



NC COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
WEEKLY UPDATE
Week Ending 9/12/08

1. Items for Approval – None this week.

2. Items for Discussion – None this week.

3. Summary of County Visits by Dr. Jon Ort

DATE	COUNTY VISITED	PURPOSE
	None this week.	

4. Items for Information

- Johnston County is one of the most rapidly developing counties in the state. Forest and farm landowners are facing increasing pressure to sell and higher prices are being offered from developers and potential home buyers. NC Cooperative Extension addressed this issue by conducting educational programs in partnership with NCSU, NC Forest Service, Consulting Foresters and NC Forest Landowners Association. Program emphasis was on Things to Consider Before Selling The Farm, Determining Fair Rental Rates, Use Value Taxation, Timber Harvesting and Reforestation, and Cost Share Opportunities to manage land. Forest Landowners reported \$464,600 in increased revenue from timber sales as a direct result of following Extension recommendations for selling timber. Four landowners increased the sales value of their property by \$360,000 by not selling their timber and having a Consulting Forester determine a separate timber value to add to the land sales price.
- Requests relating to alternative energy have reached an all-time high in Graham County. A poor economy and rises in building and electrical expenses are just a few of the reasons why. Although alternative energy is gaining in popularity, there are few places in Western North Carolina where one can view a working system. To remedy this problem, Cooperative Extension went to work in Graham County trying to find money to construct an alternative energy demonstration site using Graham County's most plentiful natural resource: water. As a result of these efforts, grant money in the amount of \$40,000 was secured from NC Tobacco Trust Fund to construct the facility. A local trout farm was identified as a textbook site for a hydro-electrical system. A system was installed that employed the use of four turbines that yielded 1,000 watts of electricity each. The system earns the landowner an average of \$160 each month, while Cooperative Extension uses the site as an educational facility to help educate farmers, school groups, and private citizens about the benefits of alternative energy.
- Children with parents in the military who are deployed have problems finding support with issues that arise by having a parent absent. In an effort to help build a support network for these youth, the 4-H Rural Life Center hosted *Operation Purple Camp* in partnership with the National Military Family Association. The youth had classes on teambuilding, volunteerism, and healthy living styles through proper eating and exercise. They also kept written journals on their week and progress, as well as an address book to keep in touch with fellow campers. Through the written evaluation at the end of camp, 90% of the youth felt like they now had someone they could talk with to help provide them with the support they needed when they faced tough issues without both parents.

- Agriculture and agribusiness is a diverse industry representing just over 17% of the Johnston County gross product. As one of the fastest growing counties in the state, population growth threatens the future of agriculture. The Johnston County Extension Advisory Council identified farmland protection and preservation as a critical need for the county. Cooperative Extension staff members worked with local government and farm organizations to increase awareness of this issue and to build support for the development of a Farmland Protection Plan for Johnston County. Because of Extension's efforts, the North Carolina Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation Trust Fund recently funded a grant request in the amount of \$31,500 to assist with the development of such a plan for Johnston County. This plan will help agriculture remain strong and transition into the future by improving business opportunities for farmers and preserving farmland.
- Rising land sales prices in Johnston County have farm land and forest land owners concerned about having higher property tax bills. Landowners came to Extension asking for advice to protect these tracts from being sold because of higher taxes brought on by appreciating land values and higher market assessments. The North Carolina Farmland Taxation Act permits eligible agricultural, horticultural, and forestry lands to be valued and taxed on the basis of their present use value instead of market value. NC Cooperative Extension partnered with the Johnston County Tax Office, NC Forest Landowners Association, Consulting Foresters, and NC Forest Service to address this concern at Forestry Educational Meetings. As a result, 50 parcels were enrolled in Farm Use Valuation Tax programs and had their value reduced by \$1,912,200. This reduced the owners' tax bills by \$13,385.
- NC Cooperative Extension's Agent in Halifax County partnered with the Pesticide Division of NCDR to conduct a Pesticide Disposal Day. This event was held at a local cooperator, Meherrin Ag, in Scotland Neck, with 14,540 pounds of old pesticides collected. This was the largest single day collection held in the state to date. At a minimum cost of \$5/pound disposal fee, this program saved Halifax County over \$72,000 and reduced the real threat to farms, families and the environment. In Sampson County, a Pesticide Disposal Day collected 480 pesticide containers, totaling 4,402 pounds of pesticides.
- Soybeans are Johnston County's largest acreage crops, but rank next to last in profitability. Agricultural and Field Crops Advisory Committees identified this as a major long-term problem to sustaining farming operations. To address this issue, NC Cooperative Extension conducted an educational program cooperating with Extension Crops, Marketing, and Seeds Specialists along with Seed Producing Agribusinesses to inform local farmers about the opportunity to grow seeds and address crop management expectations. As a direct result of these long-range Extension programs, 2 companies are contracting with 25 local growers to produce over 22,000 acres of soybeans, and wheat for seeds. Participating farmers reported an 8 bushel yield increase compared to traditional seeds by growing the better quality, higher yielding varieties provided by the companies. Growers received \$132,000 in quality premiums and received \$2,200,000 in additional market price for producing high quality seeds during a drought stricken year.
- In Craven County, former tobacco producers seeking replacement of tobacco income have done so through adoption of contractual peanut production. NC Cooperative Extension has worked with these producers by offering production meetings, newsletter articles, on-site visits for disease evaluations and monitoring for pest outbreaks. Additionally, daily emails outline the risks associated for specific diseases and recommended treatments. Web-based computer programs provide site-specific weed loss estimates and best return on investment for product selection and application. Peanut production has steadily increased by approximately 50 acres per year reaching a total of 650 acres in 2008. On average, producers realized a profit of approximately \$550 per acre for over \$350,000 additional income to these producers.

- Production costs are continually increasing for tobacco farmers. In 2008, curing fuel prices increased over 40 percent for propane and even more for diesel. Grower profitability requires a high level of efficiency and good yields. NC Cooperative Extension educated growers on burner tuning at meetings and one-on-one visits. On-farm fuel efficiency tests are in progress on 4 farms involving 11 barns in Johnston County. Factors being compared include insulation, automated controls and burner settings. Data from one farm indicated the grower could lower his firing rates from 500,000 to 300,000 BTUs per hour on 12 barns. This simple change allowed the grower to reduce fuel consumption by a documented 40 gallons of propane gas per cure. The savings for this grower was \$7,680 in one growing season. Because of Extension's efforts, firing rates have already been reduced on 41 tobacco barns in Johnston County for a potential savings of \$26,240.
 - The NC Department of Juvenile Justice estimates that it can cost up to \$63,500 annually to secure a Delinquent Juvenile in an appropriately supervised environment. It is estimated to cost up to \$30,000 to send a Youth Offender through The Juvenile Court System. In fiscal year 2007-2008, The JCPC (Juvenile Crime Prevention Council) Grant funded Sampson County's 4-H Teen Court & Juvenile Restitution Program, served 78 Juvenile Offenders/Delinquents while utilizing 120 youth and adult volunteers. Over \$5,000 in restitution was paid to the victims of these Juvenile Crimes. The program's 7 year existence has demonstrated a 95% success rate in preventing Juvenile Recidivism. These statistics imply a potential savings of up to \$6.9 million returned on the \$88,000 in state and local funds invested. The rate of return is \$78 for every dollar spent. In addition, over 7,100 hours of Community Service have been performed with a value of \$85,200.
5. Routine Items – There will be no Weekly Report for the week ending September 19, 2008.