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Photo: Courtesy Donna Whittington

## Introduction

Understanding a community's existing conditions lends a better understanding of overall flood risk and ability to mitigate future risk, including characteristics that influence the vulnerability of people and assets to flooding, as well as the community's ability to reduce the impact of flood events. Tazewell County has geographic, economic, and societal factors that affect the frequency and severity of flood events, as well as the community's ability to rebound from damaging floods. This section provides a summary of existing conditions in Tazewell County, including:

- Community history;
- Geography and climate;
- Population and demographics;
- Economy;
- Transportation; and,
- Flood history and characteristics.

## Community History

Tazewell County is located in the Appalachian Mountains of southwestern Virginia. With 520 square miles, Tazewell County and the surrounding region are known for their agriculture, historical, resource, and cultural significance.

The initial settlers of the land were indigenous people known as the Woodland Indians. There are few known details about the early inhabitants of the area. Artifacts have been found across the county indicating they were an organized society of people and groups. The Woodland Indians were no longer in the area when the pioneers and European Settlers arrived. At that time, the Cherokee and Shawnee tribes were using the lands as hunting grounds.<sup>1</sup> After the first European colony was established in Jamestown, settlers including professional hunters who exported animal pelts to Europe, hunted large herds of deer, elk, buffalo, and other game in the region.<sup>2</sup>

The first permanent European settler in Tazewell County is believed to arrive in 1770.<sup>3</sup> Most of the early settlers were of Scotch-Irish descent and arrived via the Wilderness Trail. James Burke, operating under the Woods River Company, led the first land survey of Tazewell County in 1749. The survey expedition mapped the headwaters of the Clinch River, Maiden Spring, and Dry Branch near today's Russell County.<sup>4</sup> Tazewell County, chartered on December 19, 1799, was named in honor of Senator Henry Tazewell who made the motion to create the county. It was formed from Russell and Wythe Counties.

Tazewell County in its early formation and into the 19<sup>th</sup> century had a lower population than surrounding counties. The low population could be attributed to distance from the great migration road westward,

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Tazewell County 2017 Comprehensive Plan. Retrieved February 24, 2023. [2017-Comprehensive-Plan-Final.pdf \(tazewellcountyva.org\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

hostile encounters with Native American tribes in this area, and difficulty securing clear title to land due to large-scale land speculation of the times. Historic sites, monuments, and museums reflect the community's link to pioneer and Native American ancestors throughout the region.<sup>5</sup>

The economic base in Tazewell County's early history was primarily agricultural uses. In the 1880s, coal started being mined commercially in Tazewell County.<sup>6</sup> Coal mining rapidly expanded in the 1930s with the establishment of railroads for transporting coal. The economy in Tazewell County shifted to primarily mining and mining-related industries which peaked in 1990. As the rural Appalachia region in Southwest Virginia saw downward trends in the region's primary economic sectors of mining, manufacturing, and agriculture, the entire region collaborated in the early 2000s to develop a branding/marketing campaign under the Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation.<sup>7</sup>

A recent economic revitalization study was prepared in September 2021. The Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission Roadmap to Economic Resiliency Study charts a path forward for business and tourism resiliency in the region. Recommendations underway include making the region more attractive to a migrating workforce, eliminating blight, and advertising the community for potential relocation.<sup>8</sup>

Tazewell County is governed by a five-member Board of Supervisors which represent the County's five magisterial districts. Incorporated towns within Tazewell County include Bluefield, Cedar Bluff, Pocahontas, Richlands, and Tazewell.<sup>9</sup> In addition, Tazewell County has approximately twenty unincorporated communities and four census-designated places.

## Geography and Climate

Tazewell County is located in the north central portion of southwestern Virginia. The county lies within the valley and ridge portions of the Appalachian Mountains on the southeast with the Cumberland Plateau and Allegheny Mountains on the northeast. Tazewell County is bordered by West Virginia on the north, Buchanan County and Russell County on the west, Smyth County on the south, and Bland County on the east (Figure 4-1). It is one of four counties that comprise the Cumberland Plateau Planning District. Tazewell County is 520 square miles (the 20th largest out of 95 Counties and 39 Independent Cities in Virginia) and represents 27.5 percent of the total land area of the district.<sup>10</sup> The county's incorporated municipalities include the Town of Bluefield, the Town of Cedar Bluff, the Town of

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Geological Survey Bulletin. Coal Resources of Tazewell County, Virginia, 1980. Retrieved July 7, 2023, <https://pubs.usgs.gov/bul/1913/report.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Southwest Virginia Economic Analysis Report. Retrieved March 13, 2023. <https://cppdc.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/SWVA-Economic-Analysis-Report.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission Roadmap to Economic Resiliency September 2021. Retrieved March 17, 2023. <https://cppdc.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Cumberland-Plateau-PDC-Roadmap-to-Economic-Resiliency.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Tazewell County 2017 Comprehensive Plan. Retrieved February 24, 2023. [2017-Comprehensive-Plan-Final.pdf \(tazewellcountyva.org\)](https://tazewellcountyva.org/2017-Comprehensive-Plan-Final.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Tazewell County Comprehensive Plan 2017. Retrieved February 13, 2023 from <http://cppdc.com/Reports/Tazewell%20Comp%20Plan%202017.pdf>



Pocahontas, the Town of Richlands, and the Town of Tazewell, which is the county seat. The incorporated towns are labeled with bold font in Figure 4-1.

Tazewell County maintains a continental climate, characterized by hot summers and cold winters. The average high is around 82 degrees in July, and the average low is 22 degrees in January. In addition, the county averages 42 inches of rain a year, 4 inches above the U.S. average of 38 inches. July is the most saturated month in Tazewell County with an average of 4.5 inches of rain, and the driest month is October with 2.5 inches.<sup>11</sup> Storms occur throughout the year in Tazewell County. In the mid-spring through early fall, Tazewell County faces more localized storms with large amounts of precipitation in a short period of time. From late fall to middle spring, Tazewell County faces slower moving storms with moderate precipitation. The climate in relation to flooding is discussed further in **Section 6: Risk Assessment**.

Since recording began in 1953, Tazewell County has experienced 21 presidential disaster declarations, including nine severe storms, five snowstorms, three hurricanes, one flood, and three other related disasters. After experiencing a hiatus in disasters from 2012 to 2017, the County has seen at least one disaster every other year. More recently, in July of 2022, the County experienced a flooding and mudslides disaster. The funding obligations for this incident accounted for approximately \$1.3 million in Public Assistance grants from the federal government.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> NOAA Online Weather Data for Tazewell County, VA. Retrieved from [Climate \(weather.gov\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> FEMA. Disaster Declarations by State and County. Retrieved from Disaster Declarations for States and Counties | FEMA.gov.

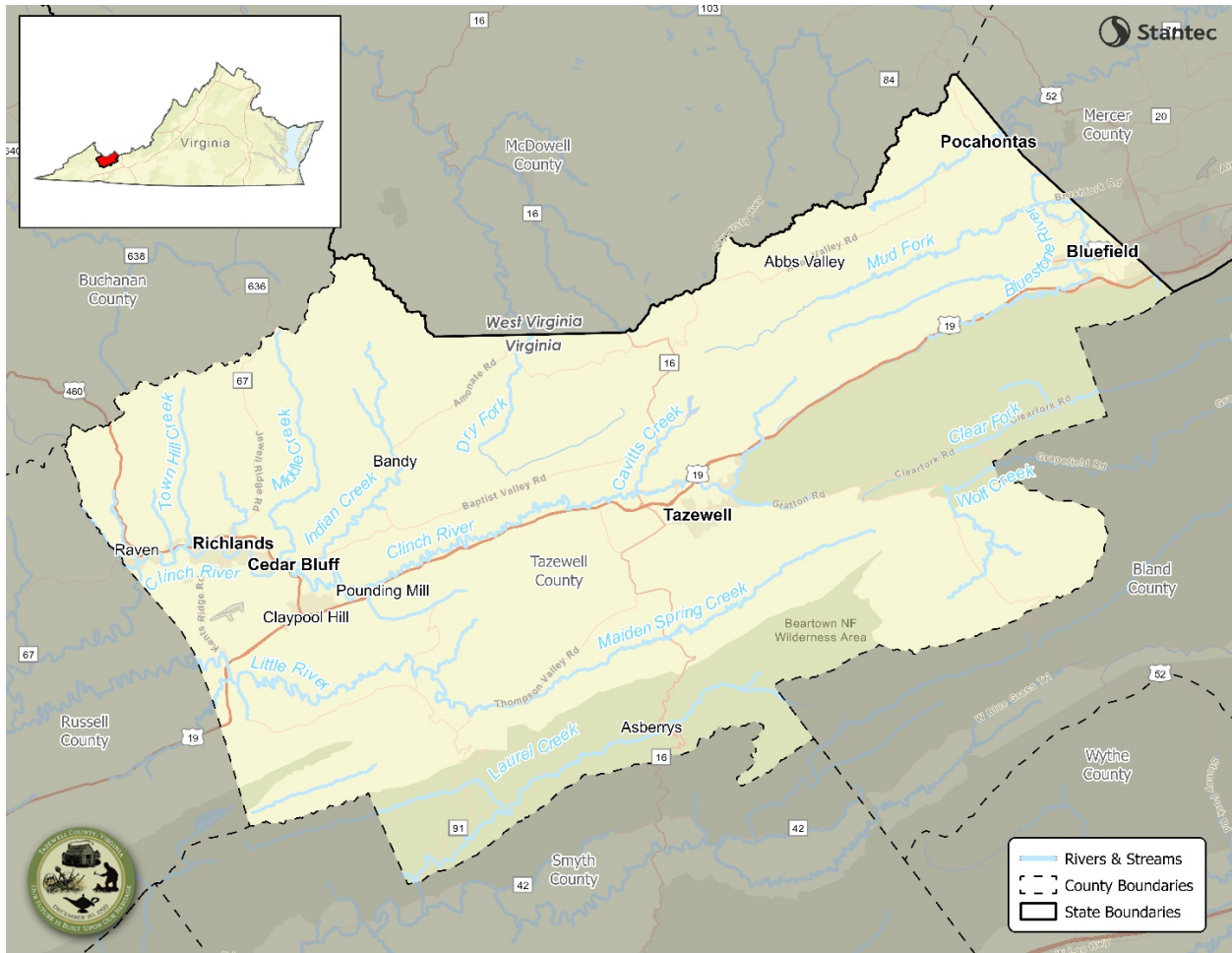


Figure 4-1: Location Map - Tazewell County, Virginia

## Topography

Elevation in the valley areas of the county ranges from 1,900 feet in the western and southeastern areas to 2,763 in the east central areas.<sup>13</sup> Uneven terrain is traversed by streams and sinkholes characteristic of a karst landscape. The topography ranges from sloping to hilly and steep with few areas of smooth and rolling sections across the county. The scenic mountains range from 2,500 to 4,500 feet of elevation with higher irregular peaks. While the mountains provide scenic vistas for residents and visitors, they pose a challenge to the installation of infrastructure and structural development throughout the county. Forested uplands and agriculture remain the predominant land uses for the hill and valley areas.<sup>14</sup>

## Population and Demographics

As of 2020, Tazewell County had a population of approximately 40,429 residents, with a population density of 78 people per square mile. Since 2010, Tazewell County's population changed drastically with

<sup>13</sup> Tazewell County Comprehensive Plan 2017. Retrieved February 13, 2023 from <http://cppdc.com/Reports/Tazewell%20Comp%20Plan%202017.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Tazewell County Comprehensive Plan 2017. Retrieved February 13, 2023 from <http://cppdc.com/Reports/Tazewell%20Comp%20Plan%202017.pdf>

a decline of approximately 4,600 residents. This number is a significantly larger decrease in population from prior previous decades. Table 4-1 below presents population statistics for Tazewell County and the incorporated areas within from the U.S. Census Bureau for 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2020.

Table 4-1: US Census Population Counts

	1990	2000	2010	2020	Percent Change 1990 - 2020
<b>Town of Bluefield</b>	5,371	5,100	5,444	5,096	-5%
<b>Town of Cedar Bluff</b>	1,759	1,050	1,137	1,069	-39%
<b>Town of Pocahontas</b>	510	453	389	268	-47%
<b>Town of Richlands</b>	4,506	4,206	5,823	5,261	+17%
<b>Town of Tazewell</b>	4,273	4,113	4,627	4,486	+5%
<b>Tazewell County</b>	45,968	44,598	45,078	40,429	-12%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Based on the 2020 Census, the median age of residents is 45 years old. Table 4-2 presents the county's racial characteristics from the 2020 Census. 92.8% of residents identify as White, 2.4% as Black, and 1.1% as Hispanic.

Table 4-2: 2020 Race Demographics for Tazewell County

	White	Black	Multiracial	Asian	American Indian and Alaska Native	Hispanic Origin*
<b>Town of Bluefield</b>	83.9%	7.1%	5.7%	1.8%	0.2%	3.1%
<b>Town of Cedar Bluff</b>	95.3%	0.4%	2.9%	0.5%	0.1%	0.0%
<b>Town of Pocahontas</b>	92.9%	1.5%	5.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
<b>Town of Richlands</b>	94.9%	0.5%	3.3%	0.7%	0.2%	0.1%
<b>Town of Tazewell</b>	89.5%	4.7%	4.6%	0.6%	0.2%	0.2%
<b>Tazewell County</b>	92.8%	2.4%	3.6%	0.5%	0.1%	1.1%

\*Hispanics may be of any race, so also are included in applicable race categories.  
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau<sup>15</sup>

## Socially Vulnerable Populations

Social vulnerability refers to the potential adverse impacts on social groups including death, injury, loss, or disruption of livelihood caused by external stresses on human life.<sup>16</sup> Several factors can contribute to increasing the vulnerability of communities to natural disasters such as flooding. Examples include age, income, employment status, or race, as well as access to day-to-day resources such as vehicles, telephones, and broadband internet. Having high social vulnerability makes it more challenging for individuals to prepare, respond, recover, and adapt to disasters. Due to the mixture of factors increasing social vulnerability, both federal and state agencies have developed indices that highlight social vulnerability at the county or census tract level.

The Center for Disease Control’s (CDC’s) Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) is frequently used for federal grant applications. The CDC’s SVI utilizes 16 census variables to establish an index score that highlights the social vulnerability of each county or census tract within the county. The data includes poverty, lack of vehicle access, and crowded housing, among others. The 2020 SVI score, the most recent data available for Tazewell County at the statewide level is 0.69 on a 0 (lowest vulnerability) to 1 (highest vulnerability) scale. This SVI score indicates that Tazewell County has a medium to a high level of vulnerability. The score is most impacted by Tazewell’s scores in socioeconomic status, household characteristics, and housing type/transportation options. When evaluating the data at the census tract level, most of the tracts are identified as areas that have “medium-high” levels of vulnerability. In addition, there are two census tracts on the western boundary of the county and abutting Buchanan and Russell County that are within the “high” level of social vulnerability (census tracts 209 and 210) and one

<sup>15</sup> United States Census Bureau. (n.d.) QuickFacts: Tazewell County, Virginia; United States. Retrieved March 2, 2023, from U.S. [Census Bureau QuickFacts: Tazewell County, Virginia](#).

<sup>16</sup> FEMA National Risk Index.

census tract on the eastern boundary that is a “low-medium” level of social vulnerability (census tract 211.02).<sup>17</sup> The social vulnerability by census tract is shown in Figure 4-2.

According to the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), there are two Opportunity Zones (OZ) within Tazewell County. One is located along the northeast side of the county (census tract 202) and the other is located along the southern quadrant of the county (census tract 206). OZs are a federal economic and community development tax benefit designed to encourage long-term private investment in low-income urban, suburban, and rural census tracts. OZs were nominated by each governor in the spring of 2018 and are comprised of low-income census tracts, based on 2015-16 American Community Survey data. Virginia, which had 901 eligible census tracts, was able to nominate 25% of these tracts for certification by the U.S. Department of Treasury, per the Tax and Jobs Act. The designations are permanent through December 31, 2028.<sup>18</sup>

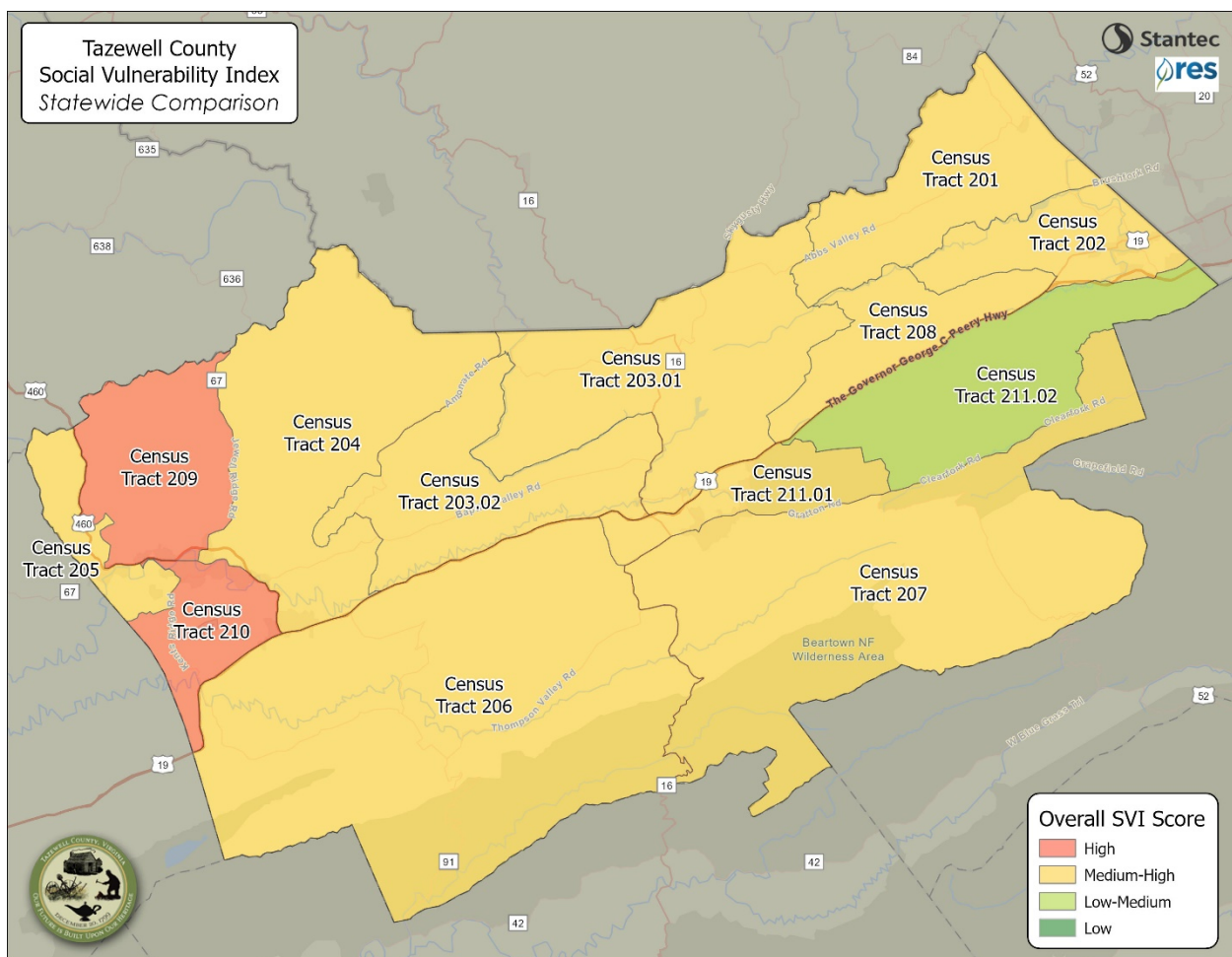


Figure 4-2: Social Vulnerability by Census Tract

<sup>17</sup> Center of Disease Control. Retrieved from [CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index \(SVI\) | Place and Health | ATSDR](https://www.cdc.gov/atsdr/social-vulnerability/index.html)

<sup>18</sup> Virginia DHCD. Opportunity Zones. Retrieved from [Opportunity Zones \(OZ\) | DHCD \(virginia.gov\)](https://www.virginia.gov/dhcd/opportunity-zones/).



## Economy and Industry

The region's abundant natural resources and economic sectors of manufacturing, mining, and agriculture have significantly declined over the last four decades. Once railroads were upgraded and expanded in the 1930s, the mining industry took off and remained very profitable until the 1960s. After a lull in production, coal resurged in southwest Virginia during the 1980s and reached peak production in 1990, when the state produced 46.5 million tons of coal. However, since then coal production has declined drastically. The number of licensed mines in Virginia in 1980 was over 800; by 2001 that number was down to 328.<sup>19</sup> The decrease in coal production can be attributed to several factors. First, coal reserves in the area are largely depleted after years of mining. Second, the remaining coal seams in the Appalachians are relatively thin compared to mines in the western U.S. and require costly underground mining. Lastly, coal prices declined over the past 15 years, decreasing profit margins and further increasing automation.

Current regional economic growth focuses on the mission of Virginia's e-Region, promoting jobs in the electronic information technology, energy, education, and emerging specialty manufacturing industries.<sup>20</sup> In an effort to diversify the economic base of the economy and support new business and industrial facilities, basic infrastructure projects and the installation of fiber optic cabling have been underway. Additional access and availability of funding to improve infrastructure, incentivize local businesses, and market the community are necessary for continued economic growth in Tazewell County and the region.<sup>21</sup>

## Leveraging Natural Resources

Tazewell County historically depended on natural resources such as lumber, coal, and shale as a driving force for the local economy. Even as the county incorporates additional sources of revenue, natural resources will likely continue to play a key role moving forward. Solar energy presents a potential revenue-generating source for the county. The Nature Conservancy, in partnership with Dominion Energy and Sun Tribe, is developing solar farms on six abandoned mines in Southwest Virginia.<sup>22</sup> This creates jobs in the short term and provides cheap, renewable energy in the long term. Moreover, the CPPDC is participating in the Southwest Virginia Solar Workgroup to develop residential and utility-scale solar projects in the region.

Revitalizing agriculture in the region is another means of utilizing natural resources to support the local economy. Demand for local, hormone-free, grass-fed livestock has renewed interest in agriculture education in the region's schools and farming as an occupation.

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<sup>19</sup> Virginia Center for Coal and Energy Research. (n.d.) Virginia Coal. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Retrieved March 14, 2023 from <https://vept.energy.vt.edu/coal.html#:~:text=Virginia%27s%20peak%20production%20year%20was,declined%20to%2031%20million%20tons.>

<sup>20</sup> Tazewell County 2017 Comprehensive Plan. Retrieved February 24, 2023. [2017-Comprehensive-Plan-Final.pdf \(tazewellcountyva.org\)](https://www.tazewellcountyva.org/2017-Comprehensive-Plan-Final.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Murphy, Zoeann. (2022). In Virginia, abandoned coal mines are transformed into solar farms. The Washington Post. Retrieved August 11, 2022 from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-solutions/2022/03/03/coal-mines-solar-farms-climate-change-video/>

Presently, tourism and cultural heritage stimulate the local economy with the Nature Conservancy identifying the Clinch River Basin as one of twenty “Last Great Places” along with the Historic Crab Orchard Museum, the Tazewell County Old Time Bluegrass Fiddlers’ Convention, Pocahontas Exhibition Coal Mine and Museum, Burke’s Garden, and the Appalachian Trail. Burke’s Garden, visible from space and known as “God’s Thumbprint,” is a unique massive bowl formed by a mountain collapsing in on itself.<sup>23</sup> Outdoor recreation produces local tax dollars while maintaining the region’s natural beauty. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce, outdoor recreation accounts for 1.6% of Virginia’s Gross Domestic Product totaling \$9.4 billion annually.

## Transportation

Tazewell County, located in southwest Virginia is near the borders of West Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Major highways connecting the towns of Richlands, Tazewell, and Bluefield include US Routes 460 and 19. Connections to economic centers in Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia, and other parts of Virginia are made by Interstates 81 and 77 which run 30 miles south of Tazewell’s southern border.

In recent years, the Commonwealth Transportation Board has prioritized updating and repairing the bridges in Tazewell County many of which were constructed in the 1970s. In addition, repairs have been made to State Roads 696 and 747 improving the safety of those roadways. Regional improvements outside the county limits but beneficial to the county, have included I-73 and the “Coal Fields Expressway”.

The Tazewell Airport has the capacity to provide relief in the wake of natural disasters such as floods. Local police, Civil Air Patrol, and the National Guard utilize the airfield for the detection and suppression of forest fires, chemical spills, and other natural or man-made disasters. The airport has small plane capabilities, a 4,300-foot runway, and instrument landing capability for single and twin-engine general aviation uses.<sup>24</sup>

Norfolk Southern Railroad and CSX Transportation provide local rail services mainly for the export of coal. The closest passenger rail service is an Amtrak station an hour away in Hinton, Virginia.<sup>25</sup>

Greyhound-Trailways, Four County Transit, and Graham Transit provide bus service in the county.

## Flood Overview

The steep topography of the county causes precipitation to drain quickly, and at high velocities, which can lead to rapid flooding following moderate or heavy rainfall. Quick-moving floodwaters may increase the potential for damages as the force of moving water pushes buildings off foundations and carries other large items, such as vehicles, trees, and bridges, downstream. Flooding can also occur if there is rapid snowmelt. In addition to the steep terrain, the large number of smaller tributaries feeding into the region’s larger streams and rivers creates a large influx of water during a rain event. The combination of

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<sup>23</sup> Burke’s Garde. Virginia DWR website. Accessed March 15, 2023. <https://dwr.virginia.gov/vbwt/sites/burkes-garden/>

<sup>24</sup> Tazewell County 2017 Comprehensive Plan. Retrieved February 24, 2023. [2017-Comprehensive-Plan-Final.pdf \(tazewellcountyva.org\)](#)

<sup>25</sup> Tazewell County 2017 Comprehensive Plan. Retrieved February 24, 2023. [2017-Comprehensive-Plan-Final.pdf \(tazewellcountyva.org\)](#)

fast-moving runoff and the large volume of water can easily lead to flash flooding, leaving residents in the floodplains with little warning to evacuate.

The Clinch River, as it traverses through Tazewell and Russell Counties, has a drainage area of approximately 670 square miles. Multiple tributaries flow into the Clinch River including the Guest River flowing from the northwest and the Little River flowing from the east near the headwaters in Tazewell County. The mountainous terrain's steep slopes increase rapid flooding conditions following significant rainfalls or spring snowmelts.<sup>26</sup>

Impervious surfaces associated with commercial and residential buildings, encroaching roadways and railways, and restricted flow from bridges all contribute to increased flood heights and increased water velocities during storm events. Most of the damage during flood events is to the contents of basements in the area, as well as the roads and railways that line the local waterways. However, in larger storm events, fast-moving water can wash out large sections of roadway, cause serious structural damage to permanent buildings, and push homes, especially mobile or modular homes, off their foundations, leading to serious injuries and loss of life.

The CPPDC's Hazard Mitigation Plan, last updated in 2018, details the flood occurrences along the Clinch River dating back to 1862. The primary data source for flood level measurements is a USGS gauge located Cleveland, Virginia. Additional USGS surface peak streamflow gauge data is available for the Bluestone River at Falls Mills, Virginia. The NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) Storm Events Database reported twenty-one additional flood events that caused either damage to homes or injuries/fatalities since 2002. Table 4-3 shows a full accounting of the forty-two flood events documented in the CPPDC's Hazard Mitigation Plan, the NCEI Storm Events Database, and/or presidential disaster declarations.

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<sup>26</sup> Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission Hazard Mitigation Update September 2018. Accessed March 16, 2023. <https://cppdc.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Hazard-Mitigation-Plan.pdf>

*Table 4-3: Previous Flood Occurrences in Tazewell County*



<b>Occurrence</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Source(s)</b>
February 22, 1862	Clinch River Area	CPPDC HMP
February 22, 1867	Clinch River Area	CPPDC HMP
June 22, 1901	Entire River	CPPDC HMP
March 1, 1902	Clinch River Area	CPPDC HMP
November 20, 1906	Clinch River Area	CPPDC HMP
June 14, 1907	Clinch River Valley	CPPDC HMP
April 3, 1912	Clinch River Area	CPPDC HMP
April 1, 1913	Clinch River Area	CPPDC HMP
March 5, 1917	Lower Clinch Area	CPPDC HMP
January 29, 1918	Clinch River	CPPDC HMP
February 3, 1923	Clinch River	CPPDC HMP
June 13, 1923	Clinch River	CPPDC HMP
December 22, 1926	Clinch River Area	CPPDC HMP
August 14, 1940	Clinch River Basin	CPPDC HMP
January 30, 1957	Clinch River	CPPDC HMP
May 7, 1958	Clinch River	CPPDC HMP
March 12, 1963	Clinch River	CPPDC HMP
March 17, 1973	Clinch River Area	CPPDC HMP
January 26, 1978	Clinch River	CPPDC HMP
January 23, 2002	Wardell	NOAA/NCEI
March 18, 2002	Countywide	NOAA/NCEI
February 16, 2003	Clinch River Area	CPPDC HMP
November 19, 2003	Countywide	NOAA/NCEI
February 28, 2011	McCall Place, Bandy, Adria, Richlands	NOAA/NCEI
April 26, 2012	Richlands	NOAA/NCEI
May 22, 2012	Bluefield	NOAA/NCEI
March 4, 2015	Red Ash	NOAA/NCEI
April 23, 2017	Raven	NOAA/NCEI
June 16, 2017	Bluefield	NOAA/NCEI
February 11, 2018	Richlands	NOAA/NCEI
April 16, 2018	Cedar Bluff	NOAA/NCEI
September 10, 2018	Bluefield	NOAA/NCEI

<b>Occurrence</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Source(s)</b>
December 21, 2018	Richlands	NOAA/NCEI
February 20, 2019	Bluefield, Cedar Bluff, Pisgah, Hockman	NOAA/NCEI
February 6, 2020	Countywide	State Declared Emergency, NOAA/NCEI
April 13, 2020	Pounding Mill	NOAA/NCEI
March 1, 2021	Richlands	NOAA/NCEI
January 2, 2022	Cedar Bluff	NOAA/NCEI
May 24, 2022	Falls Mills	NOAA/NCEI
July 12, 2022	Mouth of Laurel, Jewell Ridge, and Burkes Garden	NOAA/NCEI
August 5, 2022	Richlands	NOAA/NCEI
February 17, 2023	Countywide	Local News

Note: The table does not include flash flood events.

To supplement the historical record of flooding events, County officials identified ten initial flooding hotspots within the county during project scoping. Table 4-4 presents these initial flood hotspots, which are assessed further in Section 6: Risk Assessment. Figure 4-3 shows flooding from the Clinch River at the Raven hotspot.

Table 4-4: Tazewell County Flood Hotspots

<b>Location</b>
Clinch River in Raven
Clinch River at Plant Road near Richlands
Clinch River near Patton Street
Clinch River in Richlands
Big Creek in Richlands
Indian Creek at Banes Bottom
Indian Creek Near Cedar Bluff
Clinch River near Tazewell Wastewater Treatment Plant
North Fork Clinch River near Freedom Avenue
Bluestone River near Falls Mills



*Figure 4-3: National Guard Rescue from Flood - February 6, 2020  
Photo: Courtesy Donna Whittington*

In addition to the flooding hotspots, abandoned mines present a unique flooding hazard. Portals (entry tunnels) into the abandoned mines can flood and overflow. This can lead to a mine blowout or a landslide. Flood risks associated with abandoned mines are further addressed in Section 6: Risk Assessment.

## Summary

In conclusion, this Appalachian Mountain community depends on agriculture, historic, cultural, and natural resources. The steep elevations and karst landscape provide challenges for physical growth and expansion of infrastructure. The population has steadily decreased since 1990 corresponding to the decline of the coal industry in the region. However, there are economic redevelopment efforts focused on business and tourism resiliency. Flood risk presents a challenge to these efforts, as well as maintaining life safety and quality of life within the county. There have been forty-two reported flood occurrences in Tazewell County with twenty-one occurring since 2002. The highest number of annual flood occurrences was in 2022. Flood mitigation actions are necessary to preserve and protect the residents and existing industry within Tazewell County and the incorporated areas within and make it an attractive community for future economic investment and industry.