



Principle 1: Conserve Natural and Scenic Assets

County Information Sheet

Highland County

Highland County is the most mountainous county in the region. Although it is almost exclusively rural, it does not have much opportunity for high value agricultural activity. The county ranked 53th in agriculture in the state and 7th in the VCC region in 1997.

The main agricultural products are hay and cattle. Highland also ranks 2nd in Virginia in sheep production. Maple syrup is an important local product. Total market value of agricultural products in 1997 was \$12,256,000, an increase of more than 74% over its 1987 total. Livestock and poultry made up 98% of that value. According to the Agricultural Census, the county lost both farms and farmland. In 1997 there were 20 fewer farms and 3,538 fewer acres in farming.

These statistics mirror the regional trend, but the reasons for this decline are unclear. Highland County has been losing population and has not experienced land use change that would explain a movement out of farming. The losses may relate to a high rate of absentee landlords and some reversion of steep, erodible land to forestland.

In forestry, the county is fairly important. The value of timber harvested in Highland County was \$2,067,195 in 2000, up from \$472,242 in 1986 (a 337.7 % increase). The county ranked 4th in the region in timber harvest value in 2000, down from 3rd in 1986. Hardwood was increasingly dominant, moving from 91.6 percent of the harvest in 1986 to 99.8 percent in 2000.

Figure 1-9b.
**Agricultural Census Statistics
Highland County**

	1987	1997	Change 1987-1997
Number of Farms	303	283	(20)
Acres in Farms	94,880	91,342	(3,538)
Avg. Size of Farm	313	323	10
Market Value of Crops	\$ 88,000	\$ 265,000	\$ 177,000
Market Value of Livestock	6,953,000	11,991,000	5,038,000
Market Value Ag Products	\$7,041,000	\$12,256,000	\$5,215,000

Note: Rank in State: 53; in Valley: 7
Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture

Figure 1-9c.
**Timber Harvest Volume and Value
Highland County**
(in thousand board feet)

	1986	2000	Change
Volume:			
Pine Sawtimber	288	--	(100%)
Hardwood Sawtimber	6,113	8,002	31%
Subtotal Sawtimber	6,401	8,002	25%
Small Dimension	4,176	5,105	22%
Total Volume :	10,577	13,107	24%
Value (\$):			
Pine	\$39,483	\$5,150	(87%)
Hardwood	432,759	2,062,045	377%
Total Value	\$472,242	\$2,067,195	338%
Percent Hardwood	92%	100%	
Rank in Region	3	4	
Rank in State	--	47	

Source: Virginia Department of Forestry, July 2002
Note: Volume is based on forest products tax receipts; value is based on average county stumpage costs. The standard measure for saw timber is thousand (mille) board feet abbreviated mbf. A tree 22 inches at breast height with 48 feet of usable stem would yield approximately 500 board feet.