

**6. COOPERATIVE EXTENSION MATTERS
LONNIE JOHNSON, SOUTHEAST DISTRICT DIRECTOR
VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION**

Along with several local producers and members of the Extension Leadership Council, Supervisor Young and I met with Mr. Lonnie Johnson on June 30 to discuss the current vacancies at our Extension Office. As we've previously discussed, Virginia Tech has frozen its vacant positions and we've been unable to tap into any state funding to fill either our vacant Agriculture/Natural Resources (ANR) position or our 4-H position.

At the meeting on June 30, Mr. Johnson shared that Isle of Wight County was in a similar predicament and that he hoped state funding might soon free-up for one position somewhere in the Southeast District – he suggested that we might consider sharing the state funding between Southampton and Isle of Wight (basically, we'd each receive 1/3 of the cost of salary/benefits rather than the customary 2/3), allowing both of us to move forward in filling our respective ANR positions with funds already budgeted. And with a modest increase in local funds, each of us could likely add a part-time 4-H Program Assistant.

Based on this glimmer of hope, I arranged a meeting on July 21 with Mr. Johnson and Mr. Doug Caskey, the Isle of Wight County Administrator, to discuss the concept of sharing state funding. Unfortunately, at that meeting, Mr. Johnson advised us that the state budget projections had worsened over the past several weeks and the possibility for state funding had vanished for the foreseeable future.

I've invited Mr. Johnson to your meeting to share some options with you. Our FY 2010 budget includes slightly less than \$50,000 for Cooperative Extension (roughly \$43,500 for salaries and benefits). He's indicated to me that the cost of hiring an ANR agent (fresh out of college) is slightly less than \$50,000. A part-time 4-H Program Assistant would be another \$20,000.

As I see it, you have 3 options:

- 1) Leave the positions vacant until state funding is made available;
- 2) Proceed in filling the ANR position with 100% local funds (by the time the position is filled, funding included in your FY 2010 budget will likely be sufficient to cover it); or
- 3) Proceed in filling the ANR position and the part-time 4-H Program Assistant position (will require a special appropriation of roughly \$15,000 in FY 2010 and an ongoing budgetary increase of \$25,000 in FY 2011).

In my judgment, option 2 is the most prudent choice.

DIRECTION REQUIRED:

We'll be seeking your direction on how you wish to proceed.