



MSU Extension Education & Research Improving the Quality of Life

In Powell County

Girls for Planet Earth

A grant proposal was written by a team of four female youth, the Agent, and an adult leader. Upon acceptance of the proposal, the WCS invited the team to participate in the Earth Summit in New York in the summer of 2004. The Earth Summit is an opportunity for girls to participate in a week long intensive learning experience at the Bronx Zoo to facilitate the development of a local action plan. The team elected to implement the cleanup, weed removal and revegetation of Cottonwood Creek in Deer Lodge. The team was responsible for developing the plan, getting volunteers, publicizing the event, and reporting accomplishments. A web site was developed in conjunction with this project. Due to the work of the youth team, citizens of Deer Lodge were made aware of environmental conditions of area surface waters, and over 30 community members assisted the team in cleaning and removing noxious weeds from Cottonwood Creek in Deer Lodge.

Resource Monitoring Education

Over \$15,570 in USFS Title III funds were secured through Powell County and Granite County to conduct educational programs in resource monitoring. Project workshops addressed map reading, application of GPS, locating and setting up monitoring transects, photo monitoring techniques, determining range condition and trend, determining forest stand condition, measuring riparian condition, and making management decisions to foster resource sustainability and productivity. A demonstration site was established at the Mannix Ranch, and two workshops are planned for January and March 2005.

Participants gained skills in land navigation using current GPS technology. Land managers developed skills necessary to effectively evaluate natural resource productivity, determine trend and condition, and make management decisions based upon observed empirical data. Land managers utilized program tools and techniques to develop a resource monitoring program on their land. It is anticipated that more ranches will participate in 2005 when the workshops are conducted.

Community Agriculture

Grant proposals were written to the Alternative Energy Resources Organization and the Montana Cardiovascular Association to receive funds to implement a community gardening project in Deer Lodge. An initial community garden was established at the Colonial Manor Assisted Living Center. A Community Garden Task Force was formed to administer the project and develop plans to submit grants for community gardens in 2005. Educational opportunities were planned and facilitated by the Powell County Adult Education committee, including a ten-hour course in sustainable farming and gardening. Plans are being developed to institute a Master Gardener Program in Powell County. Powell County Extension, in collaboration with Lifelines, taught youth gardening classes to after-school youth through the Community Learning Center. Lifelines after-school programs served over 60 children each school day in Deer Lodge. The community garden is one of these programs and has allowed children the opportunity to learn first hand about soils, food production and teamwork. The Task Force has brought adults together to consider the benefits of local food systems and community gardens for community development. Plans to develop new gardens throughout town are developing.

Powell County Extension Office is located at the Courthouse in Deer Lodge Phone: 406-846-3680 Ext. 208



An educational resource dedicated to improving the quality of people's lives by providing research-based knowledge to strengthen the social, economic and environmental well-being of families, communities and agricultural enterprises.

Forage Nitrate Testing

Extension provided nitrate testing for producers of small grains for livestock forage. Crops were hay, barley and oats. Most of the samples this season exhibited nitrate levels of minor concern, and recommendations were made to postpone cutting until early afternoon to facilitate metabolization of nitrates prior to cutting. Some samples were high, and lab analysis was recommended. One field in the county had to be terminated due to nitrates and environmental conditions.

Producers gained access to information on nitrate content of their crops, allowing them the ability to make critical decisions on timing of harvest to control nitrate level. As a result, nitrate concentrations were greatly lowered in forage, which increased the value for feed. Field visits by the agent led to consultations on other topics such as noxious weed control, forage varieties and cropping techniques.

Montana 4-H Wildlife Habitat and Education Program

In the summer of 2004, a state committee was formed to formulate a plan to introduce the Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Project to Montana. The Agent serves on this committee. The committee identified needs and priorities, developed curriculum, sought funding and conducted two training sessions for state committee members to become familiarized with the program. The state committee has implemented this program under the name Montana 4-H Wildlife Habitat and Education Program. A training session is planned for January 2005 for agents and leaders throughout Montana. Through participation in this program, Montana youth will gain the knowledge and attitudes needed to be effective land stewards of Montana's natural resources, including wildlife and fisheries, as they mature.

USDA Drought Assistance: Non-Fat Dry Milk Program

Extension facilitated the dry milk program in Powell and Deer Lodge counties. Producers were eligible for dry milk allotments, based on numbers of cows and bulls in foundation herd, due to county drought status. All producers elected to receive vouchers from MDA to barter with feed companies for feed or mineral purchase.

1,224,744 pounds of dry milk were allotted to Powell and Deer Lodge county ranchers. This amounted to an exchange value of \$39,804.18 for the purchase of feed or minerals for the winter of 2004/05.