

Washington State University Skagit County Extension

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

NATURAL RESOURCES

HEALTH AND WELLNESS



Every dollar that Skagit County spends in support of WSU Skagit County Extension generates \$3.73 for the county—a 373 percent annual return on investment.

Washington State University Skagit 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 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 Skagit County with federal, state, grant, and private funding to maximize our reach and effectiveness. In fact, for every \$1 invested by Skagit County, WSU Extension provides over \$3 in state and federal resources. Additionally, faculty and staff in the county raise an additional \$200,000 in extramural funding. Therefore, every dollar that Skagit County spends in support of WSU Skagit County Extension generates \$3.73 for the county—a 373 percent annual return on investment. This is a 373 percent return on investment annually and **does not include** direct investment by WSU supporting the Northwestern Washington Research and Extension Center at Mount Vernon.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

WSU Skagit County Extension educators are developing the “Viable Vineyards” project to enhance agricultural viability and preserve and stabilize farmland acreage by accelerating the growth of a high value wine industry in a five-county region, including Skagit County.

Impacts

Economic Development

WSU Skagit County Extension’s community development, leadership, and agriculture programs leverage the research base of the university to create new economic opportunities in communities throughout the county.

- WSU Skagit County Extension organized and facilitated creation of the Sedro-Woolley downtown revitalization committee and led the strategic planning effort with that community’s Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors. Extension educators helped develop a grant proposal to improve tourism in the area that resulted in a \$30,000 award. Those funds have been used to develop a greenway and trolley park; create three large, historically-themed directional signs; and implement an outdoor community movie series.
- As of May 2007, 56 graduates of the Distance Degree Program at the WSU Skagit, Island & San Juan Learning Center now reside in Skagit County. Given the additional income college graduates receive, there is the potential of an additional \$1.7 million in economic impact per year in the county as a result of their success.
- In the past four years, more than 100 people have completed the nine-month “Leadership Skagit” program, a partnership of the WSU Skagit, Island & San Juan Learning Center, Skagit Valley College, and the Economic Development Association of Skagit County. Participants come from a variety of backgrounds; graduates serve on hospital, school, and non-profit boards, and several have accepted new jobs through the network of Leadership Skagit alumni. When local leaders work together to solve the issues of the community, it improves the economic vitality of the county. Former Gov. Gary Locke recognized the program with the “Governor’s Award for Economic Development for 2004.” The 2006 Leadership Skagit class partnered with non-profit agencies to complete five team projects. One of those projects featured a partnership with Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland and funding from Homeland Security to create InFARMation, an AM radio station that will broadcast news about crops currently grown in the county, ag-related events, and official information during an emergency.

- Growth threatens much of the productive farmland in northwestern Washington; thousands of acres have gone out of production in the past two decades. In an effort to build a sustainable agricultural industry in the region, WSU Skagit County Extension educators are developing the “Viable Vineyards” project to enhance agricultural viability and preserve and stabilize farmland acreage by accelerating the growth of a high value wine industry in a five-county region, including Skagit County. The project focuses on the development and implementation of sustainable standards for wine grape production that also seek to reduce environmental and economic risks. Using a web-based, GIS system for vineyard site selection and land management, the project also will identify opportunities for growers to expand production and improve environmental stewardship practices.



Natural Resources

Enhancing the natural environment of Skagit County, in turn, enhances the health and sustainability of its economy and its communities. WSU Skagit County Extension works with landowners to implement best practices in stewardship for the county’s natural resources.

- Skagit County Beach Watchers have contributed more than 4,000 hours of service and education since fall 2005. They have removed 105 tons of creosote logs and 1.5 tons of garbage from Skagit County beaches. In addition, they have helped enhance native oyster reefs at Fidalgo Bay and Marches Point as well as planted trees near shorelines and streams.
- WSU Skagit County Extension offers the Coached Forest Stewardship Planning Short Course for private forestland owners in the area. The course helps them focus on what they want to accomplish with their land, given the biological, physical, and political realities of the day. It gives them the knowledge and the skills they need to make good choices about everything from when and how to thin trees to how to manage noxious weeds and insect pests. More than 121 plans have been written and certified in the county, 152 family forests are enrolled in tax incentive programs, and 335,700 acres have been certified as “American Tree Farms.”

NATURAL RESOURCES

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HEALTH AND WELLNESS

The Food \$ense Nutrition Program in Skagit County presented a nine-part series of nutrition lessons to third- and fourth-graders in the Mount Vernon and Burlington School Districts where more than half of the students participate in the free or reduced lunch program.

Health and Wellness

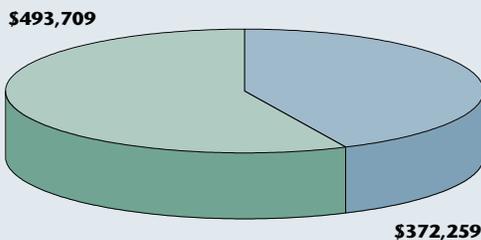
WSU Skagit County Extension improves the health and wellness of the residents of the county by stressing prevention and healthy lifestyles as well as safe food handling practices.

- In 2003, an outbreak of food-borne illness caused by cheese made with raw milk prompted a request from the Skagit County Health Department for WSU Extension to provide food safety and cheese-making classes. Dozens of classes have been presented—most in Spanish—to approximately 700 participants, 90 percent of whom were low income. The courses focused on safe food handling practices. Follow-up interviews indicated that 80 percent of those attending the class still make queso fresco, but 100 percent are now using pasteurized or heat-treated milk.
- The Food \$ense Nutrition Program in Skagit County presented a nine-part series of nutrition lessons to third- and fourth-graders in the Mount Vernon and Burlington school districts where more than half of the students participate in the free or reduced lunch program. In addition, WSU Skagit County Extension educators produced a nutrition education newsletter that was sent home to parents each week. As a result, 100 percent of participants said they now wash their hands before eating and preparing food, nearly 90 percent said they eat more fruits and vegetables, and nearly 90 percent said they now read product nutrition labels.

Overview of Funding for WSU Skagit County Extension Programming

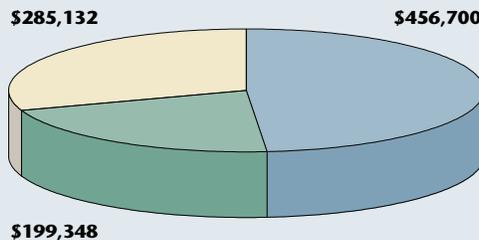
WSU (State and Federal \$) Support for Extension Programs in Skagit County

- Direct WSU Support
- Indirect Support



Direct Funding Sources for Extension Programming In Skagit County

- State and Federal Support
- Grants and Contracts
- Skagit County Support



Total Funding Supporting WSU Skagit County Extension Programming

- Total WSU Support
- Grants and Contracts
- Skagit County Support

