

## AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

### INTRODUCTION



Greene County has a tradition of farming and forestry that goes back to its earliest days, and residents have repeatedly confirmed their strong desire to see this heritage into the future. Not only does agriculture contribute to the aesthetic values and sense of place Greene County possesses, but it is also an important industry and source of employment in its own right. The goals presented in the Comprehensive Plan outline the county's vision for the future of agriculture and forestry.

Like many other communities in Virginia that are growing, Greene County is facing the prospect of gradually losing farmland and forests. Each year a portion of land in the county is converted from growing food or harvesting timber to other uses, such as residential or commercial development. At the same time, some individual farmers are finding it more difficult to sustain a viable business or recruit the next generation to carry on their role of providing food. Preserving farmland and forestland lies at the crossroads of many aspects of the Comprehensive Plan, from caring for the county's natural resources and heritage to ensuring continued economic development through production and tourism. Efforts to focus new residential, commercial, and industrial growth into the County's Designated Growth Areas also play a key role in preserving our rural areas.

Having a safe, nutritious, and fresh supply of food is important for the quality of life in Greene County, and the growing demand for locally grown foods in the region presents a renewed opportunity for Greene County farmers. Forests also provide benefits to the community and environment far above their commercial use. Each of these elements of the agricultural and forestal system is a part of the comprehensive vision for the future of Greene County.

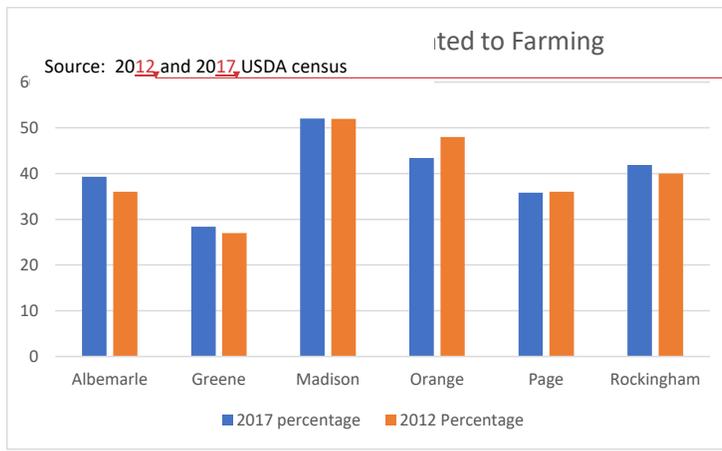


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## EXISTING CONDITIONS

### AGRICULTURE

Agriculture in Greene County has been undergoing a transition for many years. Variables such as the residential and commercial development and the economy over the last several decades have put pressure on agricultural land. Between 2002 and 2017 Geene County's population has increased by 33% while the total number of acres dedicated to farming in the county decreased by 12%.



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Most of the principle operators of farms in Greene County have other sources of income to supplement their farming. Of all principle operators of farms in 2012, 50% indicate running the farm as their primary occupation. This is up from 2007, when 38% of all farmers were considered "full-time." Part-time farming could be due to either difficult economic situations that require farmers to take alternative jobs to maintain their standard of living, or from small-scale farming conducted by households in addition to preexisting employment in another sector. The average age of farmers in the county is 61.5, compared to the national average of 57 years of age. This is not unusual for the occupation throughout the country, but it does raise the issue of whether workforce supply will be able to meet the demand for agricultural production in the future.

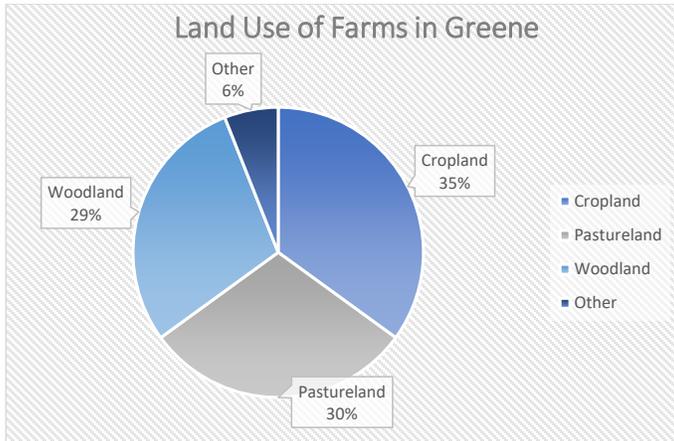
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Virginia Cooperative Extension is the local connection to Virginia's land-grant universities, Virginia Tech, and Virginia State University. They offer educational programs in agriculture in their Greene County extension office. Their Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) programs help sustain the profitability of agricultural and forestry production and enhance and protect the quality of our land and water resources.



Source: 2017 USDA census

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### PROMOTING FARMLAND RETENTION

Greene County has recognized the value of maintaining a vital agricultural industry and has employed various measures to meet this goal. The Land Use Taxation system, used by 63 other counties in Virginia, assesses the taxes of qualified parcels according to the productive potential of the land rather than the market real estate value. This often relieves farmers of some tax burden, particularly for parcels with higher potential for development, and helps make the use of this land for farming financially feasible. There are currently approximately 978 parcels in the county receiving this tax benefit. Reducing the tax burden for farmers and landowners of open space helps align these land uses with the costs of county-provided services they typically incur.

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The county has also used Agricultural and Forestal Districts as a support measure. These are voluntary agreements between landowners and the local government to decline from development in exchange for eligibility for land use taxation and limitations of eminent domain. When the program began in 1982, 23,315 acres were enrolled. The number of acres in the program had fallen to 3,466 acres in 2019.

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Conservation easements, legal agreements to keep land open or in agricultural use in perpetuity, are another available tool. Greene County does not directly purchase conservation easements at this time, but several parcels in the county have been preserved specifically for farming through the Virginia Outdoors Foundation. A total of 10,648 acres in Greene County are under a conservation easement. (source: <https://www.pecva.org/resources/press/local-land-conservation-total-in-2020/>)

Greene County also encourages the development of niche farming, specialty crops, agriculture-based tourism opportunities, event venues, and transient lodging facilities to add to revenue options on local farms.

## LOCAL FOOD

The market growth in local foods over the last several years has benefited farmers in Greene County. For ten years, the Greene County farmers' market was held June through October at the Greene County Technical College on Route 33.

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The Economic Development & Tourism department revitalized the Greene County farmers market in 2017 at a temporary location, naming it Greene Farmers Market. Greene Farmers Market moved to its permanent location in 2019, the new Pavilion at Greene Commons, in Stanardsville. The market operates seasonally from April thru October on Saturday mornings and holds a special Holiday Market in late fall. Farmers, artists, and other producers from Greene and the surrounding counties have the opportunity to sell their products directly to customers. Greene Farmers Market participates in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), providing additional access to fresh, healthy local foods which benefit both farmers and consumers.

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The Piedmont Environmental Council runs a "Buy Fresh, Buy Local" campaign to encourage residents to purchase food from farmers in the region. Several Greene County producers currently participate in this program. The Virginia Independent Consumers and Farmers Association (VICFA) also works to promote small-scale agriculture in Greene County, mostly at the level of the state legislature. ¶

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For more information about Greene Commons, see the Tourism segment of the Comprehensive Plan.

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## FORESTRY

Seventy-One Percent of all land in Greene County is forest cover, as identified by the US Forest Service Forest Inventory and Analysis most recent data in 2018. Seventy percent of Greene County's forest cover is in private ownership, with the remaining forestland being publicly owned, mostly the Shenandoah National Park. The majority of the forests in Greene County are comprised of hardwoods, with Oak-Hickory being especially prevalent.

Forests provide an important economic function to residents of Greene County. Between 2015 and 2019, timber harvests generated a total average value of \$476,325 to Greene's forest landowners. The 2015-2019 total harvest value is well above the annual average value from 2004-2019 which is \$277,524. Historical harvests are shown in the table below.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Harvest</u>	<u>Total Harvested Acres</u>
<u>2015</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>443.5</u>
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In addition, every \$1 in rights to harvest timber paid to the landowner yields \$41.82 in value-added to Virginia's economy. When all of the economic activity generated from the forestry sector in Greene County is taken into account, over 13 million dollars annually is added to the Virginia economy from this

sector. The forest-related industry in Greene County represents 35 jobs directly and 43 jobs total. ([The Economic Impact of Virginia's Agriculture and Forest Industries, Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service May 2017](#)).

Forestland is important to Greene County from an economic perspective, but it also provides numerous other benefits. The forests of Greene County protect watersheds and provide long-term carbon sequestration through forest management, which contributes to clean air. Finally, forests provide important social benefits, including attractive sites for homes, scenic beauty, wildlife habitat, contribute to the rural character of the county, and a draw for visitors and potential new residents.

**GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES: AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY**

- [Encourage and retain farming forestry land use operations](#)
  - [The County will maintain land use taxation and promote awareness of tax incentives for farmers.](#)
  - [The County will partner with local and national organizations to encourage conservation easements for agriculture and forestry.](#)
  - [The County through smart zoning practices will concentrate future development into growth areas in accordance with the land use section of the comprehensive plan.](#)
  - [The County will partner with the Greene County office of Virginia Cooperative Extension to help recruit young farmers and reduce the barriers to entry inherent to farming in the area.](#)
- [Protect forest resources in parallel with protecting agricultural resources.](#)
  - [The County in collaboration with local and national programs will promote Agricultural and Forestal Districts.](#)
  - [The County will investigate the causes of the large reduction in Forestal District acreage in recent years.](#)
- [Increase specialty and niche farming such as equestrian, vineyard, nursery, and greenhouse crop activities.](#)
  - [The County will promote the advantages of specialty and niche farming through the development of web information repository](#)
- [Encourage farming techniques that help protect farmland and water quality](#)
  - [The County will encourage organic and/or hydroponic farming by developing a web based information repository and advertising on the County Website.](#)
  - [The County will promote the use of riparian or vegetated buffers to a minimum width of 35 feet on either side of streams to protect fish and help keep the water clean.](#)

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- The County will provide to local and new farmers information on Best Management Practices (BMPs) such as no-till, contour plowing, cover crops that conserve soil integrity and health, rainwater filtration, and the reduction of the overland flow of water to area streams to encourage these practices.
- Recognize farming and farmers as a vital part of the county's future and make them part of the tourism
  - The County will work with local organizations to establish and maintain consistent events such as the Greene Farm and Livestock Show, the various farmer's markets hosted in the County, and the Strawberry Festival.
  - In order to promote agritourism businesses targeted toward the Richmond and D.C. metro areas. the County, through the Ecoomic Development Council and Tourism Council will research develop and maintain a list of business or organizations that can aid citizens and government in agritourism planning.
- Celebrate Greene County farming heritage
- The County in partnership with the Greene County Historical Society will collect stories from generational farmers to produce a pamphlet or documentary about the area's farming heritage. Support local "Farm to Table" agriculture.
- Greene County will conduct the a Buy Fresh, Buy Local campaign and hold a year-round farmer's market in Stanardsville.

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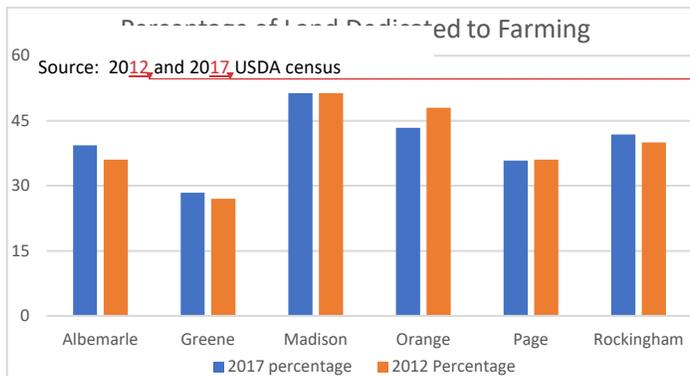
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For more information about Greene Commons, see the Tourism segment of the Comprehensive Plan.

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Forests provide an important economic function to residents of Greene County. Between 2015 and 2019, timber harvests generated a total average value of \$476,325 to Greene’s forest landowners. The 2015-2019 total harvest value is well above the annual average value from 2004-2019 which is \$277,524. Historical harvests are shown in the table below.

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In addition, every \$1 in rights to harvest timber paid to the landowner yields \$41.82 in value-added to Virginia’s economy. When all of the economic activity generated from the forestry sector in Greene County is taken into account, over 13 million dollars annually is added to the Virginia economy from this sector. The forest-related industry in Greene County represents 35 jobs directly and 43 jobs total. (The Economic Impact of Virginia’s Agriculture and Forest Industries, Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service May 2017).

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important social benefits, including attractive sites for homes, scenic beauty, wildlife habitat, contribute to the rural character of the county, and a draw for visitors and potential new residents.

#### GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES: AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

- Investigate county measures to encourage and retain farming and land use operations
  - Maintain land use taxation and promote awareness of tax incentives for farmers.
  - Partner with other organizations to encourage conservation easements for agriculture and forestry.
  - Concentrate future development into growth areas in accordance with the land use section of the comprehensive plan.
  - Partner with the Greene County office of Virginia Cooperative Extension to help recruit young farmers and reduce the barriers to entry inherent to farming in the area.
- Protect forest resources in parallel with protecting agricultural resources.
- Encourage and promote specialty and niche farming such as equestrian, vineyard, nursery, and greenhouse crop activities.
- Encourage farming techniques that help protect farmland and water quality
  - Encourage organic and/or hydroponic farming.
  - Promote the use of riparian or vegetated buffers to a minimum width of 35 feet on either side of streams to protect fish and help keep the water clean.
  - Encourage Best Management Practices (BMPs) such as no-till, contour plowing, cover crops that conserve soil integrity and health, rainwater filtration, and the reduction of the overland flow of water to area streams.
- Achieve recognition of farming and farmers as a vital part of the county's future and make them part of the tourism
  - Encourage events such as the Greene Farm and Livestock Show, the various farmer's markets hosted in the County, and the Strawberry Festival.
  - Promote agritourism businesses targeted toward the Richmond and D.C. metro areas.
- Actively celebrate the farming heritage
  - Collect stories from generational farmers to produce a pamphlet or documentary about the area's farming heritage.
- Support local agriculture through the Buy Fresh, Buy Local campaign and promote a year-round farmer's market in Stanardsville.
- [Review the zoning ordinances for A1 & C1 to ensure they in harmony with the Comprehensive Plan.](#)

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The value of Virginia's and Greene County's forests don't stop at the timber industry. Taking into account the societal and ecological benefits – recreational opportunities, clean air and water, carbon sequestration, biodiversity and a sense of place – Virginia's forests have an additional \$4 billion value to the Commonwealth. Other studies, not specific to Virginia, indicate that the ecosystem value of forest land far outweighs the value of any commodities derived from the land. It is just difficult to quantify.¶ There is potential for more timber production in Greene County, but it is limited by the level of production occurring in surrounding counties and the fact that there is currently only one mill in operation in the county. On the other hand, Greene County's location along the transportation corridors of Route 29 and Route 33 are well suited for transporting products. Overall, forests in Greene County are currently more highly valued for their aesthetic properties and range of ecological services, such as water filtering, soil conservation, plant and animal habitat, and sequestering greenhouse gases, than they are for timber harvesting.¶ ...

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## AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

### INTRODUCTION



Greene County has a tradition of farming and forestry that goes back to its earliest days, and residents have repeatedly confirmed their strong desire to see this heritage into the future. Our rural areas contribute to the aesthetic values and sense of place Greene County possesses. Our 157 square miles, nestled against the eastern slopes of the Blue Ridge, present a broad array of valuable physical and economic assets and lifestyle opportunities.

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Efforts to focus new residential, commercial, and industrial growth into the County's Designated Growth Areas play a key, though moderate, role in preserving our rural areas and their historic traditions and characteristics, but that commitment must be approached in parallel with efforts to sustain strong economic uses for those rural lands. Absent continued - and strengthened - economic stability in our rural areas, by right conversion to residential subdivisions or complete harvesting, rather than management, of timber become attractive alternatives.

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The goals presented in the Comprehensive Plan outline the county's vision for an environmentally and economically stable future for these rural areas.

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Farming and timber harvesting have been the primary economic drivers of rural Greene County for much of our history, but that focus may be slowly but steadily shifting. Like many other communities in Virginia that are growing, Greene County is facing the prospect of gradually losing farmland and forests. Each year a portion of land in the county is converted from growing food or harvesting timber to other uses, such as residential or commercial development. At the same time, some individual farmers are finding it more difficult to sustain a viable business or recruit the next generation to carry on their role of providing food.



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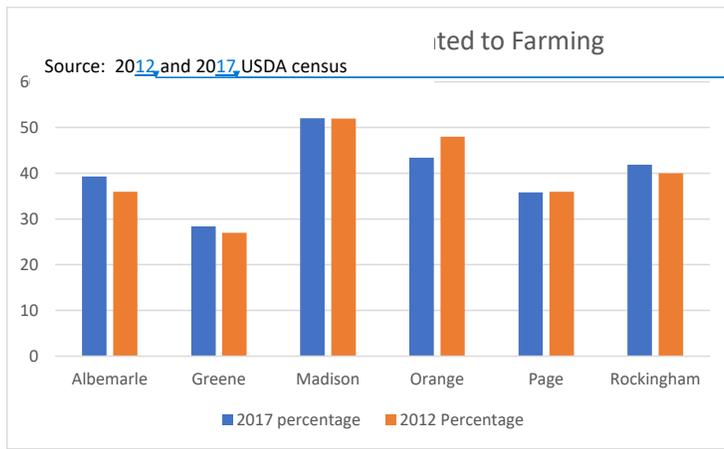
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EXISTING CONDITIONS

AGRICULTURE

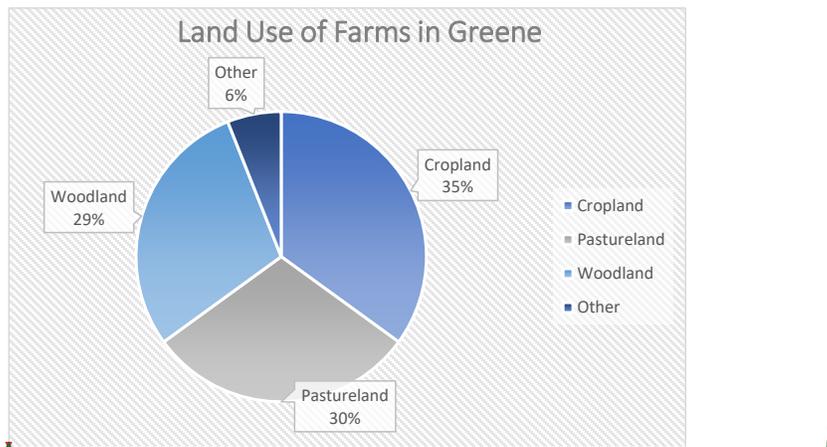
Agriculture in Greene County has been undergoing a transition for many years. Over the last several decades, variables such as local residential and commercial development, and the broader agriculture economy in general, have continued to put pressure on the economic choices for owners of agricultural land. Between 2002 and 2017, the population has increased by 33% in Greene County, topping 20,000 residents for the first time in the 2020 US Census. Within the same timeframe, the total number of acres dedicated to farming in the county decreased by 12%.

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- Deleted: Between 1987 and 2007, as the population in Greene County grew by an average of 3.5% per year, the amount of land dedicated to farming decreased by an average of 1.19% per year. Furthermore, the total number of farms in the county actually decreased, between 2007 and 2012, by 3.7%.
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Farming is changing, not just in Greene County, but throughout the country. Small, family-owned farms engaged in traditional agriculture are at an increasing disadvantage in farm markets, a trend that will likely continue. In 2017, Green County had 214 farms, covering 28,518 acres, approximately 28% of the total area of Greene County. While that is an average of 133 acres per farm, 40% (84 farms) of Greene's farms were less than 50 acres in size. On 45% of our farms (97 farms), annual sales were less than \$5000. Although total 2017 net farm income was \$944,000, that averaged only \$4,411 in net farming-related income per farm.

In that same year, 42% of Greene County producers were aged 65 or older, raising a question of the availability of farm operators in the future.



Source: 2017 USDA census

#### PROMOTING FARMLAND RETENTION

There are limited governmental roles or tools for supporting the continuation of vital, but market-driven, farming interests.

In 2015, the Commonwealth of Virginia sought to improve possible revenue options for agricultural land by directing counties to allow short-term tourist lodging, wineries, breweries, "event" venues and other uses as "by right" options for lands zoned for agriculture or conservation. Many of those choices are already helping Greene County land owners, and the tourist trade generated by those opportunities also benefits a number of other Greene County businesses.

Virginia Cooperative Extension is the local connection to Virginia's land-grant universities, Virginia Tech, and Virginia State University. They offer educational programs in agriculture in their Greene County extension office. Their Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) programs help sustain the profitability of agricultural and forestry production and enhance and protect the quality of our land and water resources.

Greene County has recognized the value of maintaining a vital agricultural industry and has employed various measures to meet this goal.

The Land Use Taxation system, used by 63 other counties in Virginia, assesses the taxes of qualified parcels according to the productive potential of the land rather than the market real estate value. This often relieves farmers of some tax burden, particularly for parcels with higher potential for development, and helps make the use of this land for farming more financially feasible. Reducing the tax

**Moved down [2]:** Virginia Cooperative Extension is the local connection to Virginia's land-grant universities, Virginia Tech, and Virginia State University. They offer educational programs in agriculture in their Greene County extension office. Their Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) programs help sustain the profitability of agricultural and forestry production and enhance and protect the quality of our land and water resources.¶

**Deleted:** Most of the principle operators of farms in Greene County have other sources of income to supplement their farming. Of all principle operators of farms in 2012, 50% indicate list running the farm as their primary occupation. This is up from 2007, when 38% of all farmers were considered "full-time." The part-time farming could be due to either too difficult economic situations that require farmers to take alternative jobs to maintain their standard of living, or from small-scale farming conducted by households in addition to preexisting employment in another sector. The average age of farmers in the county is 61.5, compared to the national average of 57 years of age. This is not unusual for the occupation throughout the country, but it does raise the issue of whether workforce supply will be able to meet the demand for agricultural production in the future.¶

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rate for farmers and landowners of open space helps align these land uses with the costs of county-provided services they typically incur. There are currently approximately 978 parcels in the county receiving this tax benefit.

The county has also used Agricultural and Forestal Districts as a support measure. These are voluntary agreements between landowners and the local government to bar non-agricultural development in exchange for eligibility for land use taxation and limitations of eminent domain. When the program began in 1982, 23,315 acres were enrolled. The number of acres in the program had fallen to 3,466 acres in 2019, a dramatic shift that merits further investigation.

Conservation easements, legal agreements to keep land open or in agricultural use in perpetuity, are another available tool. Greene County does not directly purchase conservation easements at this time, but several parcels in the county have been preserved specifically for farming through the Virginia Outdoors Foundation. A total of 10,648 acres in Greene County are under a conservation easement. (source: <https://www.pecva.org/resources/press/local-land-conservation-total-in-2020/>)

Greene County also encourages the development of niche farming, specialty crops, agriculture-based tourism opportunities, event venues, and transient lodging facilities to add to revenue options on local farms.

Articles 3-1-1, 3-1-2, 4-1-1 and 4-1-2 of the Greene County Zoning Ordinances list other currently possible uses, either by-right or by approval of a Special Use Permit, for additional revenue streams on land with either agricultural or conservation zoning.

## LOCAL FOOD

The market growth in local foods over the last several years has benefited farmers in Greene County.

For ten years, the Greene County farmers' market was held June through October at the Greene County Technical College on Route 33. The Economic Development & Tourism department revitalized the Greene County farmers market in 2017 at a temporary location, naming it Greene Farmers Market. Greene Farmers Market moved to its permanent location in 2019, the new Pavilion at Greene Commons, in Stanardsville. The market operates seasonally from April thru October on Saturday mornings and holds a special Holiday Market in late fall. Farmers, artists, and other producers from Greene and the surrounding counties have the opportunity to sell their products directly to customers. Greene Farmers Market participates in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), providing additional access to fresh, healthy local foods which benefit both farmers and consumers.

Other farmers' markets in Greene or in surrounding areas also contribute to those opportunities.

The Piedmont Environmental Council runs a "Buy Fresh, Buy Local" campaign to encourage residents to purchase food from farmers in the region. Greene Farmers Market and several Greene County

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**Deleted:** About a dozen other farmers' markets are in operation seasonally in the region, at which Greene County farmers have the opportunity to sell their produce directly to customers. A growing number of grocers, restaurants, and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) groups in the Charlottesville area are providing food from farmers in the region. ¶

The Piedmont Environmental Council runs a "Buy Fresh, Buy Local" campaign to encourage residents to purchase food from farmers in the region. Several Greene County producers currently participate in this program. The Virginia Independent Consumers and Farmers Association (VICFA) also works to promote small-scale agriculture in Greene County, mostly at the level of the state legislature. ¶

[producers currently participate in this program. A growing number of grocers and restaurants are also providing food from farmers in the region in support of “Buy Fresh, Buy Local”.](#)

[For more information about Greene Commons, see the Tourism segment of the Comprehensive Plan.](#)

## FORESTRY

[Seventy-One Percent of all land in Greene County is forest cover, as identified by the US Forest Service Forest Inventory and Analysis most recent data in 2018. Seventy percent of Greene County’s forest cover is in private ownership, with the remaining forestland being publicly owned, mostly the Shenandoah National Park. The majority of the forests in Greene County are comprised of hardwoods, with Oak-Hickory being especially prevalent.](#)

[Forests provide an important economic function to residents of Greene County. Between 2015 and 2019, timber harvests generated a total average value of \\$476,325 to Greene’s forest landowners. The 2015-2019 total harvest value is well above the annual average value from 2004-2019 which is \\$277,524. Historical harvests are shown in the table below.](#)

Year	Number of Harvest	Total Harvested Acres
2015	16	443.5
2016	13	285
2017	5	40
2018	5	252
2019	9	45
2020	5	201

[The forest-related industry in Greene County represents 35 jobs directly and 43 jobs total. \(The Economic Impact of Virginia’s Agriculture and Forest Industries, Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service May 2017\).](#)

[Forestland is important to Greene County from an economic perspective, but it also provides numerous other benefits. The forests of Greene County protect watersheds and provide long-term carbon sequestration through forest management, which contributes to clean air. Finally, forests provide important social benefits, including attractive sites for homes, scenic beauty, wildlife habitat, contribution to the rural character of the county, and a draw for visitors and potential new residents.](#)

## GOALS AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES: AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

- Investigate county measures to encourage and retain farming and land use operations
  - [Maintain land use taxation and promote awareness of tax incentives for farmers.](#)
  - [Evaluate reasons for the dramatic loss of acreage voluntarily included in Agricultural and Forestal land districts.](#)
  - [Review, altering where appropriate, the existing by right and Special Use Permit alternative revenue streams or uses enabled in Articles 3-1-1, 3-1-2, 4-1-1 and 4-1-2 of the Greene County Zoning Ordinances to help support the productivity of our rural lands while maintaining their historic character.](#)

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**Deleted:** 64% of all land in Greene County is forest cover, as identified by aerial photos from 2009. 77% of Greene County forest cover is in private ownership, and 23% in federal ownership, mostly the Shenandoah National Park. There is no statistically significant state or locally owned forest land. Most of the forest is comprised of hardwoods, with Oak-Hickory being especially prevalent.¶  
Forests provide an important economic function to residents of Greene County. Based on annual averages collected between 2003 and 2013, 185,000 board feet of pine sawtimber and 652 cords of pine are harvested annually, which brings the total value of pine harvested to \$47,285 annually. There were 798,000 board feet of hardwood sawtimber and 845 cords of hardwood pulpwood, bringing the average total value of hardwood harvested to \$177,042. Between 2003 and 2013 timber harvests generated a total average value of \$224,327 to Greene’s forest landowners. Timber harvests drastically decreased from 2008 to 2010 and have rebounded during the 2011-2013 time frame. The 2011-2013 total harvest value is \$311,672 which is well above the 11 year average.¶  
In addition, every \$1 in rights to harvest timber paid to the landowner yields \$41.82 in value added to Virginia’s economy. When all of the economic activity generated from the forestry sector in Greene County is taken into account, over \$9 million dollars annually is added to the Virginia economy from this sector.¶  
The USDA provides estimates of annual economic output and jobs generated from the forestry industry in the county. Direct activities include logging, hauling, milling, and manufacturing of wood products. Indirect output includes local businesses that serve the forestry industry, and induced includes multiplier effects generated from the forestry workers incomes being spent within the community. ¶  
The value of Virginia’s and Greene County’s forests don’t stop at the timber industry. Taking into account the societal and ecological benefits – recreational opportunities, clean air and water, carbon sequestration, biodiversity and a sense of place – Virginia’s forests have an additional \$4 billion value to the Commonwealth. Other studies, not specific to Virginia, indicate that the ecosystem value of forest land far outweighs the value of any commodities derived from the land. It is just difficult to quantify.¶  
There is potential for more timber production in Greene County, but it is limited by the level of production occurring ...

- Review, altering where appropriate, existing site-plan, lighting, buffering, critical slopes and other related County requirements primarily designed to govern new growth and development in our Designated Growth Areas, to ensure their appropriateness for future economic alternatives on our rural lands.
- Support the efforts of the Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and the Culpeper Soil and Water District to encourage conservation easements, stream protections and other best management practices for agriculture and forestry.
- Maintain County ordinances and requirements that leverage the concentration of future development into growth areas in accordance with the land use section of the comprehensive plan.
- Partner with the Greene County office of Virginia Cooperative Extension to help recruit young farmers and reduce the barriers to entry inherent to farming in the area.
- Protect forest resources in parallel with protecting agricultural resources.
- Through the County's Economic Development and Tourism Department, encourage and promote specialty and niche farming such as equestrian, vineyard, nursery, and greenhouse crop activities.
- Achieve recognition of farming and farmers as a vital part of the county's future and make them part of the tourism
  - Encourage events such as the Greene Farm and Livestock Show, the various farmer's markets hosted in the County, and the Strawberry Festival.
  - Promote agritourism businesses targeted toward the Richmond and D.C. metro areas.
- Actively celebrate the County's farming heritage
  - Collect stories from generational farmers to produce a pamphlet or documentary about the area's farming heritage.
- Support local agriculture through the Buy Fresh, Buy Local campaign and promote a year-round farmer's market in Stanardsville.

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 Encourage organic and/or hydroponic farming.¶  
 Promote the use of riparian or vegetated buffers to a minimum width of 35 feet on either side of streams to protect fish and help keep the water clean.¶  
 Encourage Best Management Practices (BMPs) such as no-till, contour plowing, cover crops that conserve soil integrity and health, rainwater filtration, and the reduction of the overland flow of water to area streams.¶

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## Goals and Implementation Strategies: Agriculture and Forestry

- Investigate county measures to encourage and retain farming and land use operations.
  - Maintain land use taxation and promote awareness of tax incentives for farmers.
  - Partner with other organizations to encourage conservation easements for agriculture and forestry.
  - Concentrate future development into growth areas in accordance with the land use section of the comprehensive plan, **with a goal of at least 80 percent of future development occurring within the designed growth areas.**
  - Partner with the Greene County office of Virginia Cooperative Extension to help recruit young farmers and reduce the barriers to entry inherent to farming in the area.
  - **Explore the creation of a county-administered purchase of development rights (PDR) program.**
- Protect forest resources in parallel with protecting agricultural resources.
  - **Encourage the preservation of forest resources by discouraging development on parcels of forest land rated as having a “high,” “very high,” or “outstanding” conservation value as determined by the Virginia Department of Forestry’s Forestland Conservation Program;**
  - **Consider establishing tree canopy retention requirements for parcels within the designated growth areas.**
- Encourage and promote specialty and niche farming such as equestrian, vineyard, nursery, and greenhouse crop activities. **Explore opportunities to encourage and promote “value-added” agricultural-related activities at small farms (e.g. beehives for honey production).**
- Encourage farming techniques that help protect farmland and water quality.
  - Encourage organic and/or hydroponic farming.
  - Promote the use of riparian or vegetated buffers to a minimum width of 35 feet on either side of streams to protect fish and help keep the water clean.
  - Encourage Best Management Practices (BMPs) such as no-till, contour plowing, cover crops that conserve soil integrity and health, rainwater filtration, and the reduction of the overland flow of water to area streams.
- Achieve recognition of farming and farmers as a vital part of the county’s future and make them part of tourism.
  - Encourage events such as the Greene Farm and Livestock Show, the various farmer’s markets hosted in the County, and the Strawberry Festival.
  - Promote agritourism businesses targeted toward the Richmond and D.C. metro areas.
- Actively celebrate the farming heritage.
  - Collect stories from generational farmers to produce a pamphlet or documentary about the area’s farming heritage.
- Support local agriculture through the Buy Fresh, Buy Local campaign and promote a year-round farmer’s market in Stanardsville.

### Goals and Implementation Strategies: Natural Resources and Environment

- Protect and conserve surface and groundwater resources, especially headwaters of key rivers and tributaries.
  - Limit the use of certain kinds of septic systems on slopes of 25% or greater to the extent allowable by State law.
  - Promote the voluntary establishment of new riparian buffers, as defined by the Department of Conservation and Recreation, around 3rd order streams to protect valuable surface water resources and maintain existing riparian buffers
  - Consider adopting Watershed Protection Design Standards.
  - For developments of 10 or more homes in A-1 or C-1 zones, **consider the establish** a requirement for a hydrological study to demonstrate that the groundwater supply is sufficient to support the development.
  - Prior to issuing a building permit in areas not served by central water, require the landowner to demonstrate that the well provides adequate water.
  - Protect water quality for fish in all existing streams and new water in impoundments or parks.
  - Cultivate awareness and practice of water conservation.
  - Promote and support TMDL projects and implementation efforts.
  - Promote and support programs and initiatives of Culpeper SWCD.
  - Encourage and promote septic system pumping, inspection, and repairs.
- **Enact measures to protect Greene County’s irreplaceable natural resources and become a model county for natural resource stewardship.**
  - Consider initiating a Mountain Protection Plan process.
  - **Discourage road construction on slopes of 25% or greater. Permitted roads should follow the natural topography and minimize grading, cutting, and filling as much as possible.**
  - Discourage excessive changes to the existing topography or tree cover, particularly outside designated growth areas.
  - **Discourage development on properties identified as “prime farmland” by the United States Department of Agriculture.**
  - Reduce carbon footprint associated with the structure and location of buildings.
  - Encourage voluntary monitoring and control of invasive species.
  - **Identify areas of the county that may have experienced past environmental contamination from certain industrial activities (e.g. gold mining) that may present threats to environmental quality or public health.**
- **Explore opportunities to utilize state flood preparedness funding via the Virginia Community Flood Preparedness Fund, including the development of a county climate resilience plan.**
- Encourage open space dedication, riparian buffers, pervious surfaces, and other best management practices.
  - Seek voluntary proffers for open space dedication, riparian buffers, limits to pervious surfaces, and similar practices.
  - Support voluntary implementation of the recommendations of the County Green Infrastructure Study.
  - Encourage the voluntary dedication (through proffers and other tools) of land in conservation easements or Agricultural and Forestal Districts.

**Commented [AG1]:** PEC suggests that the County consider adding a “Development Constraints” map to the Environment and Natural Resources chapter, in a similar vein [to the one currently contained in Culpeper County’s comp plan](#). This would help to more clearly identify areas of the County where development is prohibited/discouraged and could be based on the Green Infrastructure Network map that was developed previously.

**Commented [AG2]:** PEC would encourage the County to retain the comp plan’s existing language that discourages road construction “on slopes of 15% or greater.” As this language calls for discouragement rather than prohibition, we believe that the more aspirational goal of “15% or greater” is appropriate.

**Commented [AG3]:** PEC would encourage the County to include in its comp plan chapter a map identifying the prime farmland and farmland of statewide importance that exists in Greene County.

- Create governmental and public awareness of the importance of preserving natural resources while accommodating residential growth.
- Enact natural resource protection measures through development standards.
  - For residential development in rural areas promote conservation/cluster development to protect sites sensitive natural resources.
  - Minimize impact and preserve aesthetics of the rural countryside by buffers and natural vegetation screening.
  - Encourage the use of native plants in the establishment any vegetative buffers required by new commercial or residential development.
- Refer to Green Infrastructure Study as a means to protect ecologically sensitive areas.