

# Washington State University Benton County Extension

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

NATURAL RESOURCES

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## BENTON COUNTY QUICK FACTS

- *Named for Senator Thomas Hart Benton*
- *County seat: Prosser*
- *Land area, in square miles: 1,703 (state rank: 22)*
- *Median household income (2004): \$52,922*
- *Population (2007): 162,900 (state rank: 10)*

## CONTACT

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**W**ashington State University Benton County Extension is part of the world-class outreach and engagement enterprise of the university. We partner with businesses, the community, and volunteers to drive innovation, invention, and technology transfer. We specifically focus on expanding the problem-solving capacity of communities within the county, enhancing and sustaining the local economy, enhancing natural resources and the environment, enhancing economic opportunities for agriculture, improving health and wellness—especially in the realm of nutrition and obesity prevention—and eliminating barriers to the success of youth and families.

We leverage every dollar we receive from Benton County with federal, state, grant, and private funding to maximize our reach and effectiveness. In fact, for every \$1 invested by Benton County, WSU Extension provides \$2.54 in state and federal resources, for a 254 percent return on investment.

## Impacts

### Agriculture and Natural Resources

Benton County is one of the nation's leading producers of agricultural products. The 2007 Census of Agriculture ranked Benton County third in the state and fifty-third in the nation in market value of agricultural products. That includes about \$470 million in tree fruit, grapes, and other crops, and almost \$56 million in livestock, poultry, and other products.

### Pest Management Transition Project

WSU Benton County Extension focuses educational efforts on sustainable pest management for orchards. Many organophosphate pesticides are being removed from the market because of their questionable effects



## AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT

*During the 16-year history of the Washington Cattlemen's Association/WSU All-Breed Bull Test and Sale, 2,430 bulls have been performance tested. The test and sale contribute more than \$540,000 to the genetic and economic sustainability of the region's cattle and beef industry each year.*

on humans and the environment. We are working with the state-funded Pest Management Transition Project to assist growers in eliminating organophosphates from their pest management programs. We have conducted workshops, field days, and informal meetings to help growers develop new strategies while maintaining adequate pest control. Our efforts help reduce the amount of orchard pesticides that can adversely affect surrounding urban areas or run off into adjacent watersheds.

### Comprehensive Automation for Specialty Crops

The rising cost of labor and the shortage of seasonal help have put local farms at risk. In the past decade, labor costs have increased from 38.2 percent of the net value of the farm economy to 58 percent. WSU Benton County Extension has collaborated with a statewide and national team of researchers, growers, and machinery developers to create automated tools that will reduce the need for labor. The team was awarded a \$6 million grant with more than \$600,000 of these funds coming to Washington.

### All-Breed Bull Test and Sale

WSU Benton County Extension has helped organize and manage the Washington Cattlemen's Association/WSU All-Breed Bull Test and Sale. During the 16-year history of this bull test, 2,430 bulls from 4 northwest states and 1 Canadian province, representing 16 breeds, have been performance tested. The test and sale contribute more than \$540,000 to the genetic and economic sustainability of the region's cattle and beef industry each year. This program is responsible for infusing more than \$8 million into the agricultural industry of the Pacific Northwest. The partnership between Washington State University and the Washington Cattlemen's Association on this bull test also benefits the Pacific Northwest cattle industry in other areas of research and educational programming.

## Community and Economic Development

### Mid-Columbia Community Forestry Council

WSU Benton County Extension organized and facilitated the development of the Mid-Columbia Community Forestry Council to educate local residents and businesses about the value, selection, planting, and care of trees in our communities. The council has received \$22,000 in support from local cities and the Washington State Department of Natural Resources to carry out educational efforts. Those funds have been used to develop an educational Web site for the region; to partner with the local libraries to encourage reading and learning about trees; to sponsor the local Arbor Day poster contest; to organize tree planting ceremonies in local parks and school grounds; and to provide an educational exhibit for the local home and garden show. The council has also been helping local communities develop municipal codes related to urban forests and urban forestry plans. With the leadership of WSU Extension, the council has been creating a lasting legacy for the local communities and fostering a commitment to create a more sustainable, livable environment.

Since 2000, WSU Extension Benton County staff members have been awarded grants used to create three jobs for local residents to support agricultural research.

## Volunteers

### Master Gardeners

The WSU Extension Master Gardeners of Benton and Franklin Counties are recognized throughout the community as respected sources of safe, research-based gardening information and assistance with pest and plant problems. Master Gardeners have contributed more than 100,000 hours of service and public education to our communities in the past 10 years, building the Master Gardener Demonstration Garden on three acres of land; teaching youth at 37 local elementary schools about plants and the science of gardening; and educating residents about plant selection, yard and garden management, growing fruits and vegetables, and pest management. The Master Gardener Demonstration Garden, located in Kennewick next to the Mid-Columbia Library, serves as an outdoor classroom for educating area adults and children about growing and caring for their own gardens. Vegetables harvested from the demonstration garden are donated to local food banks.

### Master Food Preservers

Volunteer educators in Benton County's Master Food Preserver/Food Safety Advisor program provide regional expertise to consumers on topics related to food storage, food safety and food preservation. The program brings research-based information from Washington State University and USDA to individuals in the community. Specifically the program goals are designed to help consumers:

- store and handle foods using appropriate methods to optimize quality and safety;
- preserve foods using USDA certified procedures; and
- prevent consumption of foods that are unsafe or at risk for causing illness.

In 2007, twelve volunteers assisted Extension faculty in providing educational outreach to consumers. New in 2009 was staffing of a toll-free number to serve all eastern Washington counties. Outreach is also provided by staffing educational booths at the local farmers' markets and the Benton-Franklin Fair, testing pressure gauges, and teaching classes on food preservation through the local community school programs. Volunteers documented 750 hours helping over 4,300 individuals adopt safe food handling and preservation practices. The toll-free line activated in June 2007 received 308 calls in the first four months of operation.

## Youth Development

### Youth Animal Science

The Benton-Franklin youth animal science program is one of the largest in Washington with 277 4-H leaders, 14 FFA advisors, and over 1,200 project members. Each adult leader provides approximately 120 hours of service per year helping their members with animal projects, teaching them the principles of sound animal management and helping them develop life skills in preparation to become productive citizens. This volunteer time, valued at \$18.77 per hour by research from Independent Sector, represents



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more than \$600,000 in contributions to the WSU Extension youth animal science program. Through this program, youth learn about current issues and concerns in marketing food animals to the public and are required to complete a certification program through national quality assurance programs, which are taught by our local WSU Extension faculty.

## Outreach

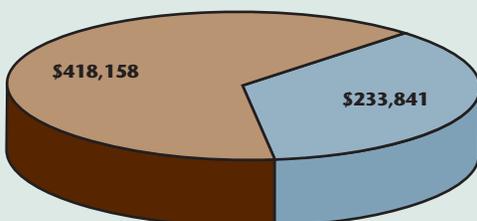
WSU Benton County Extension is reaching new clientele and increasing educational opportunities through the use of online media including videos and other presentations with audio. We have placed factsheets on safe food preservation, home gardening, and upcoming classes on our Web site for 24/7 access. We are using videoconferencing in our workshops to offer high quality educational programs. Distance learning opportunities include the annual WSU Fruit Schools that have about 200 participants from across the Pacific Northwest. Future fruit schools will even include Michigan and Pennsylvania tree fruit growing regions. In evaluations of the 2008 Fruit School, 60 percent of the attendees said they would not have attended if they'd had to incur travel expenses. By using technology, we have increased the public's access to our educational programs and materials, and provided local access to state and national experts.



## Overview of Funding for WSU Benton County Extension Programs

### WSU Support for County Extension Programs

- WSU Support in County
- Other WSU Support



### Direct Funding Sources for County Extension Programs

- Total WSU Support
- Grants and Contracts
- County Support



### Total Funding Supporting County Extension Programs

- WSU Support in County
- Other WSU Support
- Grants and Contracts
- County Support

