

Madison-Jefferson Counties



103 West Legion Ave. PO Box 1079, Whitehall, MT 59759 | 406-287-3282 | madisonjefferson2@montana.edu | <http://madisonjefferson.msuextension.org/>



Whitehall MSU Extension Office, by Kaleena Miller.

Jefferson and Madison Counties encompass an expansive 5,262 square miles of Southwest Montana and are home to nearly 21,000 residents. Agriculture, mining, recreation, and tourism represent the top industries these counties have to offer. Centrally located between the two counties, our office is in the unofficial Southwest Montana hub of Whitehall. Shared county Extension services have been available in Madison and Jefferson counties since 1936, and a sole agent was in Madison County as early as 1917.

Currently the office staffs three MSU Extension Agents and two support staff, offering programs in Agriculture, Natural Resources, 4-H/Youth Development and Community and Economic Development. Our community and economic development agent teams with the Jefferson Local Development Corporation (JLDC), whose mission is to promote the general welfare of Jefferson County through business assistance, enhancing the tax base, and development of projects and studies.

Harvest of the Month Highlights Beef and Leafy Greens

Agriculture, natural resources, nutrition, and taste tests: in June, we incorporated all of these elements as we teamed

with partners for two days of youth presentations. First, we highlighted Montana beef production by recruiting a few ranchers to present on intensive grazing and animal husbandry. Youth participated in a rotational grazing demonstration and met some local lambs as they learned about grazing habits. Students learned about the relationship between grazing and soil health as they tasted meatballs sourced from the ranchers in the room. They also learned how to approach and handle livestock.

An unexpected, positive outcome from this educational event was the networking between the ranchers. Having never met prior to the event, the ranchers learned about each other's operations and scheduled site visits with each other to learn more about different operations. We followed up the beef day with an introduction to leafy greens. Youth were introduced to different culinary herbs, kale and lettuce varieties. After completing a taste test of several leafy green species, kids voted on whether they tried it, liked it, or loved it. They also participated in a seed-starting activity and a vermi-composting project. As a result of the presentation, students walked away with an increased understanding of leafy green nutrition, recognition of culinary herbs, and the role worms play in the overall health of gardens.

406 Grazing Academy

MSU Extension partnered with the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation to offer a three-day, hands-on workshop in Ennis for ranchers wanting to hone skills for solving grazing management challenges. MSU Extension delivered a presentation on factors that affect calving season decisions. We discussed considerations related to nutritional requirements, business marketing options, off-ranch obligations, and existing resources. Participants shared their experiences and questions as they considered potential timing shifts in their calving season. As a result of the information shared, participants evaluated their current calving season dates and opportunities for shifting those dates. Following the presentation, one participant shared “I found Kaleena’s presentation on spring calving fascinating and helpful as we get started with the cattle side of our business. Traditionally we have calved in March, but are considering May calving after hearing the information shared.”

Another element of the workshop featured a panel of experienced ranchers who shared lessons learned and best practices with attendees. Many of the workshop participants listed the panel as the highlight of the training. They appreciated the opportunity to learn from more experienced ranchers as they consider changes in their own management practices. One attendee shared “To say it was informative is an understatement. It was a fantastic seminar, maybe the most useful and informative I have ever participated in.”

Golden Sunlight Mine

The Golden Sunlight Mine in the Whitehall area has been a key community partner for over 30 years. The mine was on a closure path that would have had a negative regional economic impact. MSU Extension supported the efforts of a local community group and elected officials to help the mine leadership look at reprocessing of tailings as an alternative that could sustain operations. This past year involved several public input meetings that resulted in a positive Record of Decision for the mine to operate for 12 more years. The workforce is being expanded along with many contractors being hired. This major county employer, taxpayer and community partner has been retained due to the support from community grassroots efforts.

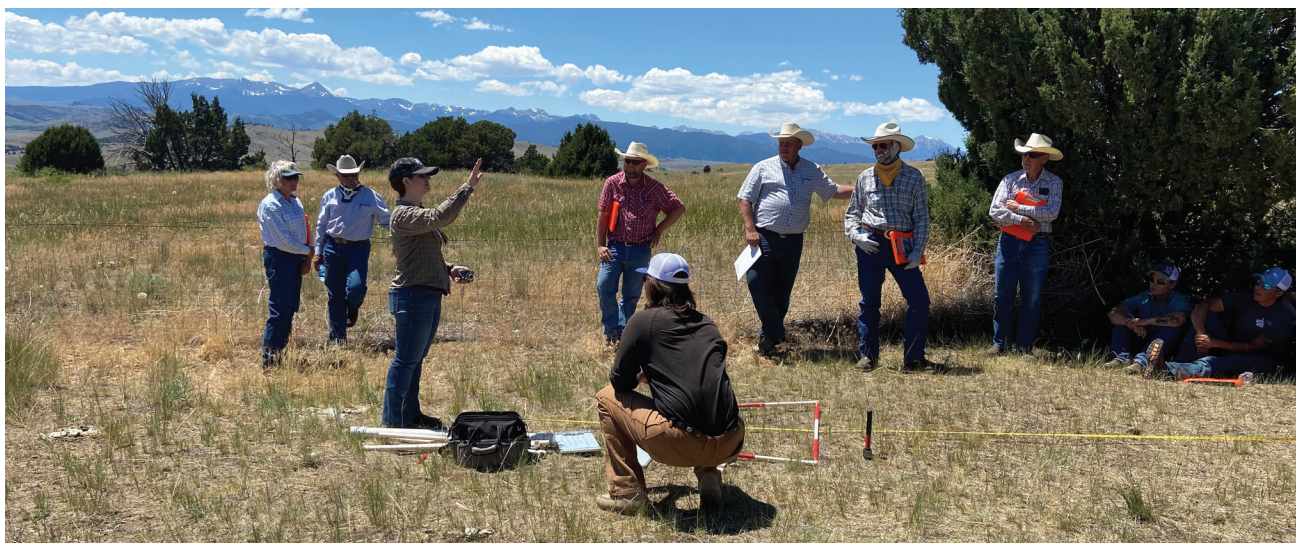
21st Century Afterschool Program

During the summer of 2021, we were presented with various opportunities to work with a range of community youth. We partnered with a 4-H Youth Leader to co-teach nine classes to audiences ranging from kindergarten to fifth grades. We covered various topics from photography to plant science and several other Cloverbud activities (typically for youth ages 5-8). The kindergarten and first grade students

completed activities from Cloverbud workbooks such as “Sink or Float” and “Create a Habitat.” Second and third grade students learned how to make plant presses. In their final class, we took flowers and other plants, pressing them into images and scenes with the material they gathered. Fourth and fifth grade classes learned about photography, creating photo jars to take home with pictures they took. We enjoyed meeting youth in the community, learning about new skills together, and introducing them to youth development curriculum through the lens of 4-H.

Water Resource Management

Our economies are tied to water resources supporting agriculture, recreation, and future growth. The drought in 2021 has been especially hard on water users with record low water flows coupled with the lack of seasonal moisture. It was normal to have low hay crop yields, limited pasture regrowth and water recreation restrictions that were compounded by reduced available water resources. MSU Extension, working with the Jefferson River Watershed Council, area producers and recreational users successfully implemented the Jefferson River Drought Management Plan. This collaboration of interested water users was able to sustain water resources with the cooperation of irrigators reducing their water needs to help sustain the Jefferson River flow. This successful model validates that diverse groups can work together for the mutual benefit of all



Top Row: (left) Vermi-composting demonstration with youth, by Kaleena Miller; **(right)** Golden Sunlight Mine, by Tom Harrington; **Center:** Participants are pictured in a field, doing a rangeland health monitoring activity, by Kaleena Miller; **Bottom Row: (left)** Youth creating habitats with various art supplies, by Mikayla Hudson; **(right)** Jefferson River, by Tom Harrington

Madison-Jefferson Counties Staff



Montana State University Extension is an ADA/EO/AA Veteran's Preference Employer and provider of educational outreach.

Kaleena Miller

Ag and Natural Resources Extension Agent

Mikayla Hudson

4-H and Youth Development Agent

Janine Burrows

Ag, Natural Resources, and 4-H Program Assistant

Tom Harrington

Community/Economic Development Extension Agent and JLDC
Project Officer

Eric Seidensticker

JLDC Executive Director

Erin Carbajal

JLDC Business Manager