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# Westmoreland County 2023 Situation Analysis Report

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Table 1. Top 10 Issues identified in the 2023 Situation Analysis of Westmoreland County, Virginia.

PERCENTAGE OF ALL RESPONDENTS SELECTING HIGH OR VERY HIGH EFFORT IS NEEDED FOR THESE ISSUES

84%	Controlling invasive pests
78%	Ensure safe, high quality foods
76%	Helping youth develop leadership, citizenship and other life skills
76%	Reducing misuses and overuse of pesticides and fertilizers
73%	Preserving farm and forest land
73%	Protecting water quality
73%	Ensuring safe food handling practice to prevent foodborne illness
70%	Strengthening the local food system
70%	Protecting the marine environment
68%	Protecting air quality
68%	Assisting farmers and forest landowners in production and profitability
68%	Getting more adults involved in mentoring youth
68%	Conservation and utilization of forest resources
68%	Protecting the coastal environment

## Introduction

Extension educational programming starts with an understanding of community needs. Local programming efforts should address high priority community needs. To help local units determine the priority issues and needs of their communities VCE facilitates a locally driven, in-depth situation analysis every five years.

In 2023, we started with a state level needs assessment survey. This survey provides data on what Virginians view as high priority needs and issues in their communities. The data informs program team planning as well other state level programs.

In 2023, to collect unit level information, we adopted the state level survey and modified it to collect information regarding the unit where the respondent lived or worked. Our survey was intended to collect information from families who live and/or work in Westmoreland and Richmond Counties. This survey was shared on paper at public events and electronically through social media, email blasts and directed emails.

Other data from the unit profile and from VCE Data Commons will be used to shape future Extension programming.

## Unit Profile: Notable Trends

Total Population: 18,324

### Demographics:

Westmoreland County has a demographic makeup of 63.32% white, 25.5% African American, 6.6% Hispanic, 2.80% two or more races, 1.03% Asian, 0.59% some other race, 0.16% American Indian, and 0.01% Pacific Islander.

### Age of Residents:

Westmoreland County has an aging population; 35% of the population is 60 or older. The population of residents 60 and older in Virginia overall is 23% and in the nation is 23%.

In contrast, the numbers of residents in each age bracket 44 years old and under are less than state and national percentages.

### Agriculture & Forestry:

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, agriculture (crops and livestock) is a \$57.1 million industry in Westmoreland County. Top commodities by number of planted acres include soybeans, corn, wheat, vegetables, and forage. The top three crops by sales are grains (\$14.1 million), vegetables (\$7.5 million) and nursery/greenhouse (\$7.3 million). Approximately 47% of the farming population is 65 and older, another 47% are age 35-64 and 6% are under 35. The farming population is mainly white (88%) and male (68%); however there has been an increase in Latino and female farmers (5% Latino; 33% female).

The total number of farms in the county increased 20% compared to the Census of Agriculture data from 2011 while the average farm size decreased to 288 acres.

### Health Summary:

Premature death (years lost before age 75 per 100k) was higher at 8600 for Westmoreland in 2023 than it was for the state (6700) and the nation (7300).

Low birthweight was at 11% for Westmoreland and is higher than the state or national averages of 8%.

Physical inactivity of residents is 25% and is 5% higher than the state but only 3% higher than the nation.

Adult obesity has increased significantly since 2016 from 31% to 41% in 2023. That is significantly higher than the national and state averages, both at 32%.

The ratio of primary care physicians to county residents is 1:6050. That translates to roughly three doctors in a county of 18,700, which is an improvement over 2018. The county is still vastly underserved medically as evidenced by the state and national ratios (1:1320 and 1:1310, respectively).

Westmoreland has a high number of children living in poverty. It has dropped to 24% since 2018 but is still higher than the state average of 13% and the national average of 17%. The percentage of children living in single-parent households is 42% which is significantly higher than state (24%) and national (25%) statistics. Approximately 22 – 26% of the population has a household income lower than the 2023 federal poverty guidelines (\$23,030 for a household of 3 and \$27,750 for a household of 4). The median household income is \$53,113 which is significantly lower than the state household median income of \$80,963 and the national median household income of \$69,717.

There are two public school districts in Westmoreland County. Both the Westmoreland County and the Colonial Beach public school districts fall under the USDA Community Eligibility Provision to provide free lunches for all students (1,581 Westmoreland County and 550 Colonial Beach).

## **Business and Employment Summary:**

Unemployment in the county is 4.4% in 2023.

The top categories of employment based on number of employees in 2022 are:

- Government (local, state, and federal)
- Manufacturing
- Retail Trade
- Accommodation and Food Services
- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting

## **Community and Resident Perspectives**

Results of data collected in the Westmoreland survey sorted by highest level effort indicated. Table 2 lists all issues in the survey in ranked order from highest effort to lowest. There are 14 issues that make the top 10 for Westmoreland. These 14 issues are highlighted in gold. The last 5 issues of that top list are all tied.

Table 2. Results of the 2023 Situation Analysis of Westmoreland County, Virginia sorted from highest level of effort to lowest.

	High effort	Very high effort	%
Controlling invasive pests (plants, animals, insects)	19	12	83.8%
Ensure safe, high quality foods	18	11	78.4%
Helping youth develop leadership, citizenship, and other life skills	13	15	75.7%
Reducing misuses and overuse of pesticides and fertilizers	9	19	75.7%
Preserving farm and forest land	10	17	73.0%
Protecting water quality	5	22	73.0%
Ensuring safe food handling practices to prevent foodborne illness	16	11	73.0%
Strengthening the local food system	17	9	70.3%
Protecting the marine environment	12	14	70.3%
Protecting air quality	4	21	67.6%
Assisting farmers and forest landowners in production and profitability	12	13	67.6%
Getting more adults involved in mentoring youth	13	12	67.6%
Conservation and utilization of forest resources	13	12	67.6%
Protecting the coastal environment	11	14	67.6%
Helping consumers make healthy food choices	16	8	64.9%
Promoting agricultural, natural resources, and environmental literacy	8	16	64.9%
Assisting local government and businesses with land use decisions	14	9	62.2%
Protecting freshwater resources (lakes, rivers, springs, wetlands)	7	16	62.2%

Managing natural habitats and ecosystems	8	15	62.2%
Assisting forest landowners with sustainable management practices	12	10	59.5%
Reducing obesity	10	12	59.5%
Supporting businesses which engage in agritourism	7	14	56.8%
Addressing hunger issues	10	11	56.8%
Helping Virginians' become more energy efficient in their homes, farms, and businesses	9	11	54.1%
Building healthy families	10	10	54.1%
Building capacity for farm to school programming	7	13	54.1%
Providing physical fitness education	13	6	51.4%
Helping communities be better prepared for and respond to natural disasters	10	9	51.4%
Teaching healthy relationship skills to teens	9	10	51.4%
Composting, reducing, and recycling consumer goods	11	8	51.4%
Promoting alternative agriculture	11	8	51.4%
Promoting economic development	10	8	48.6%
Helping communities improve their quality of life	11	7	48.6%
Preserving foods for home use (canning, dehydrating, fermenting, freezing)	11	6	45.9%
Preventing chronic disease	9	7	43.2%
Teaching youth good money habits	8	8	43.2%
Promoting scientific literacy among youth	8	8	43.2%
Addressing poverty	7	9	43.2%
Preventing youth violence	5	11	43.2%

Addressing adult and youth mental health	5	10	40.5%
Preventing suicide	5	10	40.5%
Strengthening parenting skills	5	10	40.5%
Promoting small business entrepreneurs	8	7	40.5%
Building the capacity of community nonprofits	9	5	37.8%
Strengthening workforce readiness	7	7	37.8%
Addressing before and after school challenges	5	9	37.8%
Facilitating civic engagement	3	10	35.1%
Strengthening couple and/or marital relationships	7	6	35.1%
Helping households reduce water use	7	6	35.1%
Teaching people to manage their money	5	8	35.1%
Teaching people to protect themselves from identity theft, frauds, and scams	5	7	32.4%
Strengthening dependent care	5	7	32.4%
Addressing prescription drug abuse	2	8	27.0%
Addressing alcohol abuse	1	7	21.6%

Of these top identified issues, 6 of them were also identified in the state top 10 results and are listed below.

- Ensure safe, high quality foods.
- Protecting water quality
- Ensuring safe food handling practices to prevent foodborne illness
- Strengthening the local food system
- Protecting the marine environment
- Protecting air quality

## Community Issues

Our priority issues selected were identified by the respondents to the survey: Controlling Invasive Pests, Ensure Safe, High Quality Foods and Developing Youth Leadership, Citizenship and other Life Skills. These were the top 3 issues identified as seen in Table 2 above.

# **Future Programming to Address Community Issues**

## **Issue: Controlling Invasive Pests**

Although the actual control of invasive pests will fall on the business or individual, Virginia Cooperative Extension will provide programming to assist with identification and management of these pests. The Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) program will partner with the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS), Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR), the Northern Neck Master Gardeners and the Northern Neck Master Naturalists to provide current, relevant information to clientele. Extension programming on invasive pests will be included in already established programs, such as the Northern Neck Crops Conference, the Northern Neck Vegetable Growers Association Annual Meeting, and pesticide recertification events. Stand-alone programs on invasive pests may be possible, especially with the support of the Northern Neck Master Naturalists. In addition, printed materials will be available at community events and in the office. Online resources will be available on our unit and state-level website, as available.

## **Issue: Ensure Safe, High Quality Foods**

Ensuring safe, high quality foods is an issue that requires an interdisciplinary approach within Extension and partnerships with other agencies and organizations. Both the ANR program area and the Family Consumer Sciences (FCS) program area work on this issue, as well as 4-H Youth Development with youth participants. ANR programming will include food safety updates at the Northern Neck Vegetable Growers Association Annual Meeting, stand-alone programs on the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) and on-farm food safety, and working with individual farmers on FSMA, Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) certification and general food safety. Partners will include VDACS, Specialists at Virginia Tech and Virginia State Universities, the Produce Safety Alliance, and others. Virginia Cooperative Extension in Westmoreland County does not have an FCS Extension Agent to provide food safety programming to food businesses and home cooks, so the office will advertise FCS programming from nearby counties to local residents. The Family Nutrition Program (FNP) staff that covers Westmoreland County will incorporate food safety information into the programming provided at local schools.

## **Issue: Developing Youth Leadership, Citizenship and other Life Skills:**

4-H youth development programming will focus on building leadership, citizenship and life skills. 4-H will partner with school divisions to offer school enrichment programs that are correlated with SOLs. School administrators and teachers can request programs to reach goals and build particular skill sets. Nutrition and physical activity programs for youth in schools are also available from our Family Nutrition Program staff. To build these programs, we will make sure that school divisions are aware of the programming that can be offered.

Environmental education and stewardship programs will be offered in school and through local day camps. This aligns with at least 3 of the top 10 issues identified that are not focused directly on youth. Local partners in these efforts can include Westmoreland State Park, George Washington Birthplace National Monument, Northern Neck Master Naturalists, Friends of the Rappahannock, Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association and others.

Leadership building programs will be offered through Teen Leadership and through 4-H clubs programming. Practicing and building leadership skills can happen locally and at higher levels and in partnership with other organizations. New opportunities will be examined and shared.

To measure impact in any of these program areas, evaluations can be conducted that measure knowledge gained, skills improved, and behavior changes adopted.



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