 shows the degree of crop activity in 2007 as reported in the Census of Agriculture. Harvested cropland in 2007, including that used for non-commodity crops like fruits and vegetables, totaled 15,401 acres. Forages, mostly hay, were the dominant activities, which is not surprising since there are 15,000 horses and cattle in the county. The remaining activities display a wide variety of traditional field crops and horticultural crops like vegetables and environmental horticulture. Table 3 shows that environmental horticulture products (greenhouse, nursery and floriculture) are the leading cash crops, generating over

\$11 million in sales. Tobacco, though not grown near historical levels, continues to be an important cash crop to farmers, generating over \$4 million in revenue.

Figure 3. Harvested Cropland: 1925 to 2008



Source: USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Quick Stats

Table 2. Crop Activities

Crop Activities	Farms	Acres	Amount Sold
Forage (tons)	281	6,195	12,981
Corn for Grain (bushels)	58	1,712	114,946
Soybeans (bushels)	34	4,741	55,211
Vegetables	34	218	(NR)
Tobacco (pounds)	31	1,433	3,079,544
Nursery, Greenhouse & Floriculture	20	(NR)	(NR)
Orchards	19	213	(NR)
Berries	15	16	(NR)
Wheat (bushels)	12	1,088	29,488
Oats (bushels)	7	46	1,760
Cut Christmas Trees	4	18	(NR)

(NR) = not reported

Source: 2007 Census of Agriculture

Table 3. Market Value of Products Sold

All Livestock & Their Products	\$120,216,000
Poultry & Eggs	\$108,166,000
Hogs & Pigs	\$9,263,000
Cattle & Calves	\$1,820,000
Horses & Other Equine	\$825,000
Sheep, Goats & Their Products	\$77,000
Milk & Other Dairy Products	\$36,000
Other Animals & Their Products	\$28,000
All Crops	\$18,381,000
Nursery, Greenhouse & Floricultu	\$11,052,000
Tobacco	\$4,777,000
Grains	\$1,089,000
Vegetables	\$467,000
Other Crops & Hay	\$465,000
Fruits, Nuts & Berries	\$8,000

Source: 2007 Census of Agriculture

Family Farms

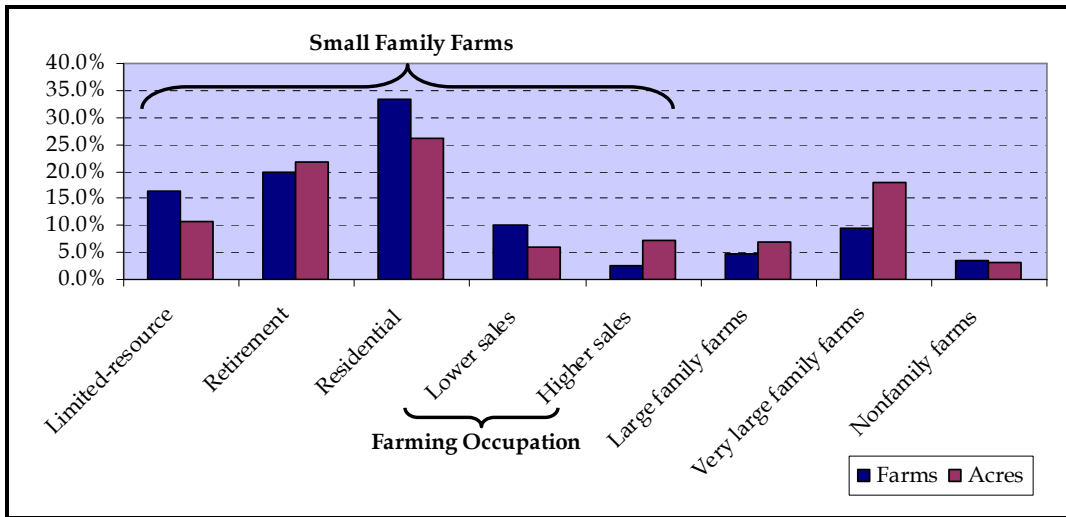
Most of the farms in the county are family owned, meaning they are organized as proprietorships, partnerships or family-held corporations—only 28 of the farms in the county in 2007 were organized as nonfamily entities. Like the population of farms in the United States, the majority of farms are small when measured by the value of their products—USDA defines small farms as producing less than \$250,000 in products. Many of these farms are operated as secondary or retirement occupations with household income supplemented by off-farm jobs or other income. According to the 2007 NC Census of Agriculture of the 804 Principal Operators (Farmers) in Moore County (who farmed a total of 80,075 acres in 2007), 387 listed farming as their Primary Occupation (a decrease of 110 from the 2002 census), while 417 (an increase of 94 from the 2002 census) listed “Other” as their Primary Occupation. Figure 4 illustrates the proportion of farms categorized by what USDA calls typology, or groups based on annual sales and operator characteristics. Over half of all farms in the county are residential or retirement operations and they occupy just under half of all the farmland. Limited-resource farms are defined as

having less than \$100,000 of sales and the farm operator's total household income is less than \$20,000. There are two types of small farms that are operated as a primary occupation, those with less than \$100,000 in sales and those with sales between \$100,000 and \$249,999.³

The higher sales occupation farms are of particular importance. They are referred to by some as midsize farms and constitute what many people consider to be a family farm.⁷ They utilize a significant amount of farmland, 276 acres on average in Moore County, and have the capability to be commercially viable. However, they are vulnerable because they are generally too small to compete in the consolidated commodity markets and too large to participate in the direct markets where higher retail prices are received. Large family farms, whose sales range between \$250,000 and \$499,999, can also be considered mid-sized for the same reasons. The two groups account for only 58 farms in the county, but they occupy over 11,000 acres, or 14 percent of all the farmland. But indeed these farms are being lost. In 2002 there were 115 farms with incomes between \$100,000 and \$500,000, almost twice as many as in 2007.³

Some, and possibly many, of the farms categorized as large and very large (sales exceed \$500,000) family farms may not be as large or industrial as the title and sales definition would imply. Contract fees are discussed on page 14 and explain how the value of sales from broilers is not received by the farm operator. Aside from the market value of the products sold, it is likely that most of the large and very large family farms in the county are more characteristic of small family farms.

Figure 4. Proportions of Farms and Acres by Farm Typology

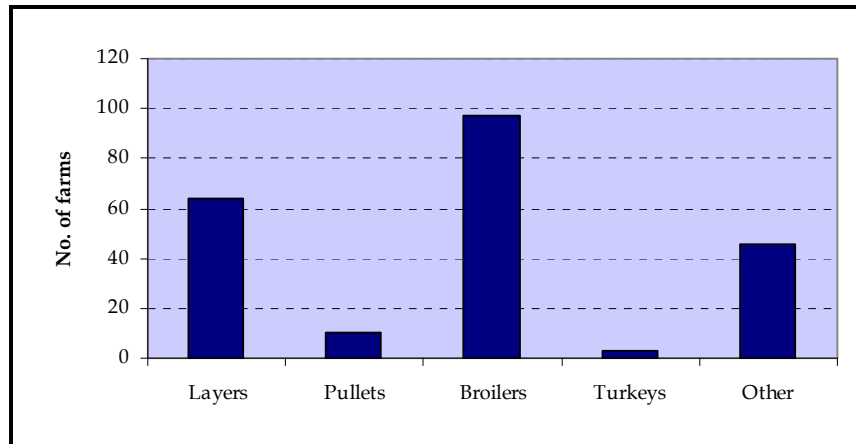


Source: 2007 Census of Agriculture

Poultry Production

Poultry producers in Moore County raise chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, and other types of birds. Most are bred for meat, but the inventories of chickens also include layers and pullets, which precede broilers. Layers produce table eggs and the eggs from which broilers are hatched, and pullets are young chickens that are bred and raised to become layers. In 2007, there were 141 various poultry farms in the county (see Figure 5). Broiler production was by far the most common type of poultry operation, accounting for the majority of farms, inventory and sales value.³

Figure 5. Number of Poultry Farms by Type of Operation



Source: 2007 Census of Agriculture

The broiler industry is controlled by integrators, which are vertically integrated firms that operate hatcheries, feed mills and processing plants, and that contract with independent farmers to raise chickens to market weight. Integrators—Purdue, Mountaire, Pilgrim’s Pride, and Townsend are integrators who contract with producers in the county—provide chickens, feed, veterinary services and other inputs to the farmers. Purdue Farms, in particular, has a large multi-faceted poultry facility in the western section of the county, near Candor. Farmers provide the poultry housing, labor and utilities, and care for the chickens until they reach market weight and are removed by the integrator. A production cycle takes between seven and ten weeks, enabling most producers to raise four to six flocks per poultry house each year. For their service, farmers are paid a fee under a production contract.

Broilers generate more value for North Carolina’s agriculture economy than any other segment, contributing \$2.7 billion (28 percent) to the total value of agricultural products produced in 2008. Moore County contributes significantly to this important segment, and in 2008 its producers raised 35 million chickens valued at \$118 million, the sixth highest of all counties in the state.⁴ Although the county should take pride in its contribution to the leading segment of one of the state’s largest industries (agriculture/agribusiness), the contribution that the industry makes to the county bears examination beyond the value of production. The market value of broilers sold represents the value of the chickens to the

integrator when they are removed from the farms. While the county has hatcheries, feed mills in the county and a processing plant in neighboring Montgomery County, the industry's value to the county is closely tied to the production payments received by the producers under contract. Production payments in 2008 are estimated to have been \$12 million.

The poultry industry does provide other benefits besides contract payments to producers in the county. Feed mills operated by the integrators purchase corn and soybeans from growers in the region. Poultry litter (manure, bedding and feathers) removed from the houses at the end of a production cycle is used to fertilize pastures, bringing substantial cost savings to cattle operations that would otherwise have to purchase manufactured fertilizer. Two major challenges face poultry producers – financial risk and rural settlement. Financial risk comes in the form of debt. The system of production contracts used in the broiler industry insulates producers from rising feed costs and falling market prices, and provides a relatively fixed income with limited operating capital requirements. The tradeoffs of these benefits are limited income growth and high fixed capital requirements. A broiler house costs between \$200,000 and \$300,000 to build and has a lifespan of about 20 years.⁸ Most producers have more than one house and finance their construction with loans made through the Farm Credit System and the USDA Farm Service Agency. Loans take seven to nine years to repay and it is not until that time that producers begin to realize significant net cash returns. Fixed capital outlays are not limited to construction costs but also include new equipment and improvements to houses that are periodically required by integrators prior to renewing contracts. These improvements can cost in excess of \$50,000 and prolong the amount of time producers are burdened with debt.⁹

Broiler production is best suited for sparsely developed, rural areas. The primary reason for this observation is the smell of poultry litter, which lasts from ten to 14 days after it has been removed from a house. Residents new to rural areas where poultry farms are common are likely to object to the smell of the litter and may pressure producers to close, or make it difficult for new operations to become established. Although North Carolina's

right-to-farm laws offer some protection to existing operations, rural settlement will likely conflict with poultry operations.

Moore County Farmers Market

The Moore County Farmers Market was started in 1976 in downtown Southern Pines. In 2000, the market moved to its current location at the Armory Sports Complex where it is open Thursday mornings from April to October. The Armory Sports Complex location had 11 vendors and approximately 700 customers weekly in 2011. In 2007, a second location was started in Pinehurst; it is open Monday afternoons from 2pm-6pm in First Health's Fitness Center parking lot. As of 2011, the market is comprised of 10 vendors and draws approximately 700-800 customers weekly. In 2007, a third location was established in downtown Southern Pines on the corner of Southeast Broad Street and New York Avenue. Open Saturday mornings from 8am-12 noon, this location, as of 2011, reported 19-24 vendors serving approximately 1,800 customers weekly.³³

Vendors selling at any of the three market locations must be producers from within 50 miles of Southern Pines and must purchase an annual membership and pay a fee each time they come to a market. The markets have drawn a mix of vendors: old and new farmers; former tobacco growers transitioning to produce; and farmers from Harnett, Chatham and Lee counties. The markets are designed for farm products but a limited number of crafts and baked goods are also sold.

The typical customers for the markets are two-person families, but the market location in downtown Southern Pines draws younger people and young families. Chefs have performed demonstrations at the downtown market using local produce, a promotion that draws a crowd.

In 2005, market organizers were begging vendors and customers to participate. Now the market organization is in the process of obtaining 501(c)(3) status as a nonprofit organization and has more vendors that they can handle. Some vendors have received

approval to participate in the Women, Infants and Children program. There is interest in accepting food stamps, which could be an opportunity to increase the number of customers and vendors, but special equipment is needed.¹⁰

Sandhills Green Farmers Market

The Local Food Movement is alive and well in Moore County. A group of farmers organized the Sandhills Green Farmers Market (SGFM) in 2009 to allow more growers, bakers and crafts people to sell their products. The market operated in the area near Owens Auditorium on Wednesday afternoons from 10am-1pm during its first year and as of the summer of 2011 it is still open on the aforementioned dates and times. A downtown site in the Village of Pinehurst and in Aberdeen opened on Thursday and Friday afternoons during 2010. As of the summer of 2011, the SGFM holds a farmers market every Friday from 10am-1pm on the Village Green called "Homegrown on the Village Green". Likewise, on Saturdays from 9am-12noon during April to October, the Town of Aberdeen Parks and Recreation Department hosts the SGFM at their Aberdeen Lake Park on US Highway 1.

The SGFM follows basically the same procedures as the Moore County Farmers Market. Its primary goal is offering any grower the chance to market his products. Both markets collectively offer seven sale dates weekly!

The SGFM even offered a 4H Blueberry Club a free membership to help encourage young people to become active in agriculture. 4H members have learned a great deal about private enterprise through the market.

Sandhills Winery Farmers Market

In the spring of 2011 a new farmers market opened in Seven Lakes at the Sandhills Winery on Seven Lakes Drive (next to the Food Lion shopping plaza) on Saturdays from 9am-12noon. The market is intended to build community and is open to a range of vendors such

as produce growers, crafters and artists. At last count over 50 customers per week (and growing weekly!) visited the new market in Seven Lakes.

Sandhills Farm to Table Cooperative

The Sandhills Farm to Table Cooperative is a commercial enterprise owned by farmers, staff and consumers. Their mission is: *to satisfy our local food needs with locally grown and produced foods.*

They define local as Moore, Lee, Harnett, Richmond, Montgomery, Scotland, and Chatham counties. Products will be sought from outside the area if they are in demand but not in supply. The practice will demonstrate demand for products that could be grown in the area and encourage local production for the benefit of both farmers and consumers.

Farm to Table follows a Community Supported Agriculture model and offers a variety of subscription plans for consumer-members. The season is 17 weeks long and runs from May through August.

www.sandhillsfarm2table.com

Forestland

Privately-owned forestland comprises 305,002 acres,^a or 67 percent of the county's land area,¹¹ most of which is owned by individuals, not timber companies. Just as soil type is an important factor of farm activities; it is an important factor in determining the health and growth of trees. Soil is therefore important for growing valuable trees, and valuable trees are important for maintaining forests. Map 3 and Map 4 illustrate the areas of the county that contain the most productive soils for loblolly and longleaf pines. Soils favorable to loblolly pine growth are concentrated in the northern and southeastern areas while soils favorable to longleaf pine production are primarily concentrated in the southwest area. Map 5 shows that the greatest concentrations of forests are found in the northern half of the county and along the western edge of the southern half.

Twenty-five different forest types are found throughout the county; Figure 6 displays the proportions of the most common types. Loblolly and loblolly/hardwood forests account for 59 percent of all forestland in the county. Loblolly is the primary tree grown for timber in the county because it has a relatively short rotation period of 30 to 40 years. However, although loblolly pine typically has an 8- to 9-foot height advantage at age 10, this advantage often disappears by age 17-20, when longleaf passes loblolly. Past studies also have indicated that as site quality declines, the performance of longleaf improves relative to the other species. According to experiments conducted in Georgia and South Carolina side-by-side plantings on Sandhills sites yielded longleaf pines with an average 6- to 11-foot height advantage over loblollies by age 28.³² While longleaf pines may have a slower start in life and require higher stand management costs up front, the high value of the longleaf pine straw and their higher saw timber values can often offset their upfront costs when considering the full life cycle benefits of the longleaf.

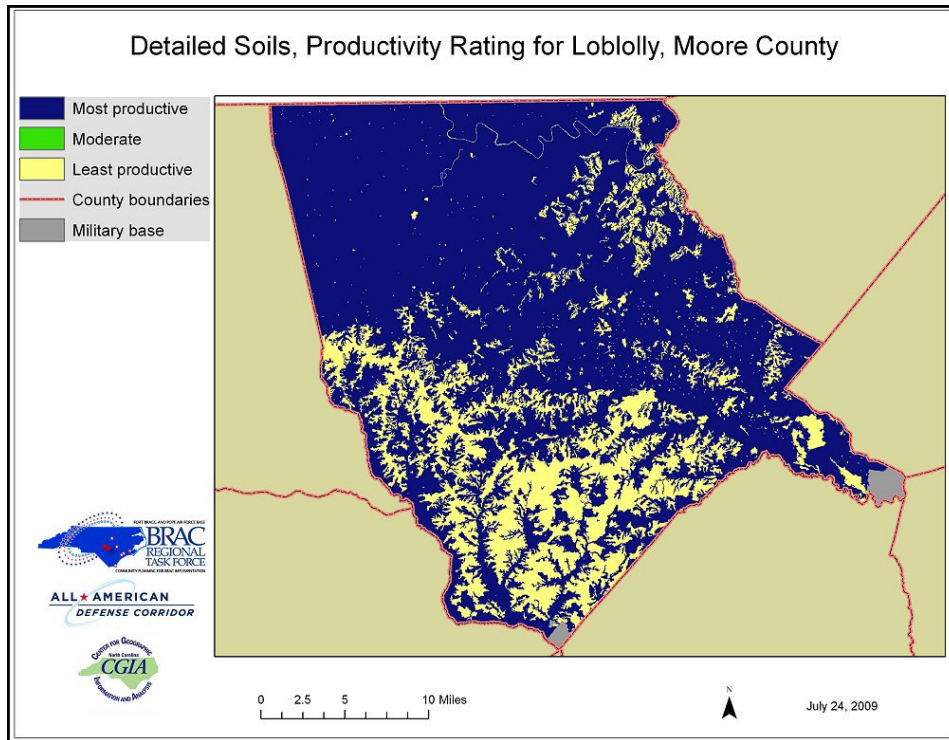
Hardwoods grow much slower, taking 60 to 90 years to reach maturity. Longleaf pines account for only five percent of total forestland. Forests that are efficiently managed for

^a Includes the 35,333 acres of woodland reported by farmers in the 2007 Census of Agriculture.

timber production have trees that are optimally spaced for their size and are classified as fully stocked. Medium stocked forests have fewer trees than what would be optimal but are still considered to be well managed. Using these classifications it is estimated that 74 percent of the private forests in the county are being managed for commercial production.¹²

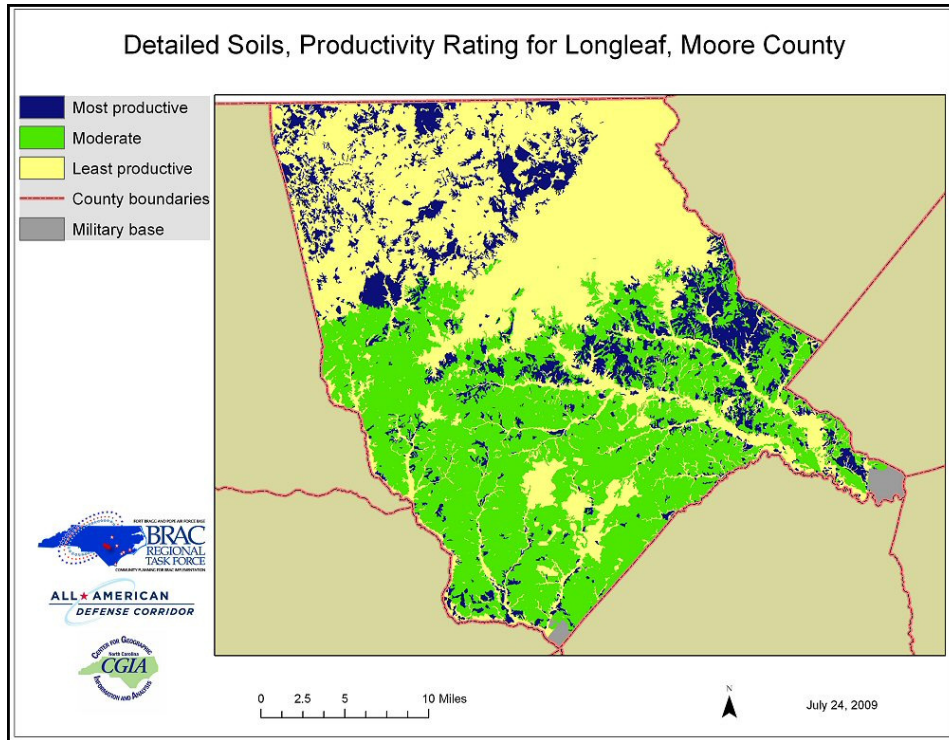
Moore County is the leader in the state for reforestation efforts with an average of 1500 to 2500 acres of timberland reforested each year. In 2010, a little over 1000 acres were reforested but this amount is lower than in previous years due to the downturn in the economy. There are numerous cost share programs that can be used by landowners to offset the costs of reforestation. The programs offer assistance for tree planting and other forest management activities such as prescribed burns. Along with reforestation tax credits, there are many incentives for landowners to keep and maintain their woodland properties.

Map 3. Productive Soils for Loblolly Pine



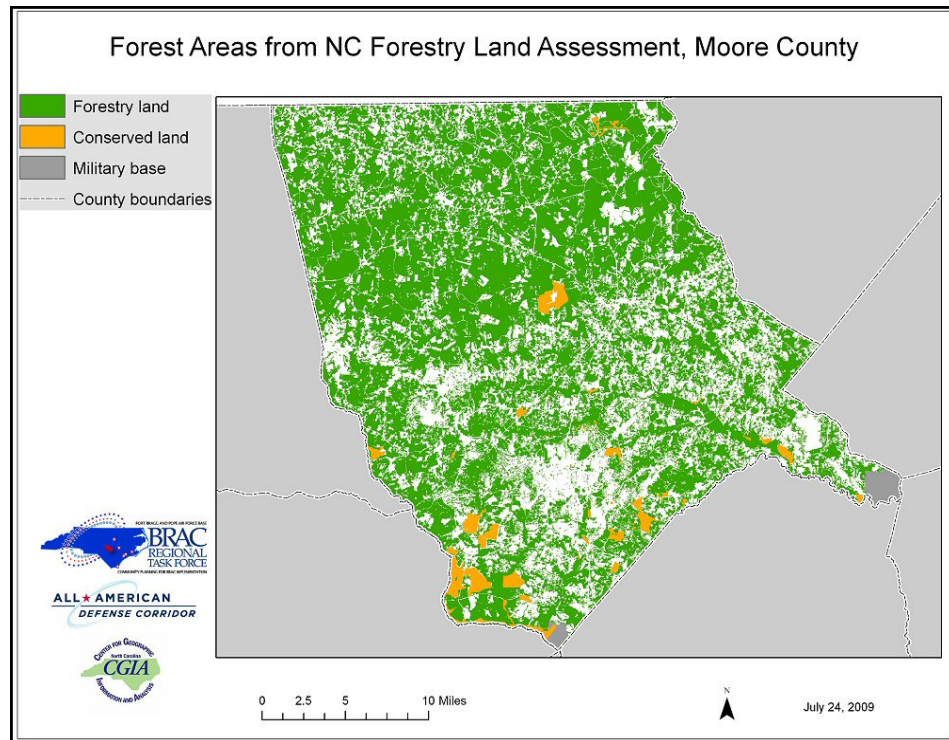
Source: USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service

Map 4. Productive Soils for Longleaf Pine



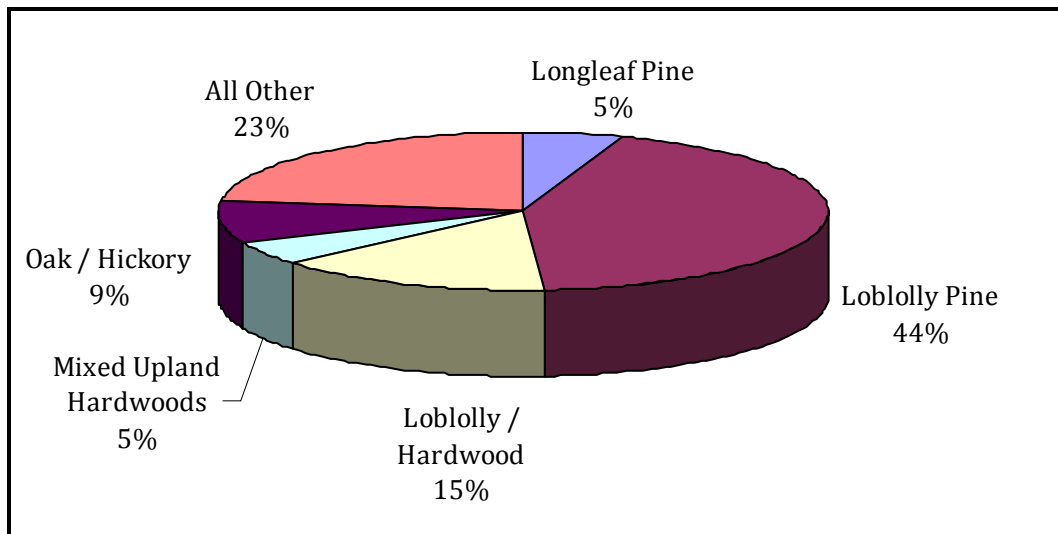
Source: USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service

Map 5. Forest Areas in Moore County



Source: N.C. Forestry Land Assessment

Figure 6. Proportion of Forestland by Forest Type



Source: U.S. Forest Inventory Analysis

Timber Products

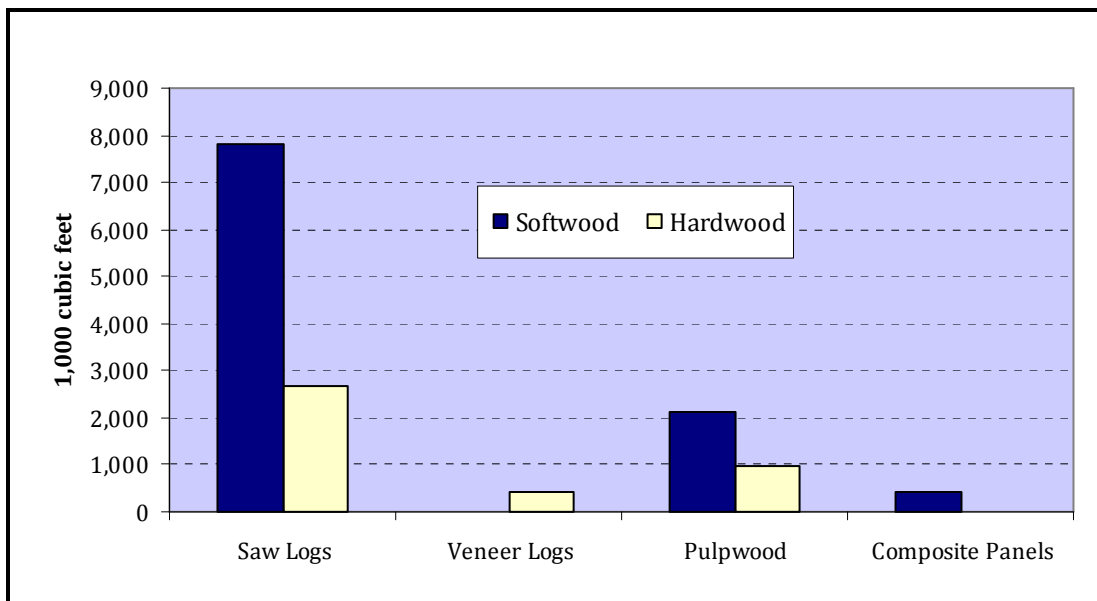
Non-industrial forest owners generally sell their timber to a buyer who works for either a wood processing mill, wood suppliers, loggers or timber brokers. In 2008, \$14.9 million was paid to private landowners in the county for timber that had a value of \$22.6 million at wood processing mills. The \$7.7 million difference was received by loggers, haulers and intermediaries.¹¹

Timber is used to manufacture a wide range of industrial and consumer products. The log, bolt or other round section cut from the main stem of a tree is called roundwood and is harvested for one of five primary groups of products: saw logs, pulpwood, veneer logs, composite panels and other industrial products. Moore County ranked 11th in the state in 2007 in the output of industrial timber products with 14.4 million cubic feet of production. Figure 7 shows the output of industrial timber products for 2007. Saw logs, which are milled into lumber and other structural products, accounted for 73 percent of the county's total output – third highest in the state. There is one sawmill in Moore County and three in Montgomery County. Stanly County mills also use Moore County timber and mills from the upper part of South Carolina get wood from Moore County woodlands. There is a wood chip mill in the northwestern part of the county that is very active and is served by a short

line railroad. With growing interest and research in biomass and renewable energies, woody biomass presents an excellent opportunity for landowners when that market is developed in the near future.

Pulpwood, which is used to make paper, paper board and other fiber products, accounted for 23 percent of output. The nearest pulpwood mills are in Columbus and Wilkes counties. Softwood species, primarily loblolly, were the source of 72 percent of all products; however, production of hardwood saw logs was greater than softwood pulpwood which accounted for 19 percent and 15 percent of total output, respectively.¹³

Figure 7. 2007 Industrial Timber Output



Source: USDA, Forest Service

Pine Straw

Forests yield a wide variety of nontimber, plant-based products. One such product is pine straw. Pine straw is a popular landscape mulch that can be harvested from stands of longleaf and loblolly pines managed for timber production or other uses. Longleaf needles generally sell for a higher price than loblolly and are easier to bale. Longleaf stands also outperform loblolly because loblolly shed more pine cones and twigs after about 15 years adding significant time and costs for cleaning. Pine needles can be harvested from loblolly

stands beginning in year eight¹⁴ and from longleaf pines in year ten,¹⁵ providing an income stream between timber harvests. Harvesting pine needles is also compatible with conservation forest management. Like timber, harvesting pine needles does not have to be done by the landowner. Thousands of acres of forestland around the region are leased by pine needle producers. There are no data on the production and sale of pine straw, but interviews with producers indicate that it is a significant business with growth potential.

Longleaf Pine and Red-Cockaded Woodpecker

The longleaf pine, North Carolina's state tree, once covered nearly 90 million acres of coastal plains in the southeastern United States. Today the forests cover only about three million acres. The forests, which burned frequently, were home to a wide variety of plant and animal species such as bobwhite quail, fox, turkey, deer, wildflowers and legumes. The longleaf pine tree is highly resistant to pine beetles, ice, and fire, and historically provided construction lumber, tar, and pitch for buildings and ships; and a resin used to refine turpentine. The Sandhills region is one of the last remaining strongholds of longleaf pine in the country and several organizations, including Fort Bragg, The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Sandhills Area Land Trust, and Sandhills Ecological Institute, are working to restore and protect this vanishing ecosystem.

An underlying goal of these organizations is to protect the red-cockaded woodpecker, an endangered bird that lives predominantly in longleaf pine forests. These two species are important issues for Fort Bragg. In 1992, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biological opinion resulted in significant training restrictions on the Fort as part of the requirements to recover the red-cockaded woodpecker. In order to meet recovery requirements for the woodpecker, Fort Bragg has been working with stakeholders to preserve and restore longleaf pine forests and manage critical habitat on private lands outside Fort Bragg. More than 12,000 acres of longleaf pine habitat have been preserved in Cumberland, Hoke, and Moore counties through the North Carolina Sandhills Conservation Partnership.

CHALLENGES TO AGRICULTURE

PROFITABILITY

Profitability is often cited as a challenge to agriculture. It stands to reason that fundamental economics are at the root of the situation, especially the laws of supply and demand, and economies of scale. There are over two million farms in the United States and most farms are small. Many producers mean low prices; low prices mean low profit margins; low profit margins mean that large volumes are needed to cover fixed costs. Small farms don't produce large volumes.

The 2007 Census of Agriculture reported that only 35 percent of farm operators in the county made a profit while 65 percent lost money. Those operators who made a profit earned an average of \$62,423. The average loss was \$14,575. Most farms in the United States don't begin making a profit until their gross income reaches \$50,000, so profitability is especially difficult for small farms.¹⁶ Table 4 displays operator income figures for all farms in North Carolina grouped by sales category. By comparing gross income and the percentage of operators with net gains between small and medium size farms, it is clear that volume is a significant factor in profitability. Small farms earned an average of \$15,185 in gross income; consequently, only 37 percent of operators in the group earned a profit. Medium farms averaged \$202,155 of gross income, leading 77 percent of their operators to earn a profit. The relationship between gross and net income is reinforced when large and very large farms are compared.

Table 4. Income of N.C. Operators by Farm Size

	<i>Farm Size by Sales</i>			
	Small	Medium	Large	Very Large
Gross Income	\$15,185	\$202,155	\$369,524	\$1,720,234
Net Income	-\$1,743	\$40,124	\$58,384	\$211,337
Operators w/ Net Gains	37%	77%	82%	89%
Average Net Gain	\$12,477	\$72,932	\$90,472	\$253,085
Operators w/ Net Losses	63%	23%	18%	11%
Average Net Loss	\$10,296	\$69,354	\$90,190	\$124,391

Source: 2007 Census of Agriculture

POPULATION GROWTH / RURAL SETTLEMENT

In 1990, Moore County had a population of 59,013¹⁷. Between 1990 and 2008 the population grew by an estimated 45 percent to 85,280. The population continues to grow and is projected to reach 116,509 by the year 2029.¹⁸ Using trends rooted in the County's own growth and verified against other growth counties on the edges of the Triangle, the 2040 population is expected to be around 162,000 people. The growth will be concentrated in the southern and eastern parts of the county. As those areas gain population, they will support more amenities. This growth in amenities then serves to draw still more people. Three potentially negative implications are: 1) pressure to develop farmland; 2) increasing values of all agricultural land; and 3) conflicts with non-farm neighbors. Farmland is typically flat and treeless, making it attractive to developers who naturally want to minimize the cost of site preparation. Thus, population growth and the need for housing leads to development pressure on farmland. Residential and commercial uses add value to land, so as farms and other properties are developed, the value of all agricultural properties will increase. Farmland in Moore County is particularly vulnerable to these effects. Many farmers are nearing retirement age and have no one to take over the farm operation. Low farm profitability makes it difficult for farmers to purchase land. With land prices rising and no one to buy or take over the farm business, retiring farmers will be

left with the only logical option of selling their land for development. Furthermore, settlement patterns (e.g. “checker board”) that break up contiguous farmland will limit future farm expansion and production options.

Farming is a production enterprise conducted in an open area and sometimes at all hours of the day and night. Forest management involves prescribed burning. New residents, who may have been attracted by the rural character of an agricultural community, often do not anticipate the dust, smoke, smells, sprays, and noise that accompany the production of crops and livestock, and the management of forests. Although bona fide farms in North Carolina are allotted some protection by state statute, ongoing complaints from neighbors can affect a producer’s quality of life and become a contributing factor in his decision to sell the land for development. State law may protect the producer in the event of a lawsuit. However, it does not prevent the producer from having to defend himself in the lawsuit which is likely to be a costly process that may result in a settlement whereby the producer is forced to cease or alter his activities. Additionally, increased traffic on rural roads makes moving farm equipment difficult and harassment by aggressive drivers is a common complaint among producers in North Carolina.

The Other Side of Rising Land Values

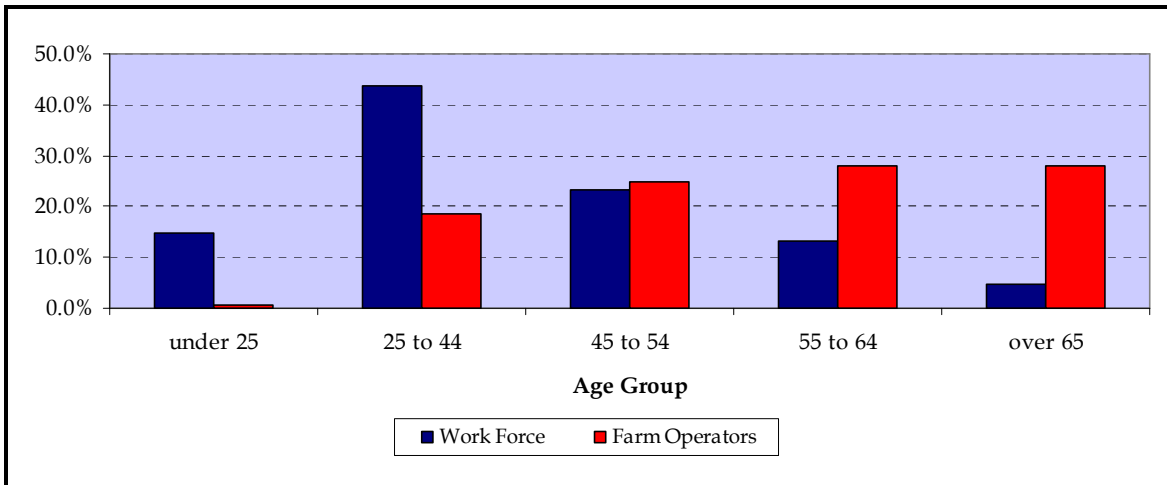
Most of the farmland in Moore County is owned by the operator as a sole proprietorship, and as landowners, farmers benefit from rising land values. The farm business benefits because the increased value is reflected in the farm’s net worth, which increases the operator’s ability to borrow capital and invest in the business. Since the family owns the farm, land and enterprise, as those values increase so does the family’s wealth. This is important because the land is generally their most valuable asset. Farm families can sell all or part of the land, or use it as collateral for a loan to pay for college tuition, emergencies and retirement.

AGING FARMERS

The aging of the American population of farmers is another often cited challenge to the viability of family farms. The average age of principal farm operators in the U.S., including North Carolina and Moore County, is 57 years old.³ In contrast, the average age of the county's workforce is 42 years old.¹⁹ Figure 8 illustrates the disparity between farm operators and the general workforce in terms of age, especially in the 25 to 44 age group that comprises over 40 percent of the work force but less than 20 percent of principal farm operators. Farmers in the region also cite the low number of new generation farmers as one of the most significant threats of the next ten years.²⁰ Without younger farmers to take over the operations of retiring farmers, many farms could fall out of production and be divided and sold in estate settlements. In such cases, not only will the county lose valuable agricultural land, but generations of farming expertise will be lost.

The high cost of land is one barrier to new entrants into farming, and declining profits and the shift to a more industrial system of food production has diminished the number of new generation farmers (children of existing farm operators). The average asset base of farms in the United States earning \$50,000 (the average needed to make a profit) in sales in 2007 was \$1.9 million, so accumulating the wealth to start an operation is difficult, which might explain why more than one-third of beginning farmers in the U.S. are over 54 years old.¹⁶ Even the tradition of inheriting farm assets has its challenges. Farmers, like the general population, are living longer and thus delaying the transfer of assets to the next generation. Furthermore, farm assets have commonly been split among multiple family members and as farms become increasingly fractured through successive generations, the likelihood that an heir will receive a share large enough to support a family is diminished.

Figure 8. Work Force and Principal Farm Operators: Age Distribution

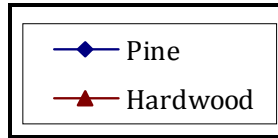


Sources: 2007 Census of Agriculture; 2007 American Community Survey

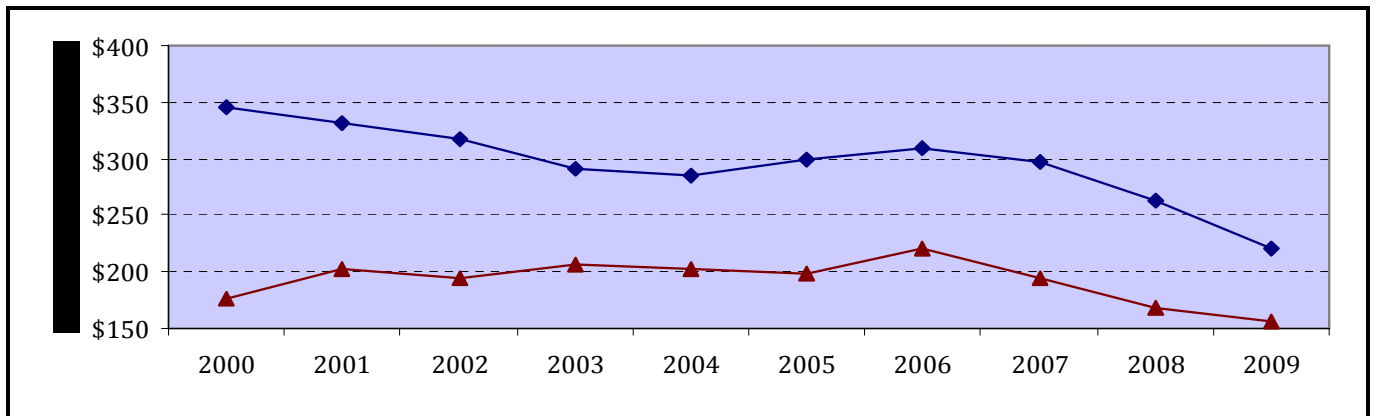
LIMITED MARKETS FOR TIMBER

Demand for forest products from the major market segments has declined in North Carolina while the supply of standing timber has increased. This trend has created a strong need for new timber markets. North Carolina timber production in 2007 was at its lowest level since 1990. Pulpwood production had increased from 2005, but was 25 percent below levels from 1990 to 1997. The number of wood processing mills in North Carolina has decreased steadily since 1990 from 366 to 163. There had been 308 sawmills in 1990, but in 2007 only 136 remained.¹³ Figure 9 shows the prices of sawtimber and pulpwood produced in eastern North Carolina from 2000 to 2009. Prices for sawtimber, which accounts for over 70 percent of output from Moore County, were at a ten-year low in 2009. The price of pine sawtimber (54 percent of total output)¹¹ had fallen \$125 per 1,000 board feet, or 36 percent, since 2000 as can be seen in Figure 9. Pulpwood prices have trended upwards since 2004, but the price of pine in 2009 was still slightly below the price in 2000.²¹

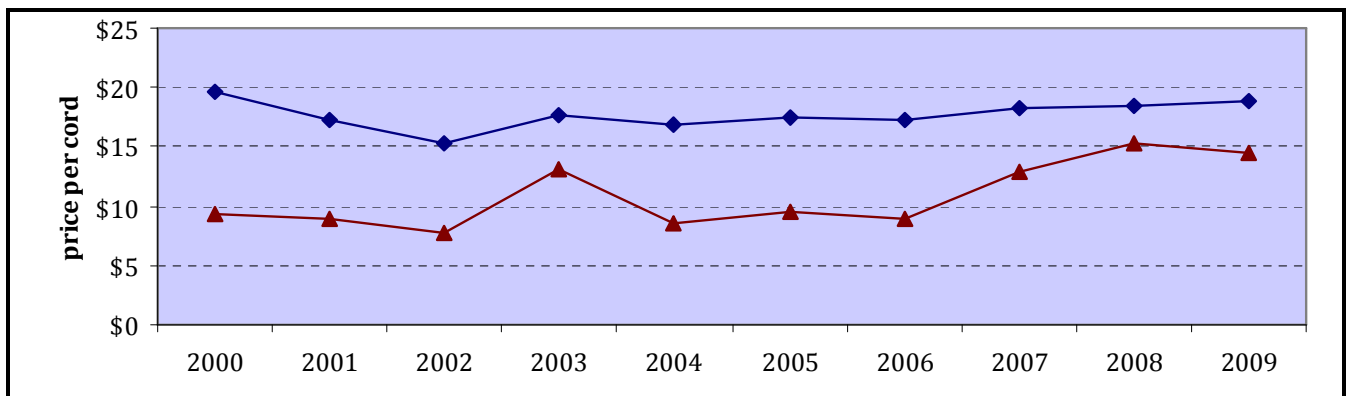
Figure 9. Historical Sawtimber and Pulpwood Prices in Eastern N.C.



SAWTIMBER (pricer per 1,000 board feet annually)



PULPWOOD (price per cord annually)



Source: N.C. Cooperative Extension Service

AVAILABLE DATA

An additional challenge to keeping track of the fluctuating agricultural and forestry industries is access to up-to-date USDA Census of Agriculture data. The USDA updates the Census of Agriculture every five years. At the time this plan was considered for adoption in 2011, the “current” Census of Agriculture data was dated 2007, which actually reflects

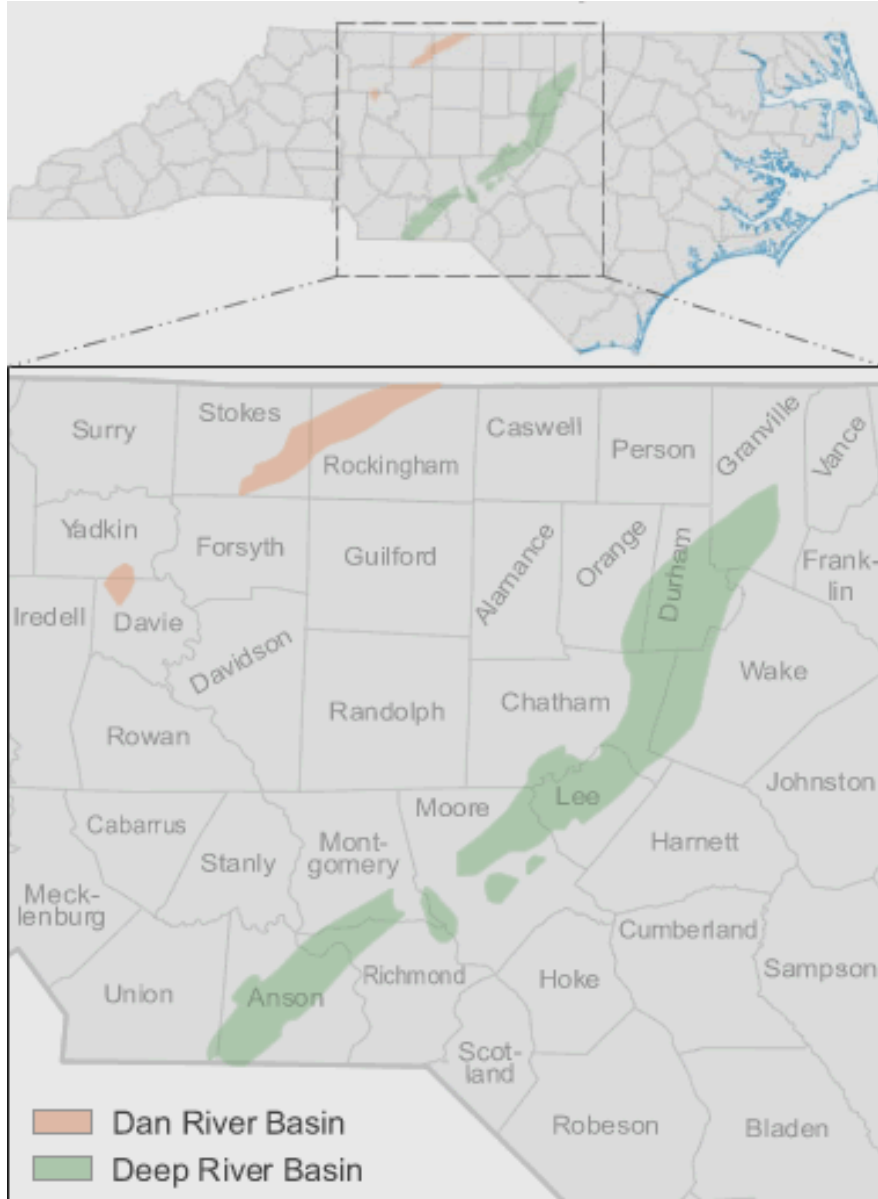
2006 conditions. Furthermore, it was noted by many stakeholders throughout the plan review process that the USDA Census of Agriculture statistics did not accurately reflect agricultural activity in the county. For instance, the Market Value of Products Sold (Table 3) for “Fruits, Nuts & Berries” only equated to \$8,000 when many farmers stated there was well over \$300,000 to \$400,000 dollars worth of peaches sold alone on an average year in Moore County. The accuracy and transparency of reporting requirements was questioned several times by the Consensus Working Group throughout the plan review period.

HYDRAULIC FRACTURING

Sometimes referred to as horizontal drilling, or gas “fracking”, hydraulic fracturing is a technique or process to access shale gas, or natural gas, that is trapped within underground shale formations. The horizontal drilling/hydraulic fracturing technique has allowed access to large volumes of shale gas that were previously uneconomical to produce. The “Map showing generalized locations of Triassic basins of North Carolina”, seen in Figure 10, depicts where shale gas could potentially be found, typically associated with the Triassic Soil areas of the state.

To date, the gas extraction industry has been known to require large quantities of water as part of the process to produce gas from the underground shale deposits. Should this industry move forward, the competition for water resources between the gas extraction and agricultural industries could arise causing the agricultural industry to experience limited ground water resources for irrigation, and livestock watering. Furthermore, the water used for hydraulic fracturing is often mixed with a “proprietary” mix of chemicals and other ingredients and the disposal of this mixture has posed a challenge in other parts of the country. However, many in the shale gas industry contend that the industry is changing. This change is due to advancements in technology that are reducing and/or mitigating many negative environmental impacts historically associated with the industry.

Figure 10. Generalized Locations of Triassic Basins of North Carolina



Source: Geology.com and MapResources.

As of April 2012, North Carolina General Statutes don't permit horizontal drilling, exploration and extraction of shale gas by the hydraulic fracturing technique. During the General Assembly of North Carolina's Session 2011, Senate Bill (SB) 709: The Energy Jobs Act was introduced, ratified, then vetoed by Governor Perdue. The bill looks to study existing state laws and regulations to provide recommendations on amendments and additions to address issues related to permitting and advancing the shale gas industry.

Furthermore, the North Carolina General Assembly ratified House Bill (HB) 242. The ratified bill, among other acts, directed the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to study the issue of oil and gas exploration in the state, and specifically the use of directional and horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracturing. Of particular interest to the agricultural industry may be 113-424. Applicability; effect. Section 4 (3): *“Potential impacts on infrastructure, including roads, pipelines, and water and wastewater services. In analyzing potential impacts, the Department shall specifically examine the expected water usage from hydraulic fracturing, water resources in the area in which drilling may occur, as well as existing water users in the area that may be impacted by increased consumption of water for use in hydraulic fracturing...”*; as well as Section 4 (4): *“Potential environmental impacts, including constituents or contaminants that may be present in the fluid used in the hydraulic fracturing process; the potential for the contamination of nearby wells and groundwater, as well as the options for disposal and reuse of the wastewater produced;...”*

AVAILABLE WATER FOR AGRICULTURE

Water quality and quantity are crucial factors to sustain life. As citizens seek an adequate supply of clean water for drinking and recreation, farmers too, seek the same to sustain crops and livestock. To water crops and livestock, farmers rely on the replenishment of ponds from surface water and wells from ground water aquifers which are each recharged through rainfall. Vegetables are 80-95 percent water and require approximately 1 inch of water per week during peak production. This equals 1000 to 4000 gallons per day per acre depending on the type of irrigation system and soil composition. A milking cow requires approximately 30-35 gallons per day, whereas a beef cow requires 10 to 15 gallons.³⁴

The County is situated within the upper reaches of two of the state’s major watersheds; the Cape Fear River Basin and the Lumber River Basin. The fact that Moore County lies at the upper reaches of these two watersheds limits the amount of surface water that can be captured through tributaries leading to minimal stream flows.

Furthermore, the southeastern region of the United States is prone to drought like conditions as often as one growing season every ten years. Drought and drought-like

conditions can be exacerbated in nearly two-thirds of the County where primarily sandy soils exist.

In the past, Federal and State regulations have hindered or made cost-prohibitive the construction of new “in-line stream” ponds, (ponds created by the damming up of streams to retain water) and even the restoration of existing ones. However, recent changes in Federal and State legislation have been made to relax regulations in this regard to allow for more flexibility for water retention to support agricultural purposes, yet water retention in the County’s sandy soils can still be difficult.

Both land development and agriculture play a significant role in the water quality and water quantity of these two basins and their associated tributaries. The Town of Southern Pines, for instance, relies almost solely on the surface waters flowing to Drowning Creek in the Lumber River Basin.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCING AGRICULTURE

Land Protection Tools

PRESENT-USE VALUE TAXATION

Present-Use Value Taxation (PUV) is a state program administered by the county assessor through which qualifying property can be taxed based on its use as agricultural, horticultural, or forest land rather than for its “highest and best” use. The objective of the program is to keep family farms in the hands of family farmers. The present-use value of a parcel is determined by the quality of its soils, is set by the North Carolina Use-Value Board, and is based on the rent a parcel could receive given its use for agriculture, horticulture or forestry. Qualifying property is assessed at its present-use value rather than its market value. To be eligible for enrollment in the present-use value taxation system, a property must meet the requirements of agricultural land, horticultural land, and/or forestland according to the North Carolina General Statute §[105-277](#) Pertaining to Present Use Value Assessment and Taxation of Agricultural, Horticultural, and Forestlands³⁵.

Once a property is removed from the present-use value system, the owner may owe deferred taxes, which are the difference between the taxes due at market value and the taxes due at the present-use value. Deferred taxes for the current year, plus the previous three years (“rollback taxes”), will become due and payable with interest when a property loses its eligibility in the present-use value program.

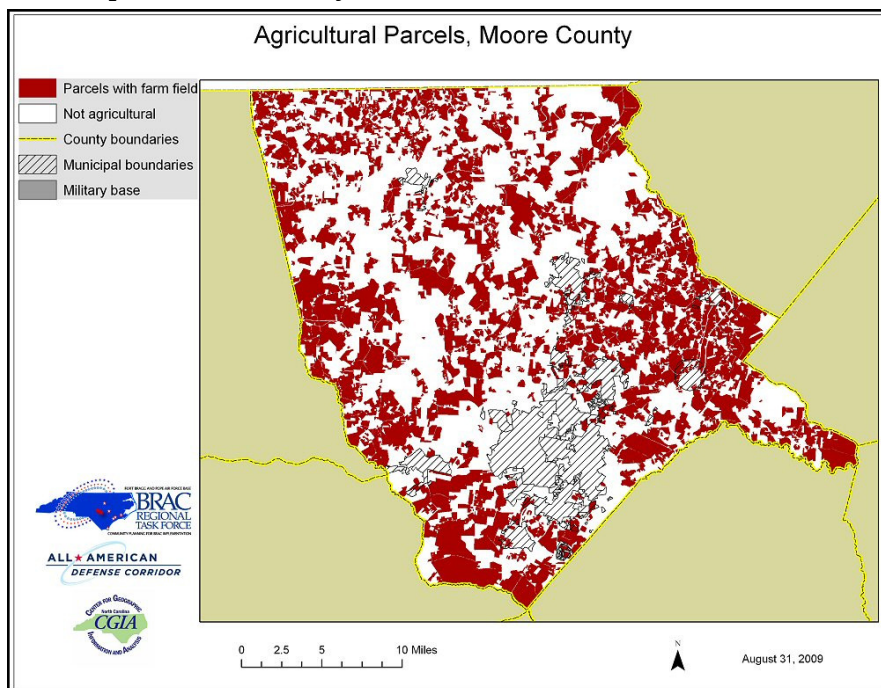
This program is arguably one of the most important programs offered to producers in North Carolina, especially to those in counties with high land values. There are 3,436 parcels totaling 183,579 acres enrolled in PUV in Moore County (see Map 6). They have a

market value of \$867 million and a present-use value of \$262 million.²² The annual cost of PUV to the county is approximately \$2.8 million,^b which is roughly five percent of all property taxes budgeted for the 2009/2010 fiscal year. That cost is partially offset each year as properties are taken out of the program. Since 2005, the county has collected an average of \$118,159 in rollback taxes each year.

The fiscal impact of PUV on a county is frequently misunderstood. Because agricultural lands are uninhabited (farm residences cannot be enrolled in PUV), a county expends little to provide them with public safety, education, human and other community services—cows and tractors don't go to school, jail or the senior resource center. As a consequence, the revenues from *ad valorem* property taxes typically exceed expenditures for public services by a median ratio of \$1.00 to \$0.37. Residential land use, conversely, demands more services from a county than they pay in taxes and have a median revenue to expenditure ratio of \$1.00 to \$1.19. Chatham County commissioned a cost of community services study in 2007 to evaluate revenues and expenditures by land use type. Expenditures associated with agricultural lands amounted to 58 cents for each dollar of related property tax, while expenditures associated with residential properties (including farm houses) amounted to \$1.14 for each dollar of revenue.²³ So even with the “discount” given through PUV, agricultural lands are typically net contributors to county budgets.

^b Deferred value (\$605 million) multiplied by \$0.00465.

Map 6. Moore County Parcels Taxed at Present-Use Value



LAND USE PLAN

In 1999, the county adopted a land use plan to meet the needs of present and future citizens. Agricultural lands are an integral part of the plan, which describes residents as having expressed a consistent desire to see their preservation.

- Vision Statement: Preserve the agricultural, rural and small-town environment of Moore County by encouraging growth inside areas that wish to host it and encouraging continued farm, forest and recreational uses outside the boundaries of these areas.
- Goal 1: Preserve and protect the rural agricultural nature of the County of Moore.
- Objective 1: Keep farmland for farming, forestland for forestry.
- Objective 2: Carefully manage development in rural areas.

Although the vision, goals and objectives of the land use plan are generally complementary to the purpose of this plan, two issues need discussing.

First, agricultural land preservation needs to be addressed separately from open space protection; the purpose of preserving farms and forests should be to protect commercially viable agricultural operations, and the fact that they qualify as open space should be viewed as an incidental benefit to the community. The distinction is important because an open space can provide many benefits while being unsuitable for agriculture, even if it has productive soil. Policies developed for the purpose of protecting open space or rural character may do more harm than good, and what seems intuitive to protecting open space may produce the opposite effect. For example; one study found that a four-acre minimum lot size led to greater homebuilding and overall land consumption than what would have been expected without the minimum requirement. The study also suggests that a ten-acre minimum lot size would not necessarily protect more land than one-acre or even one-half-acre lots.²⁴

For example, if a 300-acre parcel was zoned to allow one lot for every five acres of land, a developer could subdivide the land into approximately 54 five-acre lots (allowing about 10%, or 30 acres for roads and other infrastructure). All 54 lots could then be “developed”, in turn reducing the chance to protect/preserve any land for agricultural or environmentally sensitive land and/or public open space. If, in an alternate example, a developer could be allowed to develop the same number of lots (54), but allow them to be one or even one-half acre lots approximately 242-271 acres respectively could be preserved. If ordinances were in place to allow a developer to develop the same number of lots/units, just at a smaller size, more agricultural or environmentally sensitive land and/or public open space could be conserved.

The second issue is farmers’ equity. Although many agricultural landowners, especially those involved in operations, are concerned about residential encroachment, most do not support strategies they believe will have a negative effect on their wealth. (see *The Other Side of Rising Land Values* side box on page 28.) Any policy or program directed at protecting agricultural land should have the support of commercial producers.

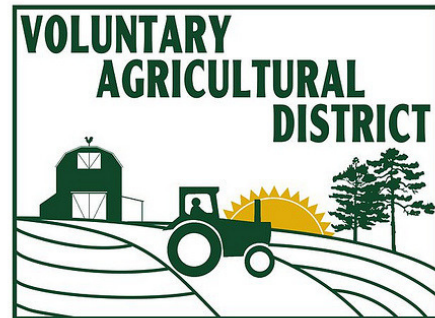
VOLUNTARY FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM

The mission of the county's Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program is to promote and protect working lands and the general ecological welfare of Moore County. Voluntary agricultural districts (VAD) are the tools used to achieve the mission.

Authorized by state statute and implemented by county ordinance, VADs are designated areas where commercial agriculture will be encouraged and protected. The purpose of the districts is to increase identity and pride in the agricultural community and to increase protection from nuisance suits and other negative impacts on properly managed farms. The goal of the program in Moore County is to protect and promote working lands and the general ecological welfare of the county.

Voluntary agricultural districts provide producers with representation to the county through the Agricultural Advisory Board and increased visibility through the use of special signs posted at each member farm (see image on this page). In return, non-farm use and development are prohibited on the land for the ten-year duration of the agreement.

"Exempt" or "tax exempt" properties as defined by the North Carolina General Statutes for property tax exemption or exclusion (NCGS § 105-282.1), are not allowed to participate in the VAD program as the regulations are currently adopted in the County. Moore County has over 10,000 acres of land that are exempt. The owners of tax exempt lands cannot avail themselves of VAD benefits such as handling nuisance complaints or intervening in

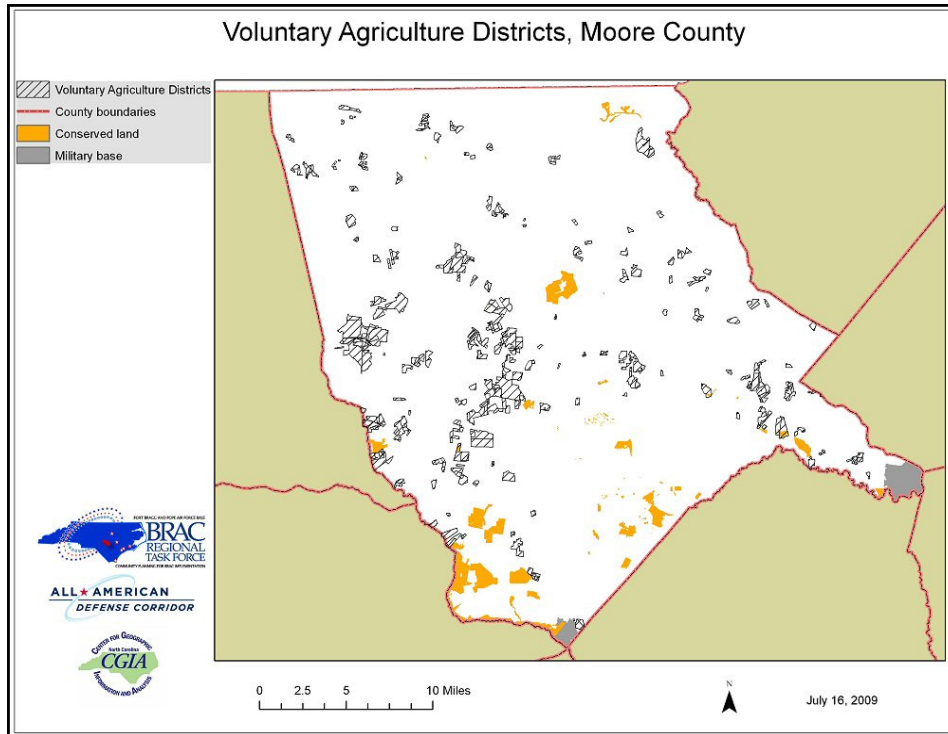


nuisance complaints. For instance, these lands are often still working forest lands and rely on harvest and controlled burning to manage them. Furthermore, they do not get the additional level of public involvement should they be considered for eminent domain.

Landowners are able to revoke the agreement at anytime by providing written notice to the Agricultural Advisory Board. There are 126 farms in agricultural districts, which are

displayed on Map 7. The districts are helping to protect 24,927 acres of farm and forest land.²⁵

Map 7. Moore County Voluntary Agricultural Districts



ENHANCED VOLUNTARY AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS (EVAD)

The Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District (EVAD) program is an extension of the VAD program. It created a new category that offers landowners additional benefits if they are willing to waive their right to withdraw from the program at any time, making the ten-year agreement (easement) IRREVOCABLE. Furthermore, at the end of ten years, the EVAD conservation easement automatically renews for three more years, unless the landowner provides timely written notice to the county or municipality. Ending the agreement (easement) will result in the property no longer qualifying for the EVAD program and its benefits. The benefits of the enhanced district are as follows: land owners are eligible to receive a higher percentage of cost-share funds under the Agricultural Cost Share Program (as high as 90%), potential priority preference for state grants, utility assessments may be suspended or waived for properties not connected to utilities in question, the farm may receive up to 25% of gross sales from the sale of non-farm products and still maintain its

zoning exemption as a bona_fide farm as is stated in N.C.G.S §[106-743.1](#), & §[106-743.4](#). To implement this option, the county must either adopt a new ordinance or modify the existing VAD ordinance.

AGRICULTURAL TERM EASEMENTS

An agricultural term easement is similar to a conservation easement but applies for a finite period of time agreed to by the landowner and easement holder. (Conservation easements are used in the EVAD program.) The N.C. Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund is authorized to grant funds to purchase agricultural conservation easements, an arrangement that is sometimes called leasing development rights.

The value of a temporary agricultural easement is that it gives landowners a period of time to experience the land use restrictions without having to make a permanent commitment, which they might do in the future. It is also possible that placing an agricultural conservation easement with a duration that is sure to exceed the landowner's remaining lifetime will induce the heirs to find a long-term ownership or management arrangement that sustains agriculture, but will also eventually "untie their hands."

AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

Under the North Carolina General Statute (§ [106-744](#)) Agricultural Conservation Easements³⁶ a conservation easement is a restrictive deed placed voluntarily by a landowner for the purpose of protecting valuable resources such as farmland, wildlife habitat, historic sites and scenic views. A conservation easement also includes a partner such as a land trust or soil and water conservation district. The conservation partner is called the easement holder and is granted the right to monitor activities on the land and enforce the terms of the easement. Having a conservation partner is important because easements are permanent and all future landowners are legally bound to abide by its terms. Because of the perpetual obligation of enforcement, the easement holders must establish procedures and commit resources to fulfill their responsibilities.

Conservation easements are flexible documents written to achieve the long-term goals of the landowner and in accordance with the mission of the easement holder. They do not have to be placed on a landowner's entire holdings but can include all or part of one or more tax parcels. Agricultural conservation easements typically restrict subdivision and non-agricultural development, and other activities that are incompatible with commercial agriculture. They usually also require that production activities be conducted in accordance with a soil and water conservation plan, or forest management plan, and make use of best management practices. Such requirements ensure the long-term viability of the natural resources while providing flexibility as activities, technologies and natural circumstances on the land change.

It is important to note that only the property rights addressed in the deed are affected, so unless otherwise stated, the landowner:

- does not have to grant access to the public
- can hunt and fish, and lease hunting and fishing rights
- remains eligible for present-use value taxation
- can sell the land or pass it to heirs.

Conservation easements have a pecuniary value based on the change in the market value of the property after the easement has been placed. It is possible for a landowner to sell the conservation easement and for programs to buy them through what are sometimes called Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) or Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE). Funding for conservation easements is highly competitive and landowners usually "donate" some or all of the easement's value—they place the easement without receiving a payment for the full value. Landowners donating any amount of an easement's value may receive a federal income tax deduction and a North Carolina income tax credit—each requires that the easement meet certain criteria. There may also be estate tax benefits that will accrue to the landowner's heirs.

NORTH CAROLINA SANDHILLS SAFE HARBOR PROGRAM

The safe harbor program is a landowner incentive program developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the Endangered Species Act to benefit red-cockaded woodpeckers. When red-cockaded woodpeckers inhabit a property, some land use restrictions apply under the Endangered Species Act, so many landowners fear that their land management actions may result in their property being occupied by the birds, in turn, limiting their use of the property. The safe harbor program provides protection to landowners that no additional land use restrictions will be imposed as a result of their management actions. Many activities are compatible with the program, including timber production, pine needle raking, hunting and other recreation. To be eligible for this voluntary program, individuals are required to sign up which may be accomplished through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's office in Southern Pines.

READINESS AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION INITIATIVE

The Readiness and Environmental Protection Initiative is a land conservation program funded by the U.S. Department of Defense. The program specifically requires the military to seek partners off the base to conserve land, preserve habitat for a threatened species and preserve test and training space. The program at Fort Bragg is coordinated by the base's Office of Plans, Training, and Mobilization and utilizes partnerships with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Nature Conservancy and the Sandhills Area Land Trust. The conservation partners receive funds from Fort Bragg to purchase lands or conservations easements on lands threatened by incompatible uses such as development.

PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

In general, landowners possess a variety of rights to their property, including the rights to use water resources, harvest timber or develop the property consistent with local regulations. Some or all of these rights can be transferred or sold to another person. Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs, also known as Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE), enable landowners to voluntarily separate and sell their right to develop land from their other property rights. Participating farmers are typically

offered the difference between the restricted value of the land and the fair market value of the land. A permanent conservation easement is recorded in the land records binding all future owners. The land remains in private ownership and on the tax rolls.

Local PDR programs *do not currently exist in Moore County*. This program can prevent development that would effectively eliminate the future possibility of farming in an area. Selling an easement allows farmers to cash in a percentage of the equity in their land, thus creating a financially competitive alternative to development. Agricultural producers often use PDR program funds to buy and/or improve land, buildings or equipment, retire debt and increase viability of their operation. The reinvestment of PDR funds in equipment, livestock and other farm inputs may stimulate local agricultural economies.

TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) programs, also known as density exchange programs, allow landowners to transfer the right to develop one parcel of land to a different parcel of land. (By contrast, cluster zoning usually shifts density within a parcel.) TDR programs can protect farmland, environmentally sensitive areas and historically significant areas by shifting development from agricultural, environmentally sensitive or historic areas to areas planned for growth. *It is important to recognize that TDR programs do not reduce the number of building rights. TDR programs simply reallocate them geographically.*

Since TDR programs are based on having a definable right to development, any area seeking to implement such a program must have a means, preferably statutory, to allocate such rights. Typically, this is done through zoned density, and in areas without zoning, may be achieved through an assignment of engineering capacity in accordance with subdivision regulations. Without a means to assign such development rights, a TDR program simply cannot be implemented with any effectiveness.

The TDR legislation itself provides the legal framework under which development rights are transferred from one lot, parcel, or area of land in any sending district to another lot, parcel, or area of land in one or more receiving districts. To implement TDR, receiving and sending districts are designated and mapped in accordance with a comprehensive plan. Sending districts may include agricultural land and the receiving districts must have the infrastructure needed to support increased development. Development rights are documented as conservation easements that are enforceable by the town or other designated entity. They may be bought or sold by the municipality for deposit in a development rights bank. Due to the complexity of implementation, developers are reluctant to endorse or use TDR programs due to the costs and additional resources required to implement them.

Flexibility is important throughout the TDR process. For TDR to work, communities must build consensus on its use as a way to protect resources and direct future growth. A market must exist for both the development rights (either in the private sector or via a community development rights bank) and the higher density development that will result. While the TDR technique holds promise in theory, it has not been greatly utilized in North Carolina due to the complexity of its administration and its unproven track record.

For example, during the winter of 2009, legislation was introduced to authorize a Chatham County TDR program. The legislation would have required that the County conduct extensive market analysis prior to developing its program responses and envisioned a multi-jurisdictional approach to TDR with the County and municipalities cooperatively developing sending and receiving areas. The legislation did not advance.

HUNT NC FARMLAND

Hunt NC Farmland is a free web-based service offered by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS) to connect farmers who want to offer hunt leases and to hunters that are looking for them. This tool could allow landowners to lease either active or idle agricultural land to hunters and make additional income as farming and hunting are often compatible uses. Users can call the NCDACS or explore their website for more information.

Economic Development Opportunities

LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM

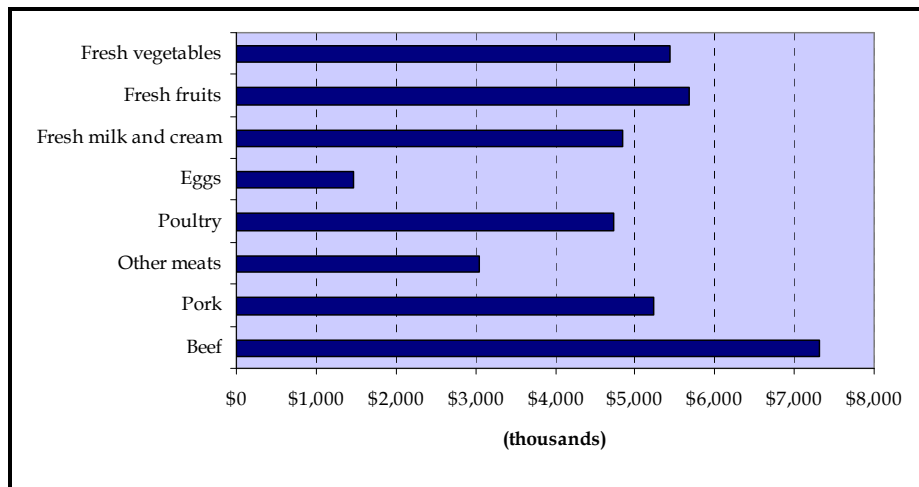
Local is an attribute of food that is increasingly valued by consumers around the country.²⁷ Local food is also becoming popular in Moore County as evidenced by the expansion of the Moore County Farmers Market and the establishment of Sandhills Farm to Table Cooperative. Local markets are an opportunity to shorten supply chains and allow farmers to capture more of the retail dollar, whereas producers selling to an intermediary in a national supply chain receive only 23.5 cents of the retail dollar for fresh fruits and 26.5 cents for vegetables.²⁸

Factors that motivate consumers to purchase local foods are varied but may be broadly grouped as either private or public. Private factors are those that are experienced directly by the consumer and include perceptions of health benefits, freshness, taste and food safety. Altruistic factors benefit individuals or groups other than the consumer and include supporting the local economy, obtaining a fair share of price to the farmer, and maintaining local farmland. Consumers may also consider private and public factors when choosing where to purchase local foods such as from farm stands, Community Supported Agriculture programs, farmers markets, food cooperatives, natural foods stores, locally-owned grocery stores, or supermarkets.

In 2008, county residents spent an estimated \$184 million on food;²⁹ Figure 10 shows how much was spent on select foods for home consumption and highlights the potential for farmers to capitalize on local markets. Nearly half the farmers in the county raise beef cattle or chickens, mostly for auction (cattle) and integrators (poultry), leaving most of the \$13.5 million spent on beef, poultry and eggs to be earned by large food companies. This represents a potentially lucrative opportunity for producers willing to grow, process and market their products.

Local food initiatives typically include efforts to supply local schools, and in 1998 the NCDA&CS initiated the Farms to School program to develop a system for schools to receive fresh produce from local farms. Moore County schools serve 1,673,100 meals annually at a cost of nearly \$5 million,³⁰ representing a potential opportunity for local farmers.

Figure 101. Annual Expenditures on Select Foods



Source: 2008 Consumer Expenditure Survey (Bureau of Labor Statistics)

Federal and state support for local and regional foods systems is increasing. The USDA launched the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food initiative to create new economic opportunities by better connecting consumers with local producers. The effort is being advanced through new and existing programs in each of the department's 26 agencies. The

Center for Environmental Farming Systems^c released *From Farm to Fork: A Guide to Building North Carolina's Sustainable Local Food Economy* in early 2010. As a result of the work preceding the farm to fork guide and the influence of the leaders of the Center for Environmental Farming Systems, in August 2009 the General Assembly created the N.C. Sustainable Local Food Advisory Council.

Feed the Forces

Early attempts to sell produce and other agricultural products to Fort Bragg were stalled by barriers imposed by the procurement procedures of the base's commissaries. Although Public Law 95-07 requires that all federal procurement agencies provide contract opportunities to small and disadvantaged businesses, the system at Fort Bragg is simply too large for small-scale producers to participate. An economic impact reportⁱ produced for the BRAC Regional Task Force asserts that the 11 counties in the Fort Bragg region combined could not supply all the food consumed at the post. The report suggests that farmers in the region need to collaborate and submit a single unified bid for a sub-contract with the Fort Bragg commissaries.

i. The Economic Impact of BRAC on the 11 Member Counties: Bridging the Gap for Economically Disadvantaged Populations. 2010

LOCAL MARKETS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HORTICULTURE PRODUCTS

Population growth provides an opportunity for agriculture as well as a challenge, and local markets are not limited to food products. As the population of the county increases, new residential and commercial developments will be built and they will need landscaping. This presents an opportunity for Moore County farmers growing ornamental trees, shrubs turf sod, and pine straw as well as greenhouses growing floriculture crops. Locally grown environmental horticultural products have some of the same potential benefits as those of local food products. Having been selected and started in the county, the woody and

^c A research, extension and education partnership of N.C. State University, N.C. A&T State University, and the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

herbaceous plants might be more adapted to the soils and climate of the area compared to plants grown in other regions. They also carry the intangible characteristics of supporting local farms and the local economy; qualities a savvy developer may use to market its homes. The pine straw market represents an opportunity for landowners to manage their timber for long leaf pinestraw, enabling the landowner to generate income until the timber is ready for harvest.

AGRITOURISM

Agritourism enterprises are consumer-focused activities located on farms and forests offering experiences and education in addition to traditional farm products. Enterprises such as corn mazes, U-pick orchards, education tours, and recreation trails are among many options for landowners and producers to diversify and stabilize their agricultural incomes. Because the elements of agritourism activities are very different from those of production agriculture, they can also be attractive options for new generation farmers who would otherwise move off the land in pursuit of another career. Farmers from the Research Triangle economic development region who were interviewed by the Agricultural Advancement Consortium of the N.C. Rural Center identified agritourism as the greatest opportunity in the next ten years as the demand for visitor services on farms increases with urban expansion.²⁰ Truly an entrepreneurial business, agritourism is limited most by imagination.

COOPERATIVE MARKETING

Farms stores and farmers markets are good opportunities for producers to connect with consumers and capture the retail dollar. However, even a small community's food system is too large to be served by direct sales. If the aggregate of small farms is going to supply a significant amount of food, then centralized marketing and distribution will be needed at some level. The same argument applies for non-food farm and forest products. Take the examples of the Sandhills Farm to Table Cooperative, Farmers Fresh Market and Feed the Forces.

Although the Sandhills Farm to Table Cooperative was untested at the writing of this plan, the organizers and participants realized that pooling their resources would enable

them to provide a wider variety and more consistent level of product, and reduce the transaction costs for each individual producer. Farmers Fresh Market has been tested and is growing rapidly in volume and geographic area. Feed the Forces, on the other hand, failed to materialize because the Army, though willing in principle to buy local, could not meet their food needs buying from countless small producers. Farmers themselves have been heard to joke that *farmers cooperative* is an oxymoron, but it is clear that great opportunities are available to those that are willing to cooperate with other farmers to meet consumers needs as well as their own.

FARMERS FRESH MARKET

Farmers Fresh Market is another example of successful collective marketing. Based in Rutherford County, Farmers Fresh Market is a non-profit rural economic development program started in 2006 by Foothills Connect partly in response to the county's loss of 6,000 textile manufacturing jobs. The market is internet-based and connects farmers from Rutherford and surrounding counties to chefs, and green grocers in Charlotte and other centralized communities. All transactions are conducted through their website, but are made between the farmer and the buyer. On delivery day, farmers bring their freshly harvested products to Foothills Connect where they are sorted and shipped. The farmer sets the price and pays a nominal rate to cover distribution costs.

www.farmersfreshmarket.org

Biofuels

Moore County, with over 300,000 acres of forestland and 26,000 acres of cropland, has the natural resources to be a substantial participant in the biofuels industry. Over 5 billion gallons of petroleum-based fuels are consumed in North Carolina each year, but none of it is produced in the state. In 2007, a strategic plan was developed to develop a liquid biofuels industry in North Carolina.³¹ The nascent biofuels industry is being developed with leadership and support from the Biofuels Center of North Carolina and presents opportunities for landowners as well as regional economic development.

Due to the limit in demand from traditional markets, and the increase in the standing timber inventory, forest resources show the greatest potential for developing the biofuels industry. Forestry residues are the waste byproducts of conventional logging operations; they included the limbs, tops and other materials left on the forest floor. Often burned in the field, residues are one of the largest sources of unused biomass in the state and can be converted into wood chips and then into biofuels.

The biofuels industry may also provide opportunities for farms, including fuel ethanol produced from corn starch and biodiesel produced from vegetable oils. The potential for producing ethanol from local feedstocks such as soybeans and corn rests in the ability to compete with corn from the Midwest. The Biofuels Center is assessing the economic viability of several crops that are grown, or have been grown in Moore County including sugar beets, barley, grain sorghum and sweet potatoes. Fluctuations in petroleum-based diesel fuel and soybean oil prices have adversely affected the production of biodiesel; however, byproducts from hog and poultry operations have been used as feedstocks in small-scale manufacturing.

GOALS, STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

The mission of the plan is to enhance the viability of the agricultural community for the benefit of all Moore County residents. Four goals are central to this mission: 1) a supportive operating environment; 2) an enhanced agricultural economy; 3) protected agricultural land; and 4) a continued succession of new farmers. Each goal is addressed with two or more strategies and each strategy is refined by one or more actions.

This mission will be achieved if there is strong leadership from the Moore County Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB) and other community members, cooperation among stakeholders, and support from the Board of Commissioners. The goals, strategies and actions are a working guideline that can and should be reviewed and revised periodically as needs, opportunities and resources change. Additionally, some strategies and actions may be better pursued at the regional level, so opportunities to work with neighboring counties and organizations should be sought.

Goals, Strategies and Actions

GOAL 1: AN ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURE IS ENCOURAGED AND EMBRACED AS ECONOMICALLY IMPORTANT AND CULTURALLY DESIRED.

STRATEGY 1.1: *Ensure that county ordinances, plans and policies do not unnecessarily impede the operation, growth and support of agricultural activities.*

Action	Leader	Partner/Dept.(s)	Year	Duration
Action 1.1.1: Update the county land use plan and develop a matrix to identify important agricultural areas and issues. (Example: Available water for agriculture)	Planning	Cooperative Extension, Soil and Water	2012	18 mos.
Action 1.1.2: Update the Working Lands Protection Plan as needed, or no more than five (5) years following its adoption.	Soil and Water	Planning, Cooperative Extension	2017	6 mos.

STRATEGY 1.2: *Inform residents about the location of agricultural areas and the characteristics of agricultural operations.*

Action	Leader	Partner/Dept.(s)	Year	Duration
Action 1.2.1: Track proposed Federal and State law changes that could have an impact on the agricultural industry and inform the community of the proposed changes.	Soil and Water	Public Information Office, Cooperative Extension	2013	1 year to establish; then ongoing
Action 1.2.2: Monitor and track recordations at the County's Register of Deeds office in regard to hydraulic fracturing.	Soil and Water	Register of Deeds, Cooperative Extension, GIS	2013	1 year to establish; then ongoing
Action 1.2.3: Coordinate with the Sandhills Conservation Partnership (USFWS) to stay abreast of easements and fee simple land acquisitions in the County.	Soil and Water & Planning	GIS	2012	1 year to establish; then ongoing

GOAL 2: A DIVERSIFIED AND EXPANDED AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY.

STRATEGY 2.1: Provide business education programs and economic development support.

Action	Leader	Partner/Dept.(s)	Year	Duration
Action 2.1.1: Develop a partnership with the Moore County Chamber of Commerce to hold business development events for producers and buyers; e.g. restaurants, food service providers and food retailers; landscape companies; and builders and other users of wood products. One such event to be considered is Moore County's Annual Farm City Banquet.	Moore County Chamber of Commerce	Cooperative Extension	2015	1 year to establish; then on-going
Action 2.1.2: Explore the possibility of developing a local Moore County tracking/reporting system to improve upon the USDA Census of Agriculture statistics and thresholds for profit in various crops and agricultural products.	Cooperative Extension	Soil and Water	2013	1-2 years; the on-going
Action 2.1.3: Conduct a study of Moore County's equine industry similar to the study the North Carolina Rural Center conducted in 2009 to document the precise size and scope of the industry, to determine its economic impact and to recommend measures for increasing the industry's contributions to the economy.	Cooperative Extension, Chamber of Commerce	Convention and Visitors Bureau, Partners in Progress	2014	1 year

STRATEGY 2.2: *Continue to expand and support the existing successful local foods initiative.*

Action	Leader	Partner/Dept.(s)	Year	Duration
Action 2.2.1: Hold a forum with leaders and stakeholders to create a framework for developing a local food system. An outcome of the forum could be a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners that they establish a food policy council. Cabarrus County recently completed a local food system assessment and may be a resource.	Cooperative Extension	Sandhills Farm to Table	2013	1 year to plan, hold and evaluate

STRATEGY 2.3: *Support producers of environmental horticulture and other landscape products.*

Action	Leader	Partner/Dept.(s)	Year	Duration
Action 2.3.1: Utilize the county's permitting process to promote the use of locally grown environmental horticulture and landscaping materials by developers and also by the Property Management division of Moore County.	Planning	Public Works, Cooperative Extension	2012	1-2 years to establish; then on-going

STRATEGY 2.4: *Support the development of agritourism enterprises*

Action	Leader	Partner/Dept.(s)	Year	Duration
Action 2.4.1: Continue efforts to support workshops on agritourism covering topics such as enterprise evaluation, liability insurance, zoning ordinances, food and environmental health regulations.	Cooperative Extension, Planning	Convention and Visitors Bureau	2013	1-2 years; then on-going

STRATEGY 2.5: *Support the development of the biofuels industry in the county.*

Action	Leader	Partner/Dept.(s)	Year	Duration
Action 2.5.1: Provide economically viable crop alternatives for biofuels to promote the continuance of farming.	Cooperative Extension	Partners in Progress	2012	On-going
Action 2.5.2 Explore the use of timber harvest residues for biofuels to promote the continuance of forestry.	Cooperative Extension	Partners in Progress	2012	On-going

GOAL 3: PROTECT AGRICULTURAL LANDS.

STRATEGY 3.1: *Promote and enhance the Voluntary Farmland Preservation Program.*

Action	Leader	Partner/Dept.(s)	Year	Duration
Action 3.1.1: Develop an updated farmland protection ordinance and promote the Voluntary Farmland Protection Plan.	Soil and Water	County Administration	2013	1 Year
Action 3.1.2: Explore a mechanism for the Moore County Soil and Water Conservation District to hold conservation easements.	Soil and Water	Sandhills Area Land Trust (SALT)	2013	On-going

GOAL 4: PROMOTE THE CONTINUATION OF AGRICULTURE.

STRATEGY 4.1: Provide new education programs to youth and adults.

Action	Leader	Partner/Dept.(s)	Year	Duration
Action 4.1.1: Expand agricultural adult education and training programs available through Cooperative Extension and Sandhills Community College. Consider using Central Community College's sustainable agriculture program as a guide.	Cooperative Extension	Sandhills Community College	2013	1-2 Years to establish; then on-going
Action 4.1.2: Expand and enhance agriculture education programs in the public schools to prepare students for careers in sustainable agriculture. Instruction should cover topics such as crop and livestock production, value-added processing, marketing, forest management, timber and non-timber forest products.	Cooperative Extension	Moore County Schools	2015	1-2 Years to establish; then on-going
Action 4.1.3: Develop an on-farm/in-forest summer internship/mentorship program between interested farmers/foresters and school age children.	Cooperative Extension	Moore County Schools, Future Farmers of America, Parent Teacher Student Assoc.	2015	1-2 Years to establish; then on-going
Action 4.1.4: Develop a Farm to School Program to connect elementary school children and agriculture. The Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project's <i>Growing Minds</i> program is a good model.	Moore County Schools	Cooperative Extension	2015	1-2 Years to establish; then on-going

STRATEGY 4.2: *Promote the transition of agricultural land.*

Action	Leader	Partner/Dept.(s)	Year	Duration
Action 4.2.1: Coordinate estate planning and farm transition assistance for agricultural land owners; include workshops and continuing education credits for attending attorneys, a directory of qualified advisors and other resources.	Cooperative Extension, Soil and Water	North Carolina Farm Transition Network	2013	On-going
Action 4.2.2: Provide technical assistance to landlords and tenants negotiating lease agreements and address issues like land and water stewardship; documentation and record keeping for PUV, loans, N.C. Agriculture Cost Share and other programs; product share in lieu of cash payment; buyout clauses; and other issues necessary to ensure that agreements are fair and that both parties are informed and protected.	Soil and Water	Cooperative Extension	2014	On-going
Action 4.2.3: When using funds pursuant to this plan to lease or otherwise convey real property rights, a property owner(s) shall execute and duly record with the register of deeds a legally sufficient instrument of conveyance clearly showing the property and rights being leased or otherwise conveyed.	Soil and Water	County Attorney	2012	On-going

Implementation

The Soil and Water Conservation District, as the lead agency, will coordinate the efforts of the Agricultural Advisory Board and assume the primary responsibility for implementing the goals, strategies and actions associated with this plan. They will initiate each action, follow progress and advocate for the leaders and partners. The plan has been organized to be implemented over six years beginning in 2012. The schedule associated with the goals, strategies and actions details the year in which each action is to begin and includes suggested leaders and partners as well as an estimate of the time needed to establish and/or complete each action.

Prior to implementation, the entire *Moore County Working Lands Protection Plan* must be endorsed by the Board of County Commissioners and certified by the N.C. Commissioner of Agriculture. Those actions should be taken in the year 2012. In that year, it is recommended that the Board of Commissioners consider one additional action that will significantly improve the county's ability to implement the plan and achieve its mission. That action is to consider utilizing revenues derived each year from the collection of Present-Use Value rollback taxes for agricultural development activities.

At the end of each fiscal year the Moore County Soil and Water Conservation District will review the Plan's action items and provide the County Manager with an update as well as make the update available to the public via the County's website.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCES

Moore County Government

- Board of Commissioners
- Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB)
- County Manager
- Planning Department
- Public Information Office

Moore County Government Affiliates

- Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)
- Cooperative Extension Service
- Partners in Progress
- Public Schools

Education, Business and Nonprofit Organizations

- Sandhills Community College
- Sandhills Farm to Table Cooperative
- Moore County Farmers Market
- Sandhills Area Land Trust
- Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Farm Bureau
- Sustainable Sandhills
- The Nature Conservancy
- Pinehurst-Southern Pines Area Association of Realtors

FUNDING SOURCES

Below is a partial list of organizations and programs that make loans or grants for natural resource conservation and economic development projects. Other resources are compiled by USDA Alternative Farming Systems Information Center and can be found at <http://nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/funding.shtml>.

- N.C. Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund
- N.C. Clean Water Management Trust Fund
- US Department of Housing and Urban Development
 - Sustainable Communities Planning Grant
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
 - Agricultural Marketing Service
 - Farm Service Agency
 - National Institute of Food and Agriculture
 - Natural Resource Conservation Service
 - Rural Development
- Golden LEAF Foundation
- N.C. Tobacco Trust Fund
- Southern SARE (Sustainable Agricultural Research and Education)
- RAFI-USA (Rural Advancement Foundation International)

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