# *Montgomery County Working Lands Protection Plan*

December 2010

# Acknowledgements

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# Executive Summary

Agriculture is important to the economy of Montgomery County. It contributes to the cultural and rural heritage of the county, open space and economic diversity. The county is centrally located between several major metropolitan areas yet maintains its pastoral characteristics. These attributes make the county an attractive place to live, work and play.

In this document, the term "agriculture" follows the legal definition of agriculture, which includes row crops, horticulture, livestock and forestry. Data for this Working Lands Protection Plan was gathered from a variety of sources such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Census of Agriculture and the N.C. Department of Agriculture. Surveys of the farmers, non-farm population and agribusinesses in the county as well as interviews with key members of the community also contributed to the information for this plan. Forestry and forestry industries are major components of agriculture in Montgomery County. Forestry data is not as extensive as traditional agricultural data so information was primarily derived from interviews, N.C. State University Extension Forestry, the N.C. Division of Forest Resources and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service.

A quick snapshot of Montgomery County's state of agriculture from the 2007 N.C. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Statistics supports the importance of agriculture:

- Land in farms: 42,523 acres
- Number of farms: 289
- Number of operators with farming as primary occupation: 143 (increase of 28 producers since 1997)
- Total value-added income for agriculture and agribusiness (2008): $615,876,052
- Market value (land and buildings): $157,889,000
- Total market value of agricultural products sold: $94,402,000
- Income from Forest Products: $22,876,000
- Net cash farm income: $21,089,000
- Ranked first in North Carolina in peach production (bearing and non-bearing acres)
- Ranked 11th in North Carolina in timber income
- Ranked 14th in North Carolina in broiler and other meat-type chicken production
- Ranked 17th in North Carolina in sales of fruits, tree nuts and berries
- Ranked 22nd in North Carolina in layer production
- Average age of principle operator: 55.6 years of age

Agriculture benefits the county in many ways. In studies conducted in various counties across the state by N.C. State University, the cost of community services were less for agricultural

lands than those provided to residential development. Agriculture contributed a net gain for the county in the taxes paid for the services received.

The prominence of forestry in the county cannot be ignored. Montgomery County is one of the top producers of timber in the state. Of the top 20 employers in the county, two were lumber companies that employed between 100 and 249 people each according to the N.C. Department of Commerce. There are numerous smaller forest product industries located in the county as well. More than 90 consulting foresters work in the county, and eight companies are located in Montgomery County that buy timber (N.C. Division of Forest Resources).

The leadership of Montgomery County has been extremely supportive of agriculture. The Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) and Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District (EVAD) programs were adopted on November 17, 2009. These programs recognize and promote agriculture in the county to the public through signage and other outreach efforts. In January 2010, an Agricultural Advisory Board was appointed by the County Commissioners to ensure agricultural sustainability through the VAD and EVAD programs.

However, there are challenges that face agriculture in Montgomery County. The recent U.S. Department of Defense's Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) act will impact Montgomery County with growth at Ft. Bragg as part of the BRAC process. Thousands of people will move to the area, which will expand the number of base personnel and the businesses associated with the military. The county is positioned to recruit military-related businesses and embrace potential population overflows. This can create pressure on farms and forests.

The Ft. Bragg BRAC Regional Task Force (BRAC RTF) determined it was critical to work with counties to plan for growth and development with a working lands protection plan. Agriculture is regarded as compatible use for the base and its operations, so BRAC RTF's goal is to ensure that agriculture is considered in planning for the region. Montgomery County is part of the 11-county BRAC region and the All American Defense Corridor.

Even as land in farms has increased, the average age of farmers has increased as well to 55.6 years old. Estate and farm transition planning has been identified by 85 percent of the Montgomery County producers surveyed by BRAC RTF and Mount Olive College as one of the top issues facing agriculture. The need to help families determine how to keep their land in production is closely tied to what happens when the farm transitions from one generation to the next.

The purpose of this plan is to provide an assessment of the agricultural industry in Montgomery County and to identify its challenges and opportunities. A set of recommendations have been developed to assist government leaders in developing and preserving agriculture in the county. This plan is a fluid document that should be revisited and revised by the county and collaborating agencies as needed.

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# Montgomery County

## History and Development

Agriculture has been part of the area for thousands of years from as early as the Native American cultures located in the region to present day. The Pee Dee Native Americans settled in the Mt. Gilead area of Montgomery County about 1200 A.D. as an agrarian settlement. These Native Americans created an elaborate society with ceremonial mounds for meetings and rituals. Today, the Town Creek Indian Mound is a historic site honoring the Town Creek Indians and Native American heritage. (http://www.nchistoricsites.org/town/town.htm).

In 1779, Montgomery County was formed from Anson County. The county was named in honor of Richard Montgomery, an American Revolutionary War General. The first county seat was Tinsdale (or Tindalsville), which was located on the western bank of the Pee Dee River. Blakely, Henderson, Stokes and Lawrenceville were also among the roving county seats. The journey to the courthouse was difficult because the Pee Dee River divided the county, and the moving courthouse locations contributed to this difficulty. So in 1842, the county was divided with the Pee Dee River as the boundary line. In 1843, as other county seats in the past, Lawrenceville was burned. Troy, then known as West Old Fields, became the county seat (http://www.montgomerycountync.com/county_history.html).

The county has more than 8,000 acres of water, the majority of which falls within the lakes of Baden and Tillery. Baden Lake was created by Alcoa to create energy for their smelting operation at the turn of the century. It was destroyed in 1916 and rebuilt. Since that time development has occurred around this lake (Region H Resource Conservation and Development, Area H Plan, 1983).

In 1928, a dam was completed to provide hydro-electricity for the region on the Yadkin- Pee Dee River and created Lake Tillery. The plant is currently owned and operated by Progress Energy. This created an attractive lake which has brought development to the county and an influx of people to the area. The lake has 10 miles of shoreline in Montgomery County and provides recreation activities such as boating and fishing (http://progress-energy.com/community/realestate/tillery.asp).

## Location and Climate

Montgomery County's location in the state, hardiness zone, ground water supply and soils are attributes for sustainability of agriculture and forest land. Montgomery County has 496 square miles of land and has 10 miles of water around Lake Tillery with a population density of 56 persons per square mile (http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/IdentifyResultServlet?_mapX=288&_mapY=197&_latitud

e=&_longitude=&_pageX=449&_pageY=535&_dBy=050&_jsessionId=0003GqG6HRFgRcIkmJUK2Juv22k:134a7lg9v:134a7lm5l). The annual average low temperature is 40 degrees and the annual high temperature is 65 degrees Fahrenheit. The average rainfall is 47 inches (https://edis.commerce.state.nc.us/docs/countyProfile/NC/37123.pdf). The county has a temperate climate with a USDA Hardiness zone of 7B (http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/consumer/weather/hardiness_zones.html).

The majority of Montgomery County is located in the Yadkin-Pee Dee River Basin. A small eastern portion of the county is in the Cape Fear River Basin, and the southeastern part of the county is in the Lumber River Basin (http://www.eenorthcarolina.org/public/ecoaddress/riverbasins/riverbasinmapinteractive.htm). Groundwater provides water resources for farmers.

The geographic region offers a variety of recreational activities including recreation on the Pee Dee River and Badin and Tillery lakes as well as the Uwharrie National Forest (http://troy.nc.us/links.htm#lakes ). Uwharrie National Forest is one of the most recently formed forests in the National Forest System. The Uwharrie Mountains have been undisturbed and are claimed to have the greatest concentrations of archeological sites in the Southeastern United States (www.cs.unca.edu/nfsnc/recreation/uwharrie/welcome.htm).

Troy is the Montgomery County seat. There are four other municipalities including Biscoe, Candor, Mt. Gilead and Star. Candor is home to the North Carolina Peach Festival (http://www.townofcandornc.com/). Mt. Gilead serves as the home of The Town Creek Indian Mound (http://www.mtgileadnc.com/). The county has 11 additional townships.

## Population, Income and Employment

Population in Montgomery County has remained steady in the past 10 years. According to the N.C. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Intelligence System (EDIS), the county's population in 2000 was 26,822 and was 27,928 in 2009, which was a 0.4 percent increase. In 2000, 12.5 percent of the population lived in urban clusters. Nearly 86 percent of the population lived in rural areas in the county but not on farms. Only 1.7 percent of the total population in 2009 lived on farms. The median age in the county was 39 in 2009, 16 years younger than the average age of county farmers (https://edis.commerce.state.nc.us/docs/countyProfile/NC/37123.pdf).

In 2009, the median household income was $33,787, which was 77.2 percent of the state median income (http://www.ers.usda.gov/data/unemployment/RDList2.asp?ST=NC). In 2000, 15.4 percent of the population had income below the poverty level. The number of children in poverty was 19.5 percent, and the elderly poverty rate was 17.8 percent. (http://www.ncruralcenter.org/databank/profile.php?county=Montgomery).

The N.C. Department of Commerce annually ranks the state's 100 counties based on economic well-being and assigns each a Tier designation. The 40 most distressed counties are designated as Tier 1, the next 41 as Tier 2 and the remaining 19 least distressed counties as Tier 3. Montgomery County is designated as a Tier 1 county. There are tax credits available for Tier 1 counties to encourage economic activity in the less prosperous areas of the state (http://www.nccommerce.com/en/BusinessServices/LocateYourBusiness/WhyNC/Incentives/CountyTierDesignations/).

As in many communities, agriculture and textiles were major players in the economic development of Montgomery County. Agriculture still contributes considerably to the employment in the county. According to Mike Walden at N.C. State University, agriculture and agribusinesses contributed 22.2 percent to the total county employment in 2006. Agriculture has indirectly impacted the labor force through other industries that are reliant on agricultural products and goods.

In 2000, manufacturing was the top employer in the county with 6,074 employees according to the U.S. Census. Of the manufacturing businesses in the county, apparel manufacturing and apparel knitting manufacturing, which have close ties to agriculture, were the top two industries. Each of those industries had 2,226 and 2,125 employees respectively. Furniture and related product manufacturing, which is also linked to agriculture, was third with 1,034 employees.

In 2007, the top field of employment in Montgomery County was manufacturing again, with 3,276 employees. However, there was a shift in the top manufacturing sectors from 2000. Wood product manufacturing was the top employer with 1,077 employees countywide. Apparel manufacturing, furniture and related product manufacturing, and textile mills declined but were still viable industries. These remaining top manufacturing employers still relied on agriculture for the materials needed for its products (http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/IBQTable?_bm=y&-ds_name=CB0700A1&-geo_id=05000US37123). These shifts could be tied to the Asian market for wood chips and the general global economic decline.

Although agriculture is well represented in the county's business composition, Montgomery County has suffered in the economic downturn the rest of the country has experienced. In 2000, there were 555 private nonfarm establishments that employed 9,774 in Montgomery County according to the U.S. Census. In 2007, the county had 528 private nonfarm establishments with 7,240 persons employed. This was a loss of 26 percent in employment from 2000 to 2007 for these establishments (http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/37/37123.html).

The global economic crisis also affected employment in the county. In July 2010, Montgomery County had a 12.5 percent unemployment rate, well above the state average of 9.8 percent (http://www.ncesc1.com/pmi/rates/ratesmain.asp#county). According to the North Carolina Rural Center, there were 134 layoffs in 2006 of which 119 were tied to manufacturing. In 2007,

an additional 85 layoffs were announced (http://www.ncruralcenter.org/rural-data-bank.html).

As reported by the N.C. Department of Commerce, the largest employer in Montgomery County was the Montgomery County Board of Education in the 2009 fourth quarter. A complete listing of the top 25 employers in Montgomery County for the fourth quarter 2009 follows. Education and manufacturing continue to be the major employers in Montgomery County. Agriculture and agribusinesses are well represented in this list and demonstrate the strong presence agriculture has in all aspects of business in the county.

| Rank | Company | Industry | Employment Range |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | Montgomery County Bd Education | Education and Health Services | 500-999 |
| **2** | Klaussner Furniture Industries Inc | Manufacturing | 250-499 |
| **3** | State of N.C. Dept. of Correction | Public Administration | 250-499 |
| **4** | County of Montgomery | Public Administration | 250-499 |
| **5** | Jordan Lumber & Supply Inc. | Manufacturing | 100-249 |
| **6** | First Bank (A Corp) | Financial Activities | 100-249 |
| **7** | Citation Corporation | Manufacturing | 100-249 |
| **8** | First Health of the Carolinas Inc. | Education and Health Services | 100-249 |
| **9** | Montgomery Community College | Education and Health Services | 100-249 |
| **10** | Wal-Mart Associates Inc. | Trade- Transportation- and Utilities | 100-249 |
| **11** | Capel Inc. | Manufacturing | 100-249 |
| **12** | Mcrae Industries Inc. | Manufacturing | 100-249 |
| **13** | Unilin | Manufacturing | 100-249 |
| **14** | Caye Upholstery Llc. | Professional and Business Services | 100-249 |
| **15** | Autumn Corporation | Education and Health Services | 100-249 |
| **16** | Gibraltar Packaging Group Inc. | Manufacturing | 100-249 |
| **17** | Troy Lumber Co. Inc. | Manufacturing | 100-249 |
| **18** | Sandy Ridge Homes Holding Corp. | Education and Health Services | 100-249 |
| **19** | Mcconnell Golf Llc. | Leisure and Hospitality | 50-99 |
| **20** | Food King | Trade- Transportation- and Utilities | 50-99 |
| **24** | Iac Old Fort Llc. | Manufacturing | 50-99 |
| **24** | Lancer Incorporated | Manufacturing | 50-99 |
| **24** | Food Lion Llc. | Trade- Transportation- and Utilities | 50-99 |
| **24** | The Mentor Network | Education and Health Services | 50-99 |
| **25** | Perdue Products Incorporated | Manufacturing | 50-99 |

Source: https://edis.commerce.state.nc.us/docs/topEmployers/topEmp_37123.pdf

# State of Agriculture in Montgomery County

Agriculture and agribusinesses have changed over the years. To gain a better understanding of the current state of agriculture in Montgomery County, this section will address land and its resources, land uses, agricultural and forestry products, impacts, trends and farm operators.

## Land – Uses, Resources and Capabilities

Land is a valuable resource in Montgomery County, particularly for the farming and forestry communities. Prime farmland, as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber and oilseed crops. It can be cultivated land, pastureland or forestland. Total land in Montgomery County is 314,300 acres with 255,800 acres in forestland in 2009 (N.C. Division of Forest Resources: http://www.dfr.state.nc.us/contacts/montgomery.htm).

Land cover is the current use or what is visible from an aerial view. Figure 1 illustrates the current land cover for Montgomery County. Some land cover types are more likely to support farmland than others. There is evidence of some developed areas that are not likely to support farmland such as Troy and Biscoe, that are shown in dark colors due to rooftops and pavement. In the southeastern part of the county, cultivated areas are evident, and forests are interspersed with pastures throughout the county. Forests are predominate in the county and are denoted by the dark green color.

Montgomery County has a total land area of 314,300 acres and 12.5 percent (39,502 acres) of it is part of the Uwharrie National Forest. In 2007, 42,523 acres in the county were in agriculture. Of the total land in agriculture, 43.37 percent was in woodlands in 2007 (18,442 acres). Over 27 percent of the total land in farms was in cropland or 11,647 acres. Over 23 percent (9,839 acres) was in pasture and 6.10 percent (2,593 acres) was in other use. The large percentage of land in pasture is tied to the robust cattle operations in the county (Figure 2) (http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Online_Highlights/County_Profiles/North_Carolina/cp37123.pdf).

How is land being used now? Land that is currently supporting crops, an indication of productive land, is dispersed across the county landscape. See Figure 3. The cropland map indicates that row crops are scarce and other farmland uses are scattered among forested areas.

The majority of Montgomery County is forested with a mix of deciduous and evergreen types. On land that is not currently forested, the soils have potential to be productive for timber, and the land may have had tree cover years ago. According to the NC Division of Forest Resources,

Montgomery County has 255,800 acres in forest ownership with 205,000 of it owned by private landowners (Figure 4) (http://www.dfr.state.nc.us/contacts/montgomery.htm).

From 1997 to 2007, the number of farms in Montgomery County increased by 11.4 percent; from 256 to 289. This correlates to the increase of land in farms over that same time period by nearly 2 percent, with 41,792 acres in farms reported in 1997 and 42,523 acres in 2007. However, the average farm size decreased by nearly 10 percent from 1997 to 2007 (Table 1). The smaller farm sizes and increase in number of farms could be tied to the shift from full time to part time farming operations. As production costs increase, many producers have found it necessary to work off the farm and manage livestock operations. These types of operations tend to be less cost and time intensive. This is also tied to diversification efforts by producers and the growth in livestock production.

To determine what is occurring on the farms in Montgomery County, a look at the total cropland and how it is being used should be examined. Total cropland represents all land that has been or is currently being planted for crop production. Harvested cropland represents all land that had some type of harvest from that acreage. Cropland used for pasture and grazing is also factored in to the cropland use data for the Census of Agriculture.

With the average Montgomery County farm size down, total cropland also decreased by 21.8 percent from 1997 to 2007. However, harvested cropland held relatively steady over the same period. There was a 10.6 percent drop in harvested land from 2002 to 2007 (Table 2). This could be tied to the tobacco buyout program as well as the horrible double whammy of a freeze and a drought in 2002.

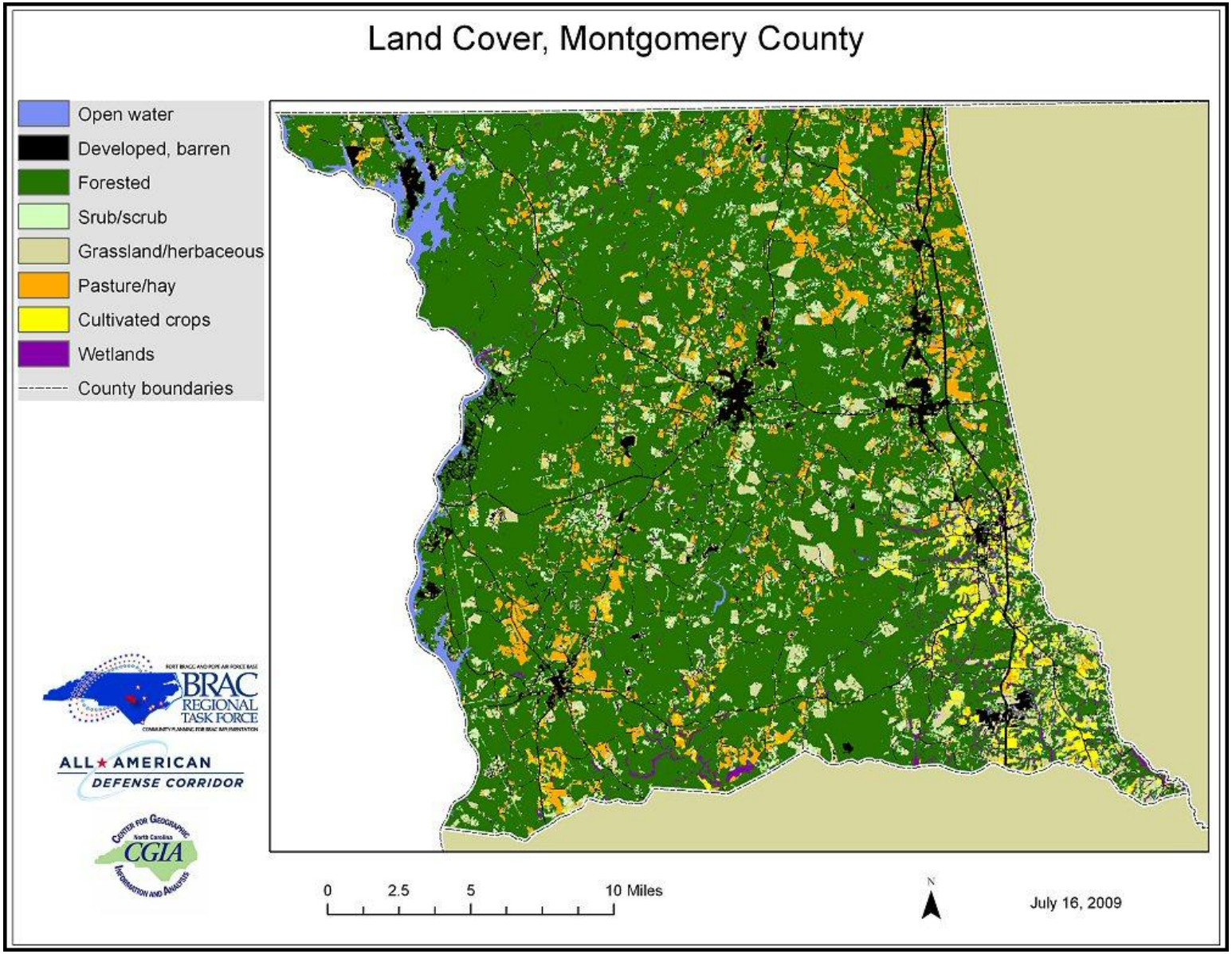


Figure 1. Source: USGS, BRAC RTF, CGIA

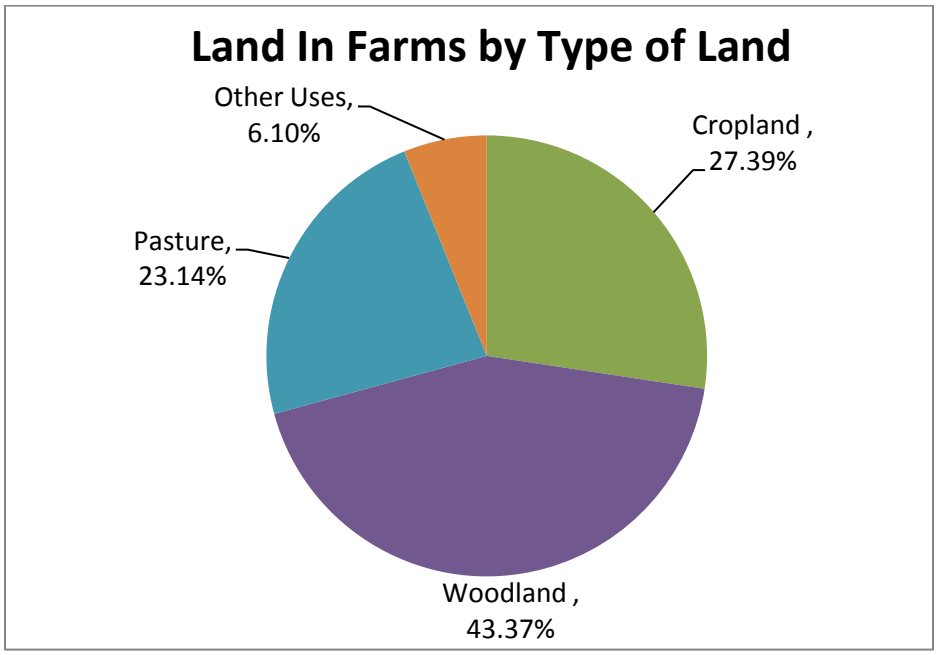


Figure 2. Source: USDA Census of Agriculture, 2007.

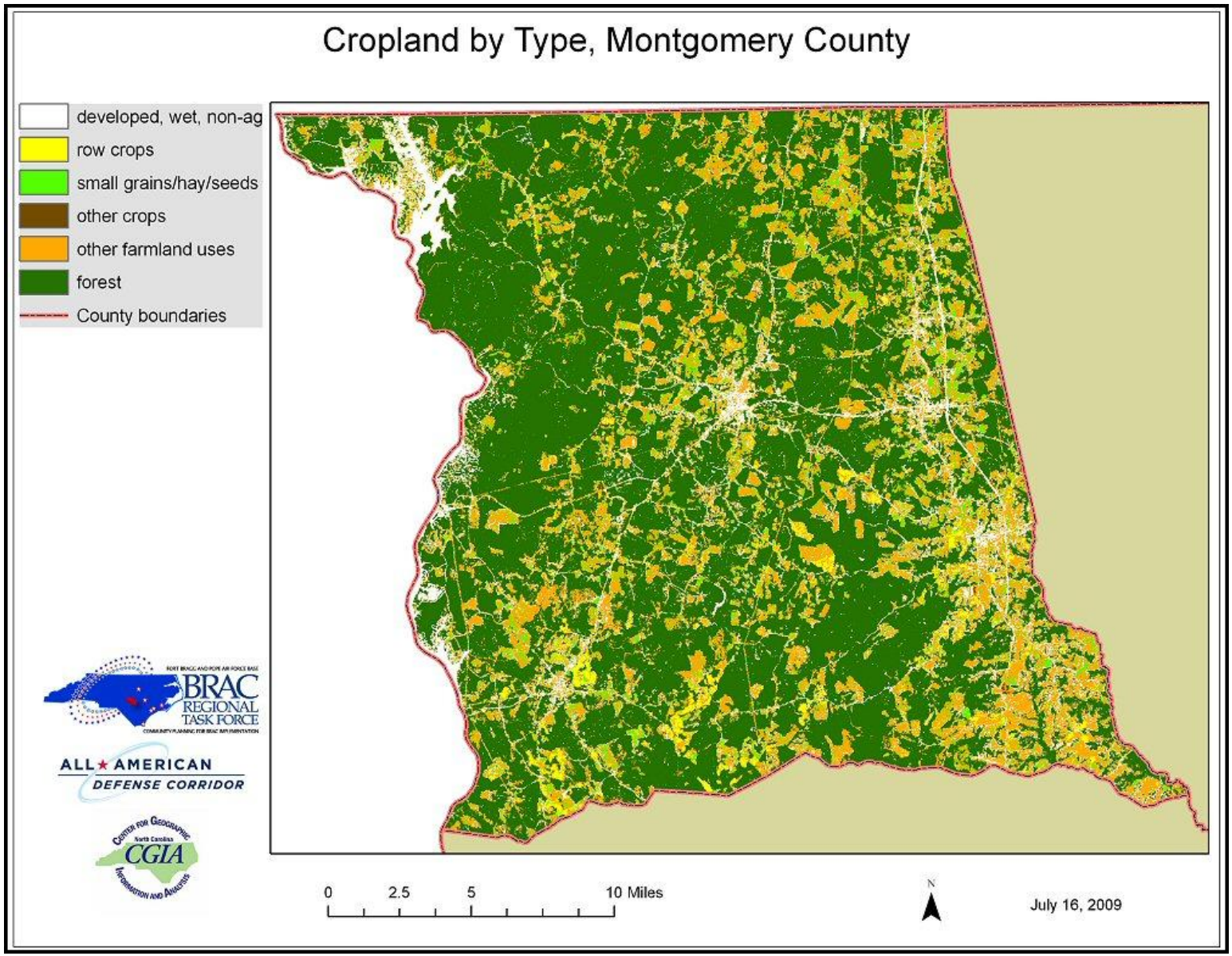


Figure 3 Source: BRAC RTF, CGIA, USDA

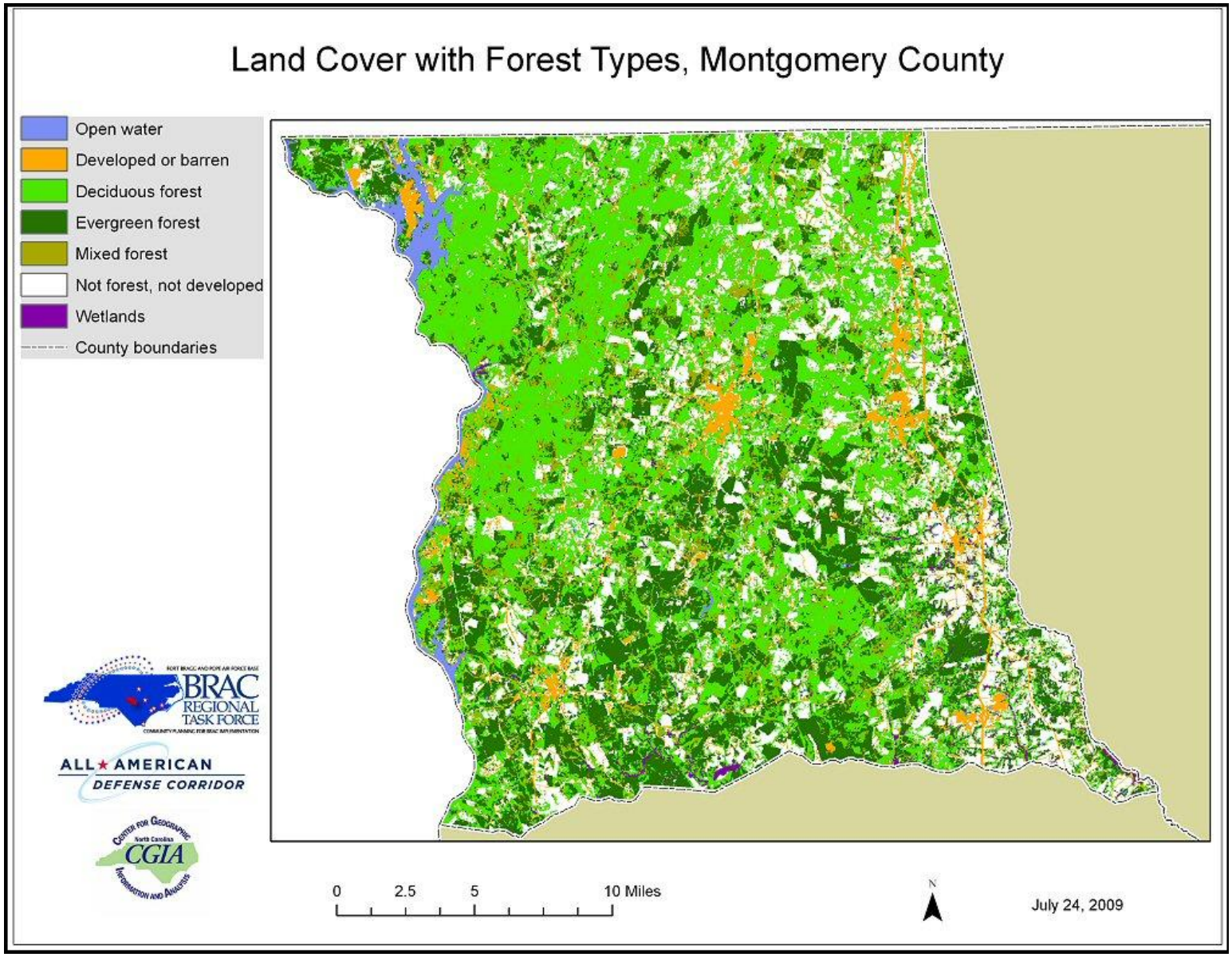


Figure 4. Source: USGS, National Land Cover Data based on 2001 Satellite Imagery

## General Farm Statistics Montgomery County

| Year | 1997 | 2002 | 2007 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Number of Farms** | 256 | 292 | 289 |
| **Land in Farms (acres)** | 41,792 | 41,769 | 42,523 |
| **Average Farm Size (acres** | 163 | 143 | 147 |

Table 1. Source: USDA Census of Agriculture, 2007, 2002, 1997.

## Total Cropland and Use

| Year | 1997 | 2002 | 2007 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Total Cropland (acres)** | 14,912 | 12,868 | 11,649 |
| **Harvested Cropland (acres)** | 6,317 | 7,189 | 6,421 |
| **Cropland Used Pasture and Grazing (Acres)** | - | 4,255 | 2,951 |

Table 2. Source: USDA Census of Agriculture, 2007, 2002, 1997.

## Soil Resources and Capabilities

Soils are critical to sustainability of agriculture and forestry. Soils are also major components to the viability of agriculture as well as for other uses such as commercial and residential developments. The soils in Montgomery County are well suited to agriculture. Soil data should be used in planning future land use patterns.

Specific soil types help determine what type crops could be best grown in that area. Slope, drainage, depth and rockiness are all attributes that determine the suitability of soils for conflicting uses of development or agriculture. Herndon and Georgeville are the primary soil types in the county. Herndon represents 28.6 percent of the total acreage in the county and Georgeville is 13.1 percent. Both are utilized for agricultural and forestry purposes, and they spread from the northeastern corner to the southwestern corner of the county. Additional soils information can be found in Appendix B.

Land use compatibility for agronomic use is shown in Figure 5. Land capability classifications are a system of soil groupings based primarily on soils capabilities to produce common cultivated crops and pasture plants without deterioration. (Natural Resources Conservation Service, Soil Data Mart http://soildatamart.nrcs.usda.gov/) Soil capability is highest (class 1-2) or high (3) in much of the county indicating land use compatibility for agronomic use. The central eastern and southwestern parts of the county are suitable for row crop production. Although the map does indicate a low capability for most row crops in the southeastern section of the county, perennial crops such as peaches and sod are being grown in the area.

Forestland is a major component of agriculture in Montgomery County. According to the N.C. Division of Forest Resources, 255,800 acres of Montgomery County is forested. Of that, 205,000 acres were owned by private landowners in 2002. Forestland supports the production of timber and wood products. The "best forestland" is related to the value of trees that can be grown and are grown. Sustainable forestry is also related to factors that keep land productive for timber and wood products.

Soil is a primary ingredient for healthy, valuable crops such as trees. Soil scientists have identified the types of soil that are most productive for tree production. Soil types in the county are classified, rated and mapped to reveal the pattern shown in Figures 6 and 7.

Two types of trees are commonly used for timber production – pine and hardwoods. Soils tend to be productive for loblolly pine production in most of the county and productive for longleaf pine in the central and Sandhills areas of the county. There is a resurgence of the planting of longleaf in the county as management of the species has improved and offers landowners both timber and pine straw production opportunities. Mixed hardwood species are found across the county but predominately in the northern section of the county. Again these species offer diversity in land use and income potential.

Soil ratings by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) classify soils as high, moderate and low productivity based on the type crop to be grown. This rating is based on soil fertility, drainage, soil type and other criteria. For sites to receive high ratings, the site index values must report 65 or greater. According to the USDA NRCS Soil Survey Geographic Database for Montgomery County, the forest productivity site index for longleaf pine rated the Sandhills region at values as moderate. Although the southeast region is rated as moderate for longleaf pine production, there is significant effort to restore the Sandhills with the longleaf pine.

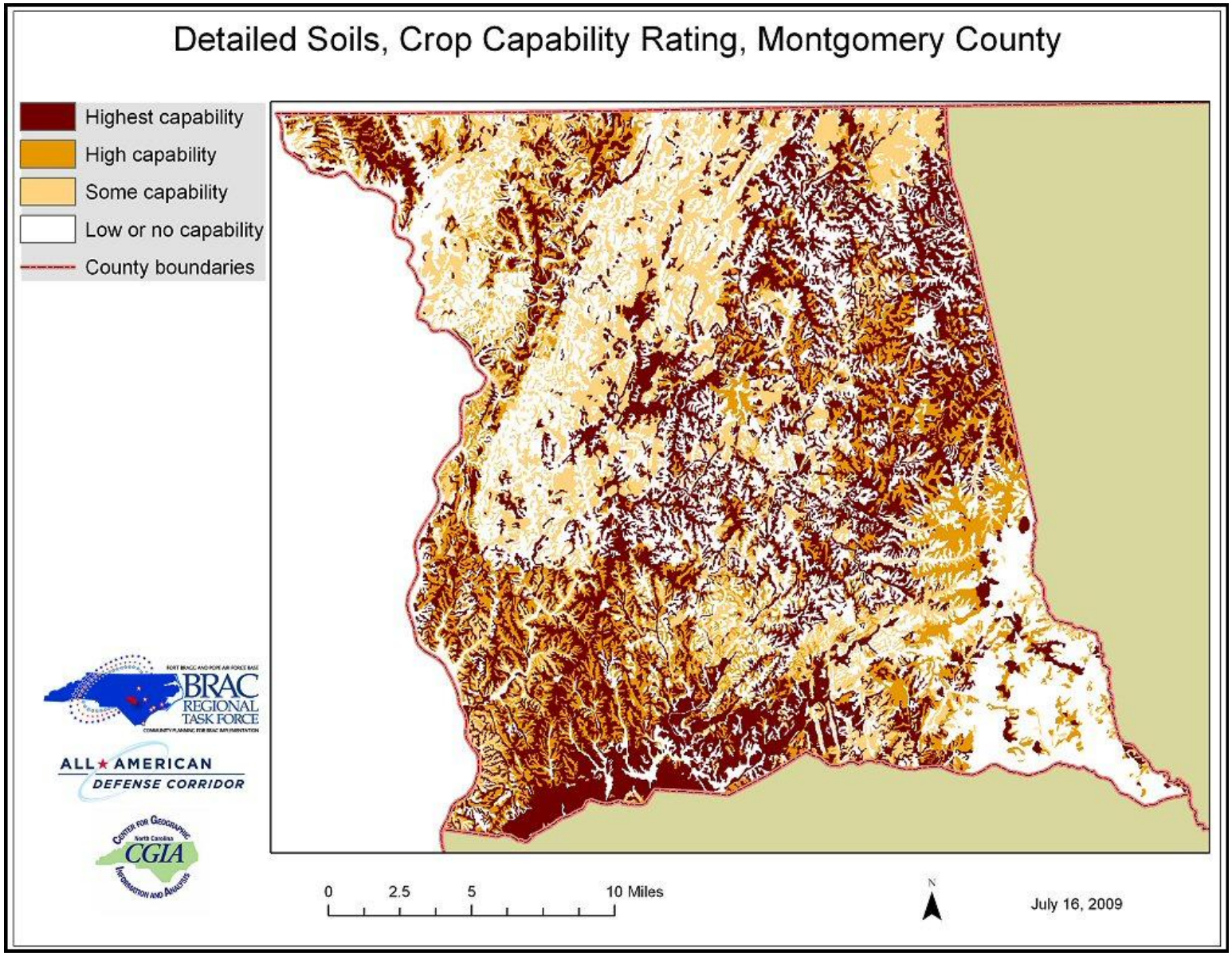


Figure 5. Source: Natural Resources Conservation Service.

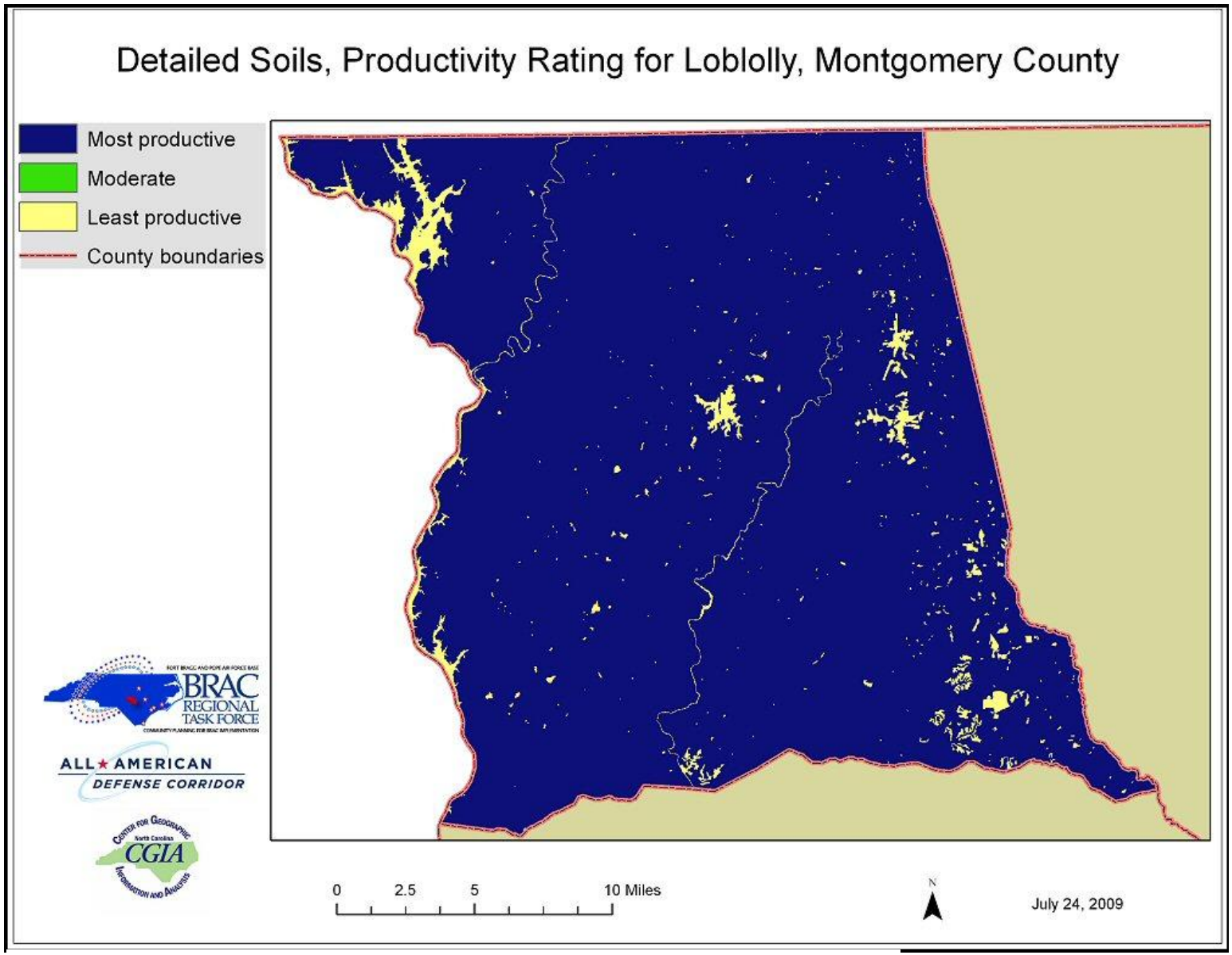


Figure 6. Source: BRAC RTF, CGIA

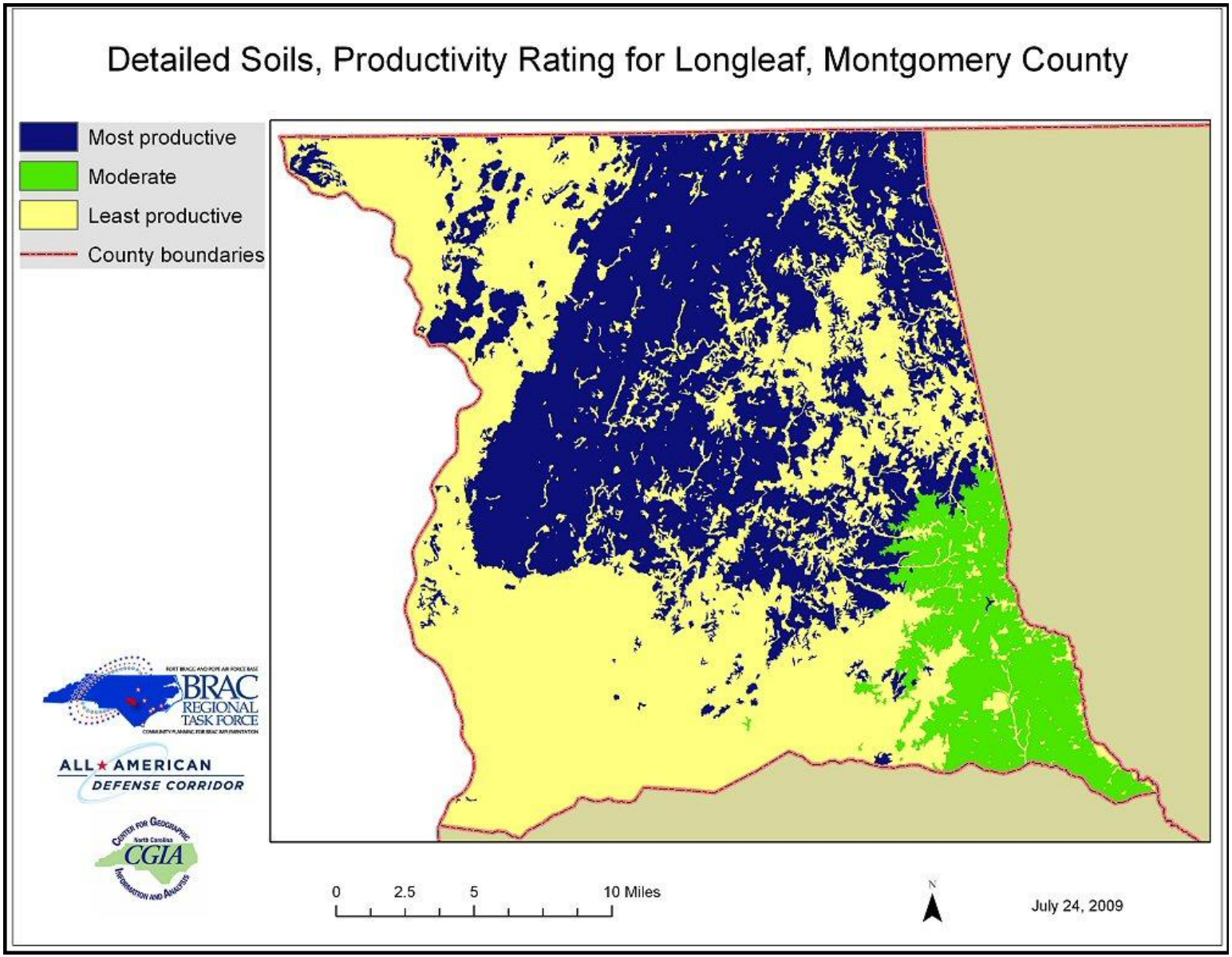


Figure 7. Source: BRAC RTF, CGIA

## Land Values and Land Use

Land values affect agriculture. Many farmers do not own enough land to expand their operations and often rent land to do so. Rent values for Montgomery County have held relatively steady over the past five years (Table 3). According to the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Sciences, the state average rent per acre was $48 in 2009. Low agricultural productive land averaged $31.50 per acre, medium productive land averaged $45.60 and high productive land averaged $66.90 per acre in the state.

Montgomery County is in District 60, and other counties in this district include: Anson, Cabarrus, Cleveland, Gaston, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Moore, Richmond, Stanly and Union. The average rent per acre in the district for high productive land is $52.90, $37 for medium productive land and $25.80 for low productive land.

In Montgomery County, rent for high productive soils and low productive soils were below the district average. However, rent for land with medium productive soils was above the district average. High productive land rented for $41.60 per acre in the county, medium productive land rented for $39.10 an acre and low productive land rented for $20.00 per acre (http://www.ncagr.gov/stats/economic/2009CashRentValues.pdf).

In 2007, there were 55 farms that were paid cash rent for land, buildings and grazing fees for a total of $561,000. In 2002, there were 42 farms rented with cash rent paid of $139,000. This was a threefold increase in rent paid in Montgomery County in five years. It is apparent that farmers continue to seek out more land to expand their operations and more land is becoming available to rent. This could be tied to the transition in farm ownerships. Many family members live away from the farm, and it is economically viable to rent the land to ensure the landowners receive the Present Use Value for keeping the land in production. (http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_2_County_Level/North_Carolina/st37_2_003_003.pdf).

With the current economic situation, many counties have had to raise their property taxes to maintain services and programs. Montgomery County raised its property tax by 5 cents from the 2009 rate of $0.6200 to $0.6700 in 2010 per $100 value. (http://www.ncacc.org/countylines/2010/07/taxrates.html). In 2007, farm owners paid $645,000 in property taxes to the county which was 70 percent more than they paid in 2002 ($379,000) (http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_2_County_Level/North_Carolina/st37_2_003_003.pdf). The economic base of county depends heavily on property taxes and agriculture is a great contributor.

A present land use taxation program is employed in Montgomery County to help offset the impact of relatively high property tax rates for agriculture and forestry. The present use program adjusts tax rates to enable agricultural, forestry and horticultural lands to be taxed at

its present use value instead of its market value. Productive agricultural and forested lands are allowed to defer to a lower tax rate thereby offering protection for continued present use. In Montgomery County, there were 1,239 land parcels enrolled in the Present Use Value program (PUV) in 2010, which represented approximately 92,451 acres of farms and forests.

Tax parcel records from Montgomery County and the Farmland Preservation Assessment indicate the location of properties that contain all or part of a farm or forest (see Figure 8).

Both farming and forestry depend upon the availability of land, and this must be considered as the county implements its first county land-use plan, which was adopted in June 2010. Proper land-use planning will help ensure rural development is suited for the best available uses, which includes agriculture. Land use is crucial to the attractiveness of the region for its citizens and development. Farms and forests provide eco- system services, a sense of community and a strong economic base.

However, the needs of development and agriculture need to be balanced. A map of land use potential indicates some of the suitable farmland competes with industrial or commercial potential (purple in Figure 9) and or residential potential (yellow).

Forest land also faces challenges from development. Figure 10 shows the competition from commercial and residential development in the county (Figure 10).

Farms benefit from North Carolina's network of farm-to-market roads to get crops to buyers. On the other hand, highways enable stores, factories and offices to reach and serve their markets. Highways and secondary roads also provide homes scattered widely across the county with access to jobs and services. However, new highways and roads often intersect over prime farm and forest land. Figure 11 displays the locations of the N.C. Department of Transportation's Transportation Improvement Program locations. New highways change the maps of land and location that translate into the best farmland. Planned projects are south of Troy and in the southeastern corner of the county.

Other infrastructure is likely to change the pattern of farmland in the region—public water and sewer systems. Public systems support commercial, industrial and residential development, and have benefits for surface water and ground water quality. Farms usually are not reliant on public water and sewer systems. As systems extend beyond municipal areas, new lands become more suitable for development. Public sewer service is planned west of Troy and in the northwest, shown in red on the map labeled Figures 12. Public water expansion is planned in eastern Montgomery County. Figure 12 overlays the future infrastructure plans on viable farmland in Montgomery County. It appears that the planned highways are in areas with moderate or low suitability for farmland. The planned expansion of public sewer service (red hatching in Figure 12) coincides with high, moderate and low farmland suitability. This planned expansion for sewer is primarily for the areas adjoining Lakes Badin and Tillery, which will

serve increased residential densities around the lakes. The future public water service area (orange hatch) also coincides with a mix of farmland suitability ratings.

Forest lands are also impacted by future infrastructure, such as public water and sewer systems, just as farmland is. Timber production is not reliant on public water and sewer systems. However, the same development pressures occur on forest lands as farmland when these services are extended. In Montgomery County, public water and sewer expansion was identified in the Rural Economic Development Center's Water 2030 study. Forestland potential is mostly high where future services were planned. See Figure 13.

Montgomery County's current land-use plan recognizes farms and forests as major players in the county's economic development. The updated 2010 zoning map (Figure 14) reflects the importance of agriculture in the county. It will be a tool to help focus the land use for the county based on the economic engines that drive the county as well as the rural attributes that make the county so attractive.

The Montgomery County Land Use Plan supports agricultural and rural preservation, demonstrating the value placed on agriculture and forestry in the county by the leadership, specifically the county commissioners. The plan includes the following policies to support the preservation of farms and forests:

### Agricultural and Rural Preservation

**Policy 2.1** Rural area lands having a high productive potential shall be conserved, to the extent possible, for appropriate forestry and agricultural use.

**Policy 2.2** Forestry, agriculture and very low density residential development shall be the preferred land uses in the designated rural agricultural areas of the county, as identified on the Future Land Use Plan Map. Urban levels of development should not be encouraged in rural agricultural areas.

**Policy 2.3** Appropriate non-residential uses which blend well with the rural/agricultural framework should be permitted in rural and agricultural areas on a case-by-case basis.

**Policy 2.4** Agri-tourism and eco-tourism enterprises may be encouraged in appropriate rural and agricultural areas to provide access to the many natural, agricultural and scenic areas of the county, which cannot be found in non-rural areas.

**Policy 2.5** Agri-tourism and value-added agricultural enterprises should be protected from land uses that are incompatible; these forms of enterprises provide valuable resources to the county in the form of tourism and economic development.

**Policy 2.6** The county should work with non-profit organizations such as the Land Trust for Central North Carolina to conserve green space and working farmland.

**Policy 2.7** Continue to support Voluntary Agricultural District Program.

(Montgomery County Land Use Plan-Adopted July 2010, http://www.montgomerycountync.com/online_forms/Zoning/Draft%20LUP%20March%202010.pdf).

## Rent Values for Montgomery County

| Agricultural Land | Montgomery County | District 60 | State |
|---|---|---|---|
| **High Productivity** | $41.60 | $48.70 | $66.90 |
| **Medium Productivity** | $39.10 | $37.20 | $45.60 |
| **Low Productivity** | $20.00 | $26.20 | $31.50 |

Table 3 Source: N.C. Department of Agriculture

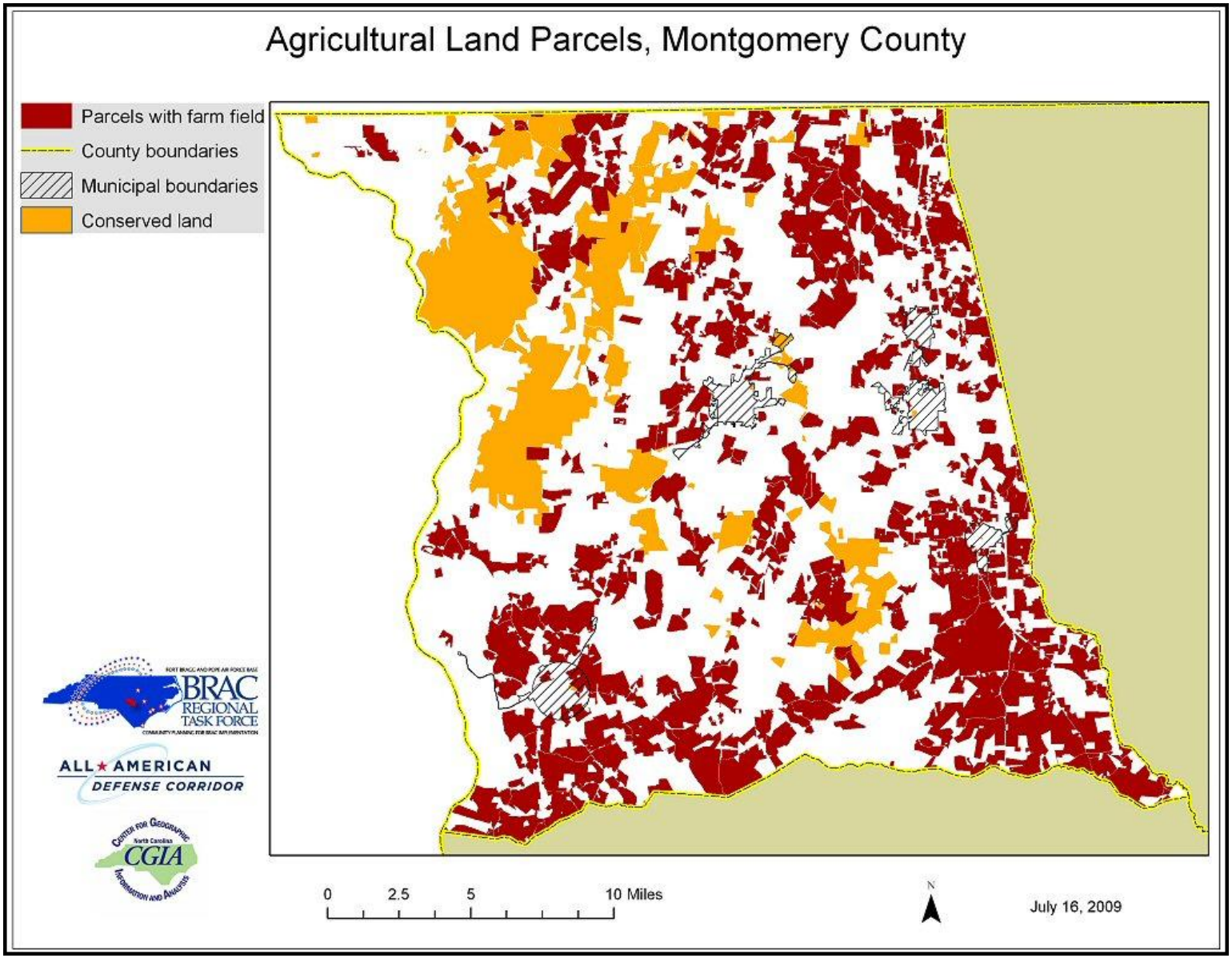


Figure 8 Source: BRAC RTF,CGIA 2009

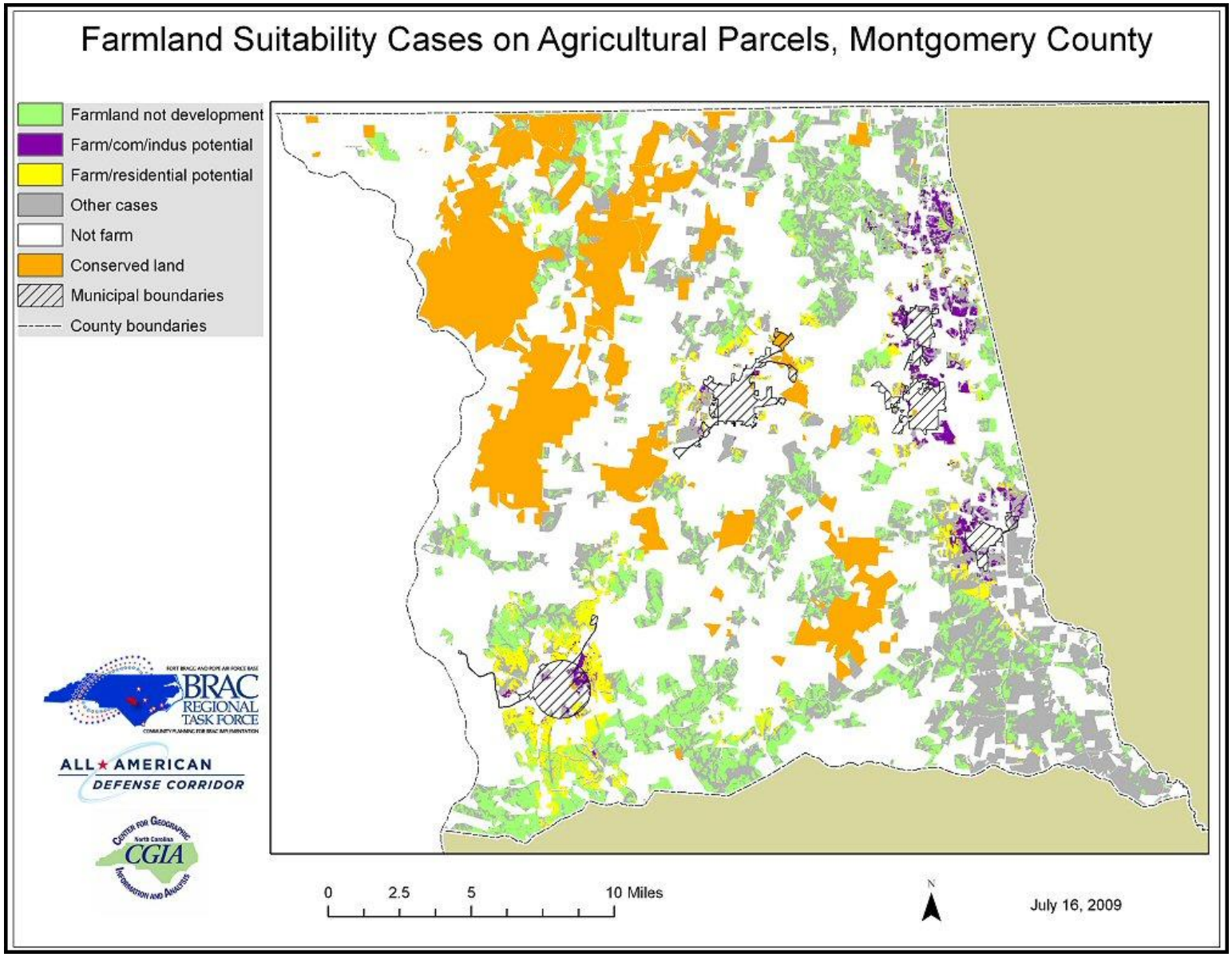


Figure 9. Source: CGIA, NC Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and Montgomery County

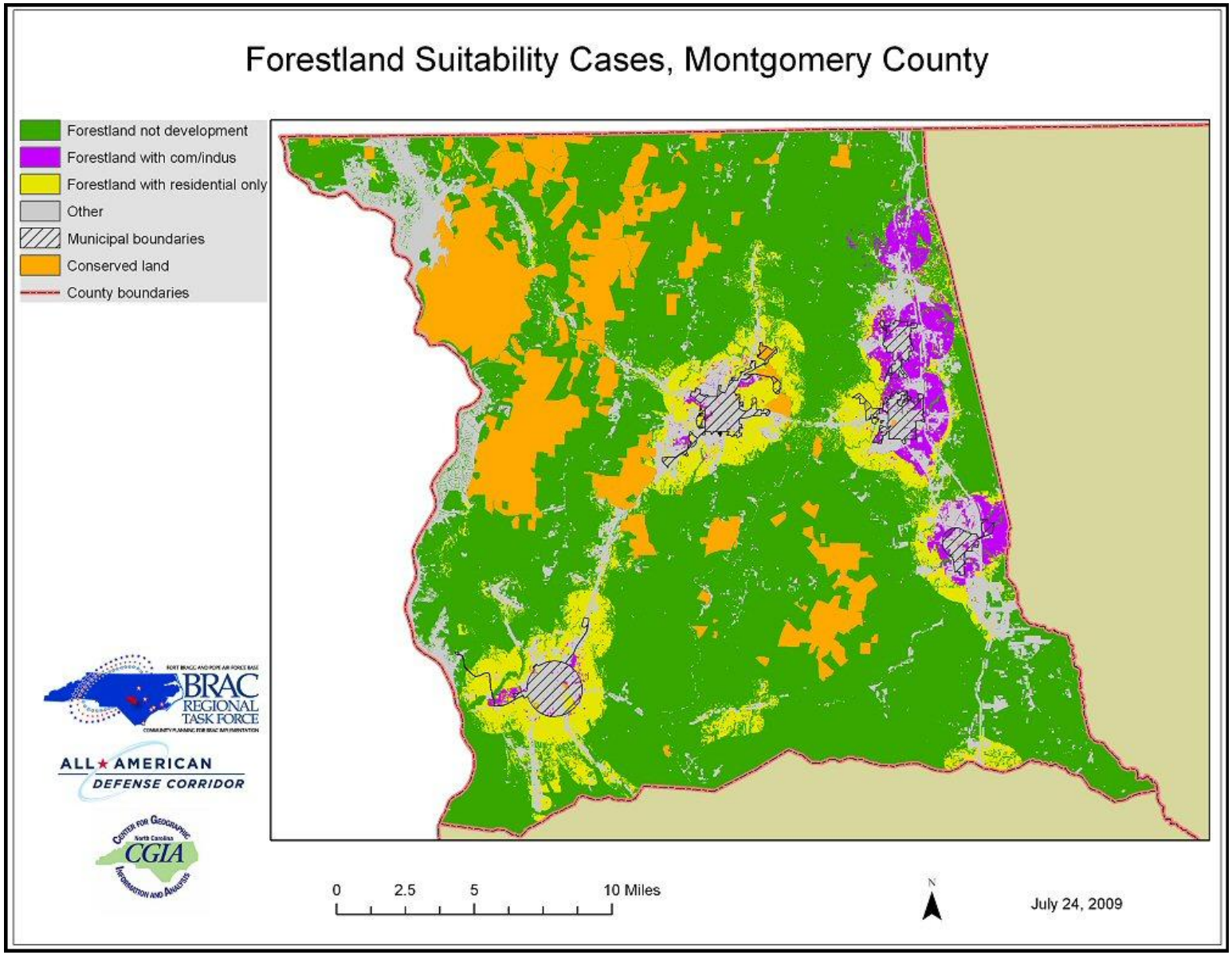


Figure 10 Source: CGIA, BRAC RTF

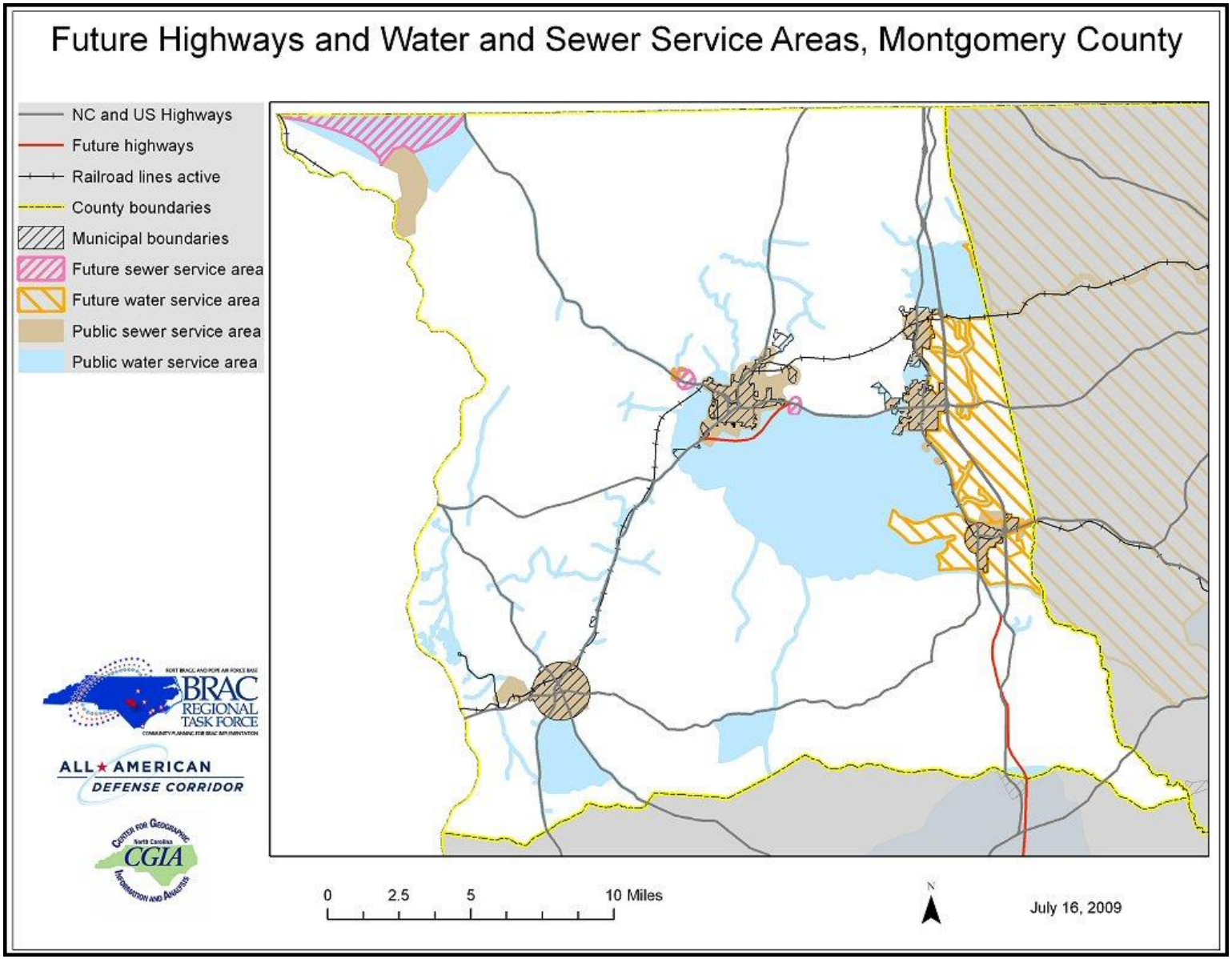


Figure 11 .Source: NC Rural Economic Development Center, CGIA, and NC Department of Transportation

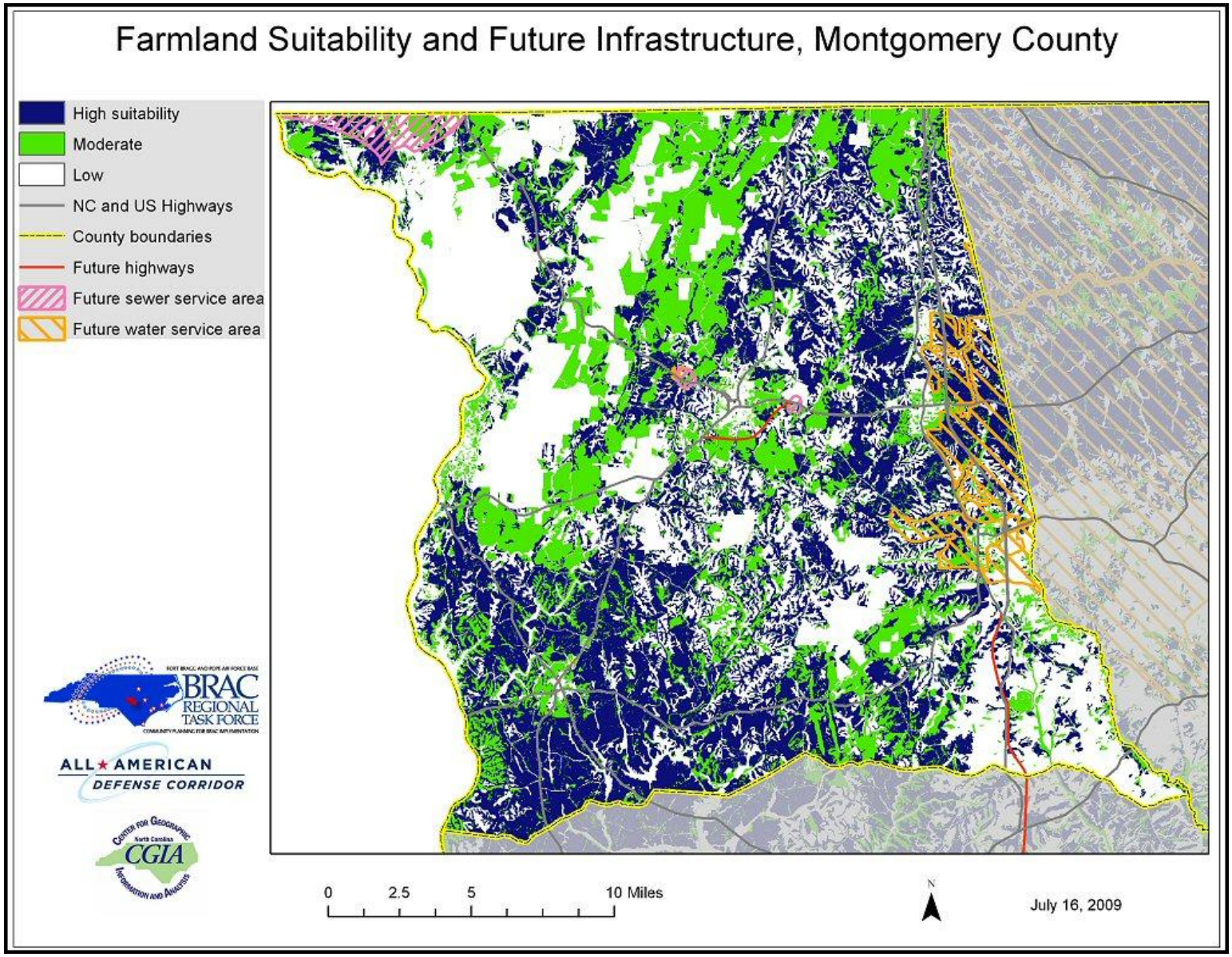


Figure 12. Source: CGIA, NC Department of Transportation, and NC Rural Economic Development Center

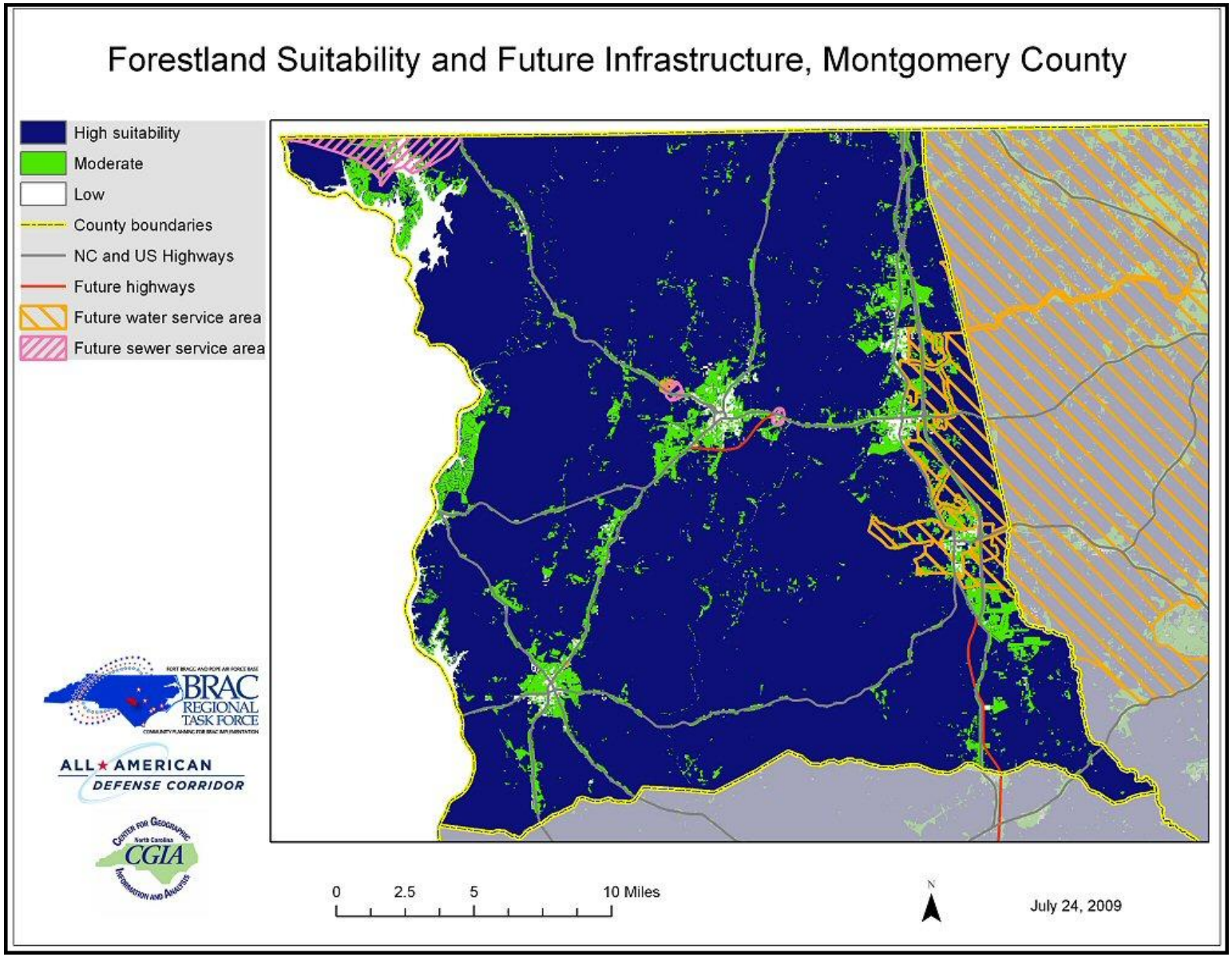


Figure13. Source: CGIA, BRAC RTF

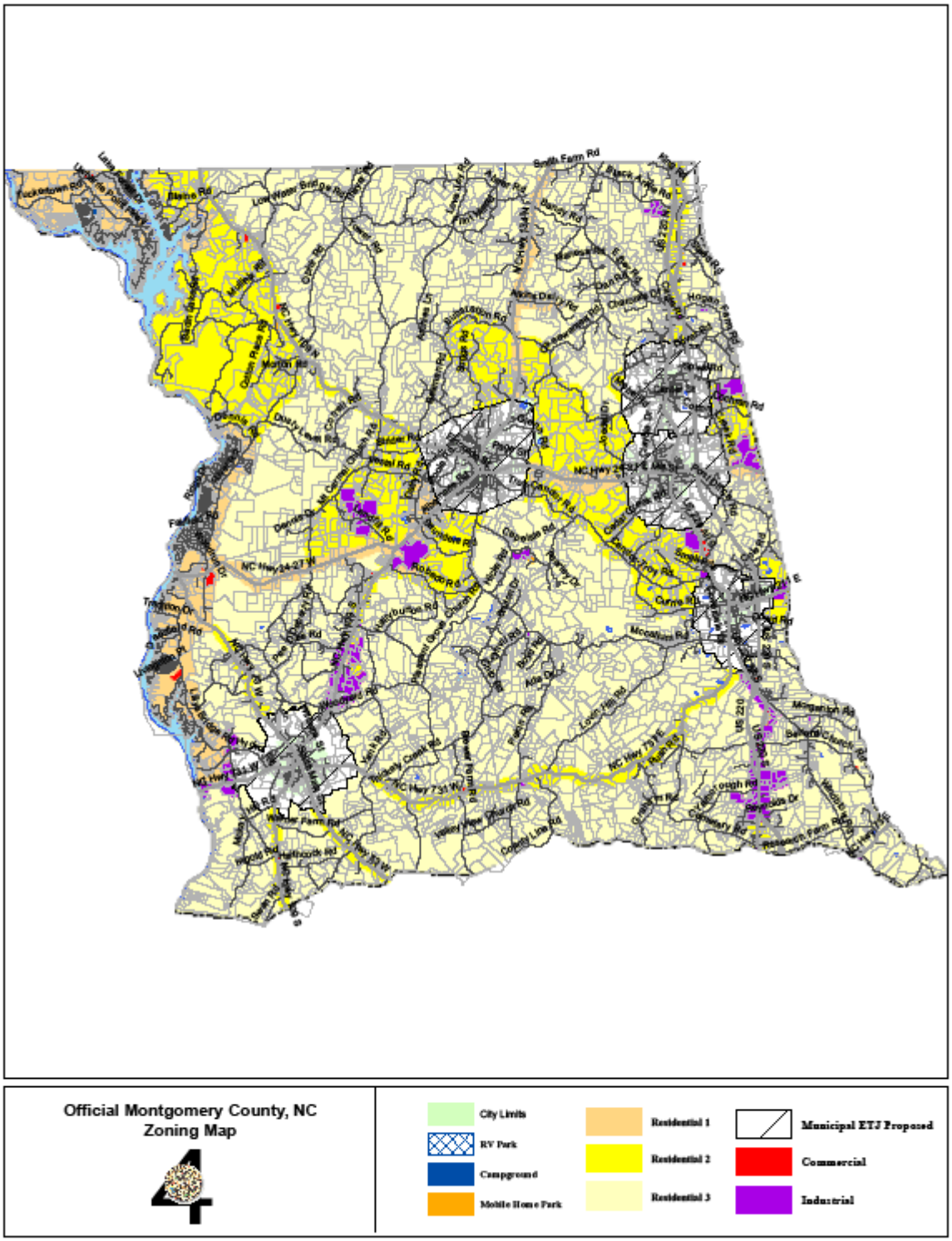


Figure 14. Source: Montgomery County GIS Department 2010

## Cost of Services

Cost of services, such as EMS, sheriff services and schools, provided by the county is supported by property taxes. In studies conducted by Renkow (1998, 2001, 2006) and Dorfman (2004) in five North Carolina counties, agricultural lands contributed more in property taxes than the costs of community services they received. Table 4 depicts the cost of providing services per dollar of revenue for the five counties as compared to the national average. Many of the surveyed counties are similar to Montgomery County, so it can assume the trends are similar.

### North Carolina Cost of Community Services Studies

(cost of providing services per dollar of revenue)

| County | Residential | Commercial/ Residential | Farm/ Forestland | Source |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chatham | $1.11 | $.47 | $.92 | Renkow, 1998 |
| Wake | $1.54 | $.18 | $.47 | Renkow, 2001 |
| Union | $1.30 | $.41 | $.24 | Dorfman, 2004 |
| Orange | $1.31 | $.24 | $.72 | Renkow, 2006 |
| Alamance | $1.47 | $.23 | $.59 | Renkow, 2006 |
| National Avg. | $1.15 | $.29 | $.37 | AFT, 2006 |

Table 4. ADFP Trust Fund 2008 Annual Report

It is interesting to note that while commercial development cost of services is lower than farms or forests, residential development tips the scale with the highest costs for services received. It is clear that farms and forests can contribute significantly to the county while not draining resources and services. This should be borne in mind as the county deals with the anticipated impacts from the BRAC process.

The leadership in Montgomery County clearly supports agriculture and its benefits to the community. On November, 17, 2009, the county adopted the Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) ordinance and the Enhanced VAD ordinance. These are voluntary ordinances that allow agriculture to be recognized for its contributions and cohesively bring together agriculture in the county. The ordinances also provide a level of protection from nuisance lawsuits and other impacts as well as provide an avenue for agriculture to be involved in land-use planning and other issues that affect farms and forests.

An Advisory Board is selected by the county commissioners to implement the VAD. This board is made up of members from the agricultural community as well as key citizens so that agriculture can be represented and supported. The county commissioners appointed an Agricultural Advisory Board on January 19, 2010. They are presently in the process of accepting applications for VAD and EVAD, and will continue to advise county leadership on agriculture and agricultural related issues and concerns.

# Montgomery County Agriculture and Forestry Products

## Impact on County Economy

Agriculture and agribusiness contribute significantly to the Montgomery County economy. According to Dr. Michael L. Walden at North Carolina State University, agriculture and agribusiness – food, natural fiber and forestry – account for more than one-fifth of North Carolina's income and employees. The industry also contributes income and jobs in Montgomery County.

The total Montgomery County value-added income from agriculture and agribusiness was $615,876,052 in 2008 (Walden, NCSU College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, 2010). This sum equals Gross County Product, a sum for all valued-added production in the county. The current economic crisis has affected agriculture as it has other industries. There was $199,948,948 lost in value-added income from agriculture in the county from 2006 to 2008. However, agriculture is still a strong component of the economy in the county.

Table 5 depicts income impacts of the entire spectrum of the agricultural industry including production, agribusiness, forestry and processing. At the farm level, value-added means sales. At the manufacturing, wholesale and retail levels, value-added is sales minus the cost of non-labor inputs. Value-added avoids multiple counting of a product used several times in the production chain.

Agriculture and food industries contributed 17.5 percent of the total county value added, and all agriculture/agribusinesses contributed more than 37 percent to the total economy in Montgomery County. Forestry is a key player in the county economy with $98,637,726, or 16 percent, of the total county value added income in 2008 (Table 5). Agricultural employment in 2008 was 2,595 or 22.5 percent of the total employment in the county according to Walden. The need to protect working lands is apparent since these lands have a significant impact on income generated in the county.

Manufacturing was the leading industry in Montgomery County in 2007 according to the U.S. Census. As a testament to the impact of agriculture and agribusinesses in the county, more than half the manufacturing companies were forestry-related industries such as wood product manufacturing, sawmills and wood preservation. These industries employed more than 2,000 people in 2007 (http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/IBQTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=05000US37123&-ds_name=EC0700A1&-_lang=en). Agricultural labor in the county was small in comparison – 63 farms had 308 hired farm laborers in 2007 according to the USDA

Census of Agriculture. However, the monetary impact of the farm labor force still contributed to the county economy since payroll generated $3,310,000.

The North Carolina Division of Forest Resources reported in 2002 that more than 80 percent of the county was in forest. According to the *2009 Income of North Carolina Timber Harvested and Delivered to Mills* prepared by James Jeuck and Robert Bardon, Extension Forestry, North Carolina State University, Montgomery County ranked 11th in the state for stumpage value and delivered value of timber. Stumpage is the price paid to the landowner for standing timber, and that generated $11,437,895 in the county. Delivered value is the price paid to timber buyers upon delivery of timber to the mill, and in 2009, delivered value of timber was $19,348,508. The value of forestry in the county is sizeable.

### Total Income

| Industries | Total Income | Share of County Value Added |
|---|---|---|
| **Agriculture/Food Industry** | $107,926,987 | 17.5 percent |
| **Natural Fiber Industries** | $25,581,745 | 4.2 percent |
| **Forestry Industries** | $98,637,726 | 16 percent |
| **All Agriculture/Agribusiness Industries** | $232,146,458 | 37.7 percent |

Table 5 Source: *Agriculture and Agribusiness in Montgomery County 2008*. Dr. Michael L. Walden, Professor and Extension Economist, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, North Carolina State University.

## Agricultural Production Commodities and Trends

Agriculture has experienced significant changes in recent years. Both traditional agricultural production and forestry have been affected by the economic downturn of the past few years as well as shifts in the farming community. The recession has affected construction, which in turn has affected forestry product production. The population of farmers and landowners is growing older. In addition, the high costs of production have caused many farmers to seek additional employment and other commodities to produce, and these high costs have compelled young people to seek other forms of more reliable employment.

Total cropland in Montgomery County decreased 21.8 percent over the past 10 years according to the USDA Census of Agriculture. Broiler production in the county increased 23.4 percent from 1997 to 2007. Cattle production held fairly steady during this time period (Table 6). It is apparent that a majority of producers who left crop production moved into broiler production. This is tied to the general shift from full-time to part-time farm operators. Livestock production tends to place less demand on time and costs are lower than with crop production. This shift to part-time farming has had a considerable impact on agriculture in the county with less land being farmed and more livestock being produced.

Livestock has continued to make inroads into the fabric of agriculture in the county, particularly broiler production. In 2007, Montgomery County was ranked 13th in North Carolina for broiler production, 45th for cattle, and 38th for hog and pig production (Table 7). Sales for broiler production have helped push the county to its top ranking.

| | 1997 | 2002 | 2007 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Broilers Inventory** | 15,413,134 | 23,145,474 | 20,134,213 |
| **Cattle Inventory** | 6,033 | 6,582 | 6,008 |
| **Total Cropland** | 14,912 acres | 12,868 acres | 11,649 acres |

Table 6 Source: USDA Census of Agriculture 1997, 2002, 2007

## Top Livestock Inventory, 2007

| | Sales | State Rank |
|---|---|---|
| **Broilers Produced** | $73,002,000 | 13 |
| **Cattle** | $1,193,000 | 45 |
| **Hogs and Pigs** | $5,123,000 | 38 |

Table7 Source: NCDA Agricultural Statistics 2008

In 2008, the county was ranked 40th in the state for hay production. However, there was a decline of 24 percent in the acreage in production from 2002 to 2007 (USDA Census of Agriculture, 2002 and 2007). The county was also ranked 42nd in greenhouse/nursery production in 2008. This generated more than $4.2 million in production value (NCDA Agricultural Statistics, 2008).

Even the beloved peach industry has been affected by the changing trends of agriculture. While Montgomery County was the number-one county in peach production and was a major contributor to the 4,200 tons produced in the state in 2009 according to the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, there has been a decline in peach production. Peach production has gone from the high of 508 acres in 1997 to 258 acres in 2007. This was a decline of almost 50 percent in peach production over 10 years (USDA Census of Agriculture, 1997, 2002, 2009).

Some of the decline in agricultural production can be tied to the aging population of farmers. The average age of farmers Montgomery County in 2007 was 55.6 years of age, which was slightly lower than the statewide farmer average of 58 years of age. As farmers and landowners age out of agriculture and forestry, there are fewer and fewer young people to take over the farm or forest operations. Many of the heirs live away from the farm or forest, and absentee landownership has become the norm in many parts of the state.

Part of the reason for the move from full time to part time and the abandonment of farming is the expense of farming. From 2002 to 2007, average farm production expenses rose by $101,106

or 64 percent. However, the net cash income per farm decreased by $9,805 or about 12 percent during that time period. The disparity between income and expenses have been a contributing factor to people moving into part-time farming or out of farming altogether. This is a driving factor in the changing arena of agriculture – many farmers cannot survive on the increasingly narrow profit margins that exist in agriculture (Table 8). The large increase noted in average production expense per farm from 2002 to 2007 may be attributed to increased input costs including, but not limited to fuel, feed, and fertilizers.

The shift in farming is also seen in the number of farms by income as outlined in the figure below. The definition of a small family farm by the U.S. Department of Agriculture is one that earns less than $250,000 in sales. The majority of farms in Montgomery County fit this definition, and most would qualify as small farms with sales of less than $100,000. There were significant increases in farms with sales between $10,000 to $19,999 (48 percent); $25,000 to $39,999 (70.5 percent); and $50,000 to $99,999 (54.5 percent) over a five-year period. However, these made up only a small part of farms in the county. The majority of farms earned less than $1,000 as stated in the USDA Census of Agriculture (Figure 15).

From 2002 to 2007, there was a 75 percent decline in small family farms that would qualify as high-sales operations with sales between $100,000 to $249,999. There was a 22 percent increase in farms that would fit the USDA definition of very large family farms with sales of over $500,000 during that same time period (Figure 15). Livestock, particularly poultry (broiler and layer) production, accounted for the increase in farms earning $500,000 or more.

## Montgomery County Farm Production Expenses and Income

| | 2002 | 2007 |
|---|---|---|
| **Average Production Expense Per Farm** | $157,072 | $258,178 |
| **Average Net Cash Income Per Farm** | $82,777 | $72,972 |

Table 8 Source: USDA Census of Agriculture 2002, 2007

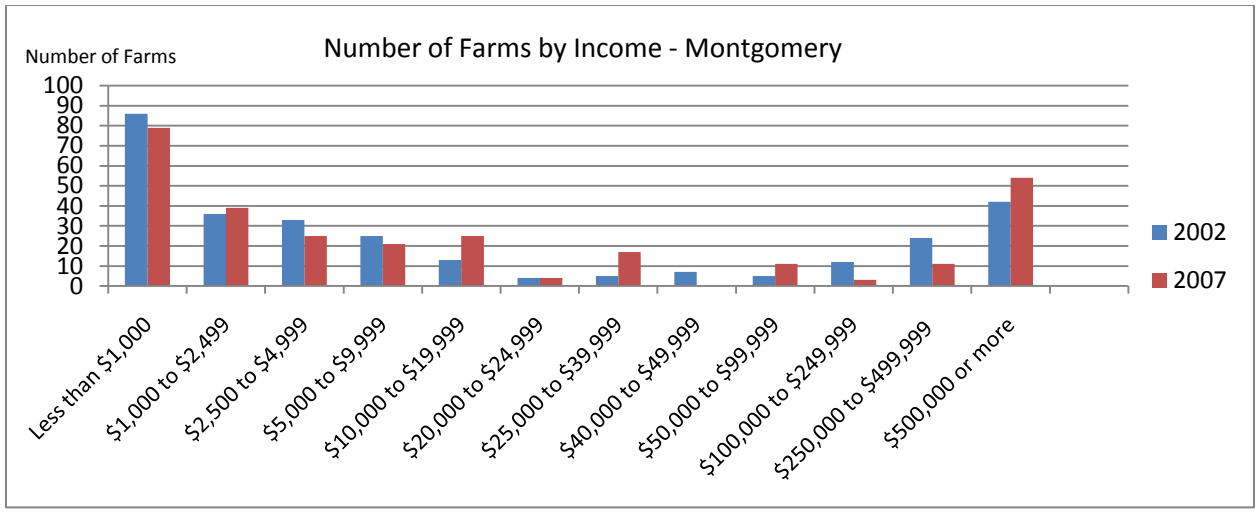


Figure 15 Source: USDA Census of Agriculture 2002, 2007

Montgomery County is noted for its forests and the forestry industries located there. Many farms in the county contain woodlands that generate supplemental income. The N.C. Division of Forest Resources in Montgomery County reported that 255,800 acres of the county was forested and 80 percent of timberland was owned by private landowners in 2002 (Figure 16). Like other agriculture in the county, forestry has had changes in the past few years. There has been little market for forest products with the global economic downturn that has been going on since 2007. Thus this has created fewer opportunities for forest landowners and forestry industries to market their products and invest in timberland.

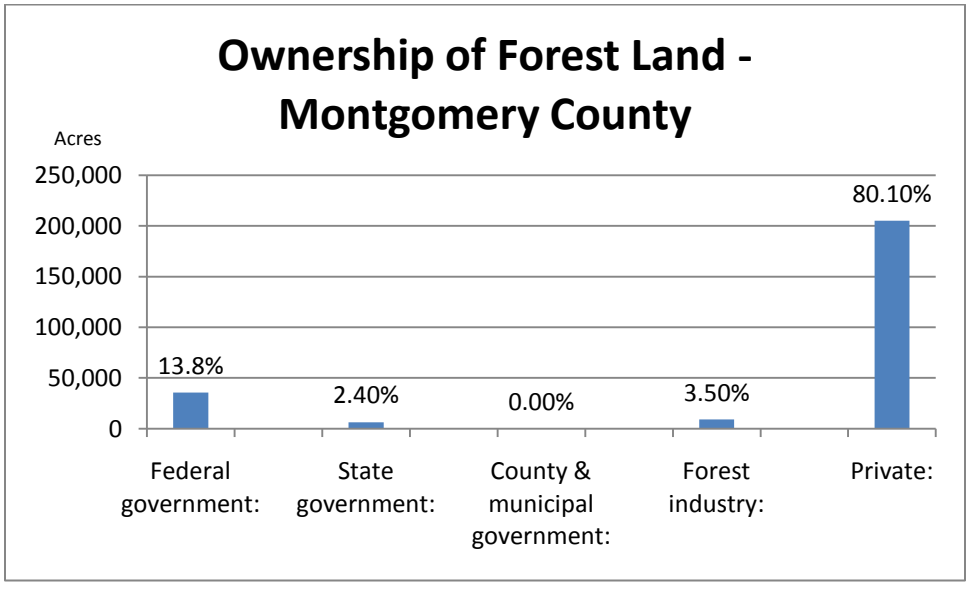


Figure 16 Source: N.C. Division of Forest Resources, Montgomery County

*The Economic Impact of Privately-Owned Forest* by the National Alliance of Forest Owners (2009) showed the contribution of forestry wood products, paper products and wood furniture

industries in 29 states and five regions in 2006. The contribution to the state gross domestic product per acre for all forests, public and private, was $359. In North Carolina, forests contributed $887 per acre to annual sales and contributed $316 per acre to the state gross domestic product in 2006 (Table 9).

## Economic Impact of Privately-Owned Forests in North Carolina, 2006

| Measurement | Amount |
|---|---|
| **DII Employment per 1000 acres*** | 12 |
| **DII Payroll Contribution per acre*** | $390.00 |
| **State Tax Contribution per acre** | $ 24.59 |
| **Annual Sale per acre** | $887.00 |
| **Contribution to GDP per acre** | $316.00 |

Table 9 North Carolina – Economic Impact of Privately-Owned Forests, 2006, by the National Alliance of Forest Owner (2009). *DII indicates the direct, indirect and induced employment and payroll.

Montgomery County has 205,000 acres of timberland in private ownership (NCDFR, Montgomery, 2002). If the average state tax contribution in North Carolina per acre is $24.59 (North Carolina – Economic Impact of Privately-Owned Forests, 2009), this is a potential of $5,040,950 in state tax contributions for Montgomery County. Similarly, if timber product sales average $887 per acre, the annual sales for acres of privately owned forests would be $181,835,000. Forestland has a significant economic impact for Montgomery County.

The trends in forestry have also changed over the years. In interviews with regional forestry companies and consulting foresters, the emerging biofuels potential and the shift in forest ownership are components of the change in forestry. The biofuels market for woody biomass is still being explored, but it presents a great opportunity for landowners. Landowners would have a chance to earn more income on their lands with the woody by-products from forestry thinning and debris from storms for biofuels, which in turn will help maintain the health of the forests. The definition of woody biomass in this plan refers to that biomass that is a result of existing best management practices for timber and timber product production.

Another trend that emerged, especially during the height of the real estate boom, was the sale of private land to corporate owners, according to interviews conducted in the county. As in other agricultural operations in the county, the population of timber landowners has been aging. Landowners approaching retirement or heirs that live away from the land have looked for economic viabilities for the land. Selling the land has presented the best option for many.

Real Estate Investment Trust (REITs) were cited as the main purchasers of forest land. The REITs are investment instruments for investors and investment firms to expand into other asset allocations such as real estate. The REITs often own various types of real estate in order to

maintain diversity in the portfolio, and timber land presented a growing opportunity during the real estate boom of the mid to late 2000s. The North Carolina Forestry Assessment, which was mandated by the 2008 Farm Bill, bears this trend out in its research for the state. From 2002 to 2007, private ownership of forest land in the state decreased by 353,000 acres, and private corporate ownership increased by 249,000 acres (http://www.ncforestassessment.com/PDF/NC%20Forest%20Assessment%20Part%202%20-%20Chapter%202%20Conserving%20Working%20Forest.pdf ).

This shift in ownership has presented challenges to timber companies and consulting foresters to reach potential customers. Often the relationships the companies and foresters have with private landowners are built on face-to-face meetings and time spent reviewing the goals and ideas landowners have for their properties. A private landowner has personal interest in the land that is either altruistic or connected with family ties. The goals for the land with corporate ownership and an REIT does not necessarily allow for such relationships to develop. Consultants and timber companies have had to adapt to these changing priorities.

## Farm Operators and Land Owners

As noted earlier in this document, changes and trends with farm operators and landowners have had a significant impact on agriculture in Montgomery County. The aging population of farmers has also been a major factor in agricultural trends. The average age of a farmer in Montgomery is 55.6 years old, which will have consequences for agriculture in the future.

Table 10 below illustrates the changes in the demographics of agriculture in Montgomery County. The number of farmers that listed their primary occupation as farming has fluctuated over the years. There was a moderate of full-time operators from 1997 to 2002 of 12.5 percent, which was tied to the increase in poultry production. However, full time farming dropped 15.8 percent from 2002 to 2007 and part time farming increased 19.6 percent. This can be tied to the economic downturn that occurred in this time period.

Farm operators were primarily male, but there was a 45.45 percent increase from 1997 to 2007 of female operators in Montgomery County. This could be tied to the generational shift of farm ownership to heirs or the increased interest in agriculture by nontraditional farm owners and operators. Also the increase in females can be attributed to the poultry industry as females find this to be an operation that can be managed alone while also managing the household.

The majority of farm operators in the county were white. This number has increased over the past 10 years by 69 percent. There were also increases in Latino operators and Asian operators. Again, this could be tied to the diversification efforts being made in agriculture, and the rapid growth of poultry production in the county. There were no Black or African American operators reported after 1997.

Agriculture and forestry continue to be significant contributors to the economy of Montgomery County through the employment and income generated as well as the products produced. The aging population of landowners and producers has created challenges for family owned farms and forests to remain in operation and has changed the makeup of agriculture. The increase in livestock and the shift from full-time to part-time farming indicates that options are being explored to deal with these challenges.

In order to delve further into the state of agriculture in the county, surveys were conducted with three populations: producers, non-producers and agribusinesses. These three groups provided on-the-ground expertise on how agriculture is viewed, the trends observed and the opportunities that exist. Additional information was sought on what could be done to preserve the agricultural and forestry industries in the county.

These changes, trends, challenges and opportunities need to be examined and acknowledged by planners, elected officials and agencies that work with the farm and forestry communities. By understanding agriculture's place in the county, decisions can be made to preserve family farms and forests as well as to promote rural development.

## Montgomery County Farmer Demographics

| | 1997 | 2002 | 2007 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Number of Operators With Farming as Primary Occupation** | 127 | 170 | 143 |
| **Number of Operators With Farming as Secondary Occupation** | 183 | 122 | 146 |
| **Average Operator Age** | 55.7 | 54.5 | 55.6 |
| **Principal Operators by Gender** | | | |
| **Male** | 234 | 261 | 257 |
| **Female** | 22 | 31 | 32 |
| **All Operators by Race** | | | |
| **American Indian or Alaska Native** | NA | 0 | 1 |
| **Asian** | NA | 8 | 9 |
| **Black or African American** | 7* | 0 | 0 |
| **White** | 249 | 395 | 421 |
| **More Than One Race** | NA | 0 | 3 |
| **All Operators of Spanish, Hispanic or Latin American Origin** | NA | 2 | 11 |

*Race specified Black and other races

Table 10 Source: USDA Census of Agriculture 1997, 2002, 2007

# Opportunities and Challenges

Three target audiences were selected to complete surveys to flesh out the current state of agriculture in Montgomery County. Producers and agribusinesses who completed the surveys outlined the trends and opportunities that they see for agriculture in the county. The non-farm population that was surveyed provided details on the perception of agriculture. These responses helped direct the recommendations for this plan and provided specific insights into Montgomery County and agriculture.

The surveys were created and distributed by Mount Olive College and Ft. Bragg BRAC Regional Task Force. The county team, made up of N.C. Cooperative Extension Montgomery County Center, Montgomery County Soil and Water Conservation District, N.C. Division of Forest Resources Montgomery County, the Montgomery County Economic Development Commission, the Montgomery County manager's office and the Montgomery County Planning Department, all assisted with the distribution of the surveys to the various audiences. The surveys were distributed at meetings and workshops in paper form and were available online at the county team agencies' websites. The survey results present a snapshot of agriculture in the county, and information provided by interviews and focus groups supplement the picture of agriculture.

## Agricultural Producers

The snapshot from these surveys of agricultural producers in Montgomery County shows a strong agricultural base. More than 59 percent of the producers that responded to the survey were long-time farmers/landowners who have operated in the county for more than 20 years (Figure 17). Producers in the county still intended to continue farming according to the survey. More than 88 percent of the producers also expected to remain in farming from 10 to more than 20 years.

Montgomery County producers were somewhat similar to the typical farmer across the state. The average age of the survey respondent was 54 years, which is close to the NCDA county average of 55.6 years old. The average acreage farmed was 256.33 acres within the county, which is significantly larger than the NCDA average of 147 acres.

Timber was well represented in the query about crop production, which reflected the strong status of forestry in the county. Sixty-four percent of the survey respondents reported that they have timberland. Hay production was another strong representative in the survey with grain corn, small fruits, vegetables, grapes, cotton and soybeans also reported. Beef cattle was the largest reported livestock, and broilers were second in the survey results. This large response may be due to the active Cattlemen's Association in the county, which promoted the survey and the plan to its members. It was interesting to note that 28.6 percent of the survey respondents

stated they had grass-fed beef (Figure 18). This is an emerging market in livestock, and the response indicated that producers in Montgomery County are exploring new markets for their products.

The strong representation of timber and livestock reflected the shift from full-time to part-time farming. These segments of agriculture do not require as much time and the costs are somewhat less than full time farming. Sixty-three percent of the survey respondents reported that they worked less than 40 hours per week on the farm (Figure 19). Survey respondents corroborated this shift as 60 percent reported zero to 25 percent of their income came from farming operations (Figure 20). Agribusinesses surveyed also observed the same trend towards more small operations in the county.

Producers and operators reach their markets through the traditional mechanisms for agriculture and forestry. The majority of producers (76.8 percent) sell their products through an auction, broker, or third party. Over 33 percent sell directly to the consumer through roadside stands or pick-your-owns which reflects the strong fruit and vegetable production that Montgomery County has. This is further backed up by 88.9 percent of the respondents who reported that only 0-25 percent of their farm income came from retail.

While most of the producers were not members of cooperatives, over 80 percent noted that selling and buying cooperatives could benefit farmers in Montgomery County. A farmers' cooperative is an organization of local farmers established for their mutual benefit, such as buying products and services for their operations or selling their goods. Cooperatives offer opportunities for producers, especially for small fruit and vegetable growers in Montgomery County, to increase profitability. This could be a timely opportunity to help farmers reach new markets as well as increase their operations.

The surveyed producers identified farm profitability as the best way to keep land in agriculture (42.6 percent) and expansion of farm operations represents the best way to increase profitability. Many producers reported that they did not expand their operations in recent years because of personal reasons (50 percent) and poor profit margins (50 percent). The reference to profit margins reiterates the continued squeeze producers feel between rising production costs and lower profits. Over 37 percent stated they did not expand because of their age.

Land availability also affected expansion efforts by surveyed producers. Fifty-five percent said that they did not own enough land to expand their operations. Many producers rent additional land in order to increase their operations. The lack of available land could be tied to the shift of ownership to heirs who may not be aware of this option to keep land in production and the limited availability of optimal farm land.

Optimism in their operations still remains high with Montgomery County producers, even with the economic downturn. From 2002 to 2007, 58 percent of the producers reported that their customer numbers for their operations remained the same and 47 percent said their sales

quantity volume held steady. Sixty-three percent expected their sales dollar volume to increase in the next five years. Fifty-three percent expected the profits for their operations would increase during that same time period (Figure21).

To follow on this optimistic view, producers who were surveyed reported they would make improvements and changes in their operations in the next five years to accommodate these expectations. Over 52 percent planned to buy new equipment and add new technology to their farming operations. Producers also planned to diversify into other farming ventures, renovate buildings, and construct new buildings on their farms.

In order for farmers and producers to meet these confident outlooks, specific needs and support are needed to fulfill those expectations. Farm management and taxes, marketing and consumer awareness, and training and technical needs emerged as key needs with specifics identified. These needs and support required are closely identified in the recommendations.

The survey respondents identified assistance with farm transfer and estate planning as the top need for farm management. Interviews with local producers and landowners in the county also reiterated this need. Many of those interviewed had not lined up anyone to take over the farm and indicated this as a concern. The participating producers realized that a successful farm transition will help ensure the land remains in production. Most of the producers expected to transfer their farming operations to family members. None of those surveyed expected to sell to non farmers (Figure22). Proper planning and thorough exploration of options must be discussed with the farmer and family members to make sure transition happens the way the family desires.

One of the top training and technical need identified was education in conservation best management practices. Assistance in woodlot management was also identified as a key need which is tied to the farms that also have forest land. Another major training and technical need that the survey respondents noted was agricultural awareness and career training. Understanding agriculture and identifying viable careers in agriculture are imperative to the continuation of agriculture.

For marketing and consumer awareness, the survey respondents identified assistance in creating Community Supported Agriculture which would help connect the general public with the importance of agriculture in the county. Agri-tourism and the identification of niche markets and new markets showed that the surveyed producers were looking for innovative ways to keep their lands in operation through these new avenues. These opportunities should be explored by the county as means of retaining working lands.

Several of these needs identified by the producers were tied to the general perception of agriculture. The attitudes toward agriculture by citizens and the local community are important to the longevity of family farms. If attitudes are favorable, the producers will feel encouraged to

look at new markets and opportunities that could be developed in that area. Thus the land remains in production and the economic benefit remains in the county.

The majority of producers surveyed felt that local government in Montgomery County supported them. Fifty-nine percent felt that local government was supportive with reasonable taxes and 56 percent felt that planning and zoning and provision of services were supportive towards agriculture.

Overall, the producers had good relationships with their neighbors. Over 65 percent reported they had no problems with their neighbors over farming operations. Of the 34.8 percent that did have a neighbor problem, half reported trespassing as the conflict (Figure23). However, 57.1 percent with neighbor issues reported the problem as unresolved.

It was apparent that education on agricultural matters was needed in the county. Many of the producers and agribusinesses interviewed pointed out the shift in the number of people who used to live on a farm to those who now live in town. One person who was interviewed for this plan pointed out that the citizens of Montgomery County lived in a rural area but few had seen farming up close. In interviews with local producers, it was noted that many people do not consider timber a crop. The value is in trees as another person pointed out and when people stop valuing trees, people will stop growing trees. In a county where forestry and forestry industries are prominent members of the economy, this perception needs to be addressed.

Survey respondents and other interviewees noted that environmental regulations were good and did help the common good of the community. These regulations allowed farmers to safely manage pests and other environmental stresses in order to gain more yield from their land. However, many felt that pressure was increasing to increase regulations and thus increase the costs to producers. This applies to timberland as well since trees are being managed more intensively to earn income faster – thus the use of fertilizers and pesticides. Some interviewees tied these regulation pressures to the general public's lack of knowledge of the complexities of agriculture. Thus there is a need for better information to the public on agriculture and the demands it faces.

Improvement in education and support for agriculture in the county are paramount to the success of the small family farms. Farmers and landowners understand that this is needed. The growing awareness of local foods and expanding development that takes out farms and forests can be a catalyst to build on for greater support of agriculture in the county. Support for resources and programs that help family farms and forests will be needed and citizen support of these will benefit all.

Farmers need to be aware of the resources available to them to help them make sound decisions about their farms and forests. The survey of producers in Montgomery County showed a lack of knowledge and accessibility of potential programs. Nearly 96 percent indicated their land was not in a Voluntary Agricultural District Program. Montgomery County's establishment of VAD

and Enhanced VAD will need to be marketed and producers must be educated about the benefits and impact of this program.

Seventy-six percent were not aware of North Carolina's historic preservation tax credit and 66 percent were not aware of NC's conservation easement tax credit. Sixty percent of the respondents indicated they are not aware of the NC's Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund which funded this Working Land Protection Plan. These present challenges that can be opportunities for the agencies involved with the WLPP to education and reach out to those producers and operators.

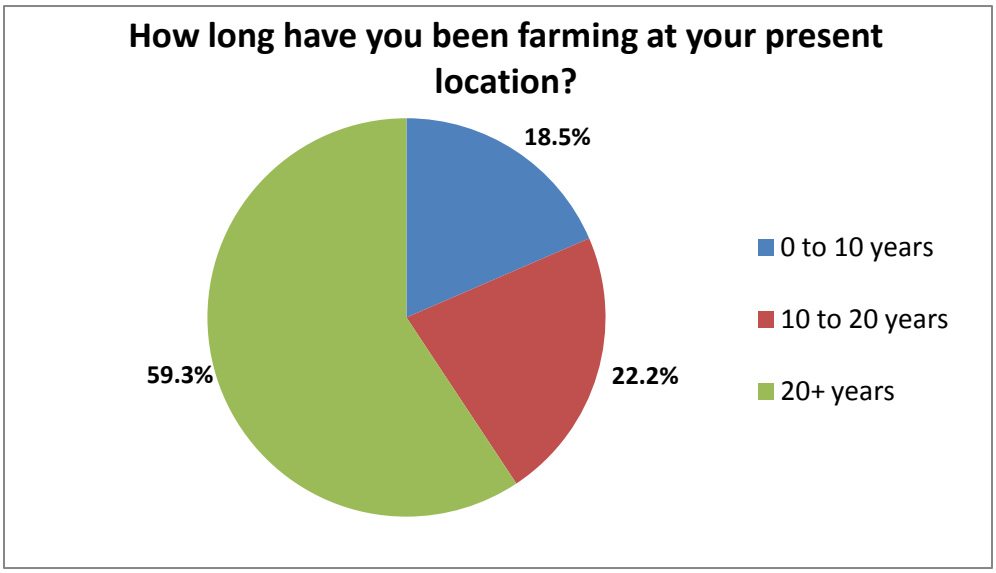


Figure 17 Source: BRAC RTF Producer Survey 2009

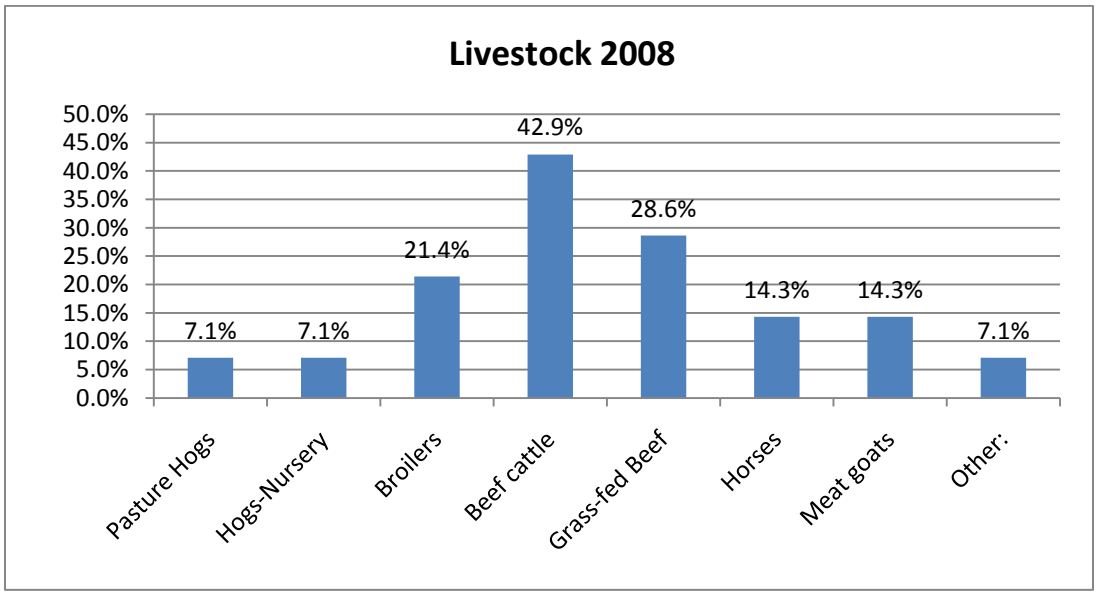


Figure 18 Source: BRAC RTF Producers Survey 2009

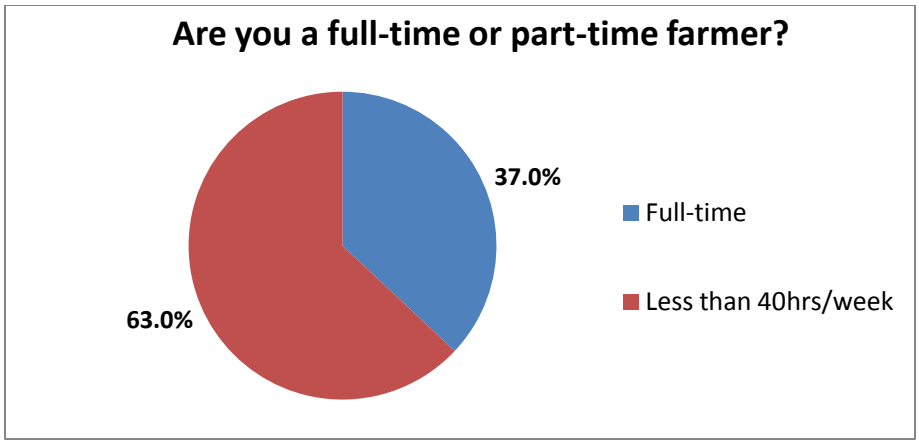


Figure 19. Source :BRAC RTF Producer Survey

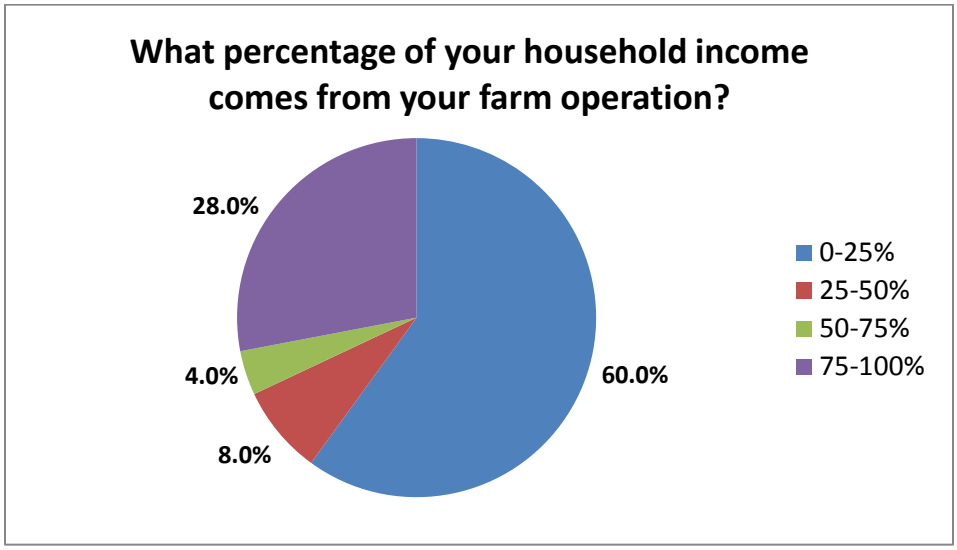


Figure 20. Source: BRAC RTF Producer Survey

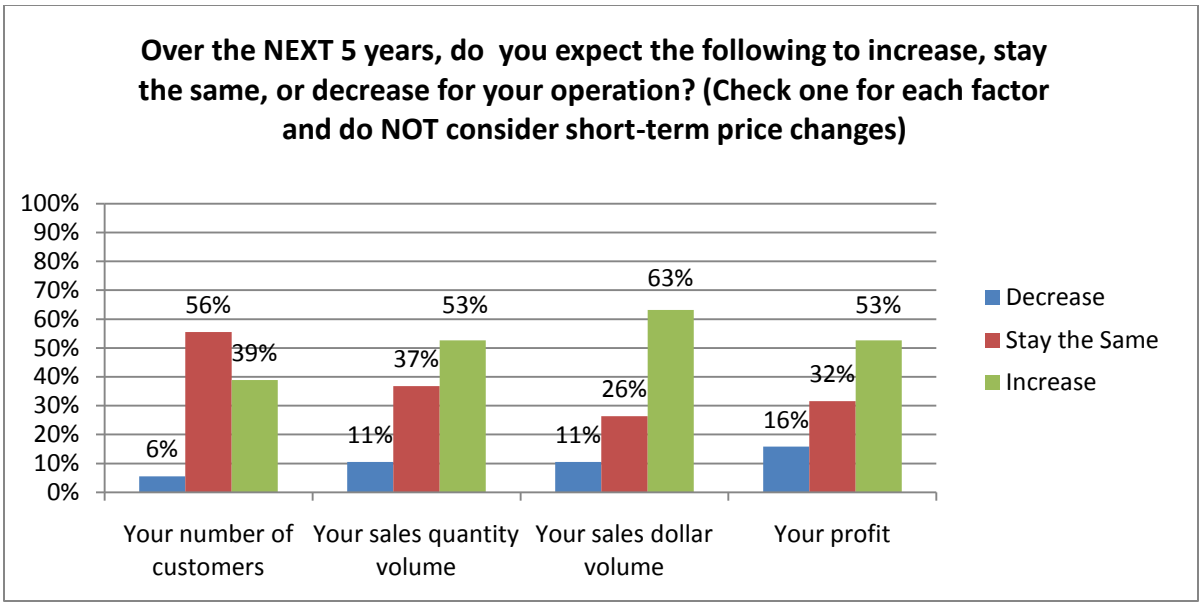


Figure 21. Source: BRAC RTF Producer Survey 2009

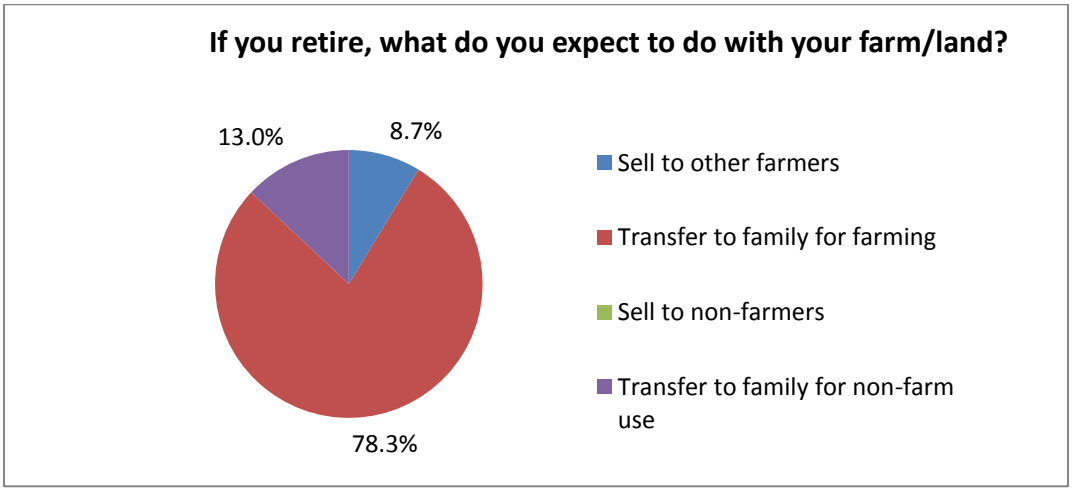


Figure 22. Source: BRAC RTF Producer Survey 2009

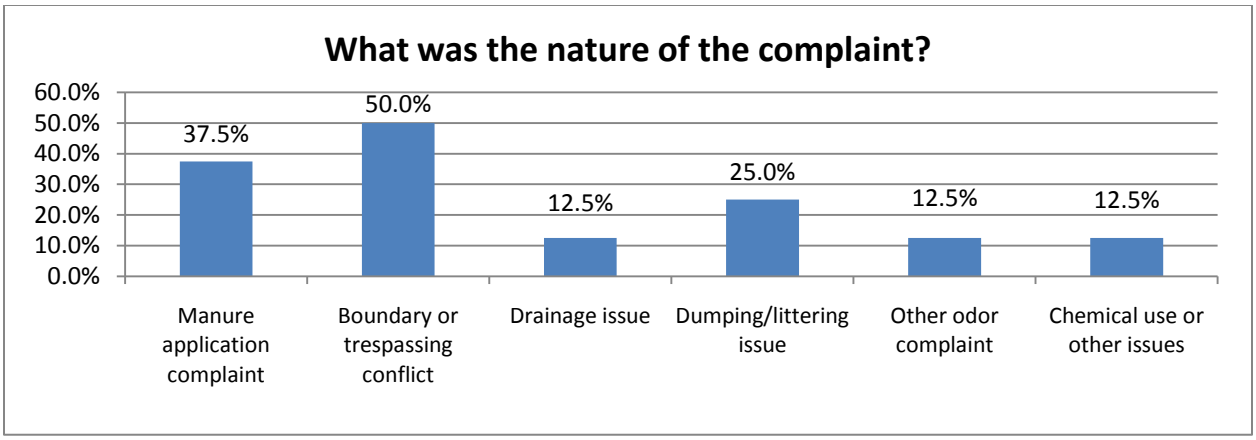


Figure 23. Source: BRAC RTF Producer Survey 2009

## Agribusiness

Agribusinesses in Montgomery County were asked to outline the current state of agriculture. Agribusinesses are closely tied to the well being of family farms and forests by the goods and services that these businesses provide. As working lands have faced challenges to their existence, agribusinesses have also experienced similar challenges.

The agribusinesses that responded to the surveys provided another snapshot into the status of agriculture in Montgomery County. The businesses that responded had been in operation in the county for more than 10 years, which substantiated their longevity. The businesses represented in the survey ranged from agricultural consultants to feed stores, farm supply stores and agri-chemical suppliers (Figure 24 ).

These agribusinesses have had to closely watch what has been going on in agriculture in order to match their services and resources with the needs of the farmers and landowners. The surveyed businesses noticed a shift to smaller and more sophisticated operations as well as movement into specialty and direct market operations. Interviews with county agribusinesses also noted the shift to smaller farms. Those who were interviewed also noted the increase in development around Badin Lake, which has created competition for land used in forestry and farming.

These shifts have caused the businesses to adapt to new customers and new products. Fifty percent reported that they added new product lines for both farmers and non farmers and anticipate doing the same in the next five years (Figures 25 and 26). This is necessary to help meet the changing needs in the county and to help continue the businesses' profitability.

One small agribusiness that was interviewed observed that the economy has affected its business. As a produce stand, the owner noticed more customers were focused on expenses rather than taste. This business has good working relationships with its growers and producers and can guarantee the produce provided is top quality. However, there seemed to be little interest from the general public in supporting local businesses, such as this produce stand, when a large retail store, with bigger purchasing power and thus lower prices, opened just a few yards down the road. The business has had to alter its focus to more horticulture and nonfarm holiday products. This supports Figure 26 with the move agribusinesses have had to make to new product lines for nonfarm customers.

As noted in the previous section, several lumber companies who were interviewed noted that the change in ownership of land has affected their operations. Many companies stated that the new landowners are out of the community and often out of the country. Land has been sold to Canadian lumber companies, which often have government support unlike the lumber companies in the United States. This shift in ownership has had an impact on the lumber industry as more land is owned by corporations, many of whom are other lumber companies.

The Montgomery County lumber companies also noted a need to increase production on forest land in order for the landowner to continue to make profits. With the shift to composite lumber, smaller timber size is seen as being as valuable as large-size timber. The turnaround on harvesting the smaller timber is quicker, generating more income. The woody biomass for biofuel possibility was mentioned as one way to increase income. Exploration into more value-added production in timber could contribute to expansion for this industry.

Agribusinesses are closely tied to agriculture, and what affects agriculture affects agribusiness. One hundred percent of these businesses identified the right-to-farm law as very important to the success of agriculture and thus their businesses. Seventy-five percent of the agribusinesses surveyed also were aware of the Voluntary Agricultural District program and saw it as very important to agriculture in the county.

Estate planning, reduction in property/liability insurance costs, and understanding risk and risk management were some of the issues seen as very important for farm management in Montgomery County by 75 percent of the agribusinesses surveyed. These echo several of the same issues raised by producers and indicate the concerns that agribusinesses have for the continuity of family farms and forests. There is a need to help these producers understand and plan for the economic well being of the farm.

Fifty percent indicated that the promotion of agricultural tourism in the county would benefit agriculture in the county. Agribusinesses surveyed also noted that organization of buyer groups, development of farmer business alliances and development of community supported agriculture were avenues to explore for the continuation of agriculture. These businesses realized the need for producers to expand their operations.

Increasing awareness of agriculture was another major point made in the surveys. One hundred percent of the surveyed agribusinesses identified youth education as a very important issue in Montgomery County. The surveyed businesses understand that youth need to see agriculture as a viable career choice with the varied opportunities that exist within agriculture, which include agribusiness careers.

A need to promote “buy local” and farm neighbor education were also identified as very important by 75 percent of the agribusinesses. The more the general public realizes how much their support of agriculture benefits the county, the more likely they would be to participate in a “buy local” effort and become good neighbors of agriculture. This is currently being promoted through the Chamber of Commerce, the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation and Central Park N.C. In an article written for the American Independent Business Alliance, Jeff Milchen pointed out a study that reported that dollars spent in the local community at a local business were more likely to circulate in the local economy (think accountants, insurance agents) than dollars spent at a big box retail store. This can clearly resonant in Montgomery County’s local economy with the strong fruit and vegetable production and roadside stands that operate there as well as with other new markets that could

be developed based on increasing awareness of what can be produced locally. The challenge in Montgomery is that there are few stores or businesses where citizens could buy local. The interviewed agribusinesses noted that costs often drive people to buy at chain stores. While these stores are local, the interviewed businesses felt that the money does not stay locally and hurts their business through price competitiveness.

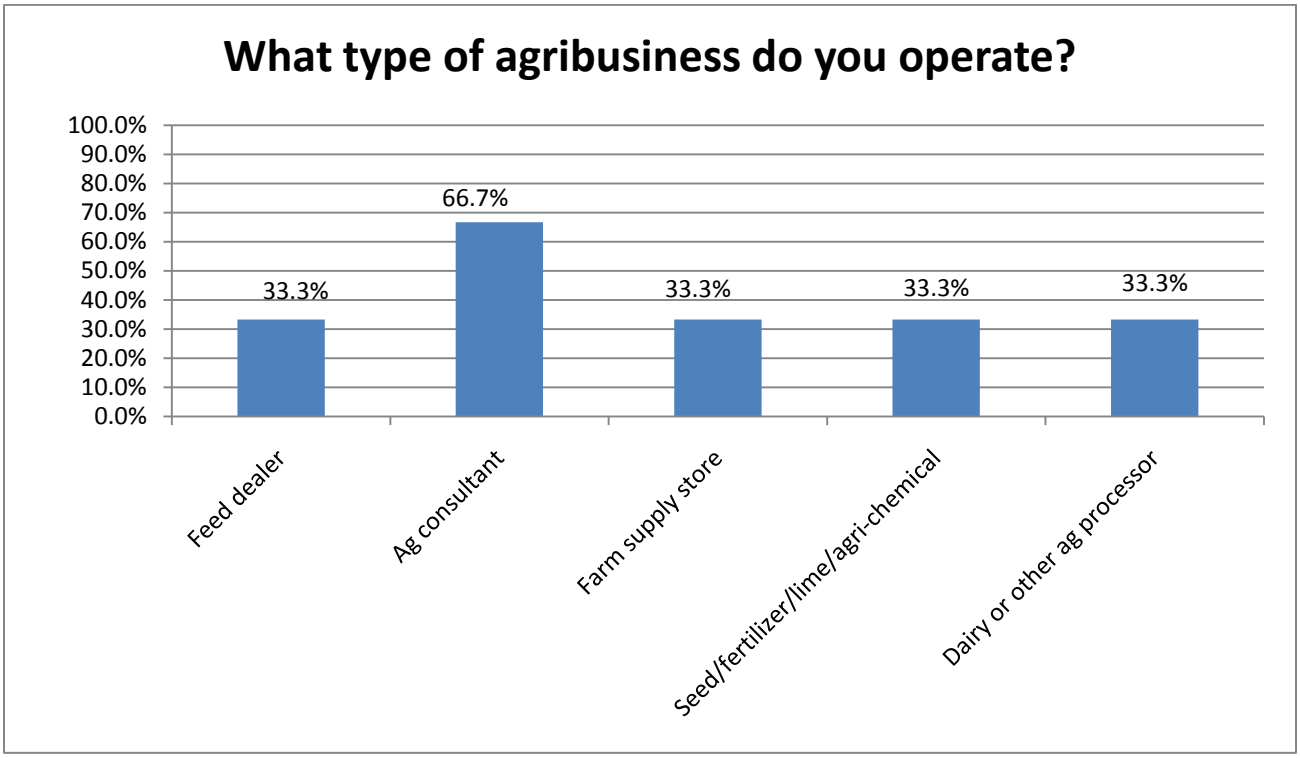


Figure 24. Source: BRAC RTF Agribusiness Survey 2009

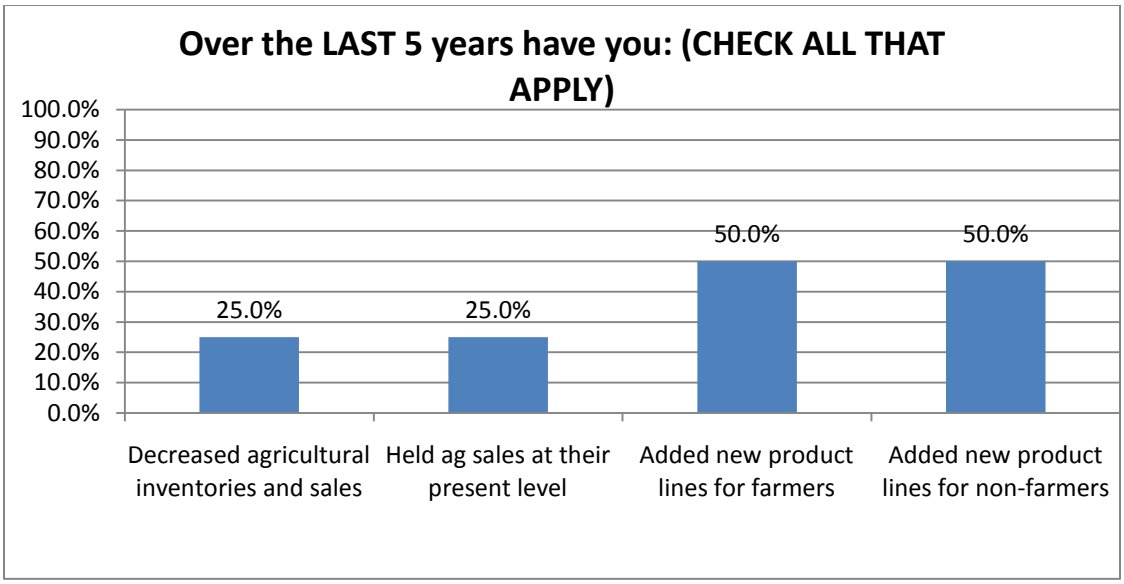


Figure 25. Source: BRAC RTF Agribusiness Survey 2009

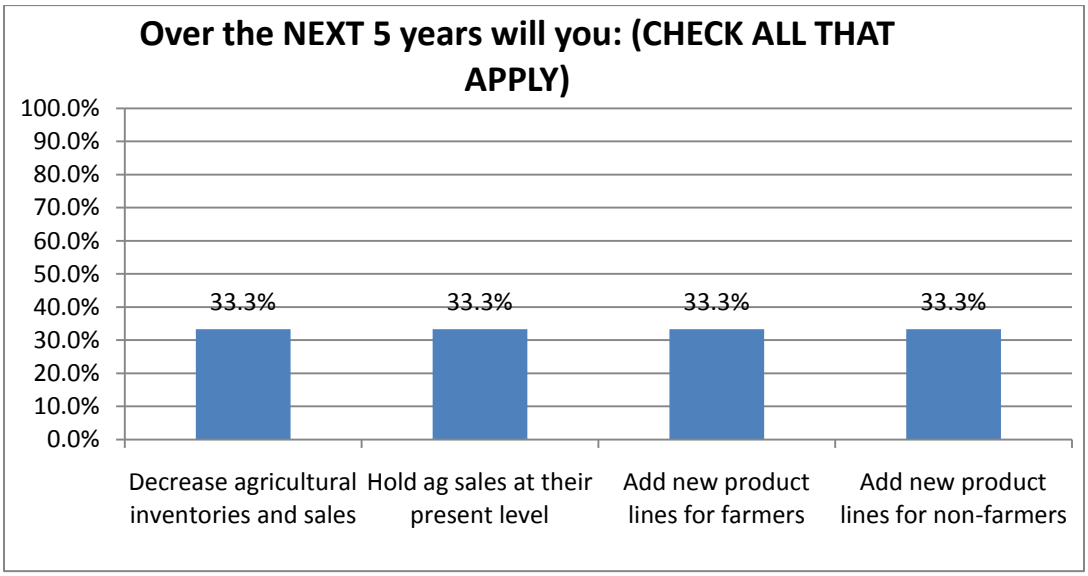


Figure 26. BRAC RTF Agribusiness Survey 2009

## Non-Farm Residents

The general public's view of agriculture is extremely important to the current state and future of agriculture in the county. According to the N.C. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Intelligence System, nonfarm residences make up the majority of the rural housing population in 2000 in Montgomery County. Ninety-three percent of those surveyed lived near a farm or timber operation, and 100 percent felt that the farmer/landowner was a good neighbor. It is important to note that while 75 percent had never owned or operated a farm or timber operation (Figure 27), 93 percent had visited a farm or timber operation in the past year. These citizens are in close proximity to agriculture, and their views of what goes on around them can influence the direction that agriculture takes in the coming years.

The nonfarm residents of Montgomery County were generally supportive and aware of agriculture in the county. Respondents also felt that agriculture enhanced the scenic beauty of the county and provided open space in the county. More than 66 percent felt that agriculture was holding its own and had potential for future growth (Figure 28).

Non-farm respondents were also active in supporting agriculture as an industry, not merely as a land use. One hundred percent of the survey respondents felt that farmers in Montgomery County delivered high-quality products. This was tied to the 100 percent of respondents who patronized fruit and vegetable stands in the county. The close association of quality products from agriculture and the support of local farm stands showed a strong awareness of what agriculture can offer and the willingness to support agriculture through personal purchases. However, this is counter to what many agribusinesses reported in surveys and interviews. This indicates the need to raise awareness of what agriculture in Montgomery County can offer.

Fifty percent felt farming presents a good career for enterprising persons, and 60 percent saw agriculture and farming as high-technology industries. More than 87 percent of respondents agreed with the need to provide loans and grants to develop local farm enterprises, and 50 percent felt tax breaks to farmers are important. The responses indicated support from the public for county government to assist with loans, grants and tax incentives to enhance and increase farm enterprises.

In comments and interviews, the general public realized that there is a lack of future farmers in the county. One survey participant stated "Do something to encourage young people to farm. Most of the farmers today are elderly and will not be able to continue farming much longer." Transition planning and youth agricultural education tie in with this view. These opinions from the nonfarm population show potential support for programs that address the future of agriculture.

When asked if Montgomery County should take steps to help preserve farmland, 100 percent non-farm respondents indicated "yes." Additionally, when asked if agricultural businesses should be encouraged to expand in Montgomery County, 100 percent responded affirmatively.

The response from non-farm respondents showed definite support for farmland preservation and expansion of agricultural businesses in Montgomery County.

The growing interest in local foods is another avenue that the general public would support according to the surveys. A dedicated farmers' market and encouragement of niche markets were seen as viable possibilities for agriculture. Agritourism was also mentioned in interviews and in the survey comments as a potential opportunity for agriculture in the county.

It was interesting to note that forestry was not brought up in the surveys as part of agriculture. This can be tied back to the interviews with forestry personnel who noted that people do not view trees as a crop. With forestry and forestry industries as solid members of agriculture in Montgomery County, this presents another awareness opportunity to be investigated.

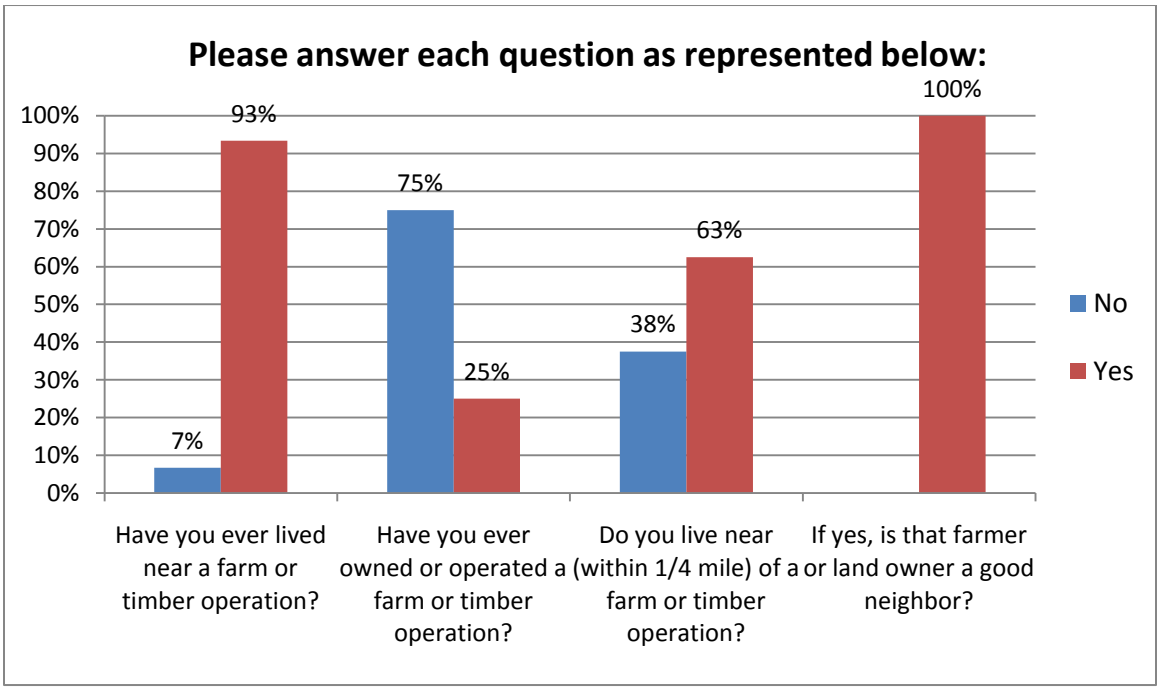


Figure 27. Source: BRAC RTF Non Farm Survey 2009

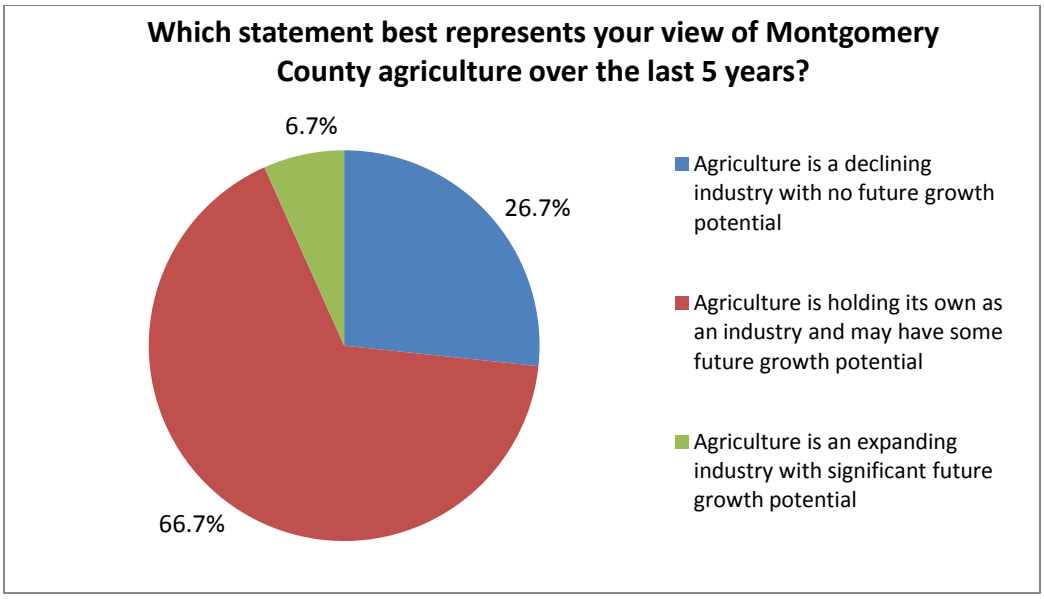


Figure 28. Source: BRAC RTF Non Producer Surveys 2009

# Strengths and Opportunities

In the *Montgomery County Economic Development Strategic Action Plan* (Sanford Holshouser Economic Development Consulting, 2009), the steering committee identified three areas for emphasis for 2010: business retention and expansion, workforce development and planning for the future. The plan stated "the agriculture base is also very strong in forest products and crops, especially peaches." Below, selected goals from the plan mirror the commitment to agriculture and offer opportunities for Montgomery County. (Some of these goals have been met.):

- Goal: Planning for the Future
  - Secure funding for a comprehensive land-use plan.
  - Agriculture should not be overlooked in the land-use planning process.
- Goal: Take Advantage of Fort Bragg Expansion
  - Create tourism package that markets to military personnel.
  - Continue participation in the All American Defense Corridor.
  - Make local entrepreneurs aware of the many contracting opportunities available to companies that deal with Fort Bragg.

As stated previously, the county's land-use plan sets forth policies to encourage agritourism, ecotourism and value-added agricultural enterprises. Thus, agriculture is supported and encouraged by county leadership. The need for entrepreneurship as well as possible opportunities with Fort Bragg are noted in the plan. These actions on the part of county leadership certainly demonstrate opportunities for agricultural sustainability.

The plan further stated that Montgomery County has a foundation in the entrepreneurial work of STARworks. The STARworks project is focused on fostering entrepreneurship in small communities as well as in agriculture to replace the farmers that are retiring. (www.starworksnc.org). The STARworks project is an incubator to help new and small companies grow, and it supports the tourism industry. Presently, it is focused on an effort that involves agricultural support of biodiesel that has possible opportunities for producers in Montgomery County. Biodiesel is being made from vegetable oil waste and could be valuable to producers. STARworks is a program of Central Park N.C. Montgomery County is one of eight counties engaged in the initiative. Central Park N.C. helps preserve local assets, develop tourism experiences, build consensus among the participating counties and market the region (www.centralparknc.org).

Agriculture is one of the dominant industries in the area, and there is a need to explore ways to retain and expand farms. Such examples given in the *The Montgomery County Economic Development Strategic Plan* include organic production, cooperatives and growing crops for alternative fuels. Additional surveys and market analysis will be important to determine if organic production is important to potential consumers.

In January 2010, a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) training was held in the region. Responses to the Sustainable Sandhills Local Foods Survey indicated nearly 70 percent of respondents preferred sustainable growing practices instead of certified organic growing practices. This is also repeated in the survey responses from producers, agribusinesses and the general public (www.sustainablesandhills.org).

The nature and functions of cooperatives differ considerably – such as purchasing cooperatives, consumer cooperatives and marketing cooperatives. In the context of agriculture, a farmer's cooperative refers to an organization of farmers residing in the same locale that is established for their mutual benefit in regard to the products. Cooperatives in Montgomery County may offer opportunities for producers, specifically for small fruit and vegetable growers, to increase profitability.

There are several cooperatives operating in North Carolina and within the Montgomery County region. The Sandhills Farm to Table Cooperative is a business enterprise selling fresh local food. This cooperative is a business owned and controlled by those who produce (farmers), distribute (workers) and consume (customers) a product. The cooperative is just under way but will eventually sell food that is grown on farms in Moore, Lee, Harnett, Hoke, Richmond, Montgomery, Scotland and Chatham Counties. This cooperative will open avenues for Montgomery County producers to market and sell their products (http://www.sandhillsfarm2table.com).

The N.C. MarketReady (formerly the program for value-added and alternative agriculture), NCSU and Cooperative Extension support the development of value-added agricultural operations. Montgomery County is poised to take advantage of this opportunity for producers to expand their product offerings to a broader audience. Producers and applicants can seek dollars to assist in the purchase of new or used equipment with cost-share funding through the N.C. Value-Added Cost Share (NCVACS) program. Such programs as the NCVACS program are viable and potential ways for farmers to add value to their products. There has been no indication that Montgomery County producers have applied for these funds, but the potential opportunity is a promising one (http://www.ncmarketready.org).

According to The Montgomery County Economic Development Strategic Action Plan, the county gained more than $21.6 million in tourism income last year mostly from visitors to the Uwharrie National Forest (September 2009, Sanford Holshouser Economic Development Consulting). With the decline of textiles in the county, Montgomery County leadership and citizens have realized the need for diversification and tourism. Agritourism would be a natural fit for the county with its rural composition. This is supported by the responses from survey respondents.

There is no question that tourism brings new money into the local economy through visitor expenditures. Tourism helps diversity and stabilization of rural economics. It can also help attract additional industry by creating a larger business base and increasing visitors' recognition

of opportunities. Tourism creates jobs and income through business expansion and new business start-ups. It also supports business services and products that could not be supported by the community's existing retail trade.

Rural tourism and agritourism are aspects of tourism that embrace the people of the community and are strengthened by their cultures, traditions and values. It involves the employment of local people and includes small-scale enterprises, open space and nature. It includes heritage, traditional values and a connection with local families as well as the attraction of countryside, rural areas and a visual amenity.

HomegrownHandmade is an identification and marketing program sponsored by the North Carolina Arts Council and Cooperative Extension. Art roads and farm trails in North Carolina have been identified. Montgomery County has a presence in the program and could certainly strengthen its presence and site identification. HomegrownHandmade is an opportunity for producers and landowners to expand into agritourism as another means of diversification for profitability and sustainability (www.homegrownhandmade.com).

North Carolina Farm Fresh, which is part of the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, is a directory of pick-your-own farms, nurseries, roadside produce stands and farmers' markets in the state. On the website http://www.ncfarmfresh.com Montgomery County has 12 sites listed. The N.C. Farm Fresh program offers yet another opportunity to enhance agricultural income and profitability.

# Working Land Protection Programs and Tools (Compiled by John Bonham, 2009)

There are programs and tools that can enhance farmland sustainability. Some of these programs are state programs, others options are for the local leadership to consider. These programs offer some viable options for Montgomery County.

### Present-Use Value Tax Program

Present-Use Value, or PUV, is a program established by N.C.G.S. 105-277.2 to .7 and administered by the county assessor through which qualifying property can be assessed, for property tax purposes, based on its use as agricultural, horticultural or forest land. The present-use value is the value of the land based solely on its ability to produce income. Qualifying property is assessed at its present-use value rather than its market value. The tax office also maintains a market value for the land, and the difference between market value and the present-use value is maintained in the tax records as deferred taxes. When land becomes disqualified from the program, the deferred taxes for the current and three previous years, with interest, will usually become payable and due.

#### Basic Requirements

- Minimum acreage of production land:
  - 10 acres for agricultural use
  - five acres for horticulture use
  - 20 acres for forest use
- Production must follow a sound management plan.
- Agricultural and horticultural land must have at least one qualifying tract that has produced an average gross income of at least $1,000 for the three years preceding the application year.
- Forest land must follow a forest management plan.

#### Benefits

- Protection from:
  - Increasing land values that are based on development potential.
  - The potential increase in property taxes.

More information can be found at http://www.dor.state.nc.us/publications/property.html

## Voluntary Agricultural Districts (VAD)

Established by N.C.G. S. 106-737 to 743 and administered at the county level, Voluntary Agricultural Districts 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. Montgomery County adopted the VAD in November 2009. There are 135 acres currently enrolled. The VAD ordinance for Montgomery County is located in Appendix A.

### Requirements

- Land must be enrolled in the Present-Use Value program or otherwise be determined to meet the qualifications of the program.
- The landowner must enter into a revocable agreement to limit development for a 10-year period.

### Benefits

- Notification to buyers of nearby property that they're moving into an agricultural area.
- Abeyance of water and sewer assessments.
- Public hearings on the condemnation of farmland.
- Stronger protection from nuisance suits.
- Representation by an appointed board regarding concerns on threats to the agricultural sector.

#### Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural Districts

Established by N.C.G.S. 106-743.1 to .5, an Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District is a VAC formed of one or more farms that are subject to an IRREVOCABLE 10-year agreement to limit development. In return for the condition of irrevocability, the landowner receives the added benefits of being able to receive 25 percent of gross revenue from the sale of non-farm products and still qualify as a bona fide farm, and being eligible to receive up to 90 percent cost-share assistance from the Agricultural Cost Share Program. Montgomery County passed the Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District ordinance with the VAD ordinance in November 2009. There are currently 250 acres enrolled in the EVAD program.

## Conservation Easements

A conservation easement is a written agreement between a landowner and a qualified conservation organization or public agency under which the landowner agrees to keep the land available for agriculture and to restrict subdivision, non-farm development and other uses that are incompatible with commercial agriculture.

**Basic Requirements**

- Permanently foregoing the right to subdivide or develop the land being conserved. There will be other limitations on activities to preserve the land's productivity, environmental values, and rural character.
- Cash payments in the range of $20,000 to $40,000 are needed to cover the costs of the transaction. These costs are for legal services, a survey, an appraisal, long-term stewardship services provided by the conservation partner, and other miscellaneous activities. In some cases grant funds will cover these costs.

**Other Information**

- A portion of the property can be left out of the easement, thereby providing an area for future homes and other non-farm activities.
- Agricultural activities, including forestry, are allowed under the agreement.
- Despite the term "easement," access to the public is not provided by the agreement.
- The value of a conservation easement is determined by a licensed land appraiser and is typically between 25 percent and 75 percent of the land's market value.
- A periodic inspection of the property is required to ensure that development does not occur. This provision will be included in the agreement.
- The agreement is recorded on the county's land records and runs with the title. All future landowners must comply with the terms and conditions of the agreement.

### Financial Benefits

- If the conservation easement is donated then the landowner will likely qualify for a federal income tax deduction and a state income tax credit. The value of these benefits depends on the appraised value of the easement and the income tax situation of the landowner.
- A conservation easement can also be sold by the landowner through a transaction commonly referred to as a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) or Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE). Funds to purchase a conservation and easement can be raised from private and government sources. North Carolina and the federal government have programs to purchase agricultural conservation easements. Funding through these programs is very competitive and will generally amount to a percentage of the easement's value. The tax benefits described above can be claimed for any of the easement's value above the purchase price.

## Term Conservation Easements

Also called Agricultural Agreements, these agreements are similar to conservation easements but apply for a finite period of time agreed to by the landowner and conservation partner.

## Farm Transition Planning

Making careful plans for the transfer of ownership of farm property and assets from the current owner to the next can be enough to preserve a farm for decades. Many options are available when planning an estate or land transfer. Farm owners can increase the likelihood of a successful transition that maintains the viability of the farm by obtaining professional assistance early in the process. Various colleges and universities provide educational and technical resources to professionals and landowners on this matter.

## Right –to-Farm Law

North Carolina has a right-to-farm law (N.C.G.S. 106-700 to 701 (2006) the protects farm and forestry operations from being declared a nuisance as long as they have been in operation for at least one year and are operated properly and without negligence.

### N.C. Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund

N.C.G.S. 106-744(c) established a trust fund to be administered by the Commissioner of Agriculture. The purpose of the trust fund is to provide monies to purchase agricultural conservation easements, and to fund programs that promote the development and sustainability of farming and the transition of existing farms to new farm families. Counties and nonprofit conservation organizations can apply for grants for these purposes. The General Assembly appropriated $8 million to the trust fund for the 2008 fiscal year and $4 million for the 2009 fiscal year.

# Recommendations

A review of farmland preservation plans from other counties and states finds a wide range of activities that communities can undertake to develop the agricultural industry and protect farmland from conversion. The actions described below are recommended because they are believed to be feasible for Montgomery County. This set of actions is not exhaustive, and community leaders are encouraged to adopt additional strategies to protect agricultural land and enhance the industry's viability. Each action is followed by a proposed time of implementation. However, the actual implementation will be contingent upon financial and human resources.

Montgomery County's leadership should be recognized for their recent adoption (November 17, 2009) of **Voluntary Agricultural District program and an Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District program.** They have also established an **Agricultural Advisory Board** (January 19, 2010) to lead and assist in all matters related to agricultural and forest industries. Presently, the newly established board will accept applications and develop the VAD and EVAD programs.

## Establish Local Foods and Other Cooperatives and Farmers' Markets for Montgomery County

The Sandhills Farm to Table Cooperative is just under way, but it will be open for Montgomery County farmers. If this cooperative is not feasible for producers, the county should explore the establishment of a county cooperative for fresh and local produce. Producers interviewed and surveyed felt that cooperatives should be established in the county to help expand their buying and selling powers. This can include produce, livestock and other commodities.

Cooperatives can give producers more negotiation power to market their goods and additional outlets for marketing. Producers will need education to understand the advantages and disadvantages of cooperatives. The Agricultural Advisory Board should encourage N.C. Cooperative Extension and/or Montgomery Community College to develop training for producers.

The reestablishment of the Master Gardener Program, N.C. Cooperative Extension Montgomery County Center, will potentially assist in the identification of producers for a local foods cooperative and sellers at a farmers' market. The local Cattlemen's Association can also be used to explore the possibilities of cooperatives for livestock.

A feasibility study needs to be conducted to determine potential consumer base and potential marketable produce for a farmers' market. Several responses from surveys and interviews

indicated the need for a local farmers' markets. The local population may not be enough to support a market, however, if a market is developed around agritourism sites and/or present tourist sites, like the Uwharrie National Forest, which had more than 1 million visitors last year, the market will be much more successful for both consumers and producers. The opportunity certainly exists for more such markets.

Producers also need assistance in promoting their products to available markets outside the county such as Albemarle, Greensboro and Charlotte. Access to these markets also needs to be secured. This would increase expansion opportunities for local farmers.

**Implementation and Timeline:** County Commissioners should encourage the Agricultural Advisory Board to explore with agricultural agencies and organizations the pros and cons of establishing local foods and other cooperatives and farmers' markets. Feasibility of both a potential cooperative and potential farmers' market should be shared with county leadership by **March, 2012.**

## Establish an Agricultural Biotechology Advocacy Action Team

Agricultural biotechnology has improved crop yields; reduced vulnerability of crops and timber to environmental stresses; increased nutritional qualities; improved taste, texture and appearance of food; reduced dependence on fertilizers, pesticides, and other agro chemicals; and produced novel (other than food) substances in crop plants like detergents, substitute fuels, petrochemicals, insulin, and vaccines.

Montgomery County should consider the possibility of appointing a biotechnology advocacy action team to explore potential biotech companies and assess the needs of local farmers and landowners in the field of biotechnology. One example might include the use of forestland and subsequent dead trees, branches and tree stumps, and biomass for renewable energy sources and production of other products like plastics.

The biotechnology action team should consist of the economic developer, forestry representatives from existing lumber manufacturing businesses like Jordan Lumber Company and/ or Troy Lumber, active farmers, forest land owners, a representative from Central Park, County Commissioner representation, the planning director, and other representatives from agricultural agencies and organizations. The team must actively engage The North Carolina Biotechnology Center for assistance and insight into the potential for biotechnologies in Montgomery County.

North Carolina Biotechnology Center (www.ncbiotech.org/) has made 24 loans or grants totaling $2.4 million to agricultural and other companies. The North Carolina Biotechnology Center has recently employed a Vice President for Agricultural Technology. The timing is ideal

to actively recruit assistance and gain knowledge in agricultural technology (http://www.ncbiotech.org/resource_center/agriculture/agricultural.html).

***Implementation and Timeline:***

Montgomery County Commissioners should appoint members to the Agricultural Biotechnology Advocacy Action Team by **January 2012**. The team will make recommendations for potential biotech industries and projects. The team should report quarterly to the County Commissioners through the Agricultural Advisory Board.

## Establish an Agricultural Value-Added Initiative

Value-added agriculture and forestry enterprises can offer improved returns for rural small businesses and communities. Providing value can be in the form of marketing a unique product, filling a market niche, simplifying the supply chain, providing a service, or lowering costs. .

The USDA Rural Business Development defines value-added products as: (http://www.agmrc.org/business_development/getting_prepared/valueadded_agriculture/articles/usda_valueadded_ag_definition.cfm):

- A change in the physical state or form of the product (such as milling wheat into flour or making strawberries into jam)
- The production of a product in a manner that enhances its value, as demonstrated through a business plan (such as organically produced products)

Montgomery County should capitalize on its proximity to the newly established N.C. Research Campus in Kannapolis and the availability of the N.C. MarketReady program (formerly the Program for Value-Added and Alternative Agriculture).

The tool kit provided by the MarketReady program can prove valuable to farmers, potential small business entrepreneurs and county leaders (www.ncmarketready.org/toolkit.html). Toolkit topics cover a range of topics that value-added producers need to consider such as Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, and Tools (SWOT) analysis, marketing training and movement into the digital world.

The County Commissioners should encourage Montgomery County Community College, Small Business Center, N.C. Cooperative Extension Montgomery County Center and other agricultural-related educational agencies to develop a series of trainings/workshops for farmers, forest and other landowners to gain an understanding of value-added agriculture and identify potential value-added markets for Montgomery County. Representatives from the N.C. Research Campus in Kannapolis and N.C. MarketReady program should be contacted for assistance and guidance in training and development of potential value-added enterprises.

### *Implementation and Timeline:*

County Commissioners should take action immediately to identify partners in the value-added initiative. Notification and identification of partners should be completed by **September 2012**. A defined marketing plan of how to reach clientele, training topics and dates should be developed by **December 30, 2012**. Trainings should begin in **January 2013**. Accountability and identified impacts of the initiative will be the responsibility of the partners identified by the County Commissioners. An annual report of successes and impacts should be required by county leadership.

## Establish a Local Forestry Association/Club

Since many farms have timberland and much of the county is in forestry, a forestry association/club could benefit these landowners. A local association can provide resources, advocacy, education and a sense of community for landowners and forestry professionals. The association could provide tools and information to help landowners manage their forests and learn about potential income generating opportunities. In interviews with local timber companies and foresters, it was apparent there is a need for such an organization.

### *Implementation and Timeline:*

N.C. Cooperative Extension Montgomery County Center and N.C. Division of Forest Resources Montgomery County should partner to establish such a group. These two entities, the Agricultural Advisory Board and other related groups should identify potential members by **December 2011** and organize the initial meeting by **spring 2012.**

## Establish an Agritourism Clearinghouse

Montgomery County's Land-Use Plan Draft clearly supports and encourages agritourism and value-added agricultural enterprises as well as working farmland. House Bill 329 (http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/Sessions/2005/Bills/House/HTML/H329v5.html) defines agritourism in North Carolina as "any activity carried out on a farm or ranch that allows members of the general public, for recreational, entertainment or educational purposes, to view or enjoy rural activities, including farming, ranching, historic, cultural, harvest-your-own activities, or natural activities and attractions…."

Examination on local websites and face-to-face interviews has revealed that agritourism is gaining momentum in Montgomery County but very haphazardly. There is not a designated portal or clearinghouse to provide assistance and track agritourism activities. Montgomery County's agritourism efforts are difficult to access. Some are listed with

HomegrownHandmade, others with N.C. Farm Fresh and STARworks, and some are not easily identified or located.

### *Implementation and Timeline:*

County Commissioners should appoint an agency to be responsible for assisting and tracking agritourism activities by **December 31, 2011**. A subcommittee of the Montgomery County Tourism Development Authority should be formed to include representatives from the Small Business Center, County Planning, N.C. Cooperative Extension Montgomery County Center and other agricultural related agencies to assist and track agritourism by **February 2012.** A concerted effort should be made to educate potential agritourism entrepreneurs and the public about agritourism activities and business development. The County Commissioners should require an annual report of agritourism activities/sites in the county. They should also require the agency in charge to develop a web link of agritourism enterprises to the Tourism Development Authorities' webpage and the N.C. Cooperative Extension Montgomery County Center webpage.

## Establish an Agricultural Education Program

The need to educate Montgomery County agencies and governmental officials as well as the general public on the importance of agriculture is imperative to assure continued growth and diversification of the agricultural sector. Based on interviews and the passage of the VAD/EVAD ordinance, it is apparent that the County Commissioners recognize the importance of agriculture and agribusiness needs in the county. It is, however, essential that residents, local leaders and town officials, economic developers and tourism leaders in the county also recognize the importance.

Educating the public of the benefits of Montgomery County's agriculture, agribusiness and working lands will increase support of agriculture in the county and help reduce conflicts between farmers and their non-farm neighbors. It will also stimulate the market for locally grown products and create an interest in agriculture among young people. A comprehensive educational outreach plan to educate residents, youth, farmers and landowners must be developed. The Agricultural Advisory Board recently appointed by the County Commissioners can serve as the oversight committee for these educational outreach programs.

- ***Public Education***

Marketing agricultural events and activities will enhance the public's perception of agriculture. Media exposure about the importance of agriculture to the county can serve to educate many citizens. Farm tours and other events should be planned as well.

During November, Farm-City Week is normally observed in most N.C. counties. The week salutes farm families for their supply of the basic necessities of life and as caretakers of the land

and valuable natural resources. It connects the partnership of those who produce the food and fiber and those who process, market and consume the products. It strengthens the ties between rural and urban residents—living and working together in the same environment. It is a vital farm-city partnership. Festivals, fairs and other events, such as the Candor Peach Festival, present opportunities to strengthen this connection.

The Agricultural Advisory Board should identify other public education opportunities including the initiation of a cost of community services studies to determine the impact of residential, commercial and agricultural/forest development. This information will assist local leaders in understanding the net gain that farmland and forestland provide, much like that of commercial and industrial development, on the costs of services such as schools, EMS and other county services.

Additionally, the infill use of existing buildings and infrastructure by industry should be pursued to limit the adverse agricultural impact of new industries to the county. An inventory of vacant facilities and complimentary infrastructure should be developed so these facilities can be used to their maximum potential. This also provides opportunity for the use of these structures for the production of value-added agricultural products, which are needed to increase income opportunities for producers.

- ***Youth Education***

Youth education about opportunities in agriculture should be cultivated. Existing youth organizations such as FFA and 4-H are excellent organizations to cultivate an awareness and appreciation for agriculture as well as to present the various career opportunities that exist. In North Carolina, the N.C. Farm Bureau AITC hosts the Ag in the Classroom program (www.agclassroom.org). This program could be expanded, and measures of success reported annually. The Soil and Water Conservation District also has pertinent programs, such as Envriothons, to support agriculture among youth.

### *Implementation and Timeline*

County Commissioners should encourage N.C. Cooperative Extension Montgomery County Center, FFA Coordinators and other agencies to develop education campaigns for youth. These educational plans should be shared and approved by the Agricultural Advisory Board. Campaigns should begin in **January 2012** and be ongoing to continuously meet the needs of the county's youth. The education campaigns should be coordinated by N.C. Cooperative Extension Montgomery County Center and a committee of other pertinent agencies, including other USDA agencies.

- ***Estate Planning For Farmers And Landowners***

The County Commissioners should encourage Montgomery County Community College and/or N.C. Cooperative Extension Montgomery County Center, with resources from N.C. State University, to develop and implement Working Lands Estate Planning seminars and workshops. The programs should focus on strategies of farm transitions that best suit individual families. Options must be explored and available to protect the family legacy. There is a definite need for increased awareness of farm estate planning, increased strategies to transition from farming, and decisions on how and when a farm estate plan should be implemented. This recommendation is specific to the needs expressed in producer and agribusiness surveys and interviews. Underserved family farmers have limited resources. This training will allow them to pass on a legacy (no matter how large or small).

Partners to plan and conduct a farm estate planning program should include: Montgomery County Community College Small Business Center, N.C. Cooperative Extension Montgomery County Center, N.C. Farm Bureau, USDA agencies, Agricultural Advisory Board and conservation program representatives including land trusts and attorneys specializing in estate planning. N.C. Cooperative Extension has specialists in estate planning to assist.

### *Implementation and Timeline*

Schedule planning group to address specific issues and work with partners to market and target audiences. In **January 2012**, the first farm estate planning program should be implemented. This effort should be repeated in a timely manner as estate and tax laws are updated frequently.

- ***Education Seminars/Workshops For Farmers And Agribusinesses***

In the surveys of producers and agribusinesses conducted by BRAC RTF and Mount Olive College, common themes emerged when asked where and in what did they need assistance. The list included: pricing/hedging, business planning assistance, assistance in increasing local product marketing, creating direct market options, and identifying and developing new markets. N.C. Cooperative Extension Montgomery County Center, N.C. State University, N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Farm Service Agency, Montgomery County Community College Small Business Center and other agricultural-related agencies should make every effort to develop workshops and seminars focused on these topical areas. These agencies should work with the Agricultural Advisory Board to identify critical educational programs.

### *Implementation and Timeline*

County Commissioners should encourage the agricultural agencies to develop workshops and seminars to meet the needs of producers and agribusinesses with approval of the Agricultural Advisory Board by **March 2012.** The educational seminars and workshops should begin in March and continue as deemed appropriate. The agencies should identify impacts of their educational efforts and be held accountable. An annual report should be submitted to the Agricultural Advisory Board and to the County Commissioners.

# Action Steps to Recommendations

To maintain the viability of the agricultural community, the Montgomery County Board of Commissioners should consider each of the recommendations of this plan and review possible implementation of each action determined to be feasible. Furthermore, the Board of Commissioners should request an annual report on the state of agriculture and the county's programs and actions. This should be a concerted effort of the Agriculture Advisory Board and other supporting agencies.

While county agencies currently deal with many of these recommendations as part of their work plans, other sources of funds to support these recommendations might include N.C. State University and N.C. A&T State University through the N.C. Cooperative Extension Montgomery County Center, the N.C. Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund and other government and non-governmental agencies and/or organizations. The Board of Commissioners should consider acquiring funds from state and federal grant programs related to agriculture and local food systems. The Agricultural Advisory Board should be a barometer for agriculture and serve as a key information resource for the County Commissioners to assure stability through growth of the agricultural economy.

# Supporting Agencies and Organizations

*Compiled by John Bonham*

**U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).** USDA provides a wide range of services to the agricultural industry and farm owners and operators through its 17 agencies. USDA is staffed by agents of the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). FSA provides farm loans and services, disaster assistance and conservation programs. NRCS works with private landowners to help them conserve, maintain and improve their natural resources and administers several programs that purchase or provide grants to purchase, conservation easements. Information about USDA's agencies and programs can be found at their website www.usda.gov

**Environmental Impact Resource Conservation and Development Council.** In partnership with USDA-NRCS, this is a non-profit natural resources and community development organization that serves the citizens in five counties including Montgomery.

**N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA).** NCDA provides many valuable services to the agricultural industry and individual farmers. It provides services covering animal health, agronomy, commodity distribution, marketing and promotion, grading, seed and fertilizer inspection, nursery and plant pest eradication and more. NCDA also manages and operates the five state farmers markets and 18 state research stations and farms.

**N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).** DENR operates the program One North Carolina Naturally, which provides the science and incentives to inform and support conservation actions of North Carolina's conservation agencies and organizations. The website, www.onencnaturally.org, contains numerous tools and information to assist conservation organizations and local governments in developing and implementing land protection strategies. One of the three working focus areas includes working lands.

**Montgomery County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD**). SWCD provides assistance to private landowners who are implementing practices to prevent soil erosion and protect water quality. Technical and financial assistance through the Agricultural Cost Share Program and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program are provided to landowners. SWCD also conducts several education programs for students and is working with its partners to develop a North Carolina Plan for Working Lands Conservation.

**North Carolina Cooperative Extension Montgomery County Center.** Cooperative Extension provides educational programs to farmers and non-farmer residents based on research

conducted at N.C. State University and N.C. A&T State University. The Montgomery County Center has agents for horticulture, poultry, agriculture, livestock, forages, youth and family.

**North Carolina Division of Forest Resources (DFR).** DFR in Montgomery County is staffed with rangers who help landowners maintain their forests, regulate and control forest fires, and maintain the forest health in the county. They conduct education and outreach programs to the general public as well. The rangers can help landowners write forest managements plans, review plans, assist with pesticide management and provide landowners contact information for consulting foresters and timber buyers.

**North Carolina Wildlife Commission (NCWRC).** NCWRC has a mission to conserve North Carolina's wildlife resources and their habitats. They provide programs and opportunities that allow hunters, anglers, boaters and other outdoor enthusiasts to enjoy wildlife. An important part of their vision is to provide safe comprehensive, effective and efficient fisheries, wildlife and boating programs that sustain working lands and their associated wildlife communities.

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).** USFWS coordinates the Red Cockaded Woodpecker recovery program in the Sandhills through conservation, restoration and sound management practices of longleaf pine.

**Sustainable Sandhills** is a regional non-profit organization that promotes coordinated and cooperative regional planning to maintain the green quality of life in the Sandhills region.

**The Nature Conservancy** is a national non-profit organization with a Sandhills region office. The organization protects ecologically important land and water through easements and education.

**The Sandhills Area Land Trust** works with private landowners to put land in voluntary conservation easements in the Sandhills area.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY**

**VOLUNTARY AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT ORDINANCE**

**ARTICLE I**

**TITLE**

An ordinance of the Board of County Commissioners of Montgomery County, North Carolina, entitled, "Voluntary Agricultural District" and "Enhanced Voluntary District Ordinance."

**ARTICLE II**

**AUTHORITY**

The articles and sections of this Ordinance are adopted pursuant to authority conferred by the North Carolina General Statutes sections 106-735 through 106-744 and Chapter 153A. In conjunction with Ratified House Bill 607.

**ARTICLE III**

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this ordinance is to promote agricultural values and the general welfare of the county and more specifically, increase identity and pride in the agricultural community and its way of life; encourage the economic and financial health of agriculture, horticulture and forestry; and increase protection from non-farm development and other negative impacts on properly managed farms.

This ordinance establishes a Voluntary Agricultural District Program that has the following benefits for participating farmers, forest land owners, horticulture crop growers and other county residents.

- Preservation and maintenance of agriculture, horticulture, forestry, or open land areas within the county;
- Voluntary enrollment from year-to-year with the right to terminate participation at any time;
- Protection of greenspace and natural resources as the county's population and development expands;

- Public identification, indicating to any potential neighbors and passerby that land is committed to the preservation of the agriculture way of life;
- Increased protection from nuisance suits, making non-farming neighbors and potential land purchasers aware of the potential for noise, odor, dust, slow moving vehicles etc. associated with farming:
- Requirement of public hearings for proposed condemnation, encouraging county government to use agriculture land areas as a last resort;
- Eligibility for farmland preservation funding on local, state and federal levels;
- Better voice in county government concerning decisions affecting the agricultural economy or way of life within the county.

The Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District Ordinance creates a district that will provide greater benefits to farmers. These include:

- Allowance to receive up to 25% of gross sales from certain types of non-farm products and still qualify for the agricultural zoning exemption;
- Eligibility for a higher percentage of cost-share program funding;
- Priority for other state grant programs;
- Conservation agreement that prohibits non-farm use or development of such land for an irrevocable period of ten (10) years.

## ARTICLE IV

## DEFINITIONS

The following are defined for purposes of this ordinance:

| | |
|---|---|
| Advisory Board: | Montgomery County Agricultural Advisory Board |
| Chairperson: | Chairperson of the Montgomery County Agricultural Advisory Board |
| District: | Voluntary Agricultural District as established by this Ordinance |
| Enhanced District: | Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District as established by this Ordinance |
| Board of Commissioners: | Montgomery County Board of Commissioners |
| Farmland: | Agriculture, Horticulture, or Forestry |

## ARTICLE V

## AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD

A. Creation
The Board of Commissioners shall establish an Agricultural Advisory Board to implement the provisions of this program.

B. Membership
The Advisory Board shall consist of at least seven (7) members appointed by the Board of Commissioners.

C. Membership Requirements

1. Each Advisory Board member, except those serving in *ex officio* capacity, shall be a Montgomery County resident or county landowner.

2. At least four (4) of the members shall be actively engaged in farming, horticulture and/or forestry. Of the members actively engaged in farming,

   horticulture and/or forestry, there shall be at least one such member from each agricultural district or enhanced agricultural district in Montgomery County. This determination shall be made without reference to *ex officio* members.

3. The members actively engaged in farming, horticulture and/or forestry as well as other members, shall be selected for appointment by the Board of Commissioners from the names of individuals submitted to the Board of Commissioners by Montgomery County Soil & Water Conservation District, the Montgomery County Office North Carolina Cooperative Extension, the North Carolina Forest Service, Montgomery County Farm Bureau, the Montgomery County Cattleman's Association, agribusiness and the public at large.

4. Additional members may be appointed to the Board in an *ex officio* capacity from other conservation or agricultural organizations and agencies, as deemed necessary by the Board of Commissioners. *Ex officio* members may include but are not limited to the agencies stated above, Planning and Zoning Department, county GIS, etc. Members serving in an *ex officio* capacity shall neither vote nor count toward quorum requirements.

D. Tenure

The initial board is to consist of two (2) appointees for terms of one year; two (2) appointees for terms of two years; and three (3) appointees for terms of three years. Thereafter, all appointments are to be for terms of three years, with reappointment up to

three (3) consecutive terms permitted. Reappointment to additional terms is permitted after a full year off the board.

E. Vacancies

Any vacancy on the Advisory Board is to be filled by the Board of Commissioners for the remainder of the unexpired term, from recommendations of the groups specified above.

F. Removal

Any member of the Advisory Board may be removed by a two-thirds vote of the Montgomery County Board of Commissioners. No cause for removal shall be required.

G. Funding

The *per diem* compensation, if any, of the members of the Advisory Board may be fixed by the Board of Commissioners and funds may be appropriated to the Advisory Board to perform its duties.

H. Advisory Board Procedure

1. Chairperson

The Advisory Board shall elect a chairperson, a vice-chairperson and a secretary /treasurer each year at its first meeting of the fiscal year. The chairperson shall preside over all regular or special meetings of the Advisory Board. In the absence or disability of the chairperson, the vice-chairperson shall preside and shall exercise all the powers of the chairperson. Additional officers may be elected as needed.

2. Determination of Procedure

The Advisory Board may adopt rules of procedure consistent with this Ordinance or with other provisions of State law.

3. Advisory Board Year

The Advisory Board shall use the Montgomery County fiscal year as its meeting year.

4. Meetings

Meetings of the Advisory Board shall be held at the call of the chairperson and at such other times as the Advisory Board may specify in its rules of procedure or upon the request of at least a majority of the Advisory Board Membership. A

meeting shall be held at least annually and notice of any meeting to the members shall be in writing, unless otherwise agreed to by all Advisory Board members. The Montgomery County Commissioners have the right to call a meeting of the Agricultural Advisory Board at any time for any reason. Meetings shall follow Open Meetings Law.

5. Majority Vote and Quorum Requirements

No business may be conducted by the Advisory Board without a quorum present. A quorum is defined as a majority of the Advisory Board voting members. All issues shall be decided by a majority vote of the members of the Advisory Board present.

6. Records

The Advisory Board shall keep minutes of the proceedings showing the vote of each member upon each question, or if absent or failing to vote, indicating such fact, and shall keep records of its examinations and other official actions, all of which shall be filed in the office of the Advisory Board or its designee, and shall be a public record.

7. Administrative

The Advisory Board may work through the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Montgomery County Center to serve the Board for record keeping, correspondence, application procedures under this ordinance, and whatever services the Board needs to complete its duties.

I. Duties

The Advisory Board shall:

1. Review and approve or disapprove applications of landowners for enrollment of qualified farmland, horticultural land, or forestland in either voluntary agricultural districts or enhanced voluntary agricultural districts and make recommendations concerning the establishment and modification of these agricultural districts;

2. Conduct public hearings;

3. Advise the Board of Commissioners on projects, programs, or issues Affecting the agricultural economy or activities within the county that will affect agricultural districts;

4. Review and make recommendations concerning proposed amendments to This ordinance;

5. Develop a draft countywide farmland protection plan as defined in N.C.G.S. §106-744 (e)(1) for presentation to the Board of Commissioners;

6. Study additional methods of farmland preservation and make Recommendations to the Board of Commissioners; and

7. Perform other agricultural related tasks or duties as assigned by the Board of Commissioners.

## ARTICLE VI

## CREATION OF VOLUNTARY AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS AND ENHANCED VOLUNTARY AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS

A. Regions

Montgomery County is hereby considered one region including all the unincorporated land in the county.

B. Implementation

In order to implement the purposes stated in Article III, this program provides for the creation of Voluntary Agricultural Districts or Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural Districts which meet the following standards:

1. The District or Enhanced District shall contain a minimum of ten (10) contiguous acres of qualified farmland; 20 acres of qualified forest land or 5 acres of qualified horticultural land.

2. The District or Enhanced District shall contain two (2) or more qualified farms within areas designated by the Advisory Board.

All land enrolled in a region, defined in section A, above, shall be part of a single district, whether enrolled in the District or the Enhanced District. If a single farm has acreage in two or more regions, the farm shall participate in the district where the largest acreage is found. All land in a region as defined in section A, above, shall be treated as a single district whether enrolled in the District or the Enhanced District.

C. Education

The county may take such action as it deems appropriate through the Advisory Board or other entities or individuals to encourage the formation of the Districts and Enhanced Districts and to further their purposes and objectives, including the implementation of a public information program to reasonably inform landowners of the agricultural district program.

D. Addition and Withdrawal

1. Qualifying farmland in a region with an existing district shall be added to the district as herein provided.

2. In the event that one or more participants in the District or Enhanced District withdraw and the acreage in the District or Enhanced District becomes less than the minimum acreage required or results in the remaining land being noncontiguous, a voluntary agricultural district will continue to exist so long as there is one qualifying farm.

## ARTICLE VII

## CERTIFICATION AND QUALIFICATION OF FARMLAND

Requirements

To secure county certification as qualifying farmland in either a Voluntary Agricultural District or Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District, a farm must:

1. Be participating in the farm present-use-value taxation program established by N.C.G.S. §105-277.2 through §105-277.7, or is otherwise determined by the county to meet all the qualifications of this program set forth in G.S. 105-277.3;

2. Be managed, if highly erodible land exists on the farm, in accordance with the Natural Resources Conservation Service defined erosion-control practices that are addressed to said highly-erodible land;

3. Be the subject of a conservation agreement, as defined in N.C.G.S. §121-35 between the county and the owner of such land that prohibits non-farm use or development of such land for a period of at least ten years, except for the creation of not more than three lots that meet applicable county zoning and subdivision regulations; and

4. Be within the unincorporated area of Montgomery County.

## ARTICLE VIII

## APPLICATION, APPROVAL, AND APPEAL PROCEDURE

A. Application Procedure

1. A landowner may apply to participate in either the Agricultural District or the Enhanced Agricultural District program, and must designate on the application as for either Voluntary Agricultural District status or Enhanced District status. The application shall be on forms provided by the Advisory Board. These forms may be picked up from the N.C. Cooperative Extension Montgomery County Center at 203 West Main Street, Troy, NC 27371. Completed applications should be returned to this same address, labeled Attention: Voluntary Ag District. Application to participate in a district may be filed with the application for certification of qualifying farmland.

2. A conservation agreement (required by N.C.G.S. §106-737 and defined in N.C.G.S. §121-35) suited to district type (Voluntary Agricultural District or Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District) designated by the landowner to sustain, encourage, and promote agriculture must be executed by the landowner and recorded with the Advisory Board, which shall record a notarized copy of such with the Montgomery County Registrar of Deeds, and an additional copy with the Planning and Zoning Department. Permitted uses include agriculture, horticulture, forestry, and outdoor recreation.

B. Approval Process

1. Upon submission of the application to the Advisory Board, the Advisory Board shall in regular or called meeting approve or disapprove the application. The chairperson shall notify the applicant by first class mail of approval or disapproval of participation in the district as soon as practical.

2. Upon receipt of an application, the chairperson will forward copies immediately to the following offices which shall be asked to provide comments, if any, to the Advisory Board prior to the date set for the Advisory Board vote on the application. If comments are not received within 15 days, then it will be assumed there are no opinions from non-responding agencies.

    a. The Montgomery County Tax Assessor;
    b. The Montgomery County Planning and Zoning Department;
    c. The Montgomery County Soil and Water Conservation District office;

d. The Montgomery County Center of North Carolina Cooperative Extension;
e. The Natural Resources Conservation Service;
f. The N.C. Forest Service.

C. Appeal

If an application is denied by the Advisory Board, the landowner may, within fifteen (15) days of notification of disapproval of the application, request in writing that the Advisory Board reconsider its decision. The request for reconsideration shall state the reason(s) therefore.

Upon denial after reconsideration, the landowner shall have thirty (30) days from the date of notification to appeal the decision to the Board of Commissioners. Such appeal shall be presented in writing. The decision of the Board of Commissioners is final.

## ARTICLE IX

## REVOCATION, ENFORCEMENT AND RENEWAL OF CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS

A. Revocation and Enforcement

1. District

Conservation Agreements for land within Agricultural Districts are for a term of ten (10) years. By providing 30 days advance written notice to the Advisory Board, a landowner of qualifying farmland within a Voluntary Agricultural District may revoke the Conservation Agreement or the Advisory Board may revoke the same Conservation Agreement based on noncompliance by the landowner, subject to the same provisions as contained in Article VIII(C) for appeal of denials. Such revocation shall result in loss of qualifying farm status and loss of eligibility to participate in a district. Absent noncompliance by the landowner, neither the Advisory Board nor the Board of Commissioners shall revoke any Conservation Agreement prior to its expiration. If the Advisory Board shall revoke this Conservation Agreement for cause, the landowner shall have the appeal rights set forth in Article VIII(C).

Transfers of land in a Voluntary Agricultural District due to death of the landowner, sale or gift shall not revoke the Conservation Agreement unless the land no longer qualifies for the present-use-value taxation program. In the event of the original landowner's death, any surviving heirs have the

same 30 days advance written notice consideration for removal from the Conservation Agreement as stated above. Enforcement of the terms of a Conservation Agreement for land enrolled in a Voluntary Agricultural District shall be limited to revocation of the Conservation Agreement and the benefits derived therefrom.

2. Enhanced District

Conservation Agreements for land within Enhanced Districts are IRREVOCABLE for a period of 10 years. Enforcement of the terms of the Conservation Agreement may be through an action for injunctive relief and/or damages in any court of competent jurisdiction. The County may also terminate any benefits to the owner under this program either permanently or during the period of violation, as appropriate. If the Advisory Board shall revoke this Conservation Agreement for cause, the landowner shall have the appeal rights set forth in Article VIII(C). The right to terminate program benefits is in addition to any legal rights that the County may have under either this Ordinance or the terms of the applicable Conservation Agreement.

The County may seek costs of the action including reasonable attorney fees if such a provision is incorporated into the Conservation Agreement.

B. Renewal

1. District

A Conservation Agreement for land within a Voluntary Agricultural District shall be automatically renewed unless the landowner provides 30 day written notice to the Advisory Board of intent not to renew. Absent noncompliance by the landowner, neither the Advisory Board nor the Board of Commissioners shall fail to renew any Conservation Agreement unless this Ordinance or its authorizing legislation has been repealed. Renewals of Conservation Agreements for land in voluntary agricultural districts shall be for successive ten (10) year terms. A landowner may revoke the Conservation Agreement for land in a voluntary agricultural district by giving a 30 day written notice to the Advisory Committee.

2. Enhanced District

A Conservation Agreement for the Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural district shall be deemed automatically renewed for an additional term of 3 years, unless either the Advisory Board or the landowner gives written notice to the contrary prior to the termination date of the Conservation Agreement. At the end of each 3 year term the Conservation Agreement shall automatically

renew for an additional 3 year term unless notice of termination is given. The Conservation Agreement under the Enhanced District is irrevocable for the renewal term.

## ARTICLE X

## WAIVER OF WATER AND SEWER OR ALL UTILITY ASSESSMENTS

A. No Connection Required

1. A landowner belonging to the District, or an Enhanced District, shall not be required to connect to Montgomery County water and/or sewer systems.

2. A landowner belonging to an Enhanced District shall not be required to connect to any Montgomery County utility systems.

B. Abeyance

1. Water and sewer assessments shall be held in abeyance, without interest, for farms in a District, or an Enhanced District, until improvements on such property are connected to the water or sewer system for which the assessment was made.

2. Utility assessments shall be held in abeyance, without interest, for farms in an Enhanced District, until improvements on such property are connected to the utility system for which the assessment was made.

C. Termination of Abeyance

When the period of abeyance ends, the assessment is payable in accordance with the terms set out in the assessment resolution and this information is to be provided by the County Commissioners to the landowner at the time of abeyance.

D. Suspension of Statute of Limitations

Statutes of limitations are suspended during the time that any assessment is held in abeyance without interest. The landowner may be required to sign an acknowlegdement (that may be incorporated into the Conservation Agreement) of the abeyance of the statute of limitations upon collecting water and sewer assessments, or other utility assessments.

E. Other Statutory Abeyance Procedures

Nothing in this section is intended to diminish the authority of the County to hold assessments in abeyance under N.C.G.S. §153A-201, or other applicable law.

F. Conflict with Water and/or Sewer System Construction and Improvements Grants

To the extent that this section conflicts with the terms of federal, state, or other grants under which county utility systems are constructed this section shall not apply. This section shall not apply to utilities that are not owned by the County unless the County has entered into an agreement with the entity(ies) owning the utilities and that agreement provides that this Ordinance shall apply.

## ARTICLE XI

## ADDITIONAL ENHANCED AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT BENEFITS

Land enrolled in the Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District program is entitled to all of the benefits available under the Voluntary Agricultural District program, and to the following additional benefits:

A. Sale of Non-farm Products

Landowners participating in Enhanced Districts may receive up to twenty-five percent of gross sales from the sale of nonfarm products and still qualify as a bona fide farm that is exempt from county zoning regulations under N.C.G.S. §153A-340(b). A farmer seeking to benefit from this subsection shall have the burden of establishing that the property's sale of nonfarm products did not exceed twenty-five percent of its gross sales. The Agricultural Advisory Board shall develop guidance and procedures to enforce this provision.

B. Agricultural Cost Share Program

Landowners participating in Enhanced Districts are eligible under N.C.G.S. §143-215.74(b) to receive the higher percentage of cost-share funds for the benefit of that farmland under the Agriculture Cost Share Program established pursuant to Part 9 of Article 21 of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes for funds to benefit that farmland.

C. Priority Consideration

State departments, institutions, or agencies that award grants to farmers are encouraged to give priority consideration to landowners participating in Enhanced Districts.

D. Utility Assessment Waiver

As provided in Article X above, waiver of all county utility assessments in addition to waiver of water and sewer assessments is available to all participants in Enhanced Districts.

## ARTICLE XII

## PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. Purpose

Pursuant to N.C.G.S. §106-740, which provides that no state or local public agency or governmental unit may formally initiate any action to condemn any interest in qualifying farmland within a District until such agency or unit has requested the Advisory Board to hold a public hearing on the proposed condemnation.

B. Procedure

1. Upon receiving a request the Advisory Board shall, within thirteen (13) days of the request, publish notice describing the proposed action in the appropriate newspaper(s) serving Montgomery County, and will in the same notice notify the public of a public hearing on the proposed condemnation, to be held within ten (10) days of the published notice.

2. The Advisory Board shall meet to review:

    a. Whether the need for the project has been satisfactorily established by the agency or unit of government involved, including a review of any fiscal impact analysis conducted by the agency involved; and

    b. Whether there are alternatives to the proposed action that have less impact and are less disruptive to the agricultural activities of the District within which the proposed action is to take place.

3. The Advisory Board shall consult with the County Agricultural Extension Agent, the Natural Resources Conservation Service District Conservationist, the N.C. Forest Service, Montgomery County Farm Bureau, and any other individuals, agencies, or organizations deemed by the Advisory Board to be necessary for its review of the proposed action.

4. Within five (5) days after the hearing, the Advisory Board shall make a report containing its findings and recommendations regarding the proposed action. The report shall be made available to the public

prior to its being conveyed to the decision-making body of the agency proposing the acquisition.

5. There will be a period of three (3) days allowed for public comment on the report of the Advisory Board.

6. After the three (3) day period for public comment has expired, the Advisory Board shall submit a final report containing all of its findings and recommendations regarding the proposed action to the decision making body of the agency proposing the acquisition.

7. The total time period, from the day that a request for a hearing has been received to the day that a final report is issued to the decision making body of the agency proposing the acquisition, shall not exceed thirty (30) days. If the agency agrees to an extension, the agency and the Advisory Board shall mutually agree upon a schedule to be set forth in writing and made available to the public.

8. Pursuant to N.C.G.S. §106-740, the Board of Commissioners shall not permit any formal initiation of condemnation by local agencies while the proposed condemnation is properly before the Advisory Board.

## ARTICLE XIII

## NOTIFICATION

A. Record Notice of Proximity to Voluntary Agricultural District

1. Procedure

It shall be the responsibility of the landowner to present the "Notice of Montgomery County Voluntary Agricultural District Record of Membership and Conservation Agreement" to the Montgomery County Register of Deeds for recordation. Upon certification of qualifying farmland and designation of real property as a District, or an Enhanced District, the Montgomery County Register of Deeds shall file a notarized copy of said property in the land records. To provide notice reasonably calculated to alert a person researching the title of a particular tract that such tract is located within one aerial mile of a voluntary agricultural district, the Register of Deeds Office shall also maintain a separate file with copies of all participating tracts in the county. In addition, signs will be posted in the Register of Deeds Office alerting the public of the existence of Voluntary Agricultural Districts in the County, accompanied by a county map showing their locations.

This map will also be available electronically as an additional layer in the county's GIS mapping system.

2. Limit of Liability

In no event shall the County or any of its officers, employees, members of the Advisory Board, or agents be held liable in damages for any misfeasance, malfeasance, or nonfeasance occurring in good faith in connection with the duties or obligations imposed by this ordinance.

3. No Cause of Action

In no event shall any cause of action arise out of the failure of a person researching the title of a particular tract to report to any person the proximity of the tract to a qualifying farm or Voluntary Agricultural District or Enhanced Voluntary Agricultural District as defined in this Ordinance.

B. Signage

Signs identifying approved agricultural districts (and enhanced districts) shall be placed along the rights-of-way of major road that pass through or next to those districts. Signs shall also be placed along any roads deemed appropriate by the Advisory Board. There shall also be signage posted at the farm gate of each qualifying farm. Placement of any signage on the highway right-of-way shall be coordinated with the North Carolina Department of Transportation.

C. Maps

Maps identifying approved agricultural districts shall be provided to the following agencies or offices:

1. Planning and Zoning Department;
2. Register of Deeds;
3. Natural Resources Conservation Service;
4. North Carolina Cooperative Extension;
5. Montgomery County Soil and Water Conservation District
6. N.C. Forest Service
7. Montgomery County Farm Bureau
8. Any other such agency or office the Advisory Board deems appropriate.

## ARTICLE XIV

## SUBDIVISION ORDINANCE AND ZONING ORDINANCE REVIEW

Developers of major subdivisions or planned unit developments shall designate on preliminary development plans, the existence of the Districts, or an Enhanced District, within one aerial mile of the proposed Development.

## ARTICLE XV

## COUNTY LAND-USE PLANNING

A. Duty of the Advisory Board

It shall be the duty of the Advisory Board to advise the Board of Commissioners or the agency or office to which the Board of Commissioners delegate authority to oversee county land use planning, on the status, progress, and activities of the county's agricultural district program and to also coordinate the formation and maintenance of agricultural districts with the county's land use planning activities and the county's land use plan if one currently exists at the time this ordinance is enacted or when one is formed.

B. Posting of Notice

The following notice, of a size and form suitable for posting, shall be posted in the office of the Register of Deeds, and any other office or agency the Advisory Board deems necessary:

Montgomery County has established agricultural districts and enhanced agricultural districts to protect and preserve agricultural lands and activities. These districts have been developed and mapped by the county to inform all purchasers of real property that certain agricultural and forestry activities, including but not limited to pesticide spraying, manure spreading, machinery and truck operation, livestock operations, sawing, and other common farming activities may occur in these districts any time during the day or night. Maps and information on the location and establishment of these districts can be obtained from the Montgomery County Center for North Carolina Cooperative Extension, the office of the Register of Deeds, the Planning and Zoning Department, the Montgomery County GIS Department, the Montgomery County Soil & Water Conservation District office, or the N.C. Forest Service.

C. Growth Corridors

At such time as the county might establish designated growth corridors, agricultural districts shall not be permitted in the designated growth corridors, as delineated on the official county planning map without the approval of the Board of Commissioners. Districts located in growth corridors designated after the effective date of this program may remain, but shall not be expanded within the growth corridor area without the approval of the Board of Commissioners.

## ARTICLE XVI

## CONSULTATION AUTHORITY

The Advisory Board may consult with North Carolina Cooperative Extension, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, N.C. Forest Service, Montgomery County Farm Bureau and with any other individual, agency, or organization the Advisory Board deems necessary to properly conduct its business.

## ARTICLE XVII

## NORTH CAROLINA AGENCY NOTIFICATION

Annual Report to the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

A copy of this document shall be sent to the Office of the North Carolina Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Board of Commissioners, the County Office of North Carolina Cooperative Extension, the Soil and Water Conservation District office, The N.C. Forest Service, and Montgomery County Farm Bureau, after adoption. At least annually the county shall submit a written report to the Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services on the county's agricultural district program, including the following information:

1. Number of landowners enrolled;
2. Number of acres enrolled;
3. Number of acres certified during the reporting period;

4. Number of acres denied during the reporting period;
5. Number of acres for which applications are pending;
6. Copies of any amendments to this Ordinance; and
7. Any other information the Advisory Board deems useful.

## ARTICLE XVIII

## LEGAL PROVISIONS

A. Severability

If any article, section, subsection, clause, phrase, or portion of this ordinance is for any reason found invalid or unconstitutional by any court of competent jurisdiction, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this ordinance.

B. Conflict with other ordinances and statutes

Whenever the provisions of this Ordinance conflict with other ordinances of the County, this Ordinance shall govern. Whenever the provisions of any federal or state statute require more restrictive provisions than are required by this Ordinance, the provisions of such statute shall govern.

C. Amendments

The Advisory Committee may recommend needed changes to the County Commissioners and this Ordinance may be amended by the Board of Commissioners from time to time.

**ARICLE XIX**

**ENACTMENT**

The Montgomery County Board of Commissioners hereby adopts and enacts the preceding articles and sections of this Ordinance.

Adopted this the ____ day of _____, 20__

Motion for adoption by _____ and seconded by

_____.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

_____

Chairperson

ATTEST:

_____

Clerk to Board of Commissioners

Approved as to form:

_____

County Attorney

Last updated on _____, 20__

# Appendix B

## Soils of Montgomery County (USDA Soil Data Mart)

Montgomery County, North Carolina (NC123)

| Map Unit Symbol | Map Unit Name | Acres in AOI | Percent of AOI |
|---|---|---|---|
| AaB | Ailey loamy sand, moderately wet, 2 to 8 percent slopes | 5,675.6 | 1.8% |
| AeC | Ailey loamy sand, 8 to 15 percent slopes | 9,920.0 | 3.1% |
| AeD | Ailey loamy sand, 15 to 25 percent slopes | 512.7 | 0.2% |
| AgC | Ailey gravelly loamy sand, 8 to 15 percent slopes | 425.5 | 0.1% |
| AuA | Autryville sand, 0 to 3 percent slopes | 1,543.2 | 0.5% |
| BaB2 | Badin-Goldston complex, 2 to 8 percent slopes, moderately eroded | 1,131.7 | 0.4% |
| BaC2 | Badin-Goldston complex, 8 to 15 percent slopes, moderately eroded | 2,490.1 | 0.8% |
| BdB | Badin-Tarrus complex, 2 to 8 percent slopes | 10,683.7 | 3.3% |
| BdC | Badin-Tarrus complex, 8 to 15 percent slopes | 22,112.8 | 6.9% |
| BdD | Badin-Tarrus complex, 15 to 25 percent slopes | 18,643.0 | 5.8% |
| BdE | Badin-Tarrus complex, 25 to 45 percent slopes | 3,908.2 | 1.2% |
| BeB2 | Badin-Tarrus complex, 2 to 8 percent slopes, moderately eroded | 12,095.2 | 3.8% |
| BeC2 | Badin-Tarrus complex, 8 to 15 percent slopes, moderately eroded | 4,845.8 | 1.5% |
| BhA | Bibb sandy loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes, frequently flooded | 606.5 | 0.2% |
| BsB | Biscoe-Secrest complex, 2 to 6 percent slopes | 7,174.1 | 2.2% |
| BsC | Biscoe-Secrest complex, 6 to 10 percent slopes | 5,659.8 | 1.8% |
| BvB2 | Brickhaven-Carbonton complex, 2 to 8 percent slopes, moderately eroded | 1,927.2 | 0.6% |
| BvC2 | Brickhaven-Carbonton complex, 8 to 15 percent slopes, moderately eroded | 2,244.9 | 0.7% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| BvE2 | Brickhaven-Carbonton complex, 15 to 40 percent slopes, moderately eroded | 2,635.9 | 0.8% |
| CdB | Candor sand, 0 to 8 percent slopes | 8,187.9 | 2.5% |
| CdC | Candor sand, 8 to 15 percent slopes | 799.5 | 0.2% |
| CkA | Chastain silt loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes, frequently flooded | 282.2 | 0.1% |
| CnA | Chenneby silt loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes, frequently flooded | 3,834.4 | 1.2% |
| CrB | Creedmoor-Brickhaven complex, 2 to 8 percent slopes | 3,376.3 | 1.1% |
| DAM | Dam | 12.2 | 0.0% |
| GaB | Georgeville silt loam, 2 to 8 percent slopes | 11,307.5 | 3.5% |
| GaC | Georgeville silt loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes | 2,818.9 | 0.9% |
| GaD | Georgeville silt loam, 15 to 25 percent slopes | 900.6 | 0.3% |
| GeB2 | Georgeville silty clay loam, 2 to 8 percent slopes, moderately eroded | 5,888.6 | 1.8% |
| GgB | Georgeville silt loam, 2 to 8 percent slopes, very stony | 1,565.9 | 0.5% |
| GgC | Georgeville silt loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes, very stony | 1,287.3 | 0.4% |
| GgD | Georgeville silt loam, 15 to 25 percent slopes, very stony | 915.0 | 0.3% |
| GhC | Georgeville silt loam, 2 to 15 percent slopes, extremely stony | 4,679.4 | 1.5% |
| GmE | Georgeville silt loam, 15 to 45 percent slopes, extremely bouldery | 11,988.6 | 3.7% |
| GnC | Georgeville-Urban land complex, 2 to 10 percent slopes | 499.6 | 0.2% |
| GoE | Goldston-Badin complex, 15 to 45 percent slopes | 9,072.5 | 2.8% |
| HaB | Herndon silt loam, 2 to 8 percent slopes | 25,490.1 | 7.9% |
| HaC | Herndon silt loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes | 22,471.8 | 7.0% |
| HaD | Herndon silt loam, 15 to 25 percent slopes | 4,262.3 | 1.3% |
| HdB | Herndon silt loam, 2 to 8 percent slopes, very stony | 8,979.1 | 2.8% |
| HdC | Herndon silt loam, 8 to 15 percent | 14,529.4 | 4.5% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | slopes, very stony | | |
| HdD | Herndon silt loam, 15 to 25 percent slopes, very stony | 13,629.3 | 4.2% |
| HdE | Herndon silt loam, 25 to 45 percent slopes, very stony | 2,000.8 | 0.6% |
| HeC | Herndon-Urban land complex, 2 to 10 percent slopes | 1,106.8 | 0.3% |
| HgB2 | Hiwassee silty clay loam, 2 to 8 percent slopes, moderately eroded | 633.1 | 0.2% |
| HoA | Hornsboro silt loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes, rarely flooded | 766.7 | 0.2% |
| JoA | Johnston muck, 0 to 2 percent slopes, frequently flooded | 565.8 | 0.2% |
| M-W | Miscellaneous water | 23.6 | 0.0% |
| MaC | Masada gravelly sandy loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes | 326.6 | 0.1% |
| MmB | Masada-Mattaponi complex, 2 to 8 percent slopes | 1,076.5 | 0.3% |
| NeB | Neeses-Ailey complex, 2 to 8 percent slopes | 1,696.9 | 0.5% |
| OkA | Oakboro silt loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes, frequently flooded | 1,123.7 | 0.3% |
| PbB | Peakin-Brickhaven complex, 2 to 8 percent slopes | 2,422.0 | 0.8% |
| PbC | Peakin-Brickhaven complex, 8 to 15 percent slopes | 2,333.4 | 0.7% |
| PbE | Peakin-Brickhaven complex, 15 to 40 percent slopes | 1,130.3 | 0.4% |
| PeB2 | Peakin-Exway complex, 2 to 8 percent slopes, moderately eroded | 152.1 | 0.0% |
| PeC2 | Peakin-Exway complex, 8 to 15 percent slopes, moderately eroded | 176.0 | 0.1% |
| PkA | Peawick loam, 0 to 3 percent slopes | 2,543.8 | 0.8% |
| PmA | Pelion loamy sand, 0 to 3 percent slopes | 102.2 | 0.0% |
| PnB | Pinoka-Brickhaven complex, 2 to 8 percent slopes | 356.9 | 0.1% |
| PoC | Pinoka-Brickhaven complex, 4 to 15 percent slopes, very stony | 1,041.0 | 0.3% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| PoE | Pinoka-Brickhaven complex, 15 to 40 percent slopes, very stony | 1,248.5 | 0.4% |
| PtB | Pittsboro gravelly silt loam, 2 to 8 percent slopes | 1,657.6 | 0.5% |
| PtC | Pittsboro gravelly silt loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes | 949.8 | 0.3% |
| ShA | Shellbluff silt loam, 0 to 2 percent slopes, occasionally flooded | 3,582.6 | 1.1% |
| StB | State silt loam, 2 to 6 percent slopes, very rarely flooded | 1,451.0 | 0.5% |
| TeB | Tillery silt loam, 0 to 6 percent slopes, rarely flooded | 4,348.7 | 1.4% |
| ThB2 | Tirzah silty clay loam, 2 to 8 percent slopes, moderately eroded | 314.9 | 0.1% |
| TuB2 | Tirzah silt loam, 2 to 8 percent slopes, moderately eroded, very stony | 640.1 | 0.2% |
| TuC2 | Tirzah silt loam, 8 to 15 percent slopes, moderately eroded, very stony | 1,022.3 | 0.3% |
| TuD2 | Tirzah silt loam, 15 to 25 percent slopes, moderately eroded, very stony | 714.1 | 0.2% |
| TvB | Turbeville sandy loam, 2 to 8 percent slopes | 98.8 | 0.0% |
| UdC | Udorthents, loamy, 2 to 15 percent slopes | 859.8 | 0.3% |
| UdD | Udorthents, loamy, 2 to 25 percent slopes | 347.3 | 0.1% |
| Ur | Urban land | 491.3 | 0.2% |
| UsD | Udorthents, sanitary landfill, 2 to 25 percent slopes | 30.3 | 0.0% |
| W | Water | 7,508.1 | 2.3% |
| WnB | Wynott-Enon complex, 2 to 8 percent slopes, very stony | 465.4 | 0.1% |
| WyC | Wynott-Enon complex, 2 to 15 percent slopes, extremely bouldery | 2,684.3 | 0.8% |
| WyE | Wynott-Enon complex, 15 to 45 percent slopes, extremely bouldery | 2,173.7 | 0.7% |
| Totals for Area of Interest | | 321,181.0 | 100.0% |

# Appendix C

## Agricultural Producer, Agribusiness and Non-Farm Surveys

Surveys and interviews were conducted in the county to account for the trends, issues and opportunities the community as a whole identifies for agriculture. The populations targeted were producers/landowners, agri-businesses and the general non-farm public.

The county team distributed the surveys through their meetings, to their advisory boards and on their websites. The team also provided names of key people in the county to interview. All the survey and interview responses were compiled to determine the response.

Copies of the three surveys are below.

**This project received support from the N.C. Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund.**

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