

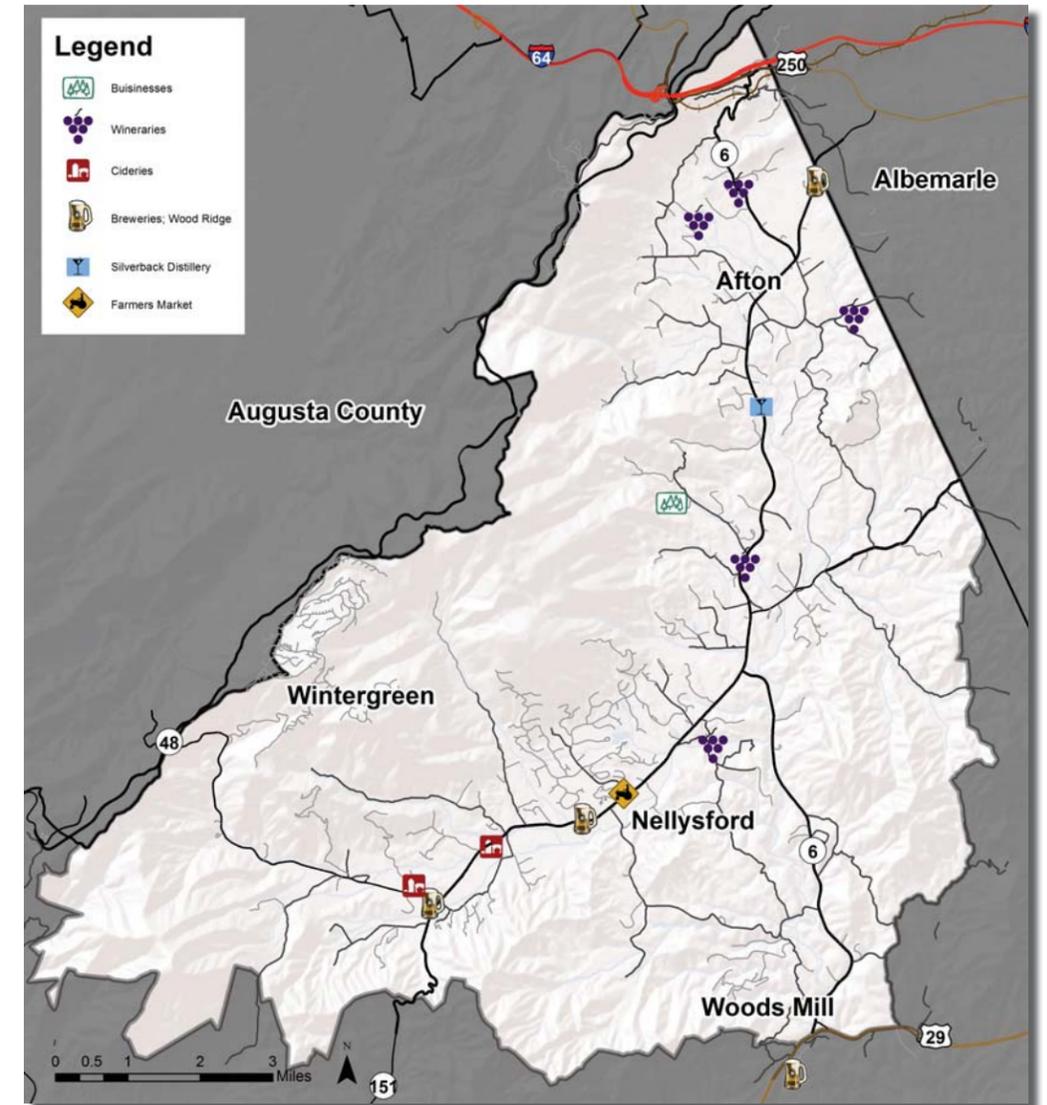


Overview

The Rockfish Valley supports a thriving agribusiness and agritourism economy, including numerous award-winning craft breweries, cideries, wineries, and a distillery. The area is also home to more traditional agricultural activities including orchards, raising cattle, the production of forage, crops, nurseries, and timber harvesting. The area's agricultural industry and landscapes help to define the authentic rural character that is such an important part of the community. Working farmlands also benefit the region by protecting open spaces and natural habitats, and providing recreation opportunities for hunting, fishing, and hiking. Most agricultural activities in the area are concentrated in the valley floors, where the flattest and most fertile agricultural land can be found. Further up slope, agricultural lands transition from fields and pastures to orchards and vineyards, which benefit from the rocky soil, cooler temperatures, and desirable solar aspect.

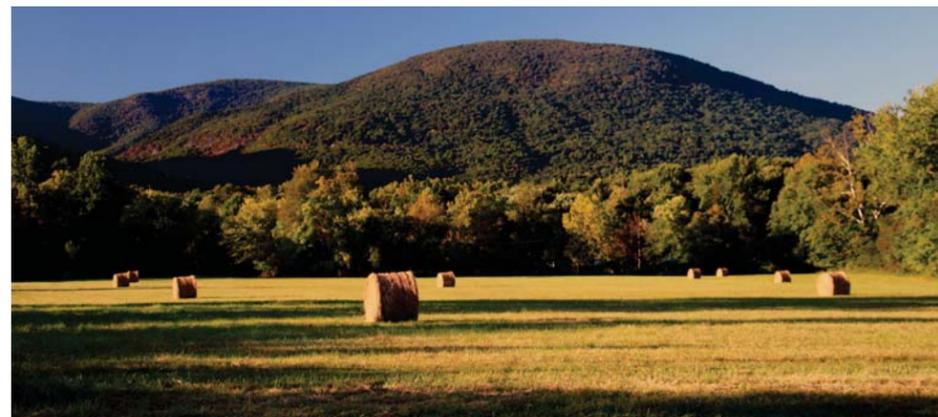


Agritourism Destinations

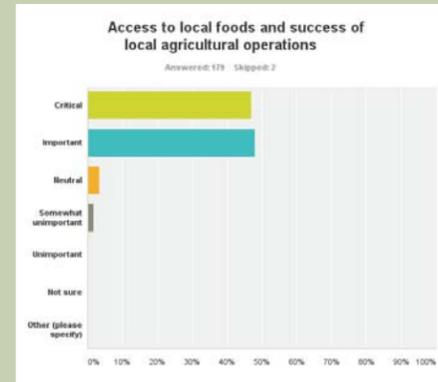


Facts and Figures

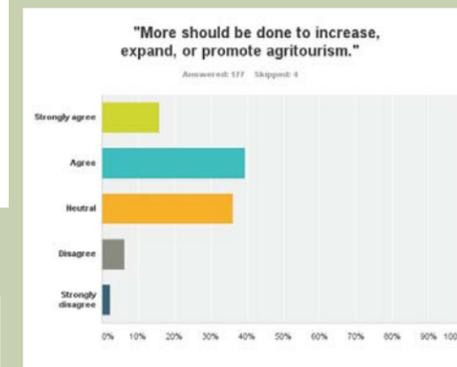
- Amount of land in agriculture: 8,243 acres (13%)
- Total value of agricultural products sold: \$15,807,000 (Countywide)
- Total value of livestock: \$5,430,000 (Countywide)
- Cattle: \$4,785,000 (Countywide)
- Total value of crops: \$10,377,000 (Countywide)
- Fruits, tree nuts and berries: \$463,900 (Countywide)
- Timber Harvest Value: \$2,845,360 Ranked 29th in the state (VDOF 2012)



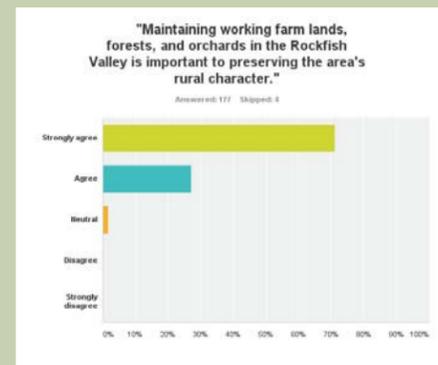
Public Survey Results: What is the community saying about Ag? Do you agree with the results of the survey?



Over 90% of respondents said local foods and local ag are important.



55% of respondents were supportive of more agritourism.



Over 95% of respondents agreed that working agricultural lands are important to the area's character.

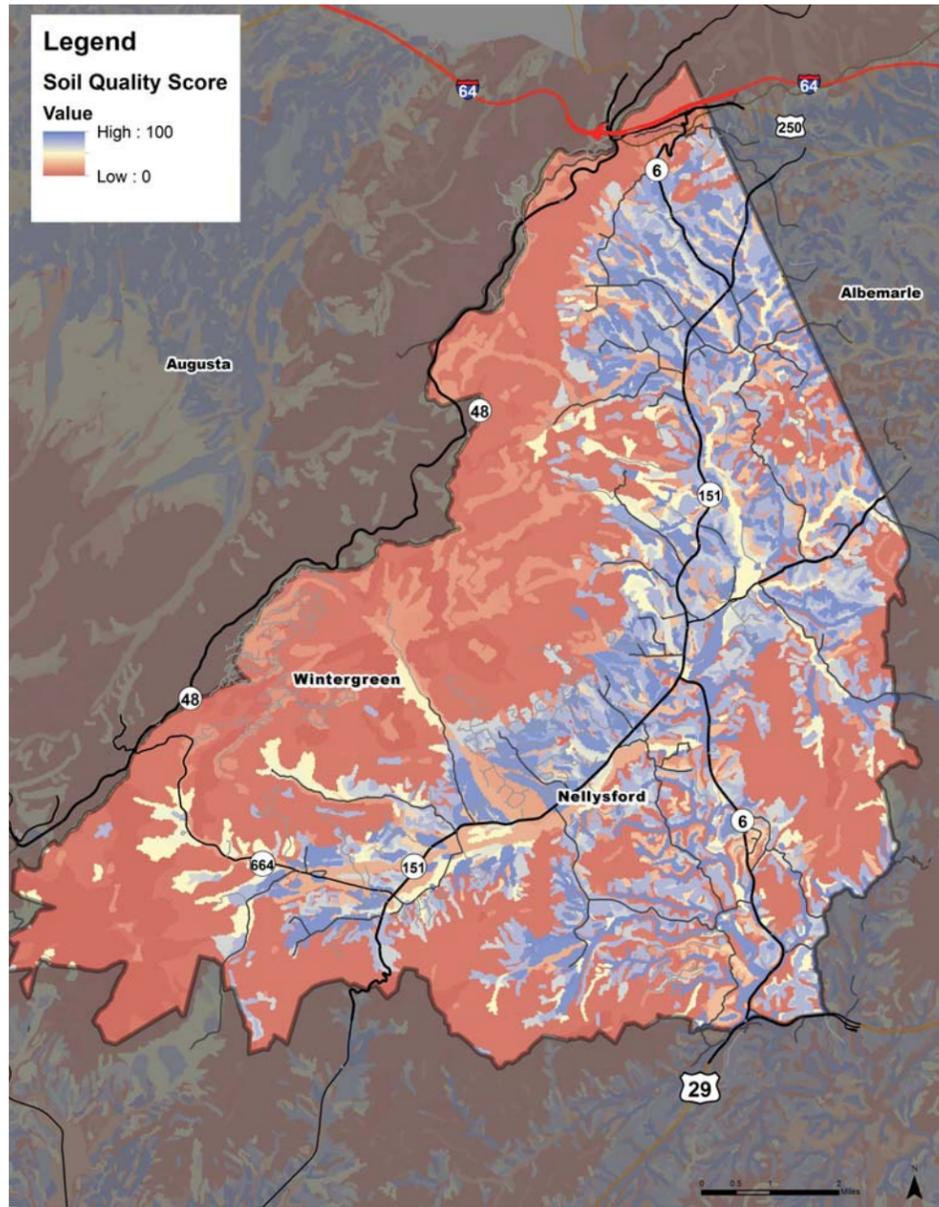


Agriculture

The Rockfish Valley's authentic agricultural heritage is an essential element of the area's sense of place. Traditional agriculture and the growing agritourism industry are vitally important components in the local economy.

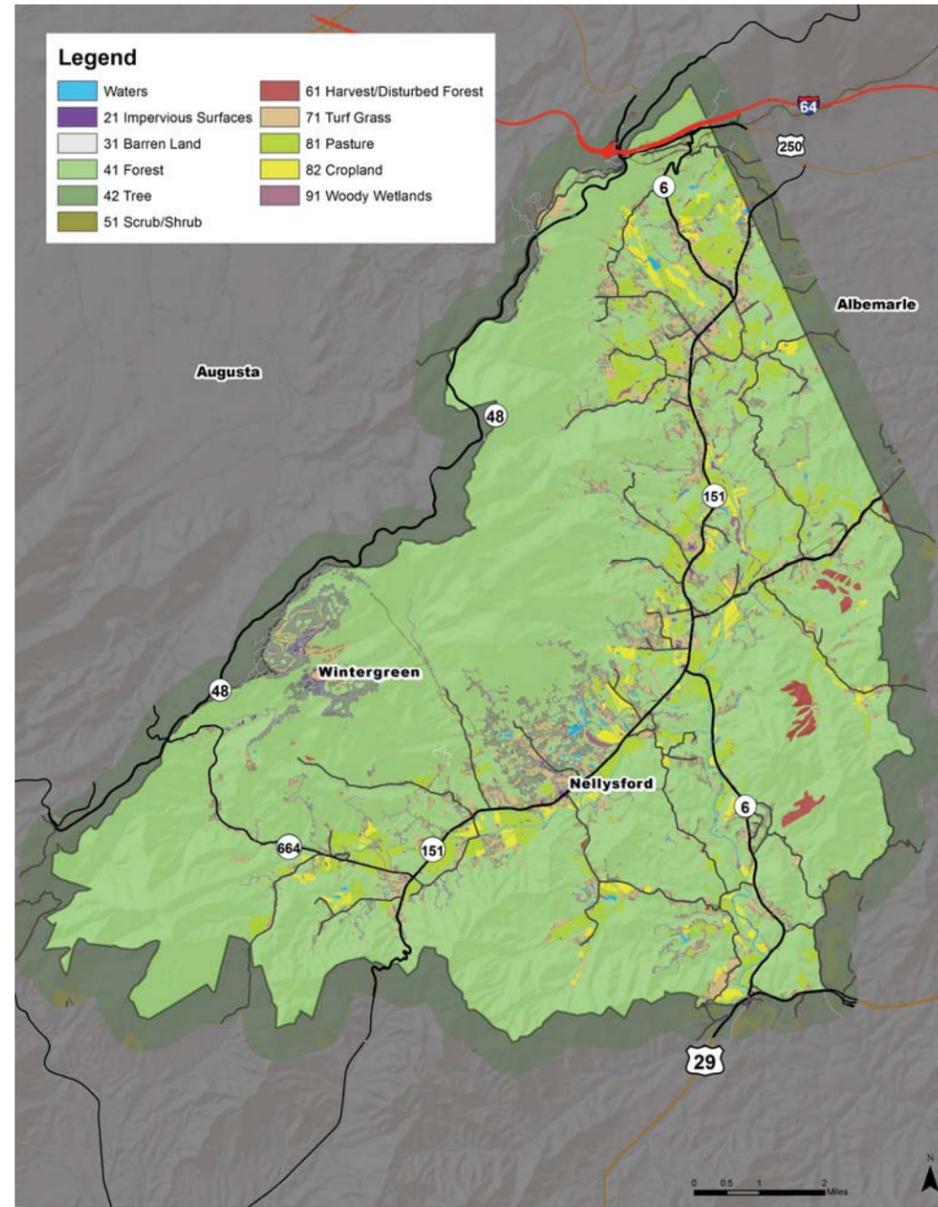


Soil Quality



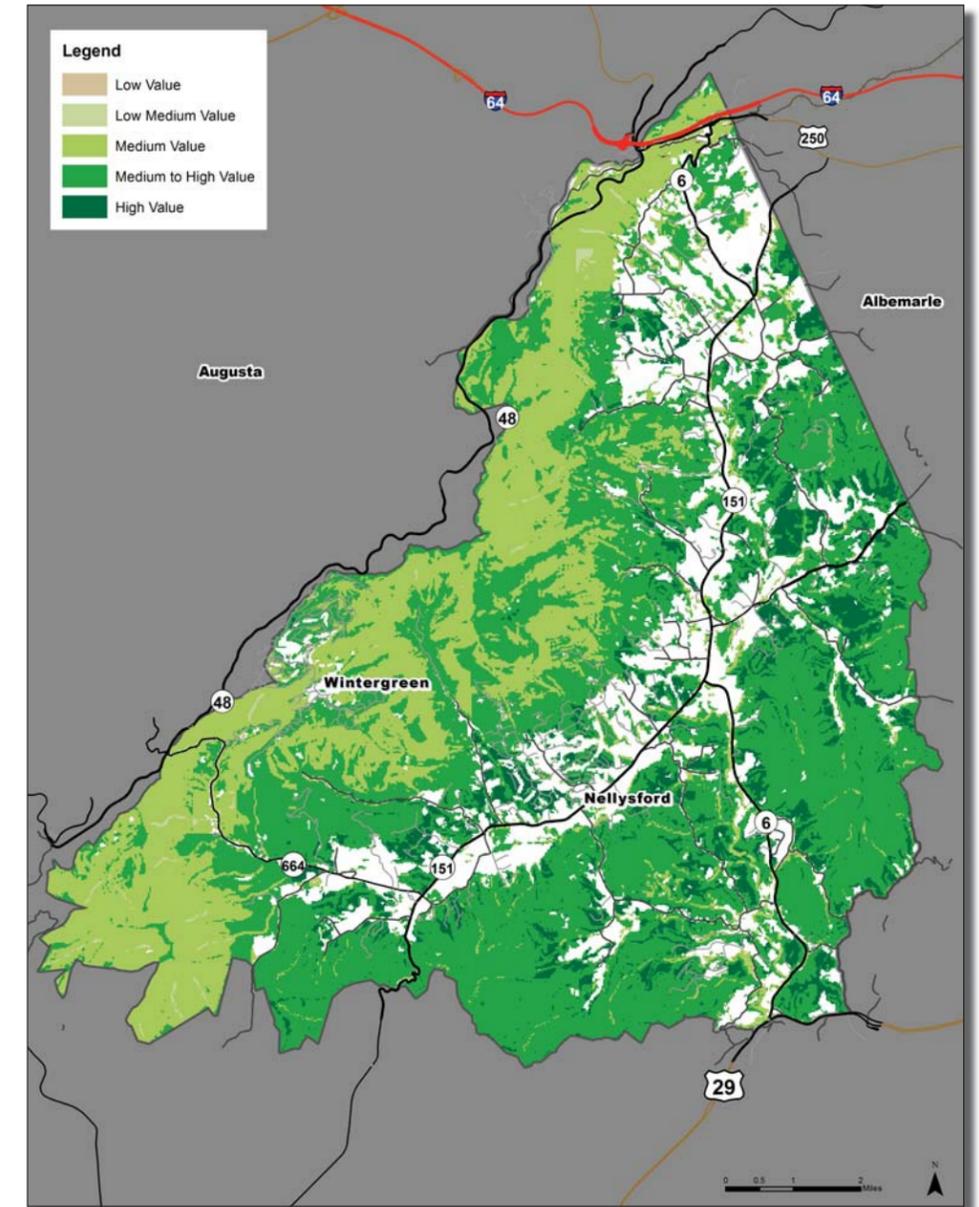
The Soil Quality Index is a map produced by the Department of Conservation and Recreation. The dataset combines several factors relating to soil quality for agricultural uses. These include prime agricultural soils, the threat of flooding, soil type, and terrain. The index scores range from 100 (optimal) to 0 (unsuitable for agriculture). This map demonstrates that high-quality soils are primarily concentrated along streams and river bottoms.

Land In Agriculture



This map uses the Virginia statewide land cover dataset to highlight different types of land cover (i.e. forest, pastures, and cropland) across the Commonwealth. This map highlights where agricultural land uses are occurring in the study area. Most of the agricultural land uses are located in the valley bottoms in close proximity to areas of growth and development, which are represented as impervious surfaces.

Forest Economics Model



The forest economics model was developed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Department of Forestry to highlight forest lands with economic value. The data classifies forest blocks into five values ranging from high to low. Forest value was determined based on a combination of environmental and access factors. The dataset can help guide land management and planning decisions by highlighting which areas of forest have a high economic value.



Overview

Several plans and studies have included the Rockfish Valley, but very few have specifically focused on the study area as this Area Plan attempts to do. Previous plans - including the 1972 and 2002 Nelson County Comprehensive Plans - recognized the area's unique attributes, but provided only a limited roadmap for the community's future growth and development. Other plans and studies include the Route 151 Corridor Study (2013); the Nelson County Green Infrastructure Plan (2010); the Rockfish Valley Corridor Water and Sewer Study (2002); the Region 2000 Water Supply Plan (2011); the TJPDC Regional Bike and Pedestrian Plan; Nelson County's Broadband Project Plan, Economic Development Authority Plan, and DRIVE Tourism Plan; and the VA Tourism Plan (2013) and VA Outdoors Plan (2013).

Facts and Figures

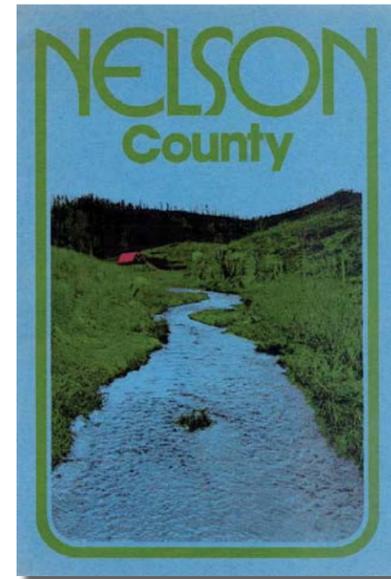
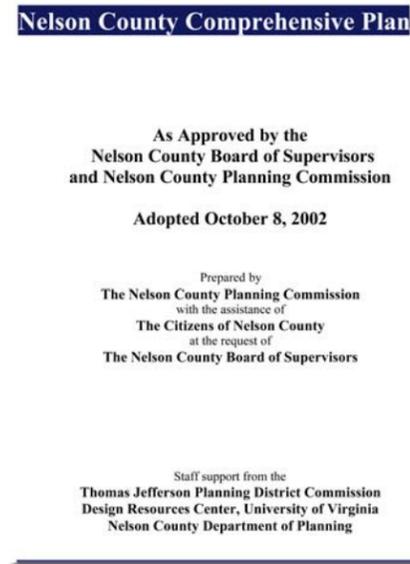
- Current Zoning Map: adopted in 1977 (as amended)
- Current Comprehensive Plan: adopted in 2002
- Study Area Population Density: 32 persons per acre
- Median Age of Residents in Study Area: 51
- Median Income of Residents in Study Area: \$57,230
- Properties on the National Register of Historic Places: 5



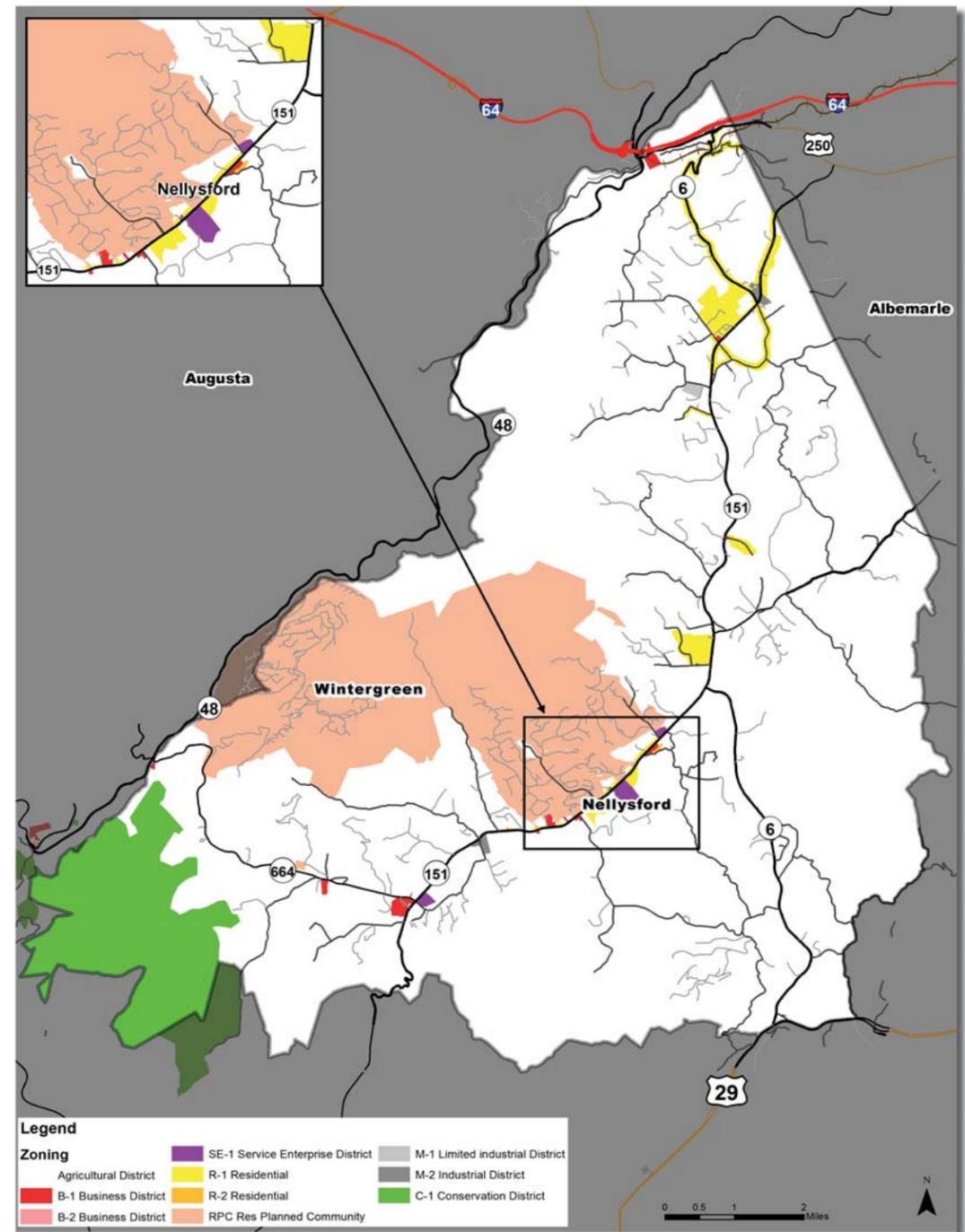
Next Steps

Planning policies and land use regulations are the two main tools that are available to local governments for shaping a community's current and future conditions. As a result, they are the overriding elements that have the ability to impact all the other topic areas. Upcoming Area Plan tasks include a review of existing zoning codes, ordinances, and relevant comprehensive plan sections; and recommendations for possible updates.

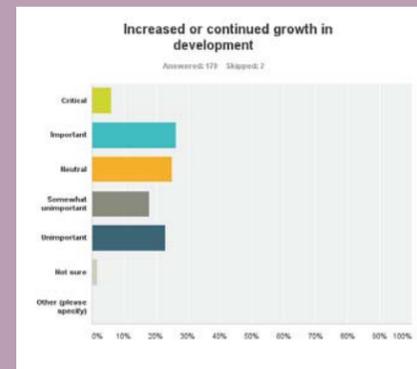
Previous Plans & Existing Studies



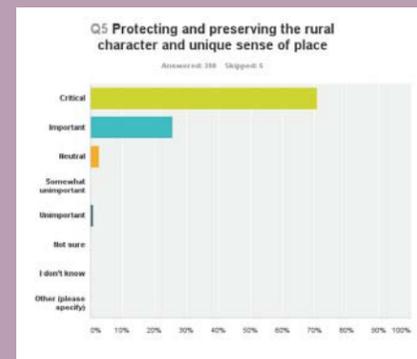
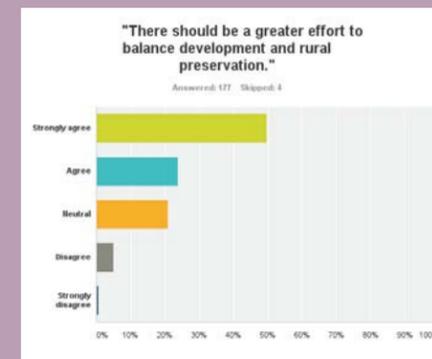
Nelson County Current Zoning Map



Public Survey Planning: What is the community saying about Planning? Do you agree with the results of the survey?



A question about the importance of continued increased growth produced widely mixed responses.



Over 70% said it is critically important to preserve rural character; and over 70% agreed on the need for greater efforts to balance growth and preservation.

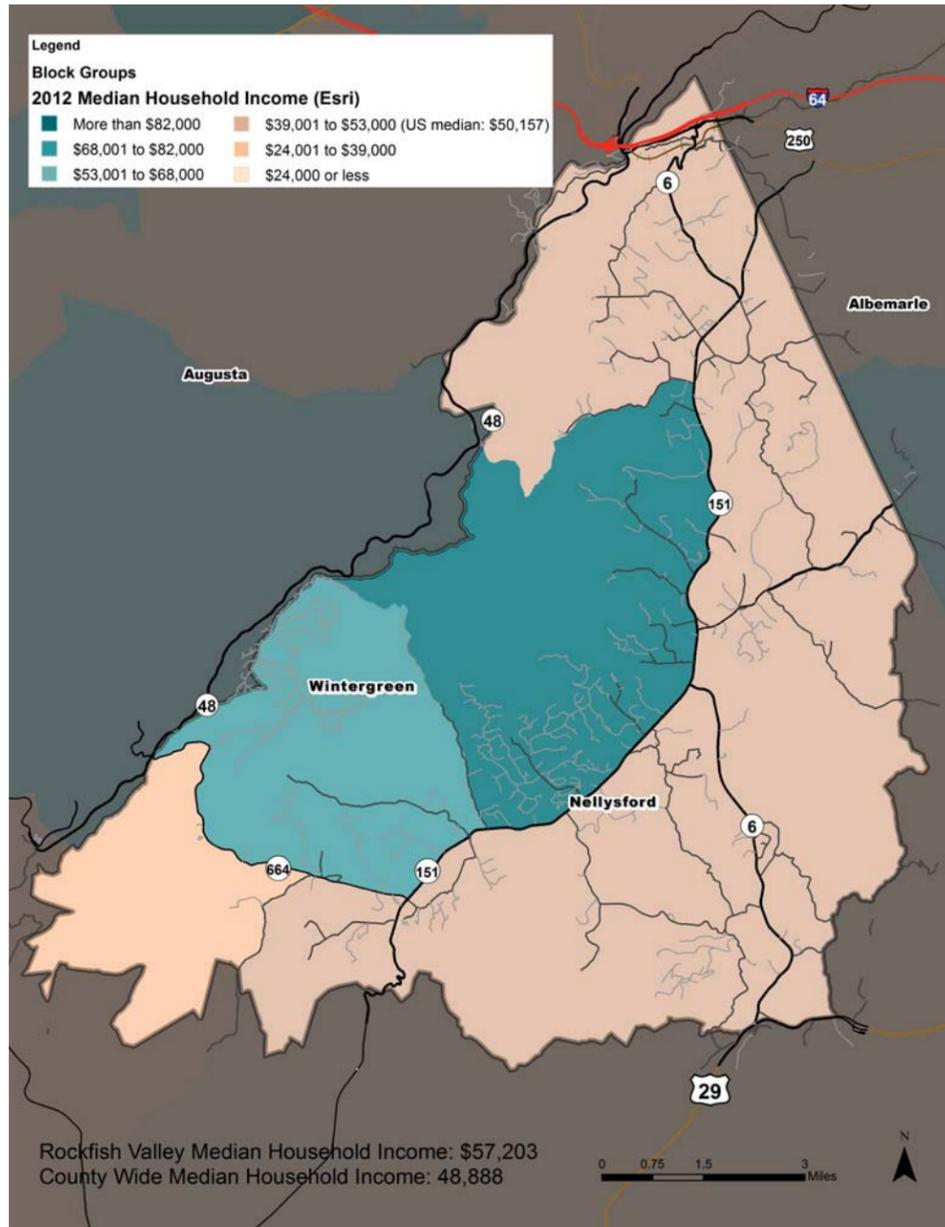


Community

Community needs should reflect the short-term and long-term goals of the local residents. To better understand a community's current trends and issues, it is important to look at demographic data such as age, income, and employment.

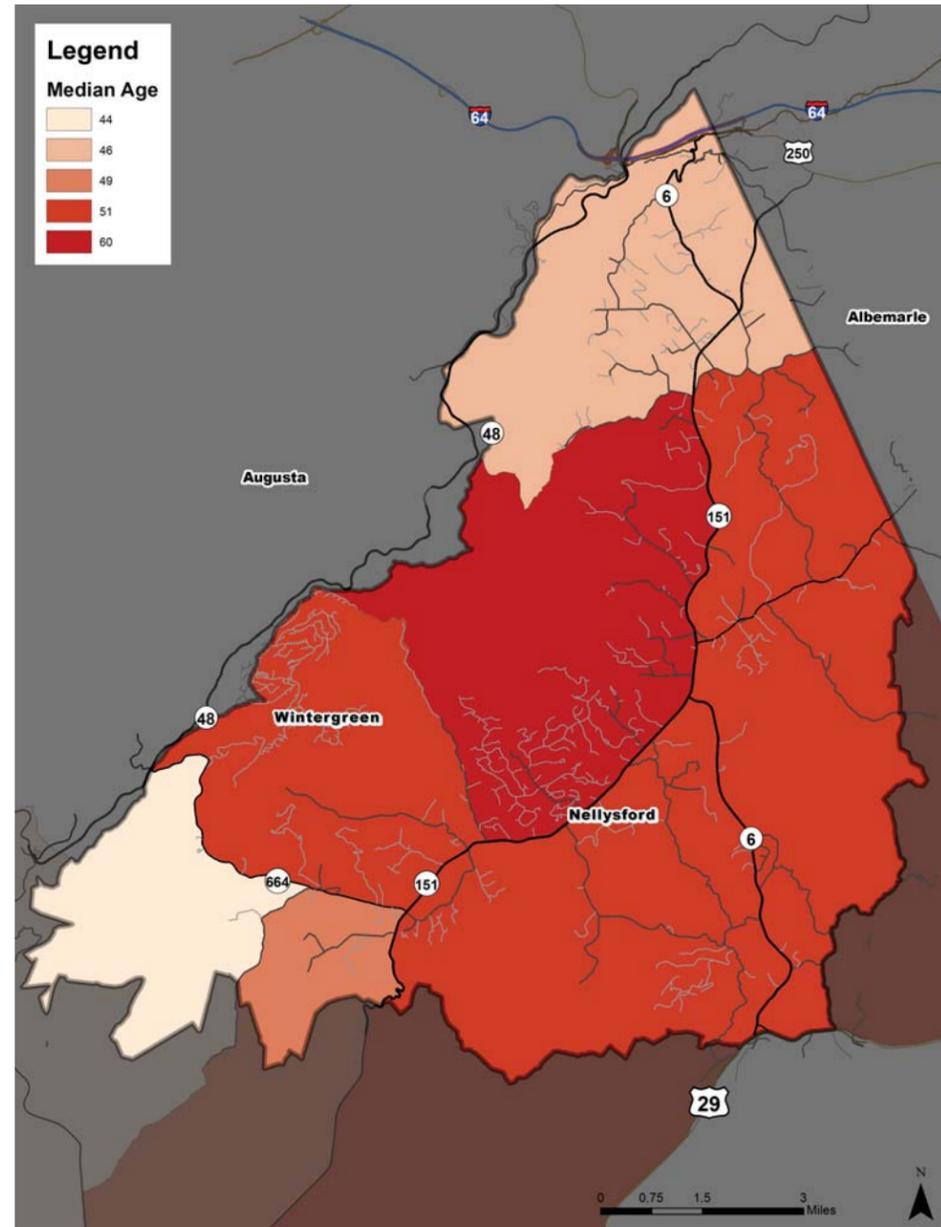


Median Income



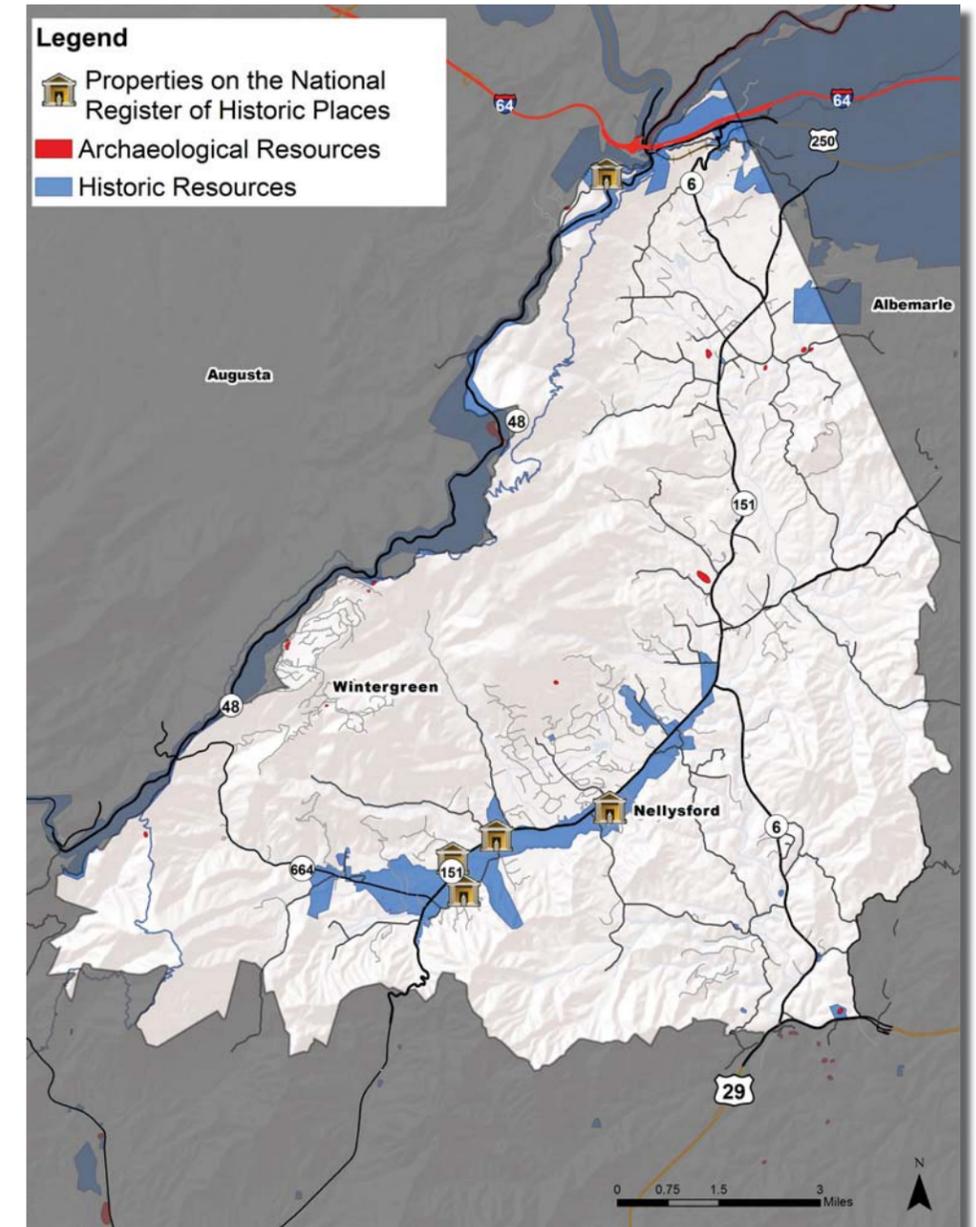
Mapping median income provides a view of how income and poverty are distributed across the study area. It provides guidance for which parts of the community might need more services, or which areas might benefit from strategic investment and employment opportunities. This data source is the US Census American Community Survey 2012.

Median Age



Mapping median age illustrates how a community is aging. It is especially useful for identifying what types of resources a community might need over the mid-term, and where; for example, more nursing homes or more playgrounds for a given location. The median age in the area is 51, which is higher than the state average of 37. The highest median age is 59, which is found in the Nellysford area.

Historic Resources



Mapping historic resources provides a better understanding of how resources individually and collectively contribute to cultural landscapes and a sense of place. This data source is the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, and includes the location of properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places as well as others deemed to be eligible or historically significant.



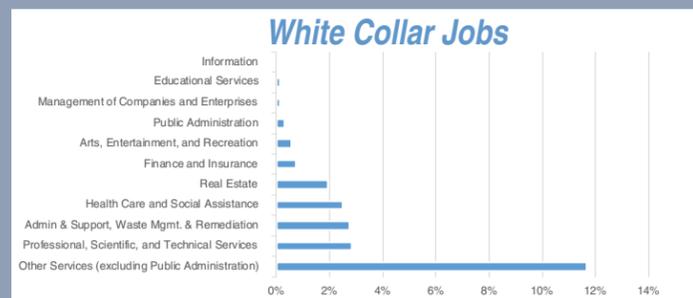
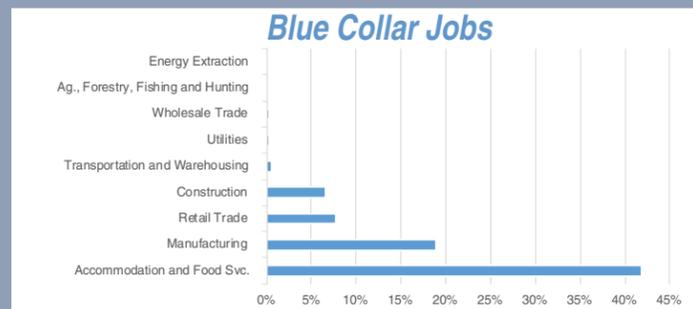
Overview

The economy of the Rockfish Valley is interconnected with its natural beauty and rural identity. The stunning vistas, ag heritage, and outdoor destinations attract a significant number of tourists and vacation home owners. Of the 1,593 jobs in the area, the largest proportion (40%) are in the accommodation and food service industry. The largest entities are Wintergreen Resort and the area's agribusiness sector, which includes numerous world-class breweries, cideries, wineries, and distillery. The vast majority of businesses have located on the 151 corridor, with concentrations in Nellysford, Afton, and Wintergreen. The area has a daily out-commuting pattern for employment, with area residents' destinations including Albemarle County (18%), Charlottesville (12%), Augusta (4%) and Waynesboro (3%).

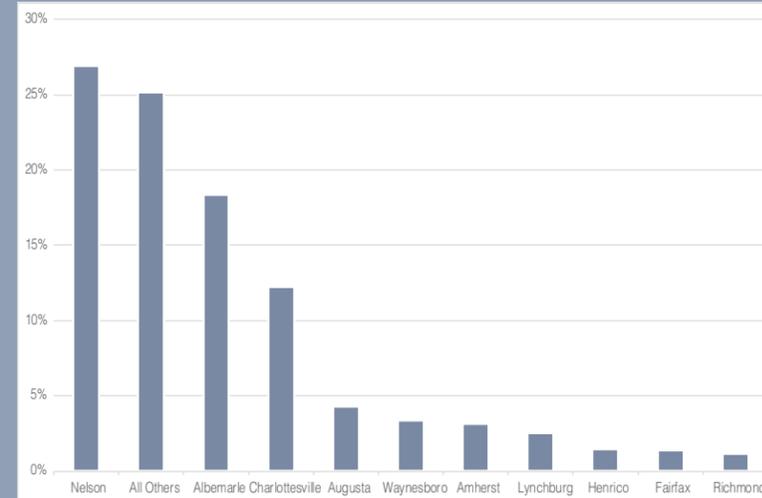
Facts and Figures

- Median Household Income in Nelson County: \$48,888
- Median Household Income in Study Area: \$57,203
- Population in Study Area: 7,749 people
- Population Density in Study Area: 32 persons per square mile
- Unemployment Rate: 3.4%

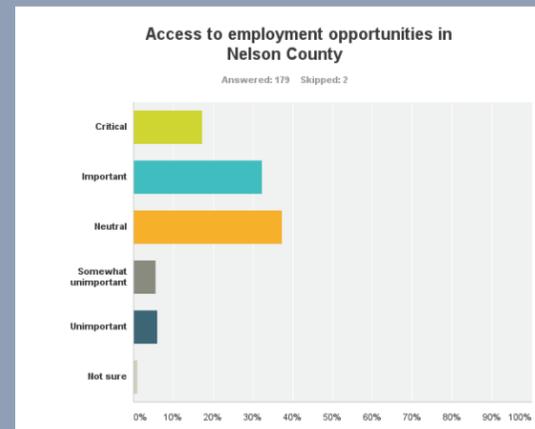
Employment by Sector



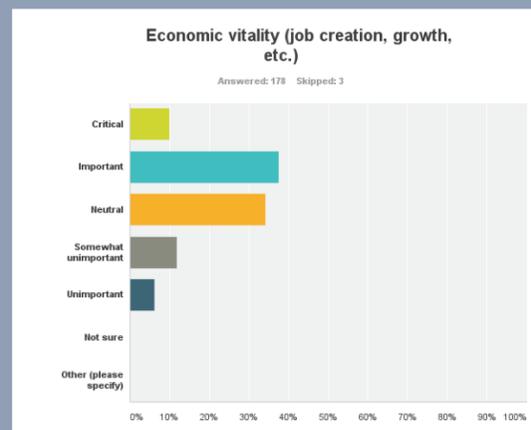
Commuting Destinations



Public Survey Results: What is the community saying about the Economy? Do you agree with the results of the survey?

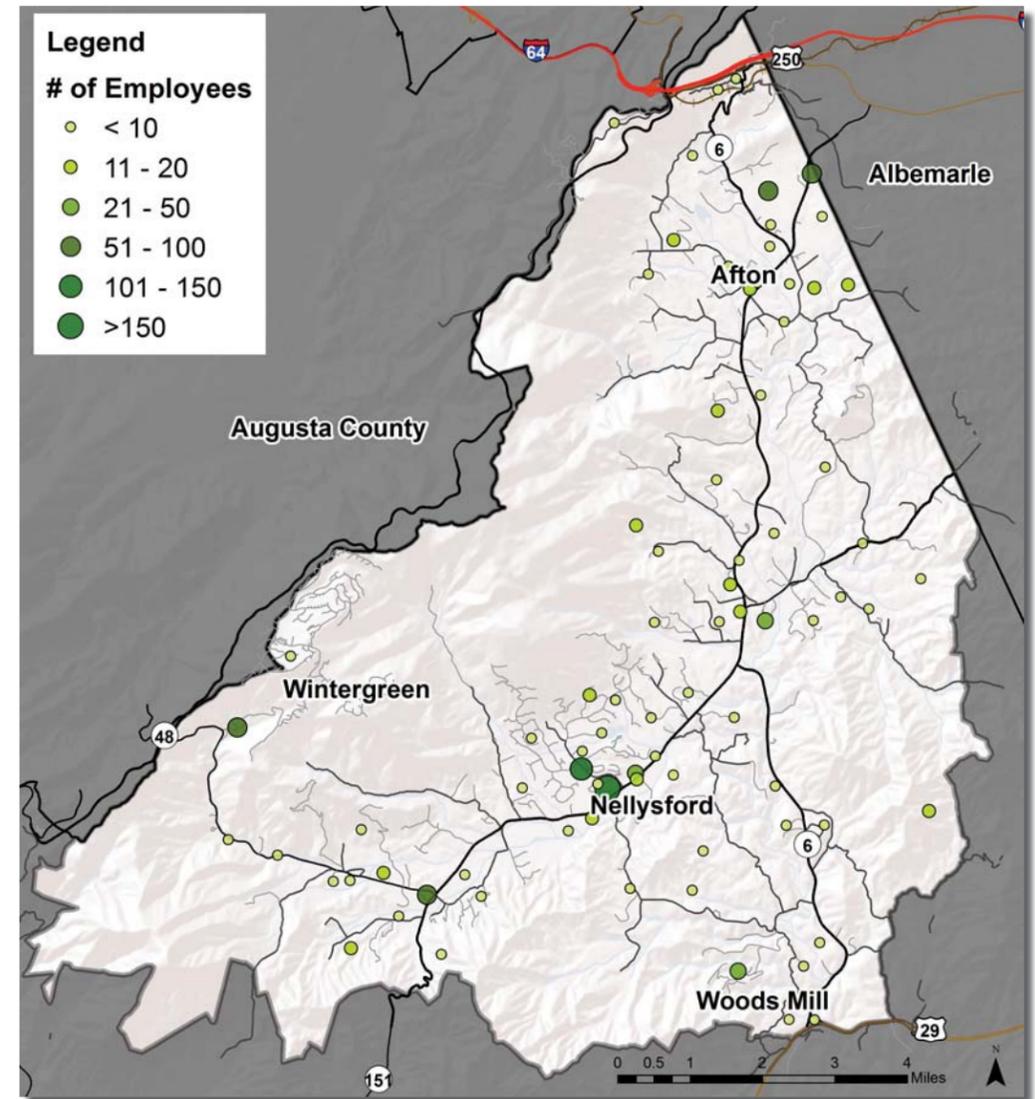


Approximately 50% said access to employment in Nelson County is important; while 35% said they are neutral on that issue.



Approximately 45% said economic vitality in the Rockfish Valley is important; while over 30% said they are neutral on that issue.

Employment Numbers by Location

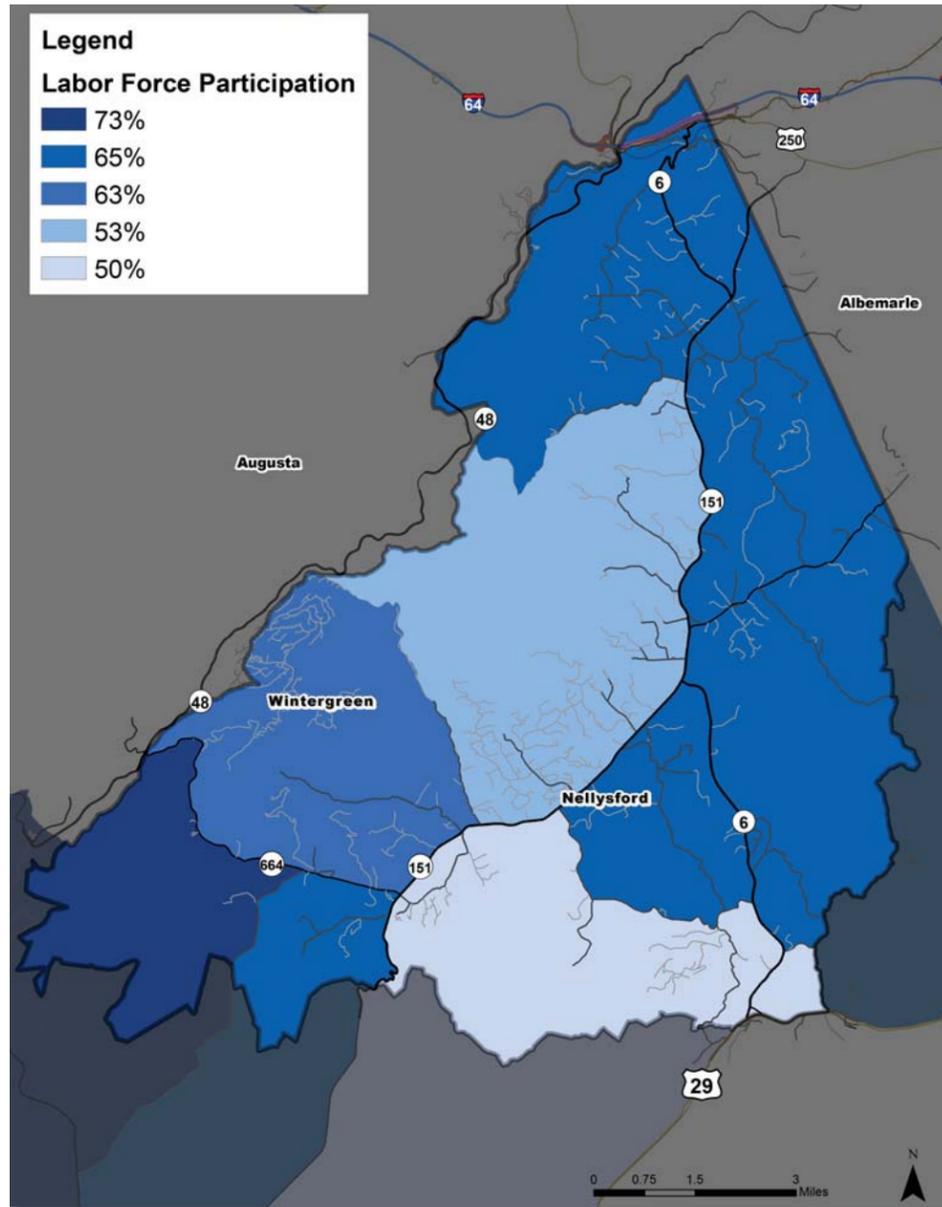


Economy

The Rockfish Valley is a vibrant, economically diverse area with numerous local family-owned businesses and successful entrepreneurs. The area supports a thriving agribusiness, agritourism, and resort tourism economy while maintaining its authentic rural character.

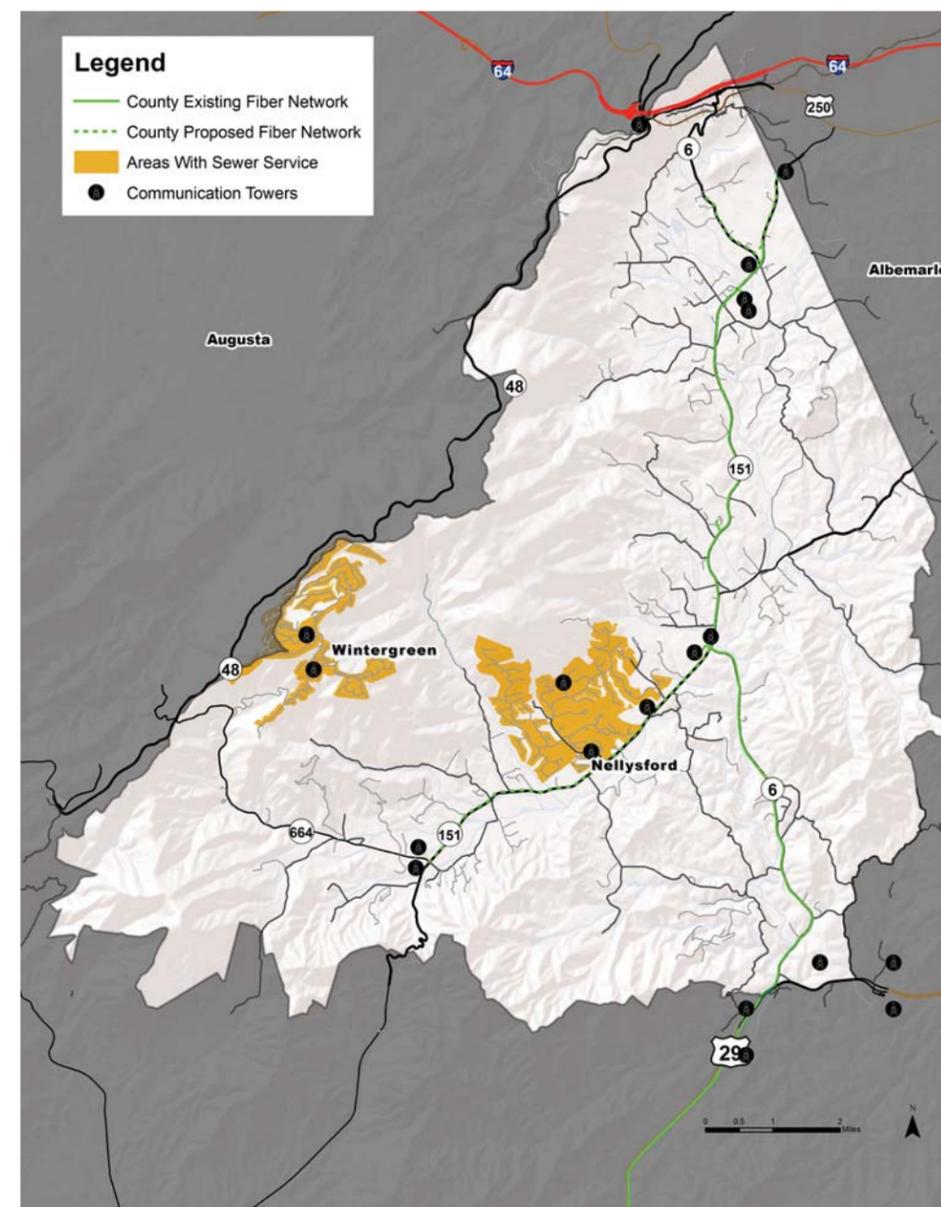


Labor Force Participation



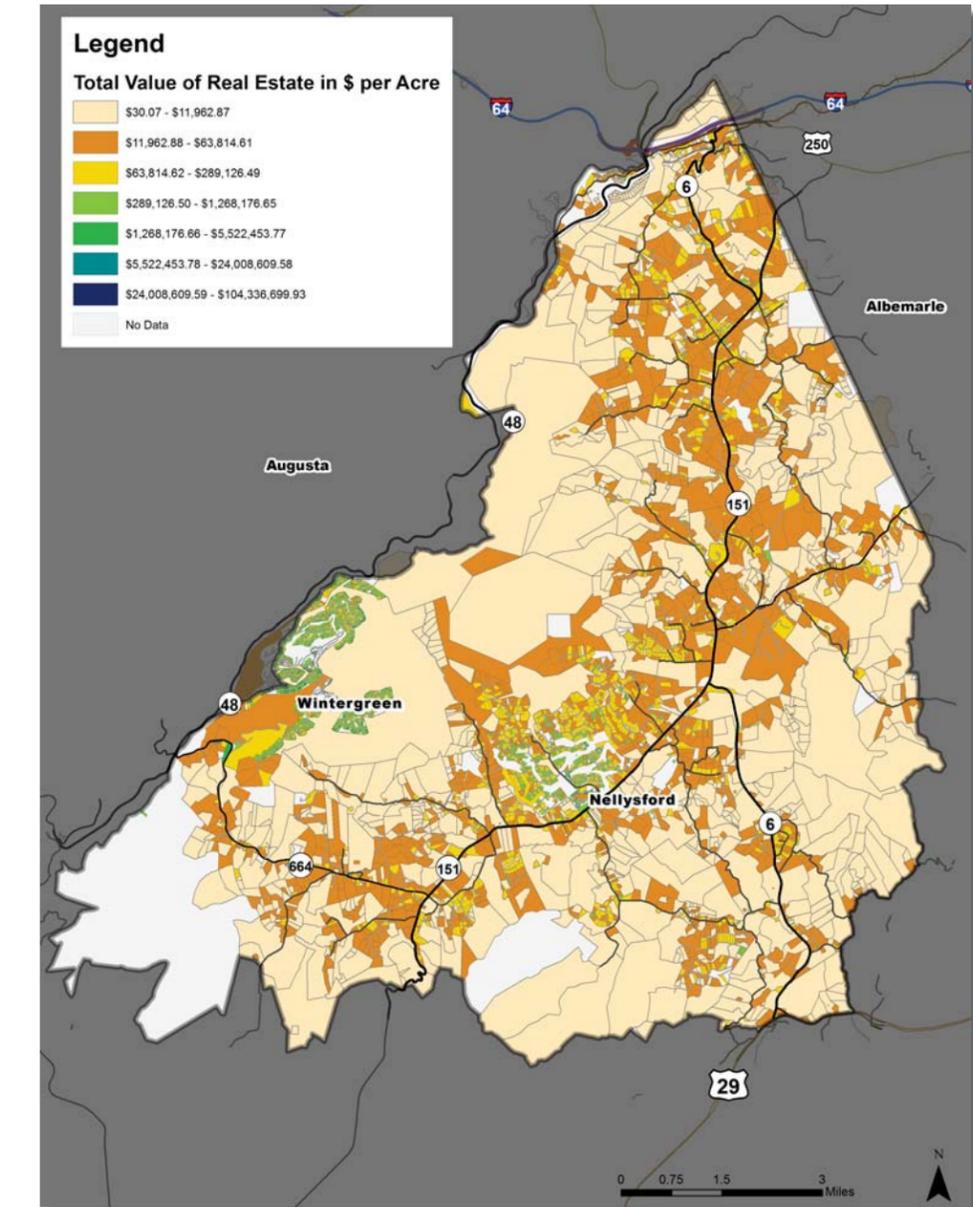
This map looks at the percent of the population 16 years and over that is participating in the labor force. This measure is an indication of areas with high unemployment rates; areas with concentrations of people who have dropped out of the labor force due to disability or long-term unemployment; and concentrations of people who are not participating because they are full-time students or retired. The state average participation rate is 66.4%

Utility Availability



This map highlights major utility availability in the area. Access to utilities is an important factor for new and existing businesses. Access to water, sewer, broadband, and other utilities also benefit residents by: reliably providing safe, clean drinking water; reducing water quality impacts from sewage; and providing broadband internet for education and teleworking.

Value of Real Estate



This map highlights the distribution of real estate values in the Rockfish Valley expressed in total dollars per acre. This value includes both the underlying land value and the value of any improvements, such as dwellings and other structures. Note: data was not available for all parcels; and the data does not represent a taxable value of real estate. Data was sourced from Nelson County assessor records from the first quarter of 2016.

Natural Resources



Overview

The natural environment is a defining characteristic of the Rockfish Valley. The study area is defined by its stunning vistas, babbling brooks, misty mountain forests, and wild places. It is these natural features that have drawn many residents and tourists to the Rockfish Valley. These environmental resources also provide recreational opportunities on public and private lands. People are drawn to the area because of the access and proximity to the Blue Ridge Parkway, Appalachian Trail, and George Washington National Forest; and locals value the area's rural landscapes, working farms, and woodlots which maintain access to hunting and fishing opportunities. The study area is largely free of large-scale residential and commercial development such as what is found throughout neighboring counties. Most development in the study area fronts along the Routes 151, 6, and 664 corridors.

Facts and Figures

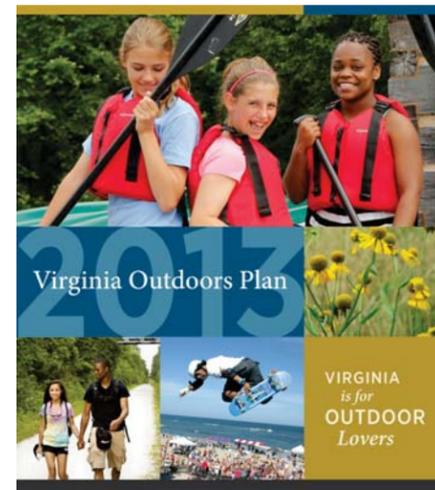
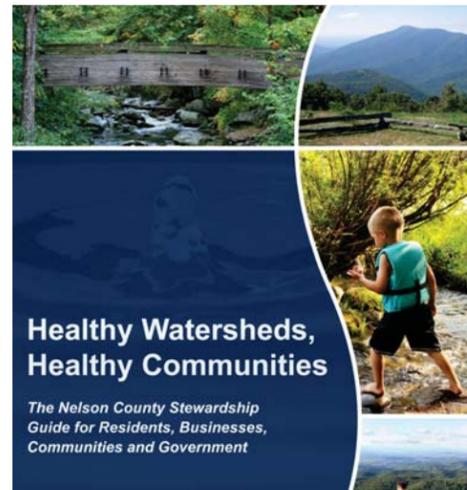
- Total conservation lands in study area: 37.5 square miles
- Total length of streams in study area: 171 miles
- Total area of wetlands in study area: 414 acres
- Total forest cover in study area: 86 square miles (83%)



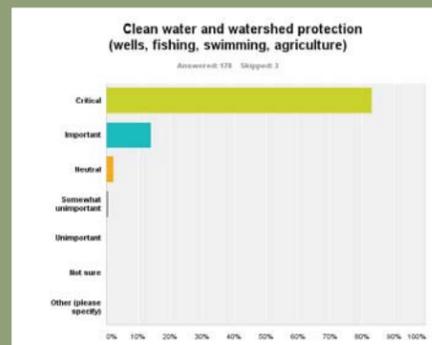
Current Recommendations

Several previous studies have focused on the Rockfish Valley's natural resources and environmental features. These include the Green Infrastructure Plan (2010), which evaluated environmental assets countywide, and which illustrated the value of conserving local natural resources while also sustaining existing local agricultural and timber industries. The Rockfish Valley was also featured in the statewide Virginia Outdoors Plan (2013), which highlighted the area's many outdoor recreation activities such as hiking, rock climbing, hunting, fishing, bird watching, winter snow sports, and cycling. The area's green infrastructure network and continued economic vitality are fundamentally interconnected.

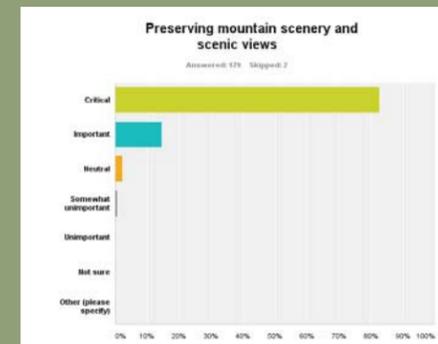
Previous Plans & Existing Studies



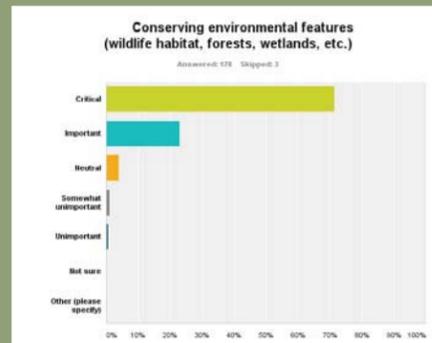
Public Survey Results: What is the community saying about the Environment? Do you agree with the results of the survey?



95% said clean water and watershed protection are important; over 80% said they are critically important.

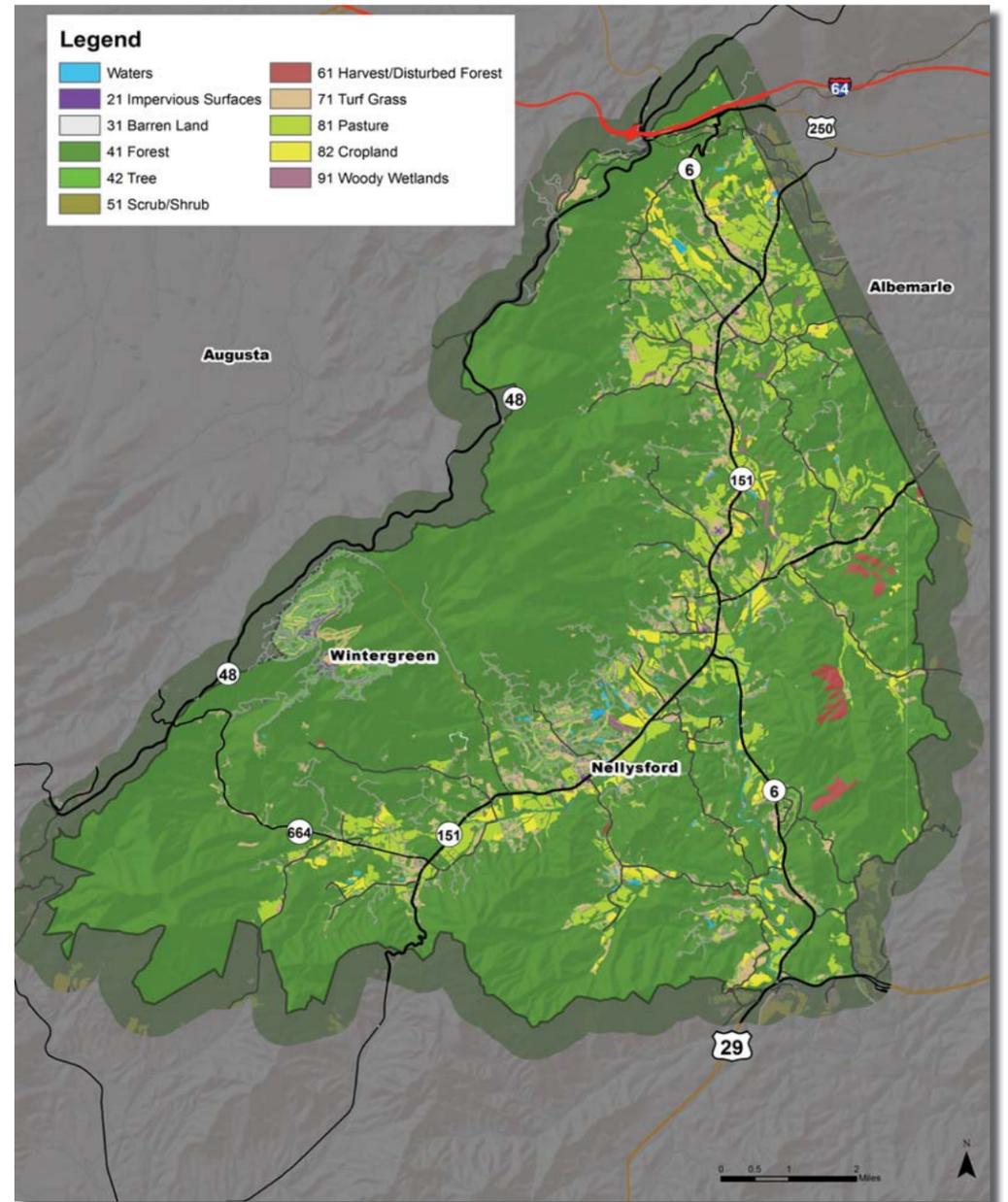


95% said scenic preservation is important; over 80% said it is critically important.

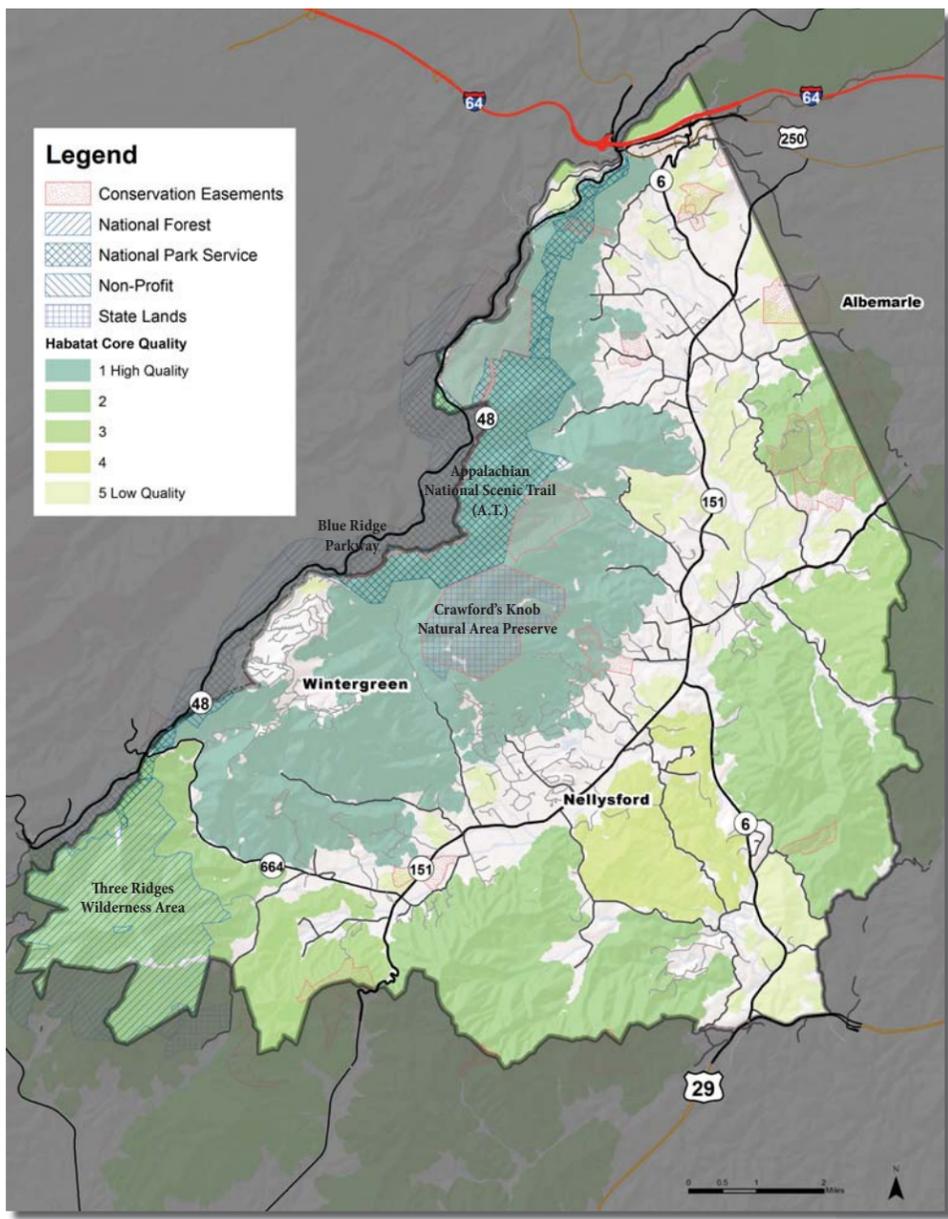


Over 90% said conserving local environmental features is important; over 70% said it is critically important.

Land Cover Map

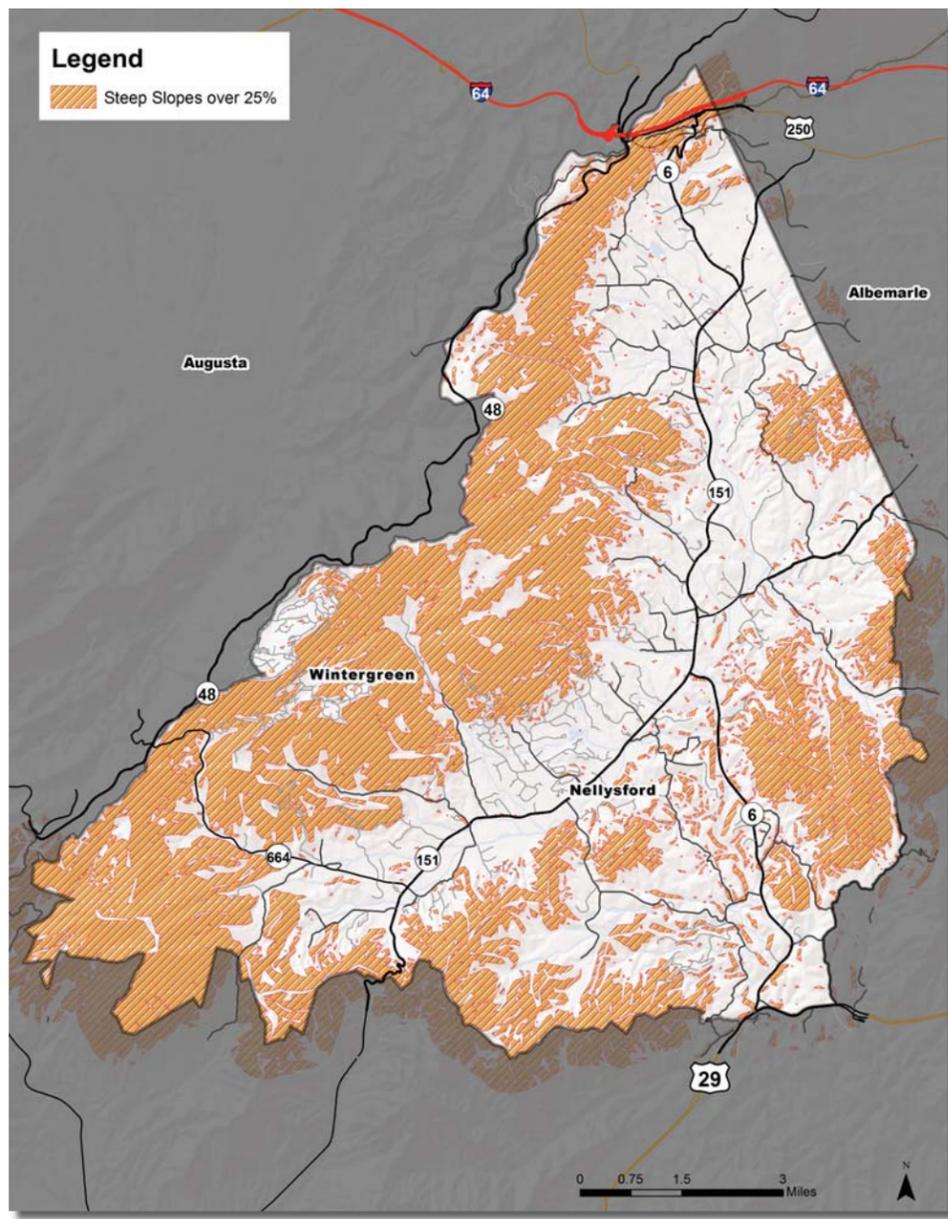


Conservation Land & Habitat Cores



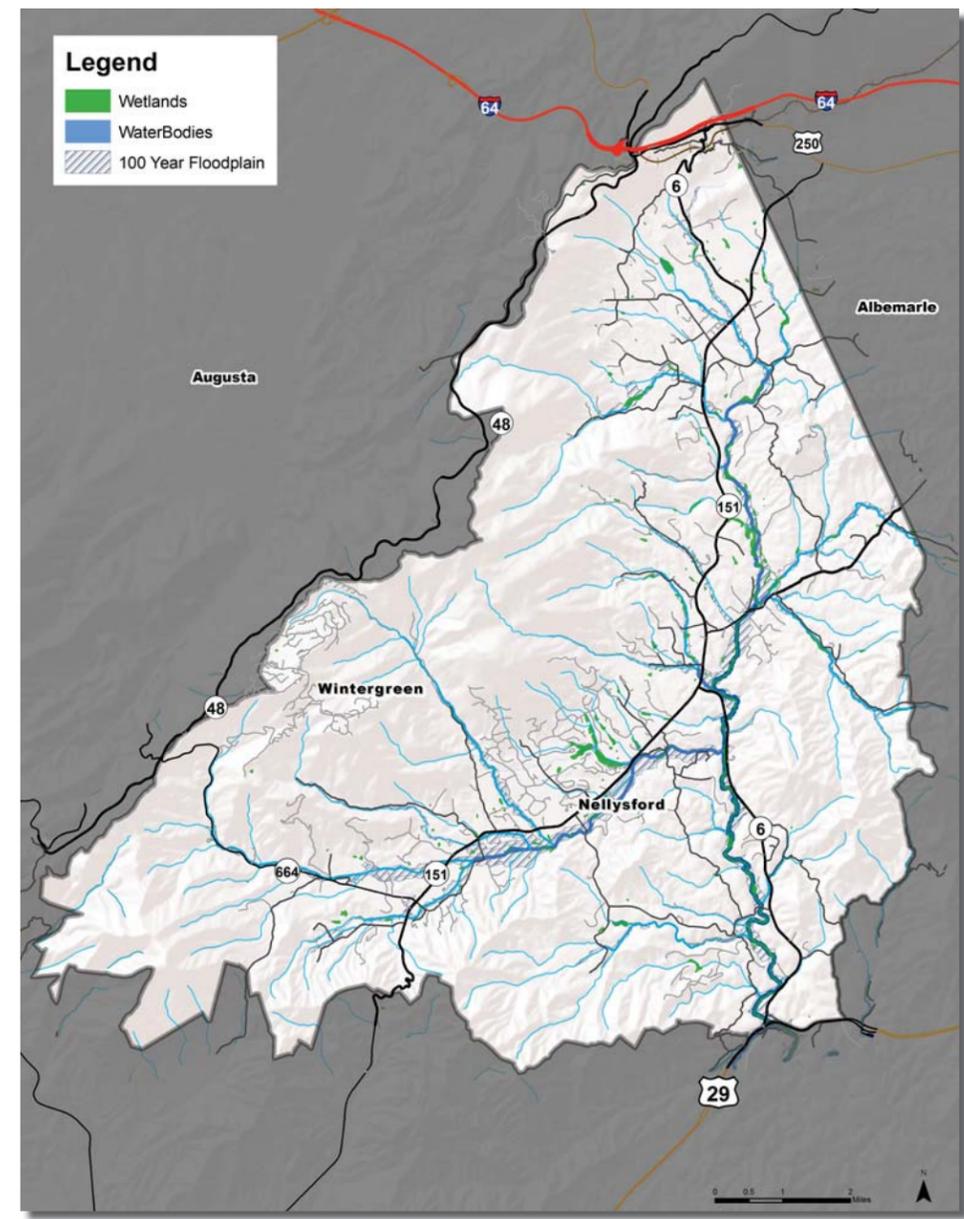

This map identifies the quality of natural landscape cores, as well as land in conservation easement or in public ownership (State, Federal, and nonprofit). These protected landscapes provide critical wildlife habitat and ecosystem services. They also provide recreation opportunities and act as a draw for tourists. Recreation activities like hiking, wildlife viewing, hunting and fishing, photography, and scenic touring have proven to create positive economic impacts.

Steep Slopes




Steep slopes are defined as land areas with slopes greater than 25% in grade. These slopes tend to be found at higher elevations in the study area. Land with steep slopes is more difficult to access and develop; and when developed, there are increased chances for erosion. Steep slope areas also represent some of the most important natural views and vistas in the study area, creating another reason to avoid development of steep slopes.

Streams and Wetlands




Streams, rivers, wetlands, and floodplains are vital components of the green infrastructure network. They provide residents with important ecosystem services such as aquifer recharge, water quality protection, a reliable source of safe drinking water, flood mitigation, and riparian habitat. They also create recreation opportunities for fishing and boating. Given the mountainous terrain of the study area, most wetlands and floodplains are in lower elevation river bottoms.



Overview

The transportation network in the Rockfish Valley consists of State-maintained rural routes and rural two-lane arterial highways. The major corridors are Route 151 (which runs north-south) and Route 6 (which runs east-west). Both routes are designated Virginia Scenic Byways; and Route 151 is a designated bicycling route. Route 151 is also the location of much of the area's recent commercial development and an growing number of special events. Route 6 has experienced less growth, but has the most heavy vehicle traffic in the study area, with 9% of vehicles on the route being heavy vehicles (trucks, busses, tractor trailers).

Facts and Figures (VDOT Data: 2012-2014)

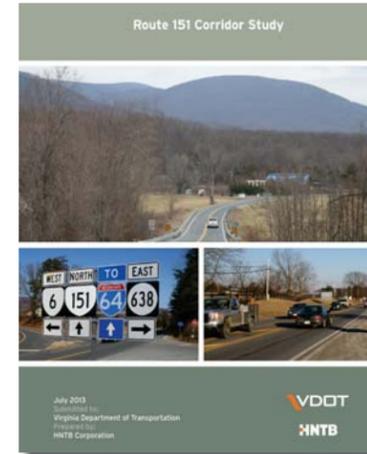
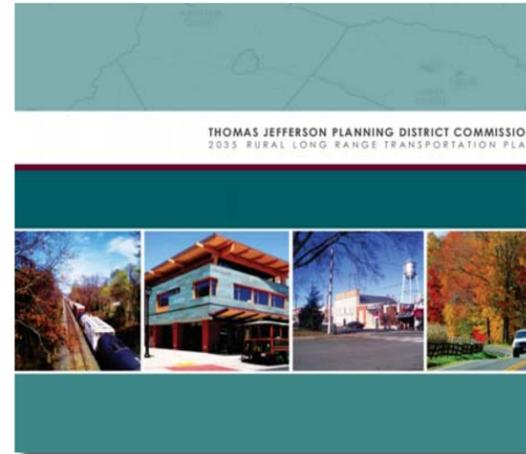
- Total road miles: 224
- Total number of crashes (between 2012-2014): 302
- Most congested routes: Route 151 and I-64
- Number of crashes involving alcohol (between 2012-2014): 26
- Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT): 8,161



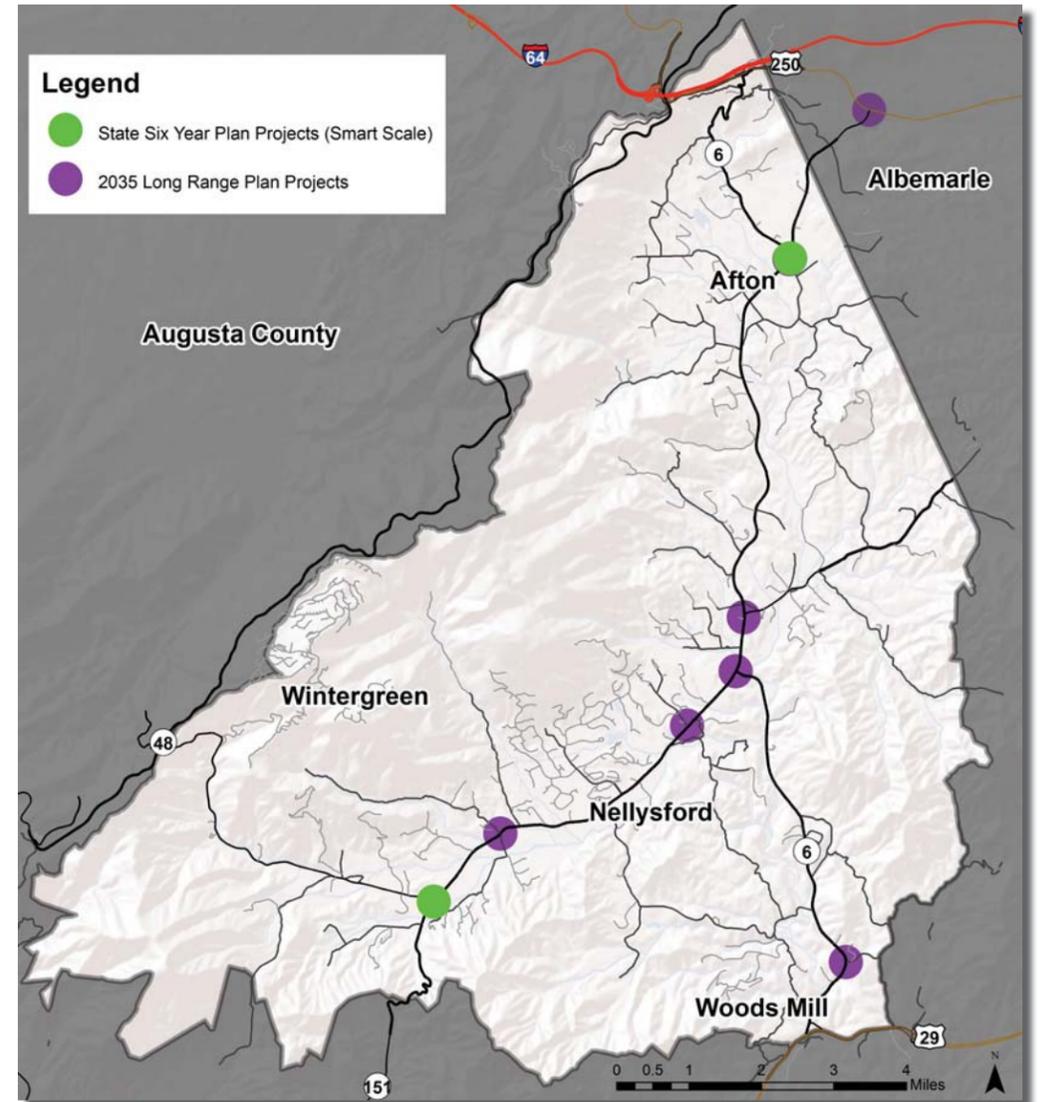
Current Recommendations

Several studies have evaluated the transportation networks in the Rockfish Valley and identified recommendations for improving safety and reducing congestion. Recommendations from these plans have been incorporated into the Regional Long Range Transportation Plan (RLRP-2035). Most recently, the VDOT Route 151 Corridor Study (2013) identified strategies for improving problematic intersections all along Route 151. Two such projects in the corridor were recently awarded construction funds through the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP).

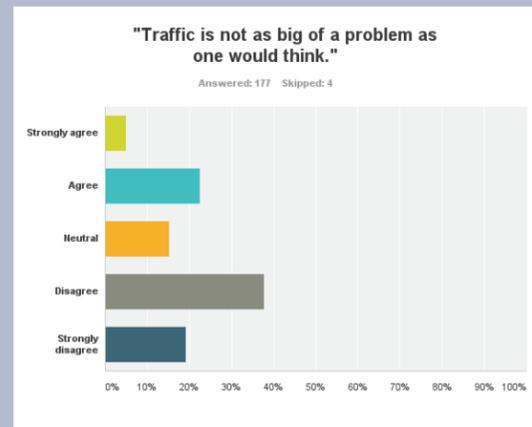
Previous Plans & Existing Studies



2035 Rural Long Range Plan Recommendations Map

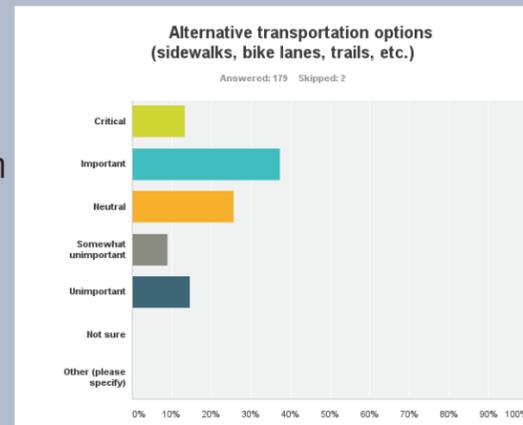


Public Survey Results: What is the community saying about Transportation? Do you agree with the results of the survey?



55% disagreed with the statement that "Traffic is not as big of a problem as one would think." Approximately 28% said they agree with that statement.

Approximately 50% said alternative transportation options in the Rockfish Valley are important. Approximately 23% such options are somewhat unimportant or unimportant.

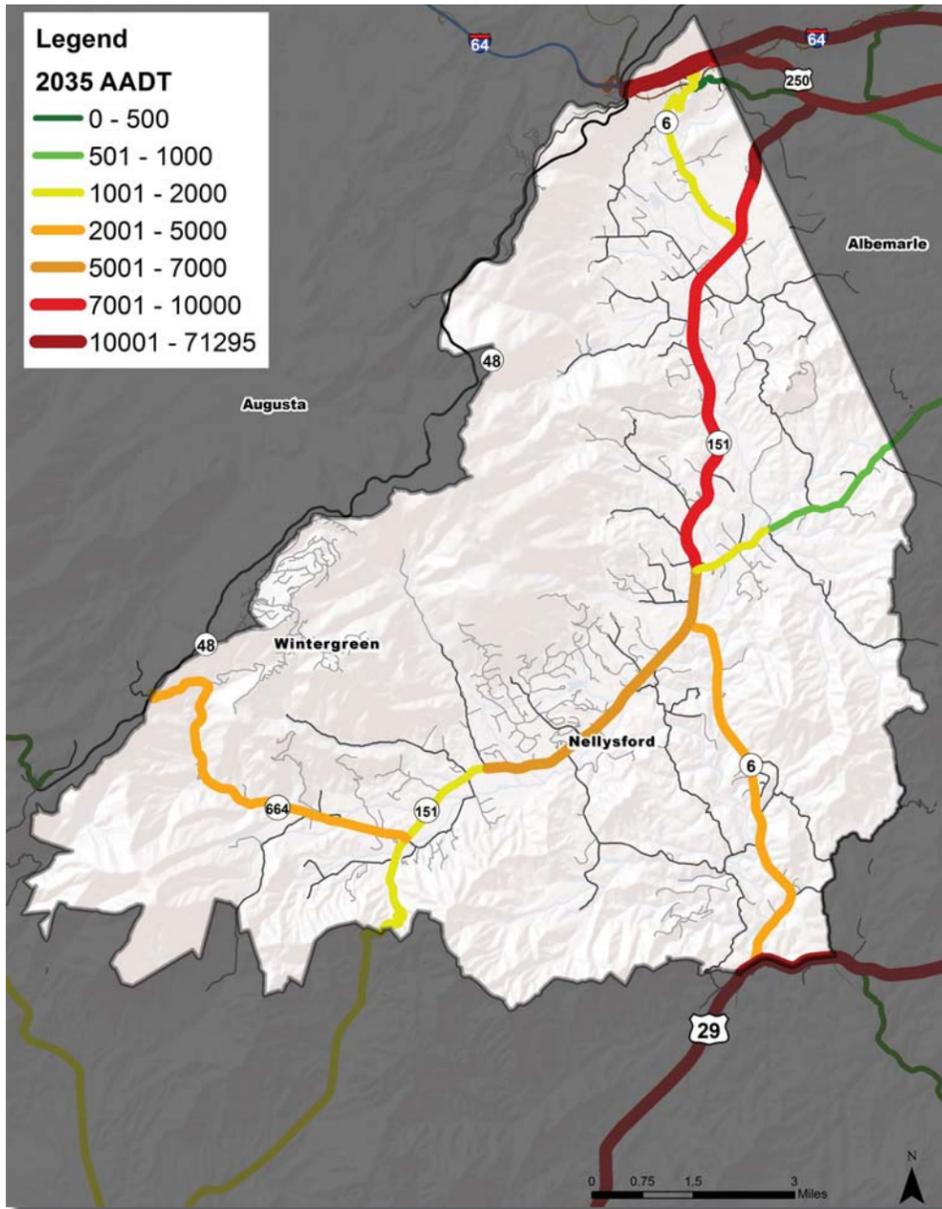


Transportation

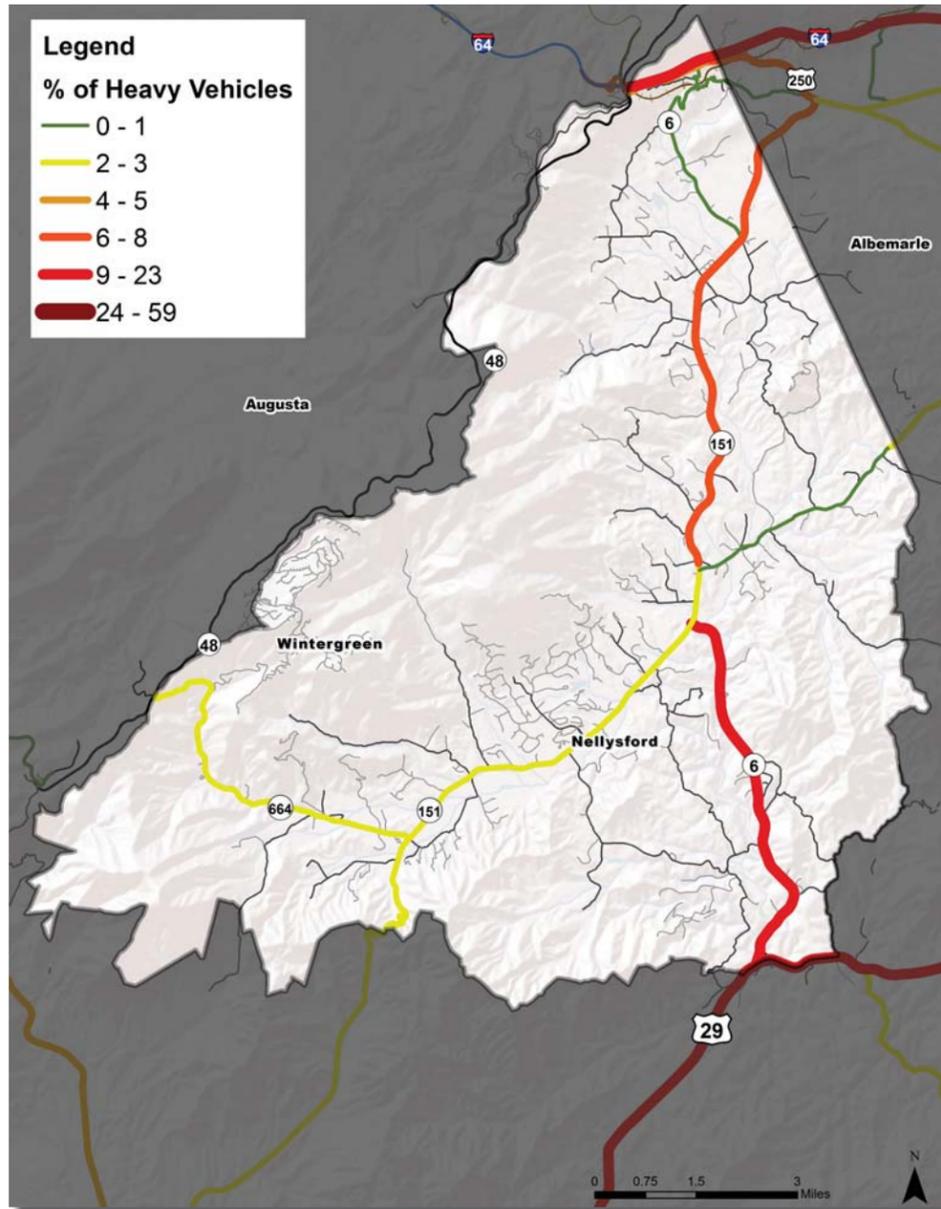
Transportation networks are evaluated on their safety, access to the community, and ability to adequately carry traffic. The maps on this poster highlight the current traffic conditions, the percentage of traffic that is heavy vehicles (trucks), and crash hotspots.



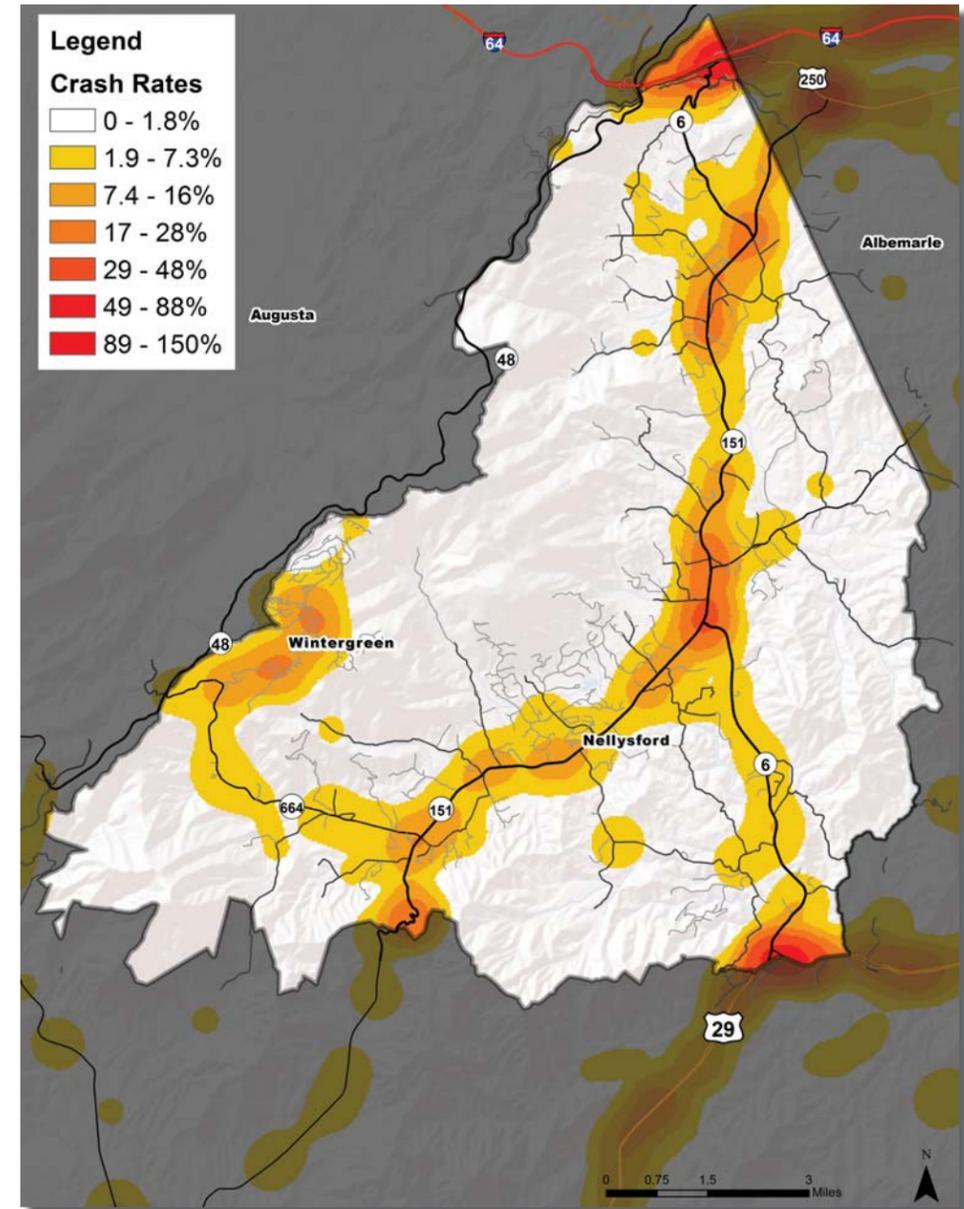
Traffic Volumes



Percent Truck Traffic



Crash Hotspots



Annual average daily traffic (AADT) is a measure of traffic volume on a section of roadway. AADT data is collected by VDOT for major roadways. VDOT collects the data using electronic counting equipment placed in the roadway. Counts are normally done during the week (Tuesday-Thursday) to represent "normal" weekday traffic - and therefore data might not fully represent weekend traffic increases. Data in this map shows current trends forecasted out to 2035.



Percent truck traffic is derived from the same counts as AADT, but sensors on the counting equipment distinguish vehicles by weight. This data provides information on the percentage of the traffic on a roadway that is made up of heavy vehicles. Heavy vehicles include busses, box trucks, large farm equipment, semi-trailers and other combination axle vehicles. Currently, the highest truck traffic rate in the study area is on River Road (Route 6) at 9%.



Crash hotspot mapping is a method used to identify areas with clusters of crashes. Crash data is reported to VDOT with location information, severity, and the type of incident. Crash data can be mapped and analyzed using specialized software that identifies hotspots. This map illustrates crashes from 2012-2014; darker colors indicate greater crash numbers. Most hotspots are clustered around intersections along Routes 151, 6, and 29.