

**Final report
Virginia Wine Board, 15 July 2012**

Title: Viticulture Research and Extension Associate

Principal Investigator:

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Type of Project: **Extension**
Amount funded: **\$8,000**
Amount used: **\$8,000**

Objective:

To increase the level of viticultural research and extension program support to grape and wine producers in Virginia and to help meet the research and extension needs of an expanding industry

Progress:

The scope and continued expansion of the Virginia grape industry merits increased human resources to provide extension, technical support of viticultural issues that constrain productivity, wine quality potential, and industry sustainability. Part of this support is provided by Virginia Cooperative Extension assets, including state level specialists (e.g., Wolf, Bergh, Pfeiffer, Nita and others), local extension agents (e.g., Love, Sutphin, Lachance, and others), as well as graduate students, post-doctoral associates, research associates and classified staff. This project provides travel and modest, material support of a viticulture research/extension associate housed at Virginia Tech's Winchester Agricultural Research and Extension Center. Tremain Hatch was hired into this position in 2010, after completion of his MSc degree in viticulture at Virginia Tech.

Salary and fringe benefit support for Mr. Hatch's position is provided by a 50:50 partnership of funding from the USDA/NIFA and from the Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station. As such, Mr. Hatch has responsibilities to the stewardship of the Specialty Crops Research Initiative grant (USDA/NIFA) and roughly 50% of his time is available to directly support Virginia viticultural extension programs. This grant only provides travel and material support of the 50% of his position devoted to viticulture extension. Mr. Hatch conducted the following activities/outputs over the last year (July 2011 – June 2012) as related to his 50% time commitment to viticulture extension activities:

- Conducted 18 on-farm vineyard visits to help clients assess vineyard site suitability, review existing vineyard, trouble shoot current problem etc. Feedback was obtained in writing from some of these stakeholders, an example of which follows:

“I felt your visit was of great value to me. I have had an opportunity to learn a great deal about the Virginia wine business in the (short) six years since I have started Bluemont with my partners. One of the main things I have learned..... is that there is a great deal more to learn...and there always will be. That being said, it is great to have a resource like you and others that remain engaged in our Virginia wine growing community. Over the years the body of material on vineyard best practices for Virginia has evolved substantially and proven to be important for keeping our industry headed in the right direction. If our community is to continue to learn, improve, and remain dynamic, we need people in the field that gather data, interact, communicate, share, and learn. The vineyard, the agriculture,...is the foundation for our industry. It will always be important to have extension resourced and engaged. Thanks.”

Bob Rupy
Winemaker/partner
Bluemont Vineyards

- Approximately 10 phone conversations with potential growers or existing Virginia grape growers with vineyard questions/issues.
- Approximately 15 email conversations with existing growers with vineyard questions/issues.
- Approximately 31 email conversations with potential growers delivering general information about growing grapes in Virginia.
- Presented a paper at academic meeting (Virginia Forum at James Madison University in March 2012;
<http://www.virginiaforum.org/conferenceprogram2012.pdf>).
- Two new grower workshops in VA (organized and presented 3 sections at the VA new grower workshop- 11 December 2011 and 2 sections at the VVA workshop - 2 February 2012).
- Team-taught a portion of the VA Tech/VA Vineyards Association’s Summer technical program on Canopy management (14 June 2012)
- Published 2 articles (Wines and Vines season report and VVA Grape Press)
- Facilitated Sustainable viticulture practices workbook development and promotion.

The workbook is an educational and self-assessment tool developed for Virginia grape growers. This tool allows growers to improve the environmental, economic and social impacts of their operations. The tool explains 120 vineyard best management practices, and allows growers to assess their compliance with these practices. The workbook is strictly an educational and self-assessment

tool at this point, but may develop into a listing of best management practices for our industry or certification program for a “sustainable” wine designation.

- Wrote two articles for Viticulture Notes newsletter.
- Served as an expert resource on eViticulture (<http://eviticulture.org/>) and is currently putting together a “new grower” module for posting therein.
- Attended and in cases contributed to 3 Virginia vineyard field meetings.
- Conducted 2 dormant pruning workshops
- Co-facilitated 3 vineyard IPM workshops in Virginia and presented at a Pennsylvania IPM meeting
- Web-site development: self-training with CMS Ensemble; addition of T-Hatch branch of grape web-site (<http://www.ares.vaes.vt.edu/olson-h-smith/grapes/index.html>). Tremain is responsible for the regular updates to the viticulture website.

Summary: Project objectives were accomplished as proposed. A renewal project was submitted and funded, again, only for travel and material support.