

5. AGRICULTURE

PURPOSE

Farming and Agriculture are primary sources of income and employment in Culpeper County, as they have been for most of its history. Farming has increased in the past five years after numerous years of decline. There are a growing number of beginning farmers, inspired by consumer demand for fresh, healthy, local foods in Virginia. In 2007 45.7% or 111,370 acres were being farmed, in 2012 that number had increased to 51.8% or 126,395 acres. The total number of active farms in Culpeper County increased from 667 in 2007 to 731 in 2012. Many of these farms are smaller in size than in the past as the popularity of “boutique” farms and “farmettes” increases.

AGRICULTURAL PROFILE OF THE COUNTY

The USDA Census of Agriculture, taken every five years, is a complete count of U.S. farms and ranches and the people who operate them. The Census looks at land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures, and many other areas. The data and comparisons presented below are based on the 2007 Census of Agriculture and the 2012 Census of Agriculture.

CULPEPER COUNTY AGRICULTURE		2012	
	2012	2007	PERCENT CHANGE
Total Number of Farms	731	667	+10%
Land in Farms	126,395 acres	111,370 acres	+13%
Average Size of Farm	173 acres	167 acres	+4%
Market Value of Production	\$42,788,000	\$27,137,000	+58%
Crop Sales	\$25,645,000	\$12,796,000	+100%
Livestock Sales	\$17,143,000	\$14,341,000	+20%
Average Per Farm	\$58,534	\$40,685	+44%
Government Payments	\$1,059,000	\$376,000	+182%
Average Per Farm	\$9,993	\$3,244	+208%

Source: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, 2012 Census of Agriculture

As a major industry, agriculture is an integral component of the County’s economy. Maintaining the continued vitality of agriculture is necessary to achieve and preserve a balanced tax base and a diverse, healthy economy benefiting all of the citizens of the County. Agriculture is also an important part of the County’s cultural heritage, having existed, and flourished, in Culpeper for more than three centuries.

2012 STATEWIDE RANKINGS FOR CULPEPER COUNTY		
MARKET VALUE OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS SOLD	Value/Quantity	Rank
Total Value of Agricultural Products sold	\$42,788,000	23
Value of crops including nursery and greenhouse	\$25,645,000	16
Value of livestock, poultry, and their products	\$17,143,000	30
VALUE OF SALES BY COMMODITY GROUP		
Grains, oilseeds, dry beans, and dry peas	\$12,119,000	21
Vegetables, melons, potatoes, and sweet potatoes	\$448,000	24
Fruits, tree nuts, and berries	\$127,000	41
Nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, and sod	\$10,248,000	6
Cut Christmas trees and short rotation woody crops	\$43,000	30
Other crops and hay	\$2,662,000	20
Poultry and eggs	\$88,000	40
Cattle and calves	\$8,384,000	25
Milk and other dairy products from cows	\$7,190,000	8
Hogs and pigs	\$74,000	29
Sheep, goats, and their products	\$115,000	29
Horses, ponies, mules, burros, and donkeys	\$1,038,000	6
Other animals and animal products	\$253,000	10
TOP LIVESTOCK INVENTORY ITEMS (number)		
Cattle and calves	26,161	23
Layers	3,825	24
Horses and ponies	2,772	5
Broilers and other meat-type chickens	2,470	23
Sheep and lambs	836	27
TOP CROP ITEMS (acres)		
Forage-land used for hay, silage, and greenchop	29,327	13
Corn for grain	7,144	19
Soybeans for beans	9,132	25
Corn for silage	2,022	15

COMMUNITY SERVICES

The local Virginia Cooperative Extension office offers a wide variety of services for the Culpeper farming community including financial planning and analysis, budgeting, farm tenure arrangements, agricultural computer applications, marketing, farm tax management and estate planning, agricultural policy, and farm labor management. In addition to those services, the extension office also offers pesticide safety training, soil testing and fertilization recommendations, insect, disease and weed identification and control measures, pesticide testing, forage testing, plant and feed toxicology, and manure testing.

The USDA provides leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition, and related issues based on sound public policy, the best available science, and efficient management.

Quick Link: [United States Department of Agriculture-www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov)

AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTAL DISTRICTS

Agricultural and Forestal Districts are established under guidelines set forth by the Code of Virginia, §15.2-4300, to protect agricultural and forestal lands. Districts are initiated by local landowners on a voluntary basis. There are 46,296 (as of October 3, 2014) acres of land in fifteen Agricultural and Forestal Districts in Culpeper County (see map 5.2) representing 18.99% of total County land. The newest Agricultural and Forestal District, Point of Fork, was created in June 2007.

CULPEPER COUNTY AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTAL DISTRICTS		
DISTRICT	ACREAGE	EXPIRATION DATE
Alum Springs	1,236.66	June 2020
Brandy Station	6,686.85	August 2020
Brandywine	2,526.63	August 2020
Catalpa	2,357.60	August 2020
Colchester Farm	428.25	March 2017
Crooked Run	249.17	January 2018
Deatherage Run	6,472.46	August 2020
Hazel River	465.97	August 2020
Horseshoe Farm	4,225.79	September 2022
Point of Fork	290.58	June 2023
Raccoon Ford	1,068.64	August 2020
Remington/ Kelly's Ford	3,670.05	June 2021
Rillhurst Farms	1,188.44	November 2016
Stevensburg	13,197.42	August 2020
Waterford Run	2,231.49	August 2020
TOTAL ACREAGE	46,296	

Agricultural and Forestal Districts allow the County to protect and encourage the development and improvement of its agricultural and forestal lands for the production of food and other agricultural and forestal products. The preservation of agricultural and forestland is a major instrument to provide support to the local agricultural economy. Agricultural land uses preserve open space, enhance watershed protection, complement public recreation and ecotourism and insure other environmental benefits.

Agricultural and Forestal Districts identify the areas where significant commitments have been made to agricultural production. Prime agricultural soils (map 5.1), are soils that have the potential for high agricultural and forestal production. Soils information coupled with the site assessment portion of the Land Evaluation Site Assessment (LESA) system equation that identifies the social and economic viability of existing agriculture and the location of those areas in agricultural districts provides the County with a tool to identify significant agricultural areas.

The LESA system was developed by the U.S. Soil Conservation Service to help localities protect valuable farmland. LESA involves the evaluation of land in two parts: 1) soil suitability for agricultural and forestal purposes, and 2) site assessment. Local representatives determine the site assessment factors. These factors are given point values; with maximum points assigned when on-site conditions support the

continuation of agricultural use. The maximum points possible for site assessment is 350. This information, combined with the presence of a significant agricultural score of 260 or greater and with 30% or more of the site containing significant soils, makes a site very desirable for retention in agricultural or forestal land use.

Once an Agricultural and Forestal District is formed, it must be reviewed periodically. State code requires that the review period be set at a minimum of every 4 years but not to exceed more than every 10 years. In Culpeper County, each of the fifteen districts was established with an eight-year review cycle. Benefits include protection from nuisance complaints, assurance of continued qualification for land use taxation, and protection from condemnation without the Board of Supervisors' approval.

Despite the growth that has occurred in Culpeper, enrollment in Agricultural and Forestal Districts only decreased minimally. This is most likely due to the eight-year cycle of each district and the public hearing process required in order to withdraw prematurely from a District. In 2010 there were 49,484.51 acres enrolled in Agricultural and Forestal Districts in Culpeper County. Currently there are 46,296 acres enrolled. This represents a 6.4% decrease in enrollment over the past five years.

LAND USE TAXATION

Land use taxation provides tax relief to farm and forest enterprises that meet the minimum acreage requirements detailed in Section 58.1-3230 of the Code of Virginia and provided for in Article II, Section 12-14 of the Culpeper County Code. Approximately 144,671.88 (August 30, 2014) acres of agriculture and forestland are currently enrolled in the program.

PROTECTION OF PRIME AGRICULTURAL LANDS

The current zoning regulations which govern the A-1 and RA districts provide for limited development on lot sizes of five and three acres, respectively. It is a recommendation of this Plan that development be encouraged in areas where there is adequate infrastructure to serve it, thereby preserving agricultural land to the greatest extent possible.

“Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country and wedded to its liberty and interests by the most lasting bonds.” - Thomas Jefferson

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

There are more than 15,000 acres of privately conserved land in the County (see map 5.3). A conservation easement is a simple legal agreement between a landowner and a government agency or a non-profit conservation organization that places permanent limits on the future development of the property in order to protect the conservation values of the land. The easement terms are negotiated between the landowner and a public agency or a qualified conservation organization. Except for rights explicitly given up in the easement document, the landowner continues to own, use and control the land. An easement is a particularly useful tool for ensuring protection of Culpeper’s agricultural lands because easements are in perpetuity: It applies not only to the current landowner, but also all subsequent owners of the property.

PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

In September of 2007 the Culpeper County Board of Supervisors adopted Appendix D of the Zoning Ordinance entitled “Agricultural Lands Preservation”. This appendix established a countywide agricultural reserve program by which the County is able to acquire the development rights on eligible parcels of farmland. The purpose of this ordinance is to promote and encourage the preservation of farmland, environmentally sensitive resources, and open space in the rural portion of the County by means that are voluntary, rather than regulatory. As funding is made available, this program will allow the purchase of agricultural land preservation easements from qualifying land owners. The purchase of development rights permits the landowner to continue agricultural use of the property while extinguishing their right to develop the property further.

FARM RETAIL



Croftburn Market and Moving Meadows are two local farms that have recently expanded to a direct sales retail location. Traditionally, retail was only an option at participating local farms as well as farmers markets. Due to a recent increase in demand for locally sourced foods, local farm retail is a growing and thriving business model.



SMALL SCALE FARMING

Urban agriculture is on the rise in cities across the United States, due in part to consumers' increased interest in buying local and sustainably-produced foods. Small scale or “backyard” farming is encouraged in Culpeper County. In May of 2013 the County Zoning Ordinance was revised in order to allow a greater number of residents the opportunity to keep hogs and poultry for personal use.

CARVER-PIEDMONT AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTE

The Carver-Piedmont Agricultural Institute received funds from the Virginia Building Collaborative Communities Grant in January, 2015. The former George Washington Carver Regional High School could potentially serve as a multi-use food processing facility and a regional agricultural education, research and training facility. Possible areas of study are large plot agronomic studies in grains and forages, vegetables and fruits for local markets and the Greens Industry including greenhouse and nursery production, sedum, green roof crop, Christmas trees, turf and cut flowers. The Institute hopes to form partnerships with Germanna Community College, Virginia State University and other schools in the surrounding counties. A regional institute will benefit local agricultural producers, food banks, businesses and residents while providing agricultural and job training opportunities.

REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM PLAN

Culpeper County recently participated in the development of a Regional Food System Plan led by the Rappahannock-Regional Commission. The goal of this effort is to strengthen the local food economy, so more local dollars can be retained within the region, while promoting citizens' health, encouraging preservation of local farmland and enhancing farmers' quality of life. An economic analysis, stakeholder interviews, focus group meetings, and a producer survey were conducted to document the conditions in the region's farm and food economy as well as stakeholder's challenges and resource needs. Recommended projects include facilities, policy changes, education and marketing programs, and opportunities for private investment, all of which address core obstacles found by the economic analysis.

ONLINE RESOURCES

[Soils Data](#)

[Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District](#)

[Department of Environmental Quality](#)

[Rappahannock Rapidan Regional Planning District](#)

[Department of Agriculture](#)

[Virginia Cooperative Extension](#)

[PEC Conservation Easements Program](#)

[Old Dominion Land Conservancy](#)

[DCR Virginia Outdoor Land Conservation Program](#)

[Department of Historic Resources Easement Program](#)

5.1 CULPEPER COUNTY

PRIME AGRICULTURAL SOILS



RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY

FAUQUIER COUNTY

Legend

- Prime farmland
- Farmland of statewide importance

Quick Fact:

51.8% or 126,395 acres were being farmed in Culpeper County in 2012.

MADISON COUNTY

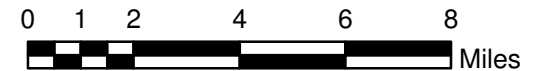
ORANGE COUNTY

SPOTSYLVANIA COUNTY

STAFFORD COUNTY


















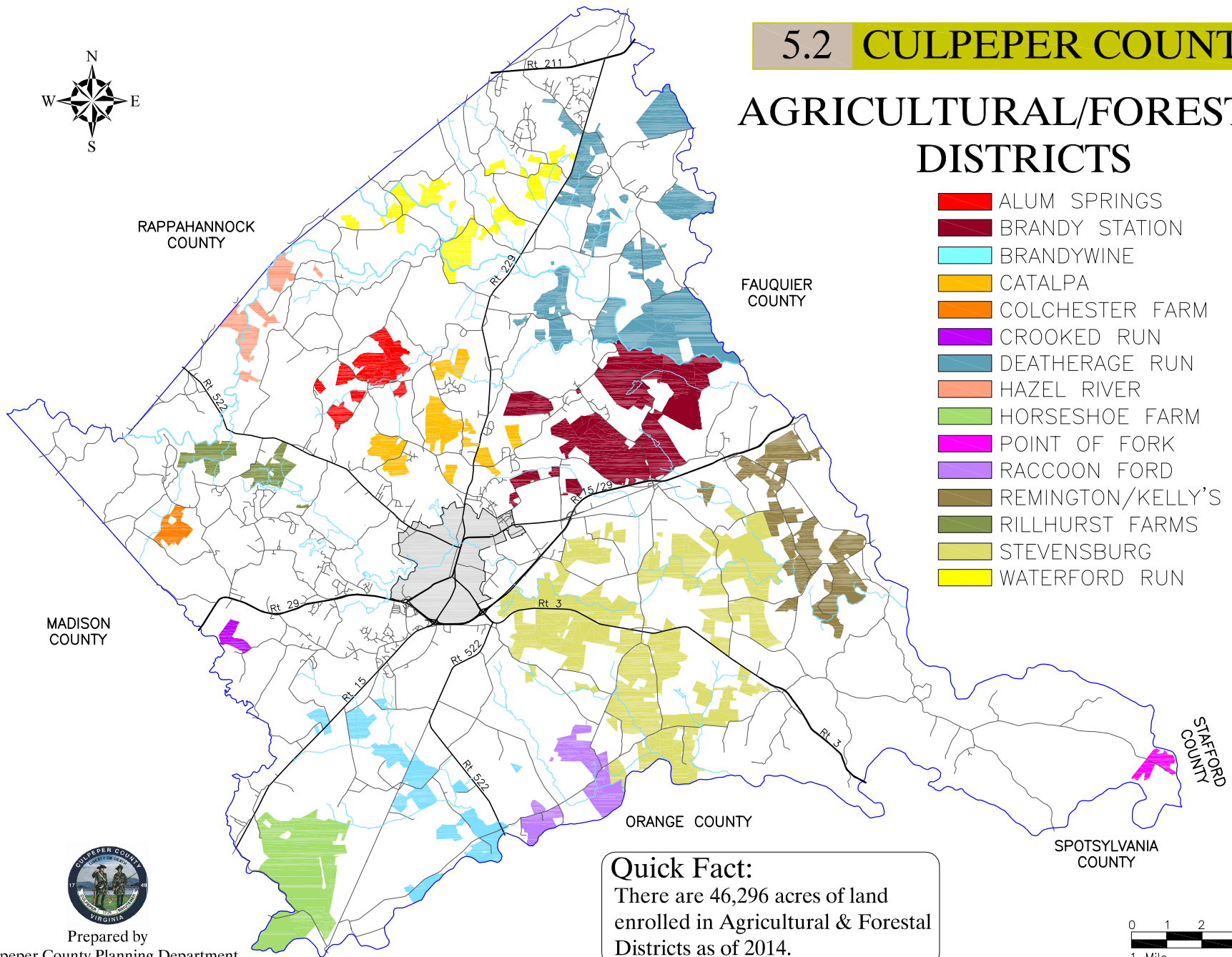
Prepared By
Culpeper County Planning Department



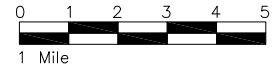
5.2 CULPEPER COUNTY

AGRICULTURAL/FORESTAL DISTRICTS

-  ALUM SPRINGS
-  BRANDY STATION
-  BRANDYWINE
-  CATALPA
-  COLCHESTER FARM
-  CROOKED RUN
-  DEATHERAGE RUN
-  HAZEL RIVER
-  HORSESHOE FARM
-  POINT OF FORK
-  RACCOON FORD
-  REMINGTON/KELLY'S FORD
-  RILLHURST FARMS
-  STEVENSBURG
-  WATERFORD RUN



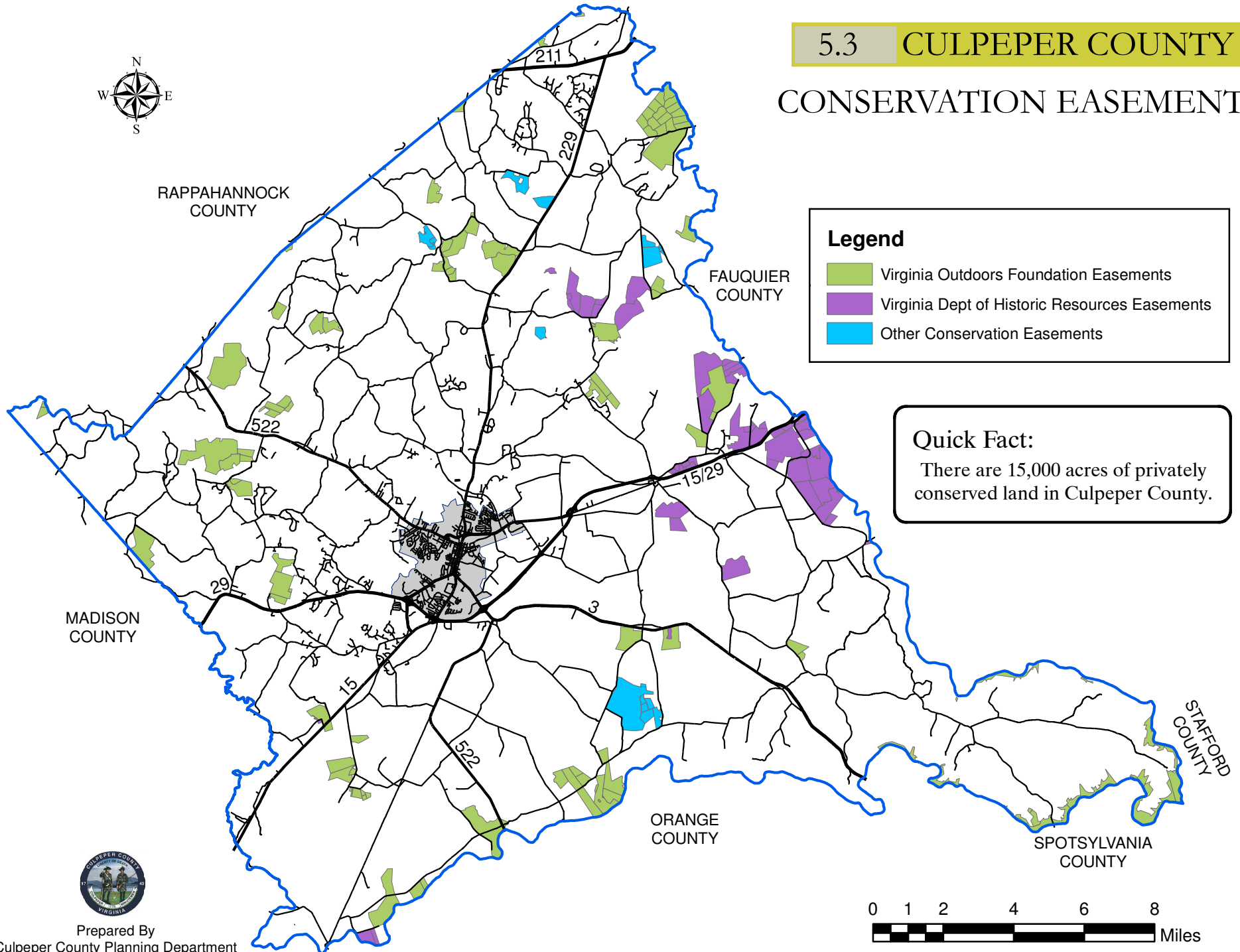
Quick Fact:
There are 46,296 acres of land enrolled in Agricultural & Forestal Districts as of 2014.



Prepared by
Culpeper County Planning Department

5.3 CULPEPER COUNTY

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS



AGRICULTURE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

General

GOAL: MAINTAIN AGRICULTURE AS A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF THE COUNTY'S ECONOMIC BASE.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Encourage the continued use of prime agricultural land for farm and agricultural uses.
2. Maintain monetary incentives to encourage continued agricultural production. Programs such as Land Use taxation serve to encourage agricultural use and to provide incentives to maintain open and forested lands which do not generate demand for services.
3. Work with the appropriate state and local agencies to promote agriculture and forestry and expand markets for Culpeper County agricultural and forestal products.
4. Encourage the development of agricultural and forestal support businesses and industries within the County which complement and support agriculture.
5. Encourage education programs focused on helping those interested in or new to farming.

GOAL: PROTECT, PROMOTE AND ENHANCE AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY AS A LAND USE.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Maintain and encourage continued enrollment of land in Agricultural and Forestal Districts.
2. Protect farming operations from encroachment of incompatible land uses.
3. Structure plans and ordinances to ensure appropriate development of lands adjoining agricultural areas.
4. Weigh the value of land use and policy decisions on agriculture.
5. Encourage landowners to convert marginal pasture or cropland to forestland.
6. Encourage woodland landowners to develop and use a woodland conservation plan which addresses timber stand improvement, utilization of damaged timber, sound harvesting techniques, pest control and reforestation.
7. Encourage landowners to utilize the forestry practices offered in the Chesapeake Bay Cost Share Program.