



PITT COUNTY AGRICULTURAL LAND USE Inventory 2010

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The purpose of the Agricultural Land Use (ALU) inventory is to inventory the history, crops and farming practices of the agricultural community in Pitt County. Pursuant to NCGS § 106-744 (e), information compiled in this inventory will provide guidance for future trends in agriculture and its contributions to the citizens and economy. Additional support and recognition to agriculture can be gained by proper planning and development of programs that address the need for agricultural commodities and protection of the natural resources used for production.

Definition of Agriculture

This inventory uses a broad definition of agriculture that includes all aspects of the cultivation and production of plant material and animal products; as well as the marketing, processing and distribution of these products; and other secondary on-farm activities (e.g., agricultural tourism, forestry, and aquaculture).

History of Pitt County

The British Colonial government created Pitt County in 1761 when the original Beaufort County was split into five smaller counties. Pitt County was named for William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, who was an English statesman and orator. William Pitt became Secretary of State in 1756 and became a pro-freedom speaker in the British Colonial government.

The county seat for Pitt County was first named Martinsborough and was located on NC 33 about three miles east of the present site. In 1786, the county seat was named Greenville in honor of General Nathaniel Greene, a Revolutionary War hero.

Pitt County Demographics

Pitt County demographics have been evolving rapidly over the past twenty years. County population has grown substantially, but not equitably countywide. The unincorporated areas of the County have continued to grow and keep pace with total municipal growth, but population growth within towns has not been constant across the County. Some municipalities have even experienced a loss of population. There are ten incorporated municipalities in Pitt County – the City of Greenville, the towns of Ayden, Bethel, Falkland, Farmville, Fountain, Grifton (partially in Lenoir County), Grimesland, and Winterville, and the Village of Simpson. The 2000 U.S. Census population for Pitt County was 133,798 persons which represents a 23.3% growth over 1990 U.S. Census figures. The current population estimates provided by the North Carolina State Data Center has the 2009 population for the county at 158,575. This represents annualized growth rate of over 2%.

Pitt County ranks thirteenth in population of the 100 North Carolina counties. The population of the County increased over 48% from 1980 to 2000. This results in a population increase of 43,652 persons in 20 years. Approximately 40% of the population lives within the unincorporated area of the County.

Pitt County Economy

The Pitt County/Greenville area is one of the fastest growing urban centers in the State of North Carolina. It is also a leading retail center in eastern North Carolina and ranks as one of only a dozen billion dollar retail markets in NC. The local economy is well diversified with government, wholesale/retail trade and manufacturing each accounting for approximately 25% of total employment. Agriculture is also a strong contributor to the economy; tobacco, corn, soybeans, wheat, peanuts, eggs, livestock, poultry and vegetables are the primary agricultural products. Major employers include: East Carolina University (education), Pitt Memorial Hospital (health care), DSM (chemical manufacturing), NACCO (lift trucks), Grady-White (boats), ASMO (electric motors), Karastan - A Division of Mohawk (carpet yarn), Mestek (steam unit heaters), and TRC, Inc. (metal fabrication).

Agriculture in Pitt County

Eastern North Carolina is an area that is rich in agricultural resources, such as tobacco, cotton, soybeans, corn, poultry, wheat, livestock, and peanuts. Native Americans bestowed farming techniques upon the early settlers in Pitt County, which led to what later became one of the most well known regions for farmland production. In Pitt County, 77% of the farmland is designated for cropland, 14% of the land is designated as green space and woodland, leaving 9% for various agricultural uses. The following section includes some of the crops that make up this percentage and the unique cultural history of Pitt County.

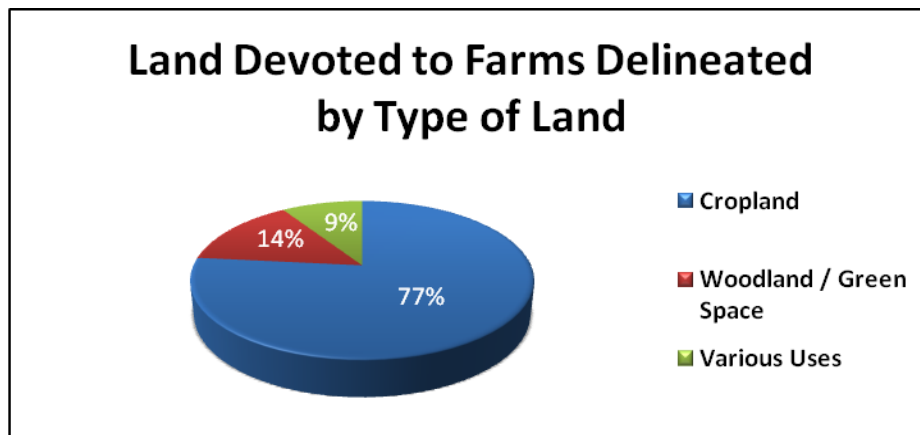


Chart 1- Farmland designations by type

Economic Impact of Agriculture on Pitt County for the 2007 Fiscal Year

- ❖ 2007 crops sales \$78,642,000 (47%)¹
- ❖ Livestock sales for 2007 \$89,800,000 (53%)¹
- ❖ Average earnings for each farm in Pitt County is \$387,224 for the year 2007¹

Oats

The data retrieved from the North Carolina Department of Agriculture indicate that in 2000 there were 750 acres cultivated for all uses of oats. Whereas in 2008, with a total of 200 acres designated for the growth of oats, there was a significant decrease in the amount of acres used. Production of oats fell from 76 bushels to 65 bushels in the eight year span.²

Cotton

Cotton has been a major commodity not only in Pitt County but throughout North Carolina and has had a significant economic impact. In years past, the cotton market has determined the amount of cotton being produced in the county, and total harvested acres has decreased through the years. In 2000, there was 44,700 acres of cotton harvested, producing 72,500 bales. In 2008, cotton had decreased close to 65% with a total of 15,100 acres producing 23,100 bales.³

Corn

Corn has been a staple crop in Pitt County and has steadily increased through the years while continuing to produce higher yields. In 2000, Pitt County had 16,100 acres of corn harvested for grain, producing 1,578,000 bushels. Over eight years the crops increased to 20,300 harvested acres, producing 2,353,100 bushels.⁴

Wheat

Between the years of 2000 to 2008 the acres of harvested wheat has nearly tripled in the county. Appealing market value has played a significant role in the increase of wheat production in the last few years. 9,500 acres of wheat were harvested in 2000, producing 392,000 bushels. In 2008, the acreage increased to 27,000 with a production of 1,540,000 bushels.⁵

¹ 2007 Census of Agriculture

² North Carolina Agricultural Statistics for Oats

³ North Carolina Agricultural Statistics for Cotton

⁴ North Carolina Agricultural Statistics for Corn

⁵ North Carolina Agricultural Statistics for Wheat

Tobacco

Tobacco has played a huge economic role in Pitt County and while there has been a decrease in production, it has not had a dramatic down turn as seen in other crops. In 2000, there were 9,290 acres of tobacco harvested, producing 22,037,000 pounds. The reduction of acreage was seen in 2008, resulting in 8,780 acres harvested, producing 16,637,000 pounds.⁶

Peanuts

Peanuts have had a slight increase in harvested acres throughout the years in Pitt County. In 2000, 4,400 harvested acres were producing 10,693,000 pounds of peanuts. The acres slowly increased in the eight year span, resulting in 5,100 acres being harvested from 18,000,000 pounds of peanuts in 2008.⁷

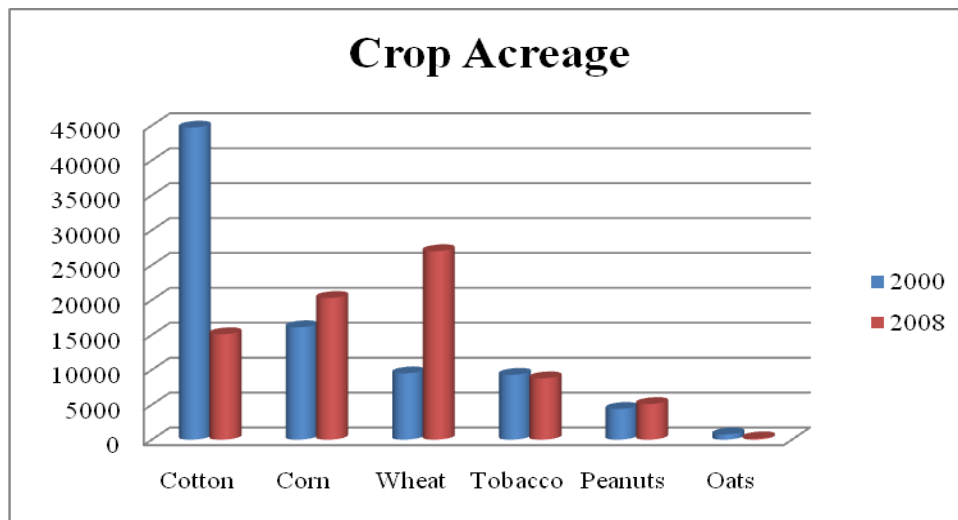


Chart 2- Illustrates the number of acres designated to specific crops. Among the selected crops included in the graph, it indicates the crops that are more prominently grown in the Pitt County area.

Shifts in Crops Planted

Most shifts in the volume of particular crops grown in a given year are related to commodity prices, input costs and market need. From 2000 to 2008, other contributing factors influenced production by farmers in selected crops. The Tobacco Buyout program provided many producers with an opportunity to change their operation from tobacco to other diversified nontraditional production. This too had an influence on the increased production of grain, peanuts, vegetables and fiber crops. In addition, petroleum cost has a direct effect on input cost such as fuel, seed and fertilizer.

⁶ North Carolina Agricultural Statistics for Tobacco

⁷ North Carolina Agricultural Statistics for Peanuts

List of All Row Crops Reported for 2009

<u>Crop</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Crop</u>	<u>Acreage</u>
Asparagus	- 3.5	Sunflower	- 7.70
Beans	- 8.5	Sorghum	- 709.75
Blueberries	- 1.75	Soybeans	- 71,471.21
Burley Tobacco	- 143.27	Strawberries	- 11.50
Corn	- 20,618.04	Sweet Potatoes	- 1,088.00
Cropland Reserve Program	- 623.24	Turn Row	- 2,389.76
Cucumbers	- 56.60	Cotton	- 10,321.04
Dark Tobacco	- 3.0	Watermelon	- 5.30
Fallow (Barnyards, etc.)	- 6398.59	Wheat	- 17,933.93
Flue Cured Tobacco	- 7,447.11	Wildlife Plot	- 238.10
Grass (Pasture)	- 3,881.73		
Home Garden	- 165.05		
Kenaf	- 615.78		
Millett	- 88.70		
Nursery	- 413.20		
Oats	- 224.38		
Other Fruits And Vegetables	- 1,309.53		
Peaches	- 1.20		
Peas	- 5.00		
Peppers	- .50		
Peanuts	- 3,424.64		
Potatoes (Irish)	- 3.20		
Pumpkins	- 34.60		
Rye	- 4.50		

Total Acreage of Reported Crops = 14,651.90.

Total Number of Crops = 34

Not all crops are reported. Some private produced crops, such as vegetables that are consumed, sold or traded locally do not get counted. Many individuals in Pitt County have home gardens that range in size from 10'X10' to 3 acres. Organic plots can be reported, but in known cases, are on a small scale and not reported as organic.

Crops are reported for participation in Farm Bill related programs. Not all producers of food and fiber are a part of a program. Producers must be registered with USDA Farm Services Agency (FSA) to participate.

Nursery producers of ornamental plants qualify as agricultural producers if they are registered with USDA/FSA.

History of Tobacco Growth in Pitt County

In 1885, it is believed that farmers began growing tobacco and since then the crop has been a major commodity to Pitt County's economic well being. Fourteen years later in 1899, Pitt County tobacco farmers cultivated 10,733,010 pounds of flue cured tobacco on 12,931 acres of land (Tobacco Digital Exhibit). Within the state, tobacco was also a major cultivated crop and contributed to the financial stability the agricultural industry experienced. As a direct result of the booming tobacco enterprise, more people settled in Pitt County.

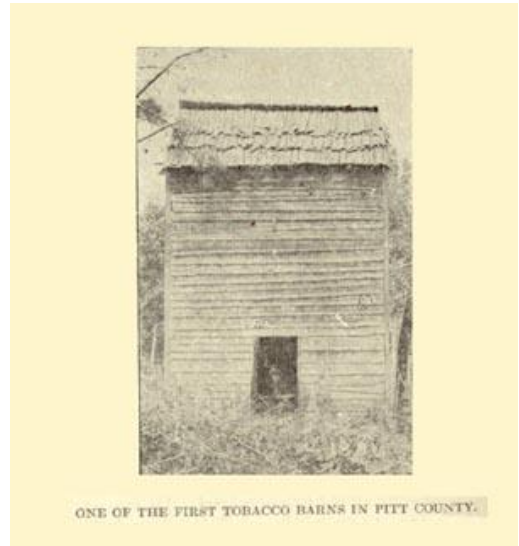


Figure 1 One of the first tobacco barns in Pitt County

Changes in Tobacco Farming in Pitt County

When tobacco cultivation first started in Pitt County in the late 1800s, farmers used small acres of land, but that number has increased significantly over the years. According to research conducted by North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T University, the amount of acres devoted to tobacco cultivation has fluctuated. A brief summary of the acreage changes is as follows:

- 1997: Out of 474 farms, 245 of the farms were tobacco based farms
- 1997: flue-cured tobacco grown on 17,090 acres of land
- 2000: flue-cured tobacco grown on 9,290 acres of land
- 2002: flue-cured tobacco grown on 10,085 acres of land
- 2004: flue-cured tobacco grown on 8,810 acres of land
- 2006: flue-cured tobacco grown on 8,200 acres of land
- 2008: flue-cured tobacco grown on 8,780 acres of land

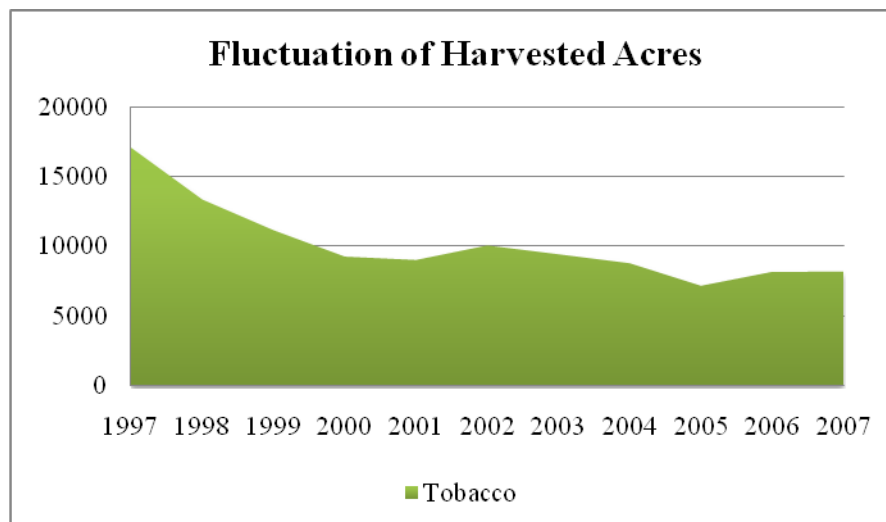


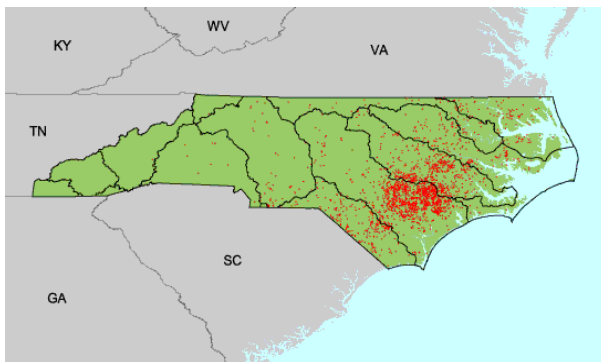
Chart 3- Tobacco Acreage (1997-2007)

Animal Agriculture

Production of animal commodities is a big part of the agriculture community in Pitt County. For hundreds of years, hogs, chickens, turkeys and cattle contributed to economic and social needs. As local production agriculture joined the world market, production needs increased. This brought about the Confined Animal Operations (CAO) and aquaculture operations which allowed more animals to be produced in less space with a more controlled environment. Chicken operations, both egg laying and broiler, were large producers in the 1970's, and hogs in the late 1980's. Hog production has remained strong despite increased environmental regulations and economic conditions.

History of Hog Farming in North Carolina

North Carolina is a state that is known for its agricultural roots; producing a various array of farm goods such as tobacco, cattle, turkeys, cotton, peanuts, etc. In the late 1980s, large scale hog farming began making its way to the forefront of North Carolina Agriculture. While many of the state's farmers entered into this new hog farming enterprise, the operations initially were concentrated in the eastern part of the state (Map 1)⁸. The mass production farms found quick success in North Carolina and became a staple industry in the states agriculture economy. Since the beginning of hog farming in eastern North Carolina, Pitt County's swine population has gradually grown from 86,000 in the late 1980s to 250,000 in 2009⁹. The total population of hogs in North Carolina holistically is even more impressive. From 2.6 million beginning in 1988 to 10 million in 1994, a total increase of 285% in hog population, placed North Carolina at the forefront in the hog farming industry and making it one of the top states with the fastest growing hog population to date.



Concentration of Hog Farms in Southeastern North Carolina

Map Legend

■ Hog Operation

Map 1⁸ - Source of map is from the North Carolina in the Global Economy Website. Additional information can be found at www.duke.edu/web/mms190/hogfarming/maps.html.

The map illustrates the high concentration of hog farms located in the southeastern region of NC.

⁸North Carolina Global Economy

⁹North Carolina Agricultural Statistics

Timeline of North Carolina Hog Farming

1980- Approximately 10,000 to 25,000 established hog farms in NC

1985- North Carolina is distinguished as the 7th largest hog producer in the U.S.

1991- Legislation passed to pardon hog farmers from zoning regulations

1992- Smithfield Foods, Inc. opens the world's biggest meat processing plant in Bladen County, N.C.

1994- Hog population increases to 10 million

1995- The Swine Farm Siting Act mandates a 1500 foot lagoon and/or pig house setback from residential structures, a 2500 foot setback from churches, hospitals and schools, and 100 feet away from any property boundary.

1996- Freedom to Farm Act passed by former President Clinton, cutting federal farm subsidies

1997- Clean Water Responsibility Act, part of Bill 515 restricts new construction of farms that have 250 or more hogs. The Act also prohibits building additions to existing large farms.

1999- Hog lagoons flooded by Hurricane Floyd, resulting in the contamination of the drinking water supply. Renewed moratorium on "lagoon-farms"; there are no limits on farms using environmental superior technologies.

2003- The Clean Water Act (Bill 515) is extended for an additional four years, prohibiting new construction of hog lagoons in eastern NC.

Current State Regulations for Hog Farming

North Carolina passed the *Swine Farm Environmental Performance Standards Act* in July of 2007, which restricts new construction of hog lagoons on farms that had more than 250 hogs. North Carolina was the first state in the nation to initiate such regulations. Minimum setbacks are also enforced to ensure that neighboring residents are not adversely affected by intensive hog operations.

Environmental Challenges in Mitigating Hog Waste

Establishing financial incentives and support to encourage hog farmers to utilize environmentally appropriate tactics to dispose of hog waste are the goals set out to meet the challenges posed by hog farms. Ways to ensure enactment of alternative hog waste disposal are as follows:

- ❖ Implement alternative ways to dispose of hog waste
- ❖ Clean up of abandoned hog waste lagoons
- ❖ Increase educational sessions on proper hog waste disposal
- ❖ Continue enforcement of existing waste disposal set back policies.

Hog Treatment Waste Alternatives

Various treatment techniques, from solid separation and treatment to methane recovery, are being tested to determine the cost-benefit of alternative systems.

Pitt County Municipalities

Greenville

The City of Greenville, incorporated in 1774, is the largest and oldest municipality in Pitt County. Greenville encompasses approximately 35 square miles of land area and had a 2000 U.S. Census population of 60,476 – an increase of 30.6% over the 1990 U.S. Census population of 46,305. The current population estimates provided by the North Carolina State Data Center has the 2009 population for Greenville at 82,569. This represents annualized growth rate of over 4.26%. A mayor and six council members govern Greenville. Cleared farmland in the city limits of Greenville is 82.2 acres, wooded acres is 65.6 acres.

Ayden

Ayden, incorporated in 1891, is located in the southwest portion of the County. Ayden incorporates 3.42 square miles of land area and had a 2000 U.S. Census population of 4,622 – a loss of 5.3% over the 1990 U.S. Census figure of 4,883 persons. The current population estimates provided by the North Carolina State Data Center has the 2008 population for Ayden at 4,943. This represents annualized growth rate of over 1.1%. A mayor and five commissioners comprise the town government. Cleared farmland within city limits of Ayden is 305.8 acres, wooded acres is 178.14 acres.

Bethel

Bethel, a small town with approximately one (1) square mile of land area, was incorporated in 1873. Bethel is located in the extreme northern portion of the County immediately adjacent to the boundary with Martin County. During the past decade the population of Bethel decreased from 1,842 persons (1990 U.S. Census) to 1,681 persons (2000 U.S. Census) – a decrease of 8.7%. The current population estimates provided by the North Carolina State Data Center has the 2008 population for Bethel at 1,809. This represents annualized growth rate of .95 %. A mayor and five commissioners govern the town. Cleared farmland within city limits is 81 acres, wooded acres is 21 acres.

Falkland

The Town of Falkland, located in the northwest portion of the County, was incorporated in 1893. Falkland incorporates 0.23 square miles of land area and in the 2000 U.S. Census had a population of 112 persons – an increase of 3.7% over the 1990 U.S. Census population of 108 persons. The current population estimates provided by the North Carolina State Data Center has the 2008 population for Falkland at 118. This represents annualized growth rate of .67 %. A mayor and three commissioners govern the town. Cleared farmland within city limits is 38 acres, wooded 3 acres.

Farmville

The Town of Farmville, incorporated in 1872, covers a land area of approximately 3 square miles. The town is located just south of US 264 in the western portion of the County near the boundary with Greene County. The 2000 U.S. Census population for Farmville was 4,302 persons – a decrease of 3.2% over the 1990 U.S. Census of 4,446 persons. The current population estimates provided by the North Carolina State Data Center has the 2008 population for Farmville at 4,680. This represents annualized growth rate of 1.1%. A mayor and five commissioners govern the town. Cleared farmland within city limits is 56 acres, wooded 2 acres.

Fountain

The Town of Fountain, located at the intersection of NC 222 and NC 258 in the far western portion of the County was incorporated in 1906. The town incorporates 0.92 square miles of land area and had a 2000 U.S. Census population of 533 persons – an increase of 19.8% over the 1990 U.S. Census figure of 445 persons. The current population estimates provided by the North Carolina State Data Center has the 2008 population for Fountain at 578. This represents annualized growth rate of 1.06 %. A mayor and five commissioners govern the town. Cleared farmland within city limits is 14 acres, wooded is 6 acres.

Grifton

The Town of Grifton was incorporated in 1883 and is located on the extreme southern boundary with Lenoir County. Grifton is the only municipality not wholly within Pitt County. In the 2000 U.S. Census, Grifton had a population of 2,073 persons – a decrease of 13.4% over the 1990 U.S. Census figure of 2,393 persons. In 2000, the majority of the town's residents – 1,889 or 91.1% - lived in Pitt County and only 184 persons – 8.9% - lived in Lenoir County. The current population estimates provided by the North Carolina State Data Center has the 2008 population for Grifton at 2,161 in Pitt County and 211 in Lenoir County. This represents annualized growth rate of 1.8 % in Pitt County. Grifton incorporates 1.97 square miles of land area and is governed by a mayor and five commissioners. Cleared farmland within city limits is 52 acres, wooded is 130 acres.

Grimesland

The Town of Grimesland is located in the far eastern portion of the County on NC 33. Grimesland covers 0.63 square miles of land area and was incorporated in 1893. The population of Grimesland in the 2000 U.S. Census – 440 persons – represented a 6.2% decrease over the 1990 U.S. Census figure of 469 persons. The current population estimates provided by the North Carolina State Data Center has the 2008 population for Grimesland at 451. This represents annualized growth rate of .31 %. A mayor and four aldermen govern the town. Cleared farmland within city limits is 174 acres, wooded is 22 acres.

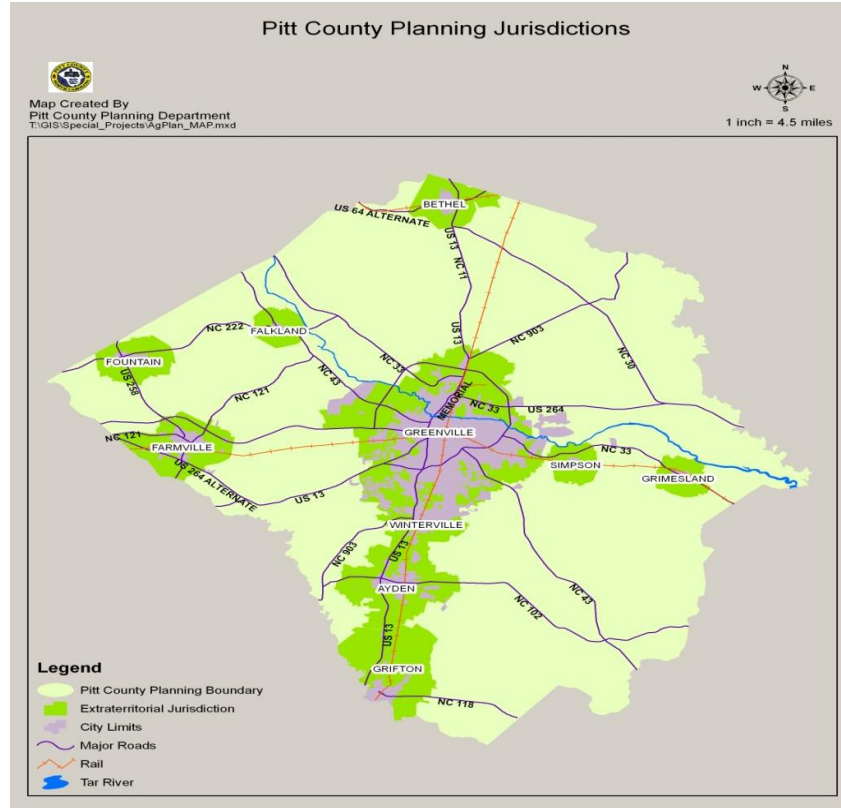
Simpson

The Village of Simpson was incorporated in 1975 with a land area of 0.37 square miles. The population of Simpson in the 2000 U.S. Census was 464 persons – an increase of 7.4% over the 1990 U.S. Census population of 432 persons. The current population estimates provided by the North Carolina State Data Center has the 2008 population for Simpson at 491. This represents annualized growth rate of .73 %. A mayor and two council members govern the village. Cleared farmland within city limits is 13 acres, wooded is 4 acres.

Winterville

The Town of Winterville, covering just over 3 square miles of land area, was incorporated in 1897. Winterville is located just south of the City of Greenville along NC 11. The Town of Winterville had the fastest population growth between 1990 and 2000 with a 2000 U.S. Census population of 4,791 persons – an increase of 56.1% over the 1990 U.S. Census figure of 3,069 persons. The current population estimates provided by the North Carolina State Data Center has the 2008 population for Winterville at 8,949. This represents annualized growth rate of 10.85%. A mayor and five aldermen govern Winterville. Cleared farmland within city limits is 114 acres, wooded is 91 acres.

Pitt County Jurisdictions



Map 2 – Pitt County municipal jurisdiction. Pitt County Planning Department

Conservation Methods in Agriculture

Since the creation of the Soil Conservation Service by the US Congress following the Dust Bowl Days of the 1930's, conservation has increased in technology and importance. Pioneer Hugh Hammond Bennett of Anson County, NC, became the father of soil and water conservation and was key to the creation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs).

SWCDs started as multi-county, grassed roots approaches to getting conservation on the ground. Most North Carolina Conservation Districts are now single-county, with 96 SWCDs in our state. This approach has assisted in implementation of cost-shared opportunities from state, federal, local and grant sources. The North Carolina Agricultural Cost Share program funds an average \$85,000 of conservation work in Pitt County annually. Other funding sources such as the United States Department of Agriculture/Natural Resources Conservation Service, North Carolina Foundation for Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Inc., and grants provide additional funding opportunities. Annually, the Pitt County Soil and Water Conservation District receives over \$250,000 to implement best management practice to improve water quality.

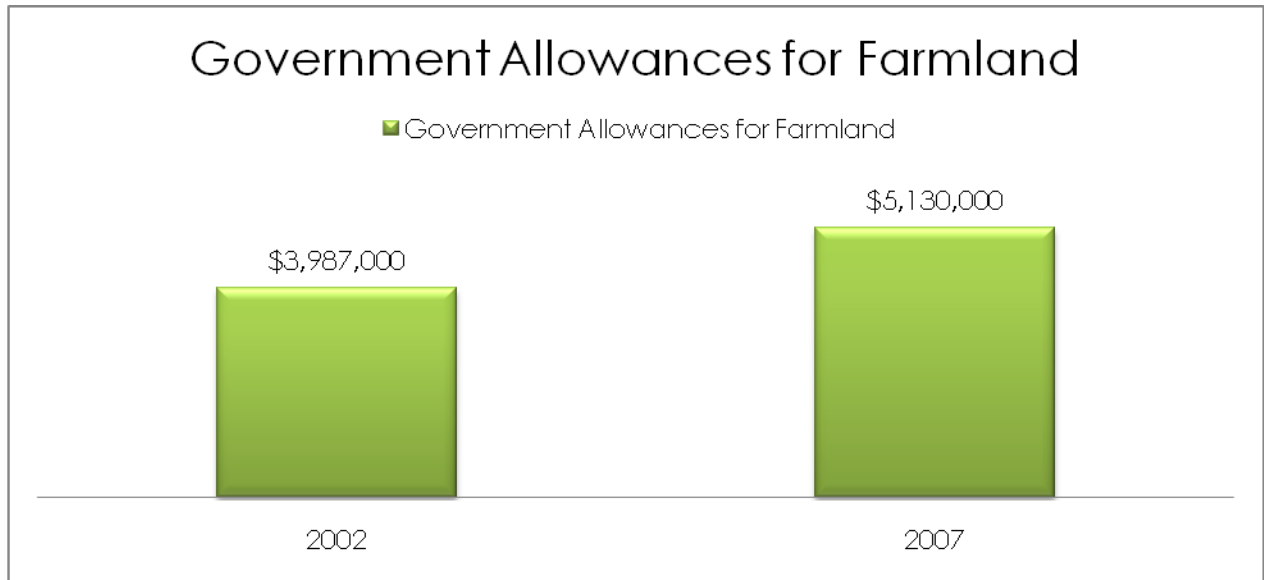


Chart 4 - Depicts the amount of money given to States to assist local governments with agriculture conservation efforts.

Through partnerships with other governmental agencies and universities, technology to address resource issues is available to local producers. Simple measures such as crop rotation and cover crops are a long standing proof of soil and water quality improvement practices.

Future Obstacles for Agriculture in Pitt County

Urbanization and increased cost of producing commodities appear to be the most limiting factors for the future of Pitt County agriculture. The housing boom in the late 1990 –2000s created high land prices that made purchase of land for farming activities practically infeasible. This urban sprawl was in part to the growth of industrial, educational and medical care facilities. Though other growth is vital to the tax base, the services required by farmland are considerably less, therefore being less of a financial liability on the local government. In addition to increased land prices, encroachment from other land uses can create access difficulties and increased complaints from the non-agricultural community. As urbanization increases, smaller farms are isolated in highly developed areas and in many cases become fallow.

As input cost increase, profit margins shrink. These costs can be highly unpredictable. The return from these products, which can have short windows of marketability, is also difficult to predict. First level producers are not in a position to pass the cost increase along. Therefore, high cost input crops tend to decrease in production.

Protecting Pitt County's Agricultural Heritage

As a whole, North Carolina is seeing a decline in the amount of farmland. According to the North Carolina ADFP Trust Fund and the USDA, there were 300,000 acres of farmland lost and 5,500 farm closings across the state between 2003 and 2006. In Pitt County, between 2002 and 2007, there was a decrease of 14,221 acres of reported farmland. Pitt County will take the necessary actions to assist local communities in mitigating the effects of these agriculture issues. It is imperative to our State's history to maintain and preserve this rich farmland and to take the necessary steps to reduce any further loss of these resources. Resolutions to this issue must be a governmental and community effort. The following section will discuss various financial resources available for farmers and agricultural based communities to begin establishing alternatives to save the agricultural state many know and love.

Protecting the Future of Agriculture and Green Space

Agriculture continues to support the basic needs for food and fiber in a local and global market. Through proper planning, Pitt County has the needed resources to compete in the world market, if the protection of farmland and open space is strategically coordinated. Voluntary Ag Districts (VADs), Enhanced Voluntary Ag Districts (EVADs) and Farmland Protection (FPPs) programs are some of the tools needed to address pressures that agriculture faces.

New markets for organic, free range and hormone free products are becoming more desirable. New technology and additional land area will be needed to produce these products on a larger world market scale.

Environmentally, pervious areas will become more valuable as increased storm water runoff and aquifer depletion have diverse effects on the quality and quantity of our water. Carbon sequestration appears to be a trend of future markets as well. Green space and open areas that are associated with farm and forest land assists with this resource concern.

Though the Right-to-Farm law protects some of the basic principles of not driving out existing farmsteads, other programs such as VADs can increase the awareness of new land buyers. The intent is to promote harmony in communities and sound land development for future growth of Pitt County as a whole.

Steps Taken to Maintain a Viable Agricultural Community

Agriculture land and the heritage associated with it has become a rare commodity in counties experiencing the pressure of urbanization. The preservation and protection of farmland from non-farm development has become more important than ever. The role that locally grown food and fiber plays in a community should be highlighted and preserved, especially as the attenuation of the local farmer continues. The following sections outline the steps that a community can take to preserve and maintain the remaining agricultural heritage that was once the foundation of their economy.

Voluntary Agricultural Districts

- ❖ In 1985, the North Carolina General Assembly, through the Farmland Preservation Enabling Act set forth the concept of “voluntary agricultural districts” as an effective and politically viable way to protect North Carolina farmland. Voluntary Agricultural Districts (VADs) form partnerships between farmers, county commissioners, and land use planners in order to promote and protect agriculture as an integral part of the County.
- ❖ Half of North Carolina’s 100 counties have passed ordinances establishing VADs since 1985, and in doing so, commissioners appoint a local board to oversee the program. This board determines eligibility and guidelines for enrollment, specific to each county. The Pitt County Voluntary Agricultural District Ordinance states its purpose to provide the following benefits to farmers and county residents:
 - The program preserves and maintains agricultural areas within the County;
 - The program informs non-farming neighbors and potential land purchasers that the participating farm may emit noise, dust, and smells (this feature may help avoid conflicts between neighbors and potential nuisance claims);
 - The program gives the farming community a better voice in Pitt County policy affecting farmland;
- ❖ Farmer participation in the program is voluntary and the farmer may terminate his/her participation at any time;
- ❖ The program requires the Pitt County Commissioners to use farmland “as a last resort” if they are attempting to condemn county lands;
- ❖ The program would provide green space and natural resources as the County’s population and development expands;
- ❖ The program maintains opportunities to produce locally grown food and fiber.
- ❖ An agricultural district is initiated when interested landowners submit a proposal to the Pitt County Agricultural Advisory Board. The district shall contain a minimum of 5 acres for horticultural use, 10 acres of agricultural use, and 20 acres for forestry use. This includes leased and/or rented land.
- ❖ VADs and/or Enhanced VADs may get higher ranking for qualification in various grants and programs.

Farmland Preservation

- ❖ Method used to secure existing farmland for current and future use.
- ❖ Maintains agricultural history in Pitt County.
- ❖ If formerly adopted, the preservation prohibits farmers from developing their land for non-agricultural uses.¹⁰

North Carolina Tobacco Trust Fund

- ❖ Financial assistance for agricultural based communities experiencing economic hardship due to shifts in demand for tobacco and Master Settlement Agreements established by NC agreements and tobacco companies.
- ❖ Financial assistance is given by the North Carolina Tobacco Trust Fund Commission.
- ❖ NC Tobacco Trust Fund awards money to communities that are undertaking agricultural related projects such as: community economic development, development of natural resources, diversification initiatives, increased farm profitability, skill and resource development.
- ❖ As a result of the financial assistance, the local tax base stabilizes.
- ❖ Decreases unemployment rate in the agricultural employment sector
- ❖ The grant money is given directly to communities and not individuals.¹¹

North Carolina Agriculture Development and Farmland Preservation (ADFP) Trust Fund

- ❖ Provides agricultural conservation easements.
- ❖ Eligible recipients include: voluntary agricultural districts, municipalities with farmland protection plans, and beginning farmers.

Results of the Agricultural Land Use Inventory for Pitt County

This inventory recognizes the needed planning for the future of agriculture in Pitt County. By identifying that over 1400 acres of farm/forest land has been incorporated by municipalities and that farm/forest land acreage has been greatly decreased, measures need to be taken to protect this economic and heritable resource. The following proposed timeline for development of farmland protection is recommended:

- ❖ By November 2010 – Present plan to Pitt Soil and Water Conservation District Board
- ❖ By December 2010 – Present VAD concept to the Pitt County Board of County Commissioners at Soil and Water Meeting
- ❖ By January 2011 – Facilitate meeting with Pitt County municipalities to address farm/forest land in incorporated areas
- ❖ By March 2011 – Present final plan to Pitt County Board of County Commissioners with Voluntary Ag District Ordinance

¹⁰ 2007 Census of Agriculture

¹¹ North Carolina Tobacco Trust Fund