

# 5 CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

## INTRODUCTION

Botetourt County was founded in 1770 and is historically unique. It was initially formed from the County of Augusta and derived its name from Lord Botetourt, who was then Governor of Virginia. The County's jurisdiction originally reached to the Mississippi River, encompassing what are now West Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, and part of Illinois.

Early County settlers were primarily Scots-Irish pioneers who journeyed from Pennsylvania seeking homesteads. In the early years of the County's development, the economy was predominantly agricultural. In later years, mining gained some prominence. In the late 1700s and early 1800s, trade centers began to develop in the County.

The Town of Buchanan, founded in 1742, became an important regional distribution center in the mid-1860s. The Town was the western terminus of the Kanawha Canal. This Canal, tied to the James River, linked the urban centers in eastern Virginia with the developing commercial areas in western Virginia. Buchanan began losing its prominence as a major center in the late 1800s and early 1900s as railroad expansion reduced the amount of shipping on the Canal.

The Town of Fincastle, the County seat of Botetourt, was once the governmental center of an area stretching to the Mississippi River. Fincastle is still the hub of government activity in the County and also serves as a minor, yet important commercial center for central Botetourt.

As a result of this long history, Botetourt County is rich in historical, cultural, and natural landmarks that enhance the County's cultural traditions and is an attraction for new residents and tourists visiting the region.

Agriculture remains an important component of the County's economy, and continues to support and define the rural character of Botetourt. The County's many mountains and national forest areas also are critical to defining the County's rural character. However, the economy and character of Botetourt has changed significantly over the past thirty years. Agriculture has lost its dominance over the local economy, and a very successful County economic development program, which includes the development of a tourism program, has contributed significantly to the fiscal health of the community.

Currently, the southern portion of the County is the most urbanized part of the community. It has higher population, housing, and commercial densities when compared to the central and northern sections of the County. The County's continued commitment to a high quality of life, educational attainment, environmental protection, efficient and cost effective governmental services, and with sensible, sustainable development patterns will ensure that future generations will enjoy the same benefits of "Botetourt Living" that residents enjoy today.



## **BACKGROUND**

Botetourt County's natural and cultural environment is characterized by many factors that both promote and impede the development of land. The attractiveness of the County promotes growth as the area continues to attract new residents, many who retreat to the area for retirement. The geographical dynamics of the area impede some growth, displacing it to either dense areas along main corridors, around existing incorporated towns, or dispersing it across the rural landscape. Dispersed residential growth is the top threat to preserving the existing rural character of the County in the future. More often than not, agricultural land is lost to new residential development, with some agricultural land converting to commercial uses. The historic, environmental, and even the agricultural quality of Botetourt County creates a nexus of loss and gain that must be addressed through various land use and growth policies that influence development and preserve the rural landscape.

### ***Agricultural/Rural/Mountain Preservation***

Over the years, the industry of agriculture has been affected by shifts in population and loss of traditional farming lands. Land trends across Virginia reflect a shifting in population from traditional urban areas to rural lands. Much of the development occurs as land intensive forms of development such as residential subdivisions and commercial development in patterns that are typically auto-dependant. When new development occurs on farms that have been sold to developers, these traditionally agricultural areas are caught in a conflict between new and old land uses. The resulting patchwork of development creates conflicts between agricultural and new land uses, generating traffic and future development pressures. Even though Botetourt County has seen a recent slow-down of residential, commercial and industrial growth, when the economy recovers, there will likely be renewed pressure on the County's agricultural and forested areas to be rezoned and developed. Agricultural statistics contained in the Land Use section of this plan show a continuing trend towards the loss of agricultural land uses and farms. Of equal concern are inappropriate patterns of development on environmentally sensitive lands such as the steep sloped properties located at higher elevations at or near mountain ridge tops.

### ***Historic Preservation***

Preserving historic resources is vital to maintaining the County's cultural heritage and also represents a significant opportunity for development of tourism as an economic resource. The three main steps to historic preservation are 1) identification, 2) recognition, and 3) protection of historic resources. Identification means inventorying the historic resources in a community and understanding their importance; this was completed recently prior to initiation of this plan update. Historic designation provides recognition for particularly significant sites, but does not protect them. Protection comes primarily through local historic districts implemented through the zoning ordinance or by a property owner placing a site or structure under an historic easement.

Currently, there is little control of the effect of development on historic resources. While there is a historic state designation program, it is up to the County to further determine incentives for maintaining historic properties. The lack of adequate protection mechanisms makes existing historic resources susceptible to negative impacts of development, including demolition.

## Cultural and Environmental Resource Analysis

### **Historic Resources**

Botetourt County continues to be a community rich in history. This history is evident through the numbers of structures and sites that have been identified as worthy of preservation for future generations. A listing on the Virginia Landmarks Register or the National Register of Historic Places is an honor but not a guarantee that these historically significant properties are protected from demolition or degradation. This is particularly true in rapidly growing jurisdictions where new development can significantly impact historic properties and their character.

#### Properties Listed on the National Register

Properties and districts in Botetourt County that are currently listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places include the following (Map 18 – Historic Resources):

Anderson House (011-0056)  
Annandale (011-0041)  
Breckenridge Mill Historic District (011-0187)  
Buchanan Historic District (180-0028)  
Callie Furnace (011-0065)  
Catawba Furnace (011-0040)  
Fincastle Historic District (218-0051)  
Greyledge (011-0010)  
Hawthorne Hall (011-0037)  
Lauderdale (011-0048)  
Nininger's Mill (011-0057)  
Phoenix Bridge (011-0095)  
Prospect Hill (011-0185)  
Santillane (011-0032)  
Thomas D. Kinzie House (011-5034)  
Varney's Falls Dam (011-0068)  
Wheatland Manor (011-0038)  
Wiloma (011-0039)  
Wilson Warehouse (180-0006)

#### Properties Evaluated by Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) National Register Evaluation Team and Determined Eligible for National Register Listing

The following properties have been evaluated by the VDHR National Register Team and determined eligible for listing on the state and national registers.

Bryan McDonald, Jr. Farm House (011-0021)  
Bowyer-Holladay House, Lewis Holladay House (011-0028)  
George Botetourt Rader House (011-0058)  
Roaring Run Furnace (011-0063)  
Henry Stair House (011-0082)  
Emanuel Episcopal Church (011-0109)  
Camper/Cronise House (011-0116)  
James River & Kanawha Canal Tunnel (011-0144)  
Jeter Barn (011-0176)  
Fort Fauquier, Lipes Site, Looney Mill Creek Site (011-0184)  
Bessemer Archaeological Site (011-0188)  
Bridge # 6100, Route 817, Craig Creek Bridge (011-0404)  
Daleville College Historic District (011-5095)  
Blue Ridge Hall (011-5096)  
The Iron Industry of Virginia (011-5116)  
Gala Site (011-5155)

### Properties Potentially Eligible for National Register Listing

As a result of a field survey, the following properties and districts are identified as being potentially eligible for listing on the state and national registers and recommended for further investigation and/or intensive-level survey so that they can be formally evaluated by the VDHR National Register Evaluation Team:

Eagle Rock Historic District  
Fox Folly Farm (011-5403)  
Glen Wilton Historic District  
Glencoe (011-0034)  
Hammit House (011-5216)  
Mill Creek Manor (011-0020)  
Mulberry Bottom (011-0049)  
Oakland (011-0050)  
Shadowlands (011-5203)  
"Soldier's Retreat" (011-0181)  
Spec Mine Facilities (011-5143)  
Springwood Historic District  
Stonelea (011-0035)  
Town of Troutville Historic District  
William Booze Farmstead (011-5171)  
Greenfield Plantation Site (011-0026)

Owners of historic properties have significant control over their condition and long-term viability. A variety of state and federal programs have been established to provide incentives to owners to maintain, restore and preserve historic properties. Botetourt County can also play an important role in the long-term preservation of these sites. Specific public actions could include directing property owners to available preservation incentive programs and considering the impact on historic resources when evaluating development proposals.

### ***Natural Environment***

Notwithstanding public investment in roads and utilities, and public policies pertaining to zoning and other development standards, the development potential for land is dependent in large part on its natural characteristics such as slope, elevation and soil types. These natural characteristics should be a major factor for consideration when land is proposed for development in the County. Development proposals should respect the natural features of a site. Natural resources, that are economically valuable and that are susceptible to damage or reduction in value by other land uses, should be protected. Prime agricultural lands, significant geologic formations, surface and ground waters and air quality are examples of such natural resources.

### Geology and Soils

Subsurface geology, soil characteristics and topography are three highly interrelated factors that can influence the development potential of property. Igneous, metamorphic, and sedimentary rocks that range from Mississippian to Precambrian in age underlie Botetourt County. Along the Blue Ridge, granite, granodiorite, diorite, unakite, quartzite and phyllite are found. Sedimentary shale, limestone, and dolomite are dominant in the valleys. The Appalachian Mountains are comprised of sedimentary sandstone and shales. The characteristics of limestone yield good wells and free flowing springs for many County property owners; however, the valley regions of the County are likewise susceptible to groundwater pollution. Limestone geology can also present significant challenges to property development including sinkhole formation and long term reliability of groundwater supplies due to multiple developments using and drawing down a single ground water source.

Soils can also play a role in the development potential of property. The United States Department of Agriculture completed a detailed soil survey of the County in 1994. There are 12 general soil classifications for the County (Map 19 – Soils). The 1994 Botetourt Soil Survey provides general information for these classifications as well as detailed information on more specific types of soils.

### Topography

Topography is another important aspect in planning for land development. Steep slopes often preclude intensive land development due in part to their natural erosive tendencies, but also because of necessary increases in development costs. It is imperative that any type of steep slope development be undertaken with the highest sensitivity for environmental considerations, including soil stability. The general topography of Botetourt County was mapped and discussed as part of the RVARC's 1977 report entitled Regional Inventory of the Fifth Planning District Commission (Map 20 - Slopes). The report presented four slope classifications and the constraints associated with each.

**Classification 1** -- level land (0-8 percent slope): this land is flat to moderate and capable of many types of development. Areas in this classification include central Botetourt (north to Fincastle), lands along the James River, Craig Creek, and the land surrounding Cloverdale and Daleville.

**Classification 2** -- rolling land (8-15 percent slope): this land can be developed for residential use with larger lots. Development of intensive residential, commercial and public uses would require different types of foundations than land in Classification 1. Classification 2 lands are well suited for pastures and certain other agricultural uses. Areas in this classification are scattered throughout the County.

**Classification 3** -- hilly land (15-25 percent slope): the lands in this classification may be suitable for residential uses provided lot size and careful site planning is used to fit the development to the topography. This slope classification limits intensive development, as well as placement of public facilities. Agricultural activities would be limited to passive activities, such as pastureland. Areas in this classification include lands along the foothills of mountains.

**Classification 4** -- steep slopes (25 percent slope and greater): this land is generally considered unsuitable for any type of intensive development or cultivation. The best use of this land is for limited outdoor recreation, wildlife management, and watershed maintenance. Areas in this classification include lands adjacent to the Blue Ridge Parkway; lands bordering Craig and Alleghany Counties; and the land northeast of Eagle Rock to the Rockbridge County border and north of Buchanan.

Any efforts to guide future development to locations that are topographically suitable must be done with an understanding of the significant environmental benefits that will accrue. Such efforts must also respect and address legitimate property right interests. A programmatic approach based upon both public regulation and private incentives has the potential to be an effective strategy to ensure both appropriate development locations and appropriate development techniques. It is also important to remember programs that discourage or limit development on steep slopes will likely redirect development demand and will most likely channel development to the south central portion of the County where land is in high demand based upon its topography, access and presence of utility services.

### Air Quality

Air quality is an important factor in local land use planning as indicated in the Federal Clean Air Act (CAA) of 1970 and subsequent amendments. The CAA requires the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to develop and issue criteria for local air quality to protect the public health and welfare. Both mobile and stationary sources contribute pollutants to the natural air environment. These pollutants influence air quality in Botetourt County and across the Roanoke Valley. Due to prevailing wind patterns and topographic considerations, discharged air pollutants can, and do, travel hundreds of miles, affecting communities far from their source.

In recent years, air quality readings in the Roanoke Valley have indicated that the Valley occasionally exceeds federal standards for ozone. If formally declared to be in violation of these federal standards, Roanoke Valley jurisdictions, including Botetourt, would be formally designated a "nonattainment area" and would be subject to more stringent Clean Air Act requirements. Communities with nonattainment status would be subject to a four-part federal compliance plan requiring that (1) long range transportation plans not negatively impact air quality, (2) new or expanded industrial operations be subject to stringent source reviews, (3) local pollutants be reduced on a yearly basis, and (4) a ten-year air quality maintenance plan be prepared to ensure continued air quality compliance.

As a proactive strategy to avoid formal non-attainment status, Botetourt County and other Valley jurisdictions agreed in 2002 to form an “Early Action Compact” to develop a formal Ozone Early Action Plan (OEAP) to address air quality issues. This OEAP does not mitigate or reduce the Valley’s responsibility to improve air quality. Rather, the preparation of the OEAP is a local, state and federal partnership to improve air quality. The OEAP (1) gives more local control in the selection of emission reduction measures, (2) avoids the local stigma of becoming a nonattainment community, and (3) allows a faster cleanup of air quality.

Botetourt County’s air quality situation increases the importance of considering air quality impacts when evaluating long-range transportation improvements, economic development opportunities, and major land use decisions. Long range transportation planning should consider the benefits of mass transit and other alternative forms of transportation other than the automobile. Local economic development programs should continue their long-term historic emphasis on encouraging “clean industries”. Finally, intensive land use development proposals in the more rural portions of the County should be evaluated partially on the basis of required commuting distances for residents or employees.

#### Surface Water Resources

As Map 22 (Watershed Basins) indicates, the southernmost portion of Botetourt County lies in the Roanoke River Basin. However, the majority of the County is in the James River Basin, the major source of drinking water for the County. The James River begins near the Botetourt-Alleghany County line where the Jackson and Cowpasture Rivers merge. Several important tributaries (Craig Creek, Catawba Creek, and Looney Creek) feed into the James. Other major creeks also contribute to the County’s surface water resources. These include Back Creek, Mill Creek, and Little Patterson Creek, all within the James River Basin, and Tinker Creek which lies within and contributes to the Roanoke River Basin.

The County’s surface water resources are significant environmental features, enhancing and contributing to the County’s quality of life and recreational opportunities. They also are a source of periodic surface flooding within the County. Map 23 (100 Year Floodplain) shows the approximate location of 100-year floodplains in the County as designated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The County participates in the federal flood insurance program and restricts the design and location of new development within 100-year floodplain areas. In exchange, County residents within flood-prone areas are eligible for subsidized federal flood insurance.

The James River flows into the Chesapeake Bay, and a majority of the County lies within the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Because of the County’s location in western Virginia, the County is not currently subject to the land use and water quality guidelines of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act (CBPA). To date, the County’s administration of Virginia’s erosion and sedimentation control laws represent the extent to which the County regulates the quality and quantity of surface water runoff. However, should future amendments to the CBPA or the federal National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program occur, Botetourt County may be required take additional programmatic and regulatory steps to manage the quality and quantity of surface water runoff. In anticipation of these requirements, some Virginia localities have voluntarily adopted environmental quality standards similar to the requirements of the Chesapeake Bay Act. Others communities are adopting Low Impact Development (LID) design standards as a strategy to achieve more environmentally sensitive development without the burden of additional development regulation.

### Groundwater Resources

Though there is an abundance of surface water flowing through Botetourt County, the majority of County residents and businesses use groundwater resources as their primary drinking water. These resources are available either through (1) individual wells, (2) private water provision and distribution systems that meet State Health Department standards, or (3) public water systems that are owned and maintained by Botetourt County.

Groundwater is that part of the subsurface water supply located within aquifers. The amount of water that an aquifer will yield depends on the porosity and permeability of the material at surface and subsurface levels. The yield of an aquifer is determined by the average annual recharge (influenced by climate and precipitation). Vegetation and slope of the land also affect perennial yield.

Groundwater is an important County water source for the foreseeable future. Although groundwater supplies are currently meeting the demands of Botetourt County residents and businesses, this source of water should not be taken for granted. All County citizens need to be aware of the competing demands on this resource, so that contamination and overuse do not occur. Wise management and control of this resource can ensure an adequate supply of clean water for years to come.

## **GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES**

### **Cultural and Environmental Resource Goals**

- To maintain and enhance the County's high standard of environmental quality.
- To ensure the preservation of areas and properties of natural, historic and cultural significance.
- To maintain and promote unique aspects and resources of the rural community.

### **Cultural and Environmental Resource Objectives**

- Enhance and protect Botetourt County's environment from adverse environmental impacts of land development through implementation and enforcement of local, state and federal environmental regulatory requirements.
- Enhance, preserve and protect areas of natural and rural significance.
- Enhance, preserve and protect historic features and buildings.
- Promote the County's proximity to the Appalachian Trail, National Forests, Blue Ridge Parkway and the James River.
- Maintain the County's predominantly rural character by ensuring that farming remains a viable livelihood and that farmland continues to be an available resource.

### **Cultural and Environmental Resource Policies**

- Continue implementation of the County's floodplain management regulations.
- Encourage new development to be connected to public water and sewer whenever feasible. If public facilities are not available, thoroughly evaluate the impact of the new development on groundwater supply and quality.
- Continue to enforce the County-wide erosion and sedimentation control laws.
- Cooperate with the Department of Forestry in the monitoring of timbering operations to ensure compliance with environmental requirements.
- Continue to participate in the regional Early Action Compact as a strategy to avoid an EPA designation as an Ozone Non-Attainment area.
- Continue to support the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) in its efforts to investigate pollution and maintain and improve water quality standards.
- Discourage land uses which would have a detrimental effect on the environment.
- Enforce standards for site development, construction and maintenance to minimize adverse impacts to the environment.
- Promote protection of the environment by identifying potential areas for low-impact county owned park and recreation development.
- Promote protection of the environment through the continued implementation of the County's solid waste management plan.
- Review and comment on proposed National Forest Plans to ensure a coordinated effort in the protection and management of forest resources in the County.
- Coordinate with Department of Forestry and the National Park Service in the protection and management of forest resources.
- Pursue programmatic and incentive-based regulatory approaches to the protection of mountain ridgelines and critical mountain viewsheds.
- Identify and protect critical viewsheds for their environmental, aesthetic, cultural, agricultural/forestral and recreational value.
- Define and identify priority areas for forestal, agricultural and open space conservation.
- Develop farmland and forestry retention programs, such as agricultural and forestal districts, to support open space protection efforts in Conservation and Agricultural areas.
- Continue the implementation and promotion of County's Conservation Easement Program
- Board of Supervisors should consider recommendations of the historic structures survey and implement as appropriate.

- Develop and adopt land-use practices and regulations under the zoning ordinance that protect historic sites and structures and their gateways and provide adequate buffer areas.
- Encourage efforts to maintain and repair historic structures in the County, and support the donation of historic easements.
- Support local, regional and state efforts to develop and promote heritage tourism and eco-tourism opportunities in the County.
- Cooperate with the National Park Service, Department of Forestry and National Forest Service in the protection of the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Appalachian Trail.
- Encourage all future development at Blue Ridge Parkway interchanges and along the Upper James to be designed consistent with the character, culture and history of these valuable resources.
- Support local, regional and state efforts to develop and promote heritage tourism and eco-tourism opportunities in the County such as the Upper James River and Appalachian Trail.
- Provide support to working farms.
- Support the farmer's markets; continue to support the Daleville farmer's market.
- Develop farmland protection programs, such as agricultural and forestal districts, to support open space protection efforts.

## IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

### *Environmental Considerations*

Botetourt County should consider many environmental factors when reviewing for new development. The following are some recommendations for consideration:

- Consider the slope and general topographic characteristics of a property when evaluating proposals for the development of Class 3 and 4 properties. (Greater than 14% slope), encouraging and requiring appropriate design techniques that address the challenges of developing in steep terrain.
- Require the preparation of a groundwater impact analysis when major subdivisions and other large-scale developments are proposed.
- Consider and encourage the development of a broad range of programmatic and voluntary activities and incentives that address the appropriate development of Class 3 and Class 4 properties. Enhanced development guidelines and regulations for these properties should also be considered.
- Continue to participate in the Regional Early Action Compact as a way of proactively planning for air quality. In addition, the air quality characteristics of new development should be a factor considered when reviewing the impacts of new development.
- Explore creative ways to encourage the management of stormwater quality including the development of mandatory and/or voluntary low impact development design standards.

### *Historic Preservation Planning*

Preserving the physical reminders of our past creates a sense of place and community pride. Historic preservation also generates a wide range of economic benefits including those associated with the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings and heritage tourism, as well as the impacts that historic designation has on neighborhood character and property values. Other benefits include the role that historic preservation plays in economic development and downtown revitalization.



The County can further implement a historic preservation planning program by the following actions:

- Link survey data to the planning process (i.e. mapping properties or districts that are or are eligible for National Register designation).
- Consider nominating local, state or national historic districts for protection.
- Consider amending the Zoning Ordinance to include a historic overlay district.
- Provide the Planning Commission and/or the Board of Supervisors with information concerning historic properties within proximity of development applications during the review process, so that potential adverse impacts to historic properties can be considered as a factor in their decision making.
- Advise applicants of potential adverse impacts of proposed projects on historic properties, and work cooperatively to achieve a site design that minimizes the impacts on historic resources.

- Work cooperatively with the owner and local historic preservation organizations to fully document historic properties and sites prior to demolition.
- Use the requirements of the building code as a resource to deter or slow demolition by neglect of historic properties.
- Provide information about state and federal historic preservation programs and incentives to local historic property owners.
- Lend support to private initiatives that preserve historic properties through acquisition, conservation easements or other preservation techniques.

**Conservation Easements**

Conservation Easements are further discussed in the Land Use Element of this plan. Not only are they a tool for land use planning, they assist with mitigating adverse impacts of land development on environmental and agricultural resources. A conservation easement is a deed restriction landowners voluntarily place on their property to permanently protect resources, such as productive agricultural land, ground and surface water, wildlife habitat, historic sites or scenic views. Conservation easements are flexible, and can be tailored to meet the needs of individual farmers and ranchers, and unique properties. They also provide farmers with several tax benefits including income, estate, and property tax reductions.



Botetourt County should continue to implement and administer its Conservation Easement program.

**Agricultural Preservation**

It is important to maintain a balance between development and preservation objectives throughout the County. When development applications are filed to convert agricultural lands to other uses, the economic and quality of life benefits of agricultural and forested land uses should be considered as significantly as the adequacy of public facilities and services available to serve new development in the area. Environmental impacts of development proposals - particularly those at higher, steep slope elevations - should also be heavily weighted.



The Future Land Use Map should be used as a general guide for future County development patterns and Zoning Ordinance revisions. Future residential, commercial and industrial development should be encouraged to locate in areas of the County where adequate public services are available or planned. For example, short term and ten-year timeframe plans for water and wastewater expansions are largely confined to the developed southern portions of the County.