Welcome to Broadwater County

MSU Extension in Broadwater County is a three-way partnership between Broadwater County, Montana State University and the United States Department of Agriculture. This partnership provides educational programs in the areas of Agriculture/Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, Community Development and Family Consumer Sciences.

Broadwater County remains a fast growing county and currently has a population of about 5,689 (2015 estimate). There is a diverse mix of agricultural land, small acreage subdivisions, rural communities and range or forested land. The county Extension office provides a unique set of services and educational resources to meet the diverse and changing needs of local clientele.

Office Welcomes New Administrative Assistant

In December of 2015, Tammy Rauser joined the office as the new Administrative Assistant. Tammy worked in the accounting department for the county for seven years prior to joining the office, so she was already familiar with the inner workings of the county. She is a former 4-H member and brings lots of experience working with the public. During her spare time, she enjoys spending time with her husband, two sons and two grandchildren. As a Broadwater County native, she says the favorite part of the job is “working with and seeing the people she grew up with.” Welcome Tammy!

Agriculture Programs Provide Decision Making Tools to Growers

Orange Wheat Blossom Midge Confirmed in Broadwater and Gallatin Counties

Throughout the summer, the Extension Agent conducted a monitoring program for the Orange Wheat Blossom Midge. In July, the midge was found in one local trap. Traps in Gallatin and Broadwater County confirm that the midge is on the move. Fortunately, counts from the summer were found late in the growing season, were well under the economic threshold and are currently not causing any major damage. However, it does tell us that monitoring next year will be critical to see if populations grow or move throughout the county. Previously, the midge has been found in northwest Montana and across the Hi-line. It has caused over $1.5 million dollars in damage in Flathead County alone. Early identification is key to determine if action needs to be taken to control the pest. The monitoring program will continue in order to be able to provide producers with information to make informed decisions. Plans are underway to provide programs and information so that farmers can be aware of the pest and best management techniques.

No-Till Drill Improves Soil Health

The no-till drill went to work for it’s first major year in the county and planted nearly 500 acres. Funds were donated by a local producer in 2015 to purchase the drill. It has been used to enable growers to try the technology before they make the capital investment and to provide a tool for small acreage landowners. By avoiding or minimizing tillage, producers can conserve moisture, increase microbial activity, decrease soil erosion and increase organic matter. In addition to improving soil health, decreased tillage can maximize profits for farmers by requiring less labor and equipment, decrease fertilizer costs and possibly improve yields. Leasees used the drill to plant cover crops, renovate pastures or grass lands and improve small acreages. It is expected the drill will be used more next year as people become aware of it.
4-H Volunteers Make a BIG Difference

During the past year, 106 youth were enrolled in Broadwater County 4-H Clubs. It is possible to reach this many youth due to the contributions of 4-H volunteers in cooperation with the Extension office. Effort was made this year to recruit new volunteers and formalize volunteer roles. As result, 31 certified adult volunteers assisted with the program. This was a 48% increase in individual volunteer support compared to last year. Volunteers with Broadwater County 4-H contributed over 1,000 hours of time throughout the year. The value of their time given back to the community and the youth is estimated at over $20,000.

4-H volunteers work in a variety of roles including club organizational leader, project leader, Council or committee member or assisting with activities. A 4-H Indoor Committee was formalized to enhance educational opportunities for 4-H project areas other than livestock. The committee recruited new volunteers, organized workshops and added more options for the Fair including an indoor project silent auction.

Broadwater County 4-H members were recently asked how 4-H made a difference in their lives:

- “It helped me talk in front of my friends and adults.” - Mikayla Lear, 8 years old
- “It has taught me to be a better leader and how to be a better person.” - Taylor Noyes, 14 years old
- “4-H has taught me responsibility and how to follow through with an idea.” - Trenton Braaten, 14 years old
- “Has made me confident to be able to talk in front of people and given me countless opportunities to learn about agriculture.” - Abby Leachman, 16 years old

4-H Archery Program Receives Grant

A grant received this year has made it possible to expand the county 4-H archery program, provide opportunities to youth who may not be able to afford their own equipment and increase safety awareness. In the county, archery is currently the most popular shooting discipline and reaches over 20 youth. The program often relies on members to provide their own equipment and donations. The purpose of the 4-H shooting sports program is to help youth learn life skills, the safe and responsible use of firearms and archery equipment and develop a lifelong appreciation for outdoor recreational activities. The Extension Agent and 4-H Archery Instructor Jason Noyes applied for and received a grant from the NRA Foundation to improve the archery program. The program was given an equipment grant valued at over $3,500 which provided targets, bows, arrows and safety gear.

Engaging Youth in Science and Engineering Through Drones

National 4-H Youth Science Day (NYSD) is held each year during National 4-H Week. This year’s challenge, Drone Discovery, allowed youth to explore the engineering design and flight principles of drones. The Extension Agent partnered with Townsend high school agriculture education teacher Jemma Morrow to engage students on the topic. Morrow’s eleventh grade agriculture class learned about drones and taught the NYSD experiment to over 50 students in the fifth grade. Students participated in a hands-on experience in science, technology, engineering and math. NYSD culminated with a school assembly for grades 5-12. Big Sky UAV of Helena discussed the history of drones, their usage and gave a demonstration. Students in Morrow’s class were given the opportunity to fly drones and discuss agriculture applications in more detail.
Master Gardeners Make a Community Difference

The Master Gardener program is a three level course that provides horticulture information to improve gardening skills paired with community involvement. During the fall of 2015, two local gardeners, Kelly Morick and Dawn Reynolds, became the first in the county to attend the Level 3 course in Bozeman. When they returned, they each completed over 40 hours of community service by assisting at the community garden, teaching classes and writing newspaper articles.

In the spring of 2016, Level 1 of the Master Gardener program was offered by Extension in Broadwater County. Five individuals successfully completed the course. Four of these individuals became certified Master Gardeners through participating in volunteer hours by assisting at the school garden, working with the Townsend Tree Board, pruning trees for the Heritage Orchard Program and improving the community garden. Together, they provided nearly 120 hours of community service.

On the final evaluation for the Level 1 course, participants indicated learning the following new skills or increased areas of knowledge: pruning, germination, fruit trees, companion planting, plant rotation, pest control, irrigation techniques, soil health and tree care. All participants indicated they increased their knowledge of general gardening, yard and tree care. All participants felt more confident in finding unbiased, research-based answers to gardening questions.

Rancher Roundtable Programs Connect Local Ranchers

Throughout the winter, Extension in Broadwater County offered Rancher Roundtable programs to provide producers with information on emerging issues, help them be better prepared to make decisions for their business and to share best practices. Each program featured a meal, guest speaker and an opportunity for networking and interaction. There were consistently 20-25 ranchers at each program. Topics included cattle fetal programming, sainfoin, smartphone applications, cheatgrass management and the veterinary feed directive. Program participants indicated value in networking with others and learning from guest speakers.

As a result of the winter programs, a committee formed to provide direction for future rancher programs. The committee met and helped organize two summer tours. In June, a tour on managed intensive grazing was held with about 25 people who toured two local ranches to learn about diversity in grazing systems. In September, a talk and tour on cover crops was held for about 30 people. The program involved a presentation from NRCS on soil health and cover crop selection, a roundtable discussion on drill calibration for cocktail mixers and a tour of three local ranches using cover crops as part of their forage production plan.

Learning Safe Practices in Food Preservation

Freezing and drying is an easy, low cost way to preserve fresh produce. By learning the proper techniques, participants can provide quality produce to their families throughout the year. Through a partnership with Old Baldy Adult Education, a food preservation class was held in September on freezing and drying techniques. The class was taught by Kim Lloyd, Lewis & Clark County Extension Agent. She reviewed safe practices in freezing and drying, provided samples and the group made freezer jam. Attendees gained skills and knowledge in safe and easy food preservation.
Growing Skills Through 4-H

For many 4-H members, their project work is the highlight of their 4-H year and they put a lot of focus in this area. For Kenzie Howey, a 13 year old member of the Crow Creek Clovers 4-H Club, the 4-H gardening project is one of her favorites. She has turned her garden into a successful service learning experience.

Howey currently has a 30’x 40’ vegetable garden. Almost all of the vegetables she produces are donated to food banks in Three Forks and Townsend. This year, she was awarded a grant through the Montana 4-H Foundation which supports youth who are involved in the greens industry. With this grant, she purchased supplies to build raised beds, irrigation equipment and composting materials. The use of raised beds was a skill she learned through participating in the Katie’s Krops Foundation, which sponsors youth across the country to grow gardens to fight against hunger.

“I enjoy growing my garden and helping others in need. Gardening is a fun activity that my whole family can do together,” Howey said, “I’m not 100% sure what I want to be when I grow up, but eating healthy vegetables will always be a main part of my life. Educating others and helping others learn the benefits of healthy eating brings me happiness, so I think it will always be a part of who I am.” Through her project, she is learning lifelong skills including concern for others, healthy lifestyle choices, disease prevention, decision making, problem solving and organization.

Preparing for Farm Emergencies

Farm work is a dangerous job and in a rural county being prepared for such an emergency is essential. As a result of a local training, emergency responders are now better prepared for farm, machinery and vehicle emergencies. Response and action time can be decreased through practice and training, which can save lives. It also creates a safer environment for volunteer emergency workers who risk their lives to help others.

A local emergency planning committee meeting identified a need for a Farm Extrication Training. As a result, a training was held in November for nearly 50 local fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel. It had been nearly 20 years since the last training and almost all of the current emergency responders had never attended.

MSU Extension in Broadwater County partnered with the MSU Fire Services Training School, MSU Extension Ag Emergency Program, local Disaster Emergency Services, Fire, EMS and local businesses to provide an all day hands-on training for all five county fire departments and EMTs. The training was taught by the Fire Services Training School, administered by MSU Extension. Participants walked through several farm scenarios including baler entrapment, hand in an auger and swather run-over. Additionally, participants were able to practice vehicle extrication.