

Washington State University Kittitas County Extension

NATURAL RESOURCES

NUTRITION EDUCATION

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



KITTITAS COUNTY QUICK FACTS

- *Named derived from Kittitas language, meaning "unclear"*
- *County seat: Ellensburg*
- *Land area, in square miles: 2,297 (state rank: 8)*
- *Median household income (2004): \$35,891*
- *Population (2007): 38,300 (state rank: 25)*

CONTACT

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Washington State University Kittitas County Extension is part of the world-class outreach and engagement enterprise of the university. We partner with farmers, the community, and volunteers to drive technology transfer, youth development, innovation, and economic sustainability. We specifically focus on expanding the problem-solving capacity of communities within the county, enhancing natural resources and the environment, enhancing economic opportunities for agriculture, improving health and wellness, and empowering youth and families with knowledge and skills.

We leverage every dollar we receive from Kittitas County with funding from state, federal, grant, and private sources to maximize our reach and effectiveness. In fact, for every \$1 invested by Kittitas County, WSU Extension provides \$1.35 in state and federal resources for a 135 percent annual return on investment. In addition, volunteers give over 23,000 hours annually in direct support of Extension's mission, a value of \$450,000.

Impacts

Protecting Natural Resources

WSU Kittitas County Extension works with agricultural producers to help them realize improvements in livestock production, rangeland condition, and economic and ecological sustainability of rangeland-dependent enterprises. For those producers, we interpret, localize, disseminate, and apply research results and emerging technology in rangeland improvement, grazing management, forages, and irrigated pastures.

Kittitas County has many small acreage rural landowners who may have little or no background in land management or animal husbandry. This large and growing constituency controls many acres and has a significant



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influence on watershed function. For the past five years, WSU Extension has partnered with the Kittitas County Conservation District to help new residents learn how to revegetate abandoned or poorly managed pastures and rangeland, and how to protect water quality near livestock confinement facilities. Over 100 participants in an annual seminar series have: implemented science-based practices to control weeds and irrigate efficiently; planned grazing rotations to maximize plant, soil, and animal health; taken targeted steps to control water quality degradation and pollution from areas of manure concentration; and used soil tests to accurately apply supplemental nutrients to hay fields.

- **Promoting Sustainable Grazing**

While export-quality timothy hay has become the highest income crop in Kittitas County, livestock production remains strong—the county is among the top five counties for beef production in Washington. It is increasingly important for livestock owners to practice managed grazing to accomplish management objectives not directly related to livestock production in order to remain in business. Twenty livestock producers, responsible for management of more than 75,000 acres of irrigated pasture and rangeland, have participated in WSU Extension programs to promote sound grazing practices and monitor grazing effects on rangeland ecosystems.

- **Enhancing the Ecosystem for Migratory Elk**

WSU Kittitas County Extension has worked closely with the Wild Horse Coordinated Resource Management group to apply prescriptive grazing practices on 62,000 acres of shrub-steppe grassland owned by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Puget Sound Energy, and the Department of Natural Resources to enhance forage quality for migratory elk and to demonstrate the successful integration of wind energy harvesting, livestock production, and wildlife management. This project incorporates state-of-the-science ecosystem health monitoring techniques to accurately evaluate the effects of the new grazing strategy over time and to serve as a model for sustainable public land grazing plans.

- **Monitoring the Ecosystem**

WSU Kittitas County Extension coordinates a rangeland monitoring program launched in 2008 with the WSU Extension Rangeland Stewardship Team. This project pairs Extension educators and agency technicians with ranchers trained in Land EKG® (a proprietary rangeland monitoring system) to cooperatively conduct accurate ecosystem monitoring, then translate those results into management decisions and sustainable, profitable ecosystems.

Youth Development

In Kittitas County, 4-H completed its 93rd program year in 2008 with 409 youth enrolled in 29 clubs. These youth participated in a total of 696 4-H projects, 419 of which involved animals. These youth were guided in their project work by 102 adult volunteers, each of whom contributed an average of 200 hours over the course of the year.

- **4-H Know Your Government**

The annual 4-H Know Your Government Conference (KYG) saw a total of 21 youth from Kittitas County travel to Olympia, in 2008, to learn firsthand how state government operates. Youth learned about political parties, party platforms, and elections. Participants built a 4-H political platform based on issues from their local county and elected a candidate to represent their platform. This year's conference featured a statewide virtual community caucus, in which each county presented their candidate and planks via satellite broadcast from WSU. Youth participated in roles of State Ambassador, Conference Facilitators, candidate for 4-H Governor for KYG, campaign manager, and speech writer. All participants from the Kittitas County delegation had a role in the campaign process.

- **Elementary Agriculture Appreciation Day**

In the last 100 years, food production has become highly specialized and is an increasingly rare lifestyle. The vast majority of youth in America do not know where their food comes from. This lack of awareness carries over into adulthood. As a result, the general public does not adequately appreciate the importance of agricultural production. That's true even in Kittitas County, which has a rich agricultural heritage.

Elementary Agriculture Appreciation Day provides students with a glimpse of what it takes to put food on their table. Third-grade students rotate through different demonstration stations dealing with water quality; protecting the soil; food and products from animals; the county's hay industry; exports to other countries and much more. 4-H Senior Leadership participates as group leaders, assistant manager, and helping with station presenters. A total of 380 third-grade students and 54 teachers and parents participated from all 6 Kittitas County school districts, in 2008. The event was sponsored and funded by Kittitas County Cattlemen, Kittitas County Cattlewomen, Kittitas County Farm Bureau, Kittitas County Conservation District, Kittitas County Crop Improvement, and Kittitas County Water Purveyors.

Food Safety Issues

Kittitas County Extension continues to address food safety issues in Kittitas County through the use of Germ City, a science-based program to improve effectiveness of hand washing.

Four new Master Food Preservers (MFPs) received training from Yakima County Extension on current methods of food preservation and related food safety issues. MFPs conducted classes on canning and freezing, tested pressure gauges, had an educational booth at the County Fair, and continue to be available to residents of Kittitas County for answers to questions about food preservation and safety. MFPs volunteer an average of 40 hours each during the year at an approximate value of \$4,077 to the county, with minimal administrative and clerical support.



YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Elementary Agriculture

Appreciation Day provides students with a glimpse of what it takes for farmers to put food on their table. Third-grade students rotate through different demonstration stations dealing with water quality; protecting the soil; food and products from animals; the hay industry; exports to other countries and much more.



HEALTHY LIVING

Master Gardeners created a children’s garden at Munchkinland Daycare and pre-school in Ellensburg and taught the children about gardening and helped them grow and harvest their own vegetables.

Environmentally Sound Gardening

The WSU Extension Master Gardener volunteers provide science-based information on horticulture and environmentally sound gardening practices to the community. Between 25 and 40 Master Gardeners give over 1,000 hours of service to local citizens.

This year, over 460 home gardeners sought help from Master Gardeners on subjects ranging from insect problems to weed control. Home gardeners also learned about using native and drought tolerant plants, water conservation, proper landscape management and care, fruit and vegetable garden production, and Integrated Pest Management—a strategy to control garden pests effectively and economically with minimum harmful effects on human health and the environment.

- **“Shape Up Kittitas County”**

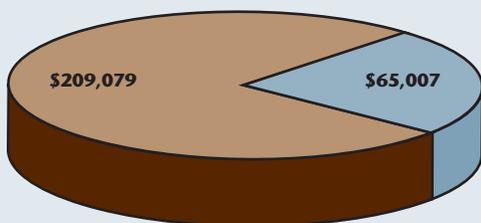
The WSU Master Gardeners of Kittitas County collaborated with “Shape Up Kittitas County” on two projects. The first was Shape Up’s Food Access Coalition, a community group that recruited home gardeners to donate their extra produce to local food banks. As a result, over a ton of produce was donated.

Master Gardeners also created a children’s garden at Munchkinland Daycare and pre-school in Ellensburg with a \$200 grant from “Shape Up Kittitas County” for tools, seeds, and supplies. Master Gardeners taught children about gardening, and helped them grow and harvest their own vegetables. The children, more than 50 percent of whom come from underprivileged families, then ate the fresh produce, thereby improving their diets.

Overview of Funding for WSU Kittitas 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

