

Western North Carolina Food Policy Council

We Are Points West

Presentation prepared for the North Carolina Sustainable Local Foods Advisory Council
by Western Carolina University's Public Policy Institute

Who We Are

- **Hosting Agency:**
 - WCU Public Policy Institute
- **Partners:**
 - MANNA Food Bank, Region A Southwest Commission, local governments, and state agencies
- **Counties Represented:**
 - Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Jackson, Macon, Haywood and Swain

The Public Policy Institute

At Western Carolina University

The Public Policy Institute (PPI) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, independent research and outreach organization.

- We're here to generate effective public policy responses and alternatives to important political, administrative, and social problems affecting Western North Carolina.
- We foster collaboration between University resources, faculty and student participation, and community partners.

Brief History of the WNC FPC

- WCU Poverty Project: March 2012 forum
 - WNC Poverty Rate; Hunger Rate; Unemployment Rate; Agricultural Losses
 - MANNA FoodBank and potential partnership
- Initial Discussions and Concerns
- First Interest Meeting: July 30
 - 65 attendees; press and media; immediate response from counties and state/federal agencies
- First Organizational Meeting: September 18

Accomplishments to Date

- Don't laugh – it's only been a few months 😊
 - Council structure and subgroups
 - School of Government list-serv
 - Web page and social media
 - Asset Mapping and GIS datasets
 - Policy issues: list in development for county governments
 - Spring 2013 : software development
 - Funding relationships
 - Partnerships with state, federal, and regional agencies, and with Asheville-Buncombe FPC

Focus Areas

- **Food Security**
 - Immediate Need and Prevention Strategies; Connection to Local Food Providers
- **Economic Development**
 - Tourism, Business Development, Capacity Building, Marketing, Funding
- **Food Policy and Advocacy**
 - Local, State and Federal Levels; Coordination with ARC, USDA, NC Legislature
- **Asset Mapping and Management**
 - GIS Mapping, Databases, Network and Systems Management
- **Farmer Outreach and Support**
 - Cultivation and Growth for Farms and Market Growers
- **Food Hub Creation**
 - Distribution, Processing, Funding, Administration, Structure, and Management
- **Land Use**
 - County Policy; Integration with Historic, Cultural, Preservation/Conservation Projects
- **Outreach and Programming**
 - Health and Wellness, Education, Medical Services, Recreation, Media, Participatory Strategy

Working Groups and Personnel

- Steering Committee
 - 1. Education, Health & Wellness, Outreach
 - 2. Farmer Support and Economic Development
 - 3. Asset Mapping, Internal Networking, Resources
- Staff: Emily Elders, Graduate Assistant, PPI
- Volunteers: WCU Students, Council Members

Goals through Dec. 2012

- Complete asset mapping and make available online.
- Begin policy research (white papers) on top five most pressing local and regional issues.
- Prepare Ag Economic Impact statements and Poverty statements for each county government and distribute.
- Implement coordinative system for farmers and pantries, and beta-test software needs.
- Continue long-range food hub planning in partnership with Region A.
- Create databases of all health, wellness, and educational programs and encourage networking among all parties.
- Begin planning for Local Food Expo and Workshops in Spring 2013.
- Work on the Laundry List...

Long-Term Goals of WNC FPC

- Stronger regional food economies
 - Through increased distribution networks, aggregation of orders, regional branding, grant and small business assistance programs, and food hub services
- More responsive, more local policy
 - Across local governments in each of the seven counties, and as a representative bloc to state and federal agencies
- Mitigation of WNC's Poverty Rate
 - Focusing specifically on children and seniors, and from a variety of angles including more readily available fresh foods, more relevant education, expansion of food donations, and increased economic opportunity

Challenges

- Educating at the planner and government level: what is food policy?
- Educating council members: the difference between programs and policy
- Navigating territorial situations with funding and other agencies
- Facing cultural obstacles: farmers and clients
- Coordinating seven counties and dozens of resources (state and federal problems)

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