

Cascade County



3300 3rd St NE #9 | 406-454-6980 | cascade@montana.edu | www.montana.edu/extension/cascade/



Overlooking Rainbow Falls on the Missouri River, by Allyssa Peak.

Cascade County, located in central Montana, is one of the population centers in the state and is known as the “Electric City” due to its historical significance with the hydroelectric generation plants and smelter activity. The MSU Extension office is located in the county seat, Great Falls, which is on the Missouri River and is one of the pioneer cities in the state. The terrain is primarily gently rolling plains dissected by the Missouri River and its numerous coulees and tributaries. The Little Belt Mountains are found in the southeastern portion of the county. The population of the county is approximately 82,300, which includes rural areas, the incorporated city of Great Falls, and the towns of Belt, Cascade, Centerville, Fort Shaw, Monarch, Neihart, Sand Coulee, Simms, Sun River, Ulm, and Vaughn, many of which have complete K-12 school systems.

Cascade County’s economic base includes agriculture, the military, education, small manufacturing, food processing, and many service industries. The majority of agricultural income is derived from crop production. According to 2014 Montana Agricultural Statistics, the county ranks 17th in crop production with over \$56 million in cash receipts. Livestock production,

primarily beef cattle, is also very important - generating over \$78 million in cash receipts and ranking ninth in the state.

Great Falls is home to the Benefis Health Care System (one of the premier hospitals and health care organizations in Montana), Malmstrom Air Force Base, and many cultural attractions including the Charles M. Russell Museum/Gallery, the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, the Paris Gibson Center, and the First People’s Buffalo Jump. Great Falls is a primary destination point for tourism. Outdoor recreational opportunities include fishing, hunting, boating, golfing, hiking, and historical exploration.

Cascade County 4-H Camp – A time for friends, food, and fun

Cascade County 4-H Camp is held at Camp Rotary in Neihart every June. Cascade County 4-H members have been attending camp here for many years. Many adult chaperones attended this camp when they were members of Cascade County 4-H.

Camp Rotary has changed quite a bit since those chaperones were campers. The camp has gotten new cabins, a new lodge, and a new bathhouse, and the swimming pool was demolished. Despite these cosmetic changes, much of the spirit of 4-H camp has remained the same. Cascade County 4-H youth still come together to learn about leadership, friendship, and skill building.

In 2022, 59 Cascade County 4-H youth members attended as campers, 10 older youth served as camp counselors, and 13 adults chaperoned. The camp was planned entirely by counselors. They planned during four pre-camp meetings where they chose workshops, activities, and the theme. One counselor indicated they felt more confident in planning events after attending camp planning meetings. Campers participated in team building, outdoor survival, archery, gaga ball, craft, and dancing workshops at camp. Multiple campers indicated they could make at least one new friend at camp, and they looked forward to attending camp next year.



Extreme Drought Leads to Increased Nitrate and Water Quality Testing

Cascade County's D3 drought is classified as extreme drought with only one more category being more severe. Many producers could not harvest forages due to drought, reduced plant growth, and grasshoppers. Producers with a crop to harvest reached out to MSU Extension for nitrate testing. Cascade County MSU Extension uses forage nitrate strip tests because the test gives an exact number of nitrate concentrations. Feeding forages with high nitrate levels can cause abortions, reduced milk production, weak offspring, or death. Nitrate tests from a lab can cost \$20 per test, whereas testing through MSU Extension is free. There were 25 forage nitrate strip tests conducted through Cascade County MSU Extension, which saved producers \$500.

Livestock can also die due to high sulfates and total dissolved solids in water. One livestock producer reached out to Cascade County MSU Extension when four cattle died in September. The cattle were being fed in a corral with an automatic waterer. Cascade County MSU Extension encouraged the producer to test for sulfates after describing symptoms of cattle foaming at the mouth, stargazing, and blindness. The well water came back with 51,000 mg/L of sulfate concentration; above 4,000 mg/L is classified as having high mortality rates. The producer saved the rest of his cattle, valued at around \$25,000. Cascade County MSU Extension worked with MSU Extension Beef Specialists Megan Van Emon and Sam Wyffels, Northern Ag Research Center Superintendent Darrin Boss, MSU Extension Water Quality Specialist Adam Sigler, and North Border Analytics owner Brian Grebliunas in water treatment, testing, and toxicity.





Previous Page: (top) 4-H Camp Dance, by Allyssa Peak; (center) Memory Café in Cascade County, by Katrin Finch; (bottom) 4-H youth with hog, by Rose Malisani; **This Page:** Photo by Katrin Finch

Caregiving Burdens and Support

Caregiving for a loved one is a challenging task, in Montana, there are approximately 17,000 caregivers who provide an annual total of 24 million hours of care at no cost. In 2016, one in six (16%) Montana adults reported providing regular, unpaid care or assistance to a friend or family member with a health problem or disability during the past 30 days (DPHHS, 2016). Over the last five years, the burden of caregiving has become prevalent and MSU Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Agent Katrin Finch has reached over 200 caregivers through one-on-one consultations and support groups. The Powerful Tools for Caregiver Education Support Group meets once a month, and all caregivers are welcome. On average, 14 caregivers attend, some are just beginning the caregiving journey, and others have completed their caregiving duties but want to share their knowledge and support with other caregivers. During these meetings, facilitators Katrin Finch and Jona McNamee discuss topics including managing stress, handling difficult conversations or family members, estate planning, self-care activities, and more.

Over the last year, there has been a significant increase in attendance of caregivers who are caring for a loved one with memory loss challenges such as Alzheimer's. In 2020, it was estimated that approximately 22,000 people 65 and older had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's (Alzheimer's Impact Movement, 2022). Between caregiver's attendance at the Powerful Tools for Caregiving Education Support Group and an increase in phone calls for resources, Finch reached out to the Montana Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association and the Great Falls Public Library to partner and began holding Memory Cafés. Memory Cafés are comfortable, social gatherings that allow people experiencing memory loss and a loved one to connect, socialize, and build new support networks. As a result of the first five Memory Cafés, three caregivers have connected outside of meetings to offer support to each other, and three individuals experiencing memory loss have created a friendship and met outside of meetings.

Montana Symbol of Excellence Recognizes Youth and Hog Breeders

The Montana Symbol of Excellence (SOE) program annually recognizes both 4-H and FFA youth and swine breeders who raise market swine to meet quality standards and show a commitment to producing quality pork products. The SOE program was created through a partnership between the Montana Pork Producers Council and MSU Extension before the Pork Act of 1985. Cascade County MSU Extension operates the program to highlight the dedicated work of both youth and swine breeders. In 2022, 2,219 hogs were entered into the program, which is an increase of 341 hogs from the previous year. Ultrasound data is also on the rise with 1,341 hogs being evaluated in 2022 compared to 784 in 2021. 22% of hogs carcass-graded qualified for SOE and 39% of hogs ultrasounded qualified for SOE in 2022. Brielle Berk (youth) and Ryan Toenjes (hog breeder) were recognized as the top light carcass division winners; Brooklynn Reid (youth) and Cain Super Sires (hog breeder) were recognized as the top heavy carcass division winners; and Colton Anderson (youth) and Millers Show Pigs (hog breeder) were recognized as the ultrasound division winners. Both youth and hog breeders winning in the three different divisions will be recognized at the MPPC Annual Conference and Trade Show in Great Falls.

Cascade County Staff

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

Katrin Finch
Family and Consumer Sciences Agent

Rose Malisani
Agriculture and 4-H Horse and Livestock Agent

Allyssa Peak
4-H Youth Development Agent



Jody Cope
Administrative Assistant

Ben Roth
Administrative Assistant