

Judith Basin County



P.O. Box 427 | 406-566-2277 Ext 104, 105 | judithbasin@montana.edu | www.montana.edu/extension/judithbasin/



Judith Basin County Courthouse by Katie Hatlelid.

Judith Basin County is located in central Montana in a fertile basin between the Highwood, Big Snowy, and Little Belt mountains, with a county population of 2,016. The principal communities are Stanford, Hobson and Geyser, with numerous other small communities throughout the county.

Judith Basin County's economy is based on agriculture, primarily livestock, small grains and forage production. The county ranks tenth in Montana for beef cattle population, tenth in winter wheat production, fifteenth in barley production, twenty-fourth for spring wheat production, fourth for alfalfa hay production, and twenty-first for other hay production. Timber and mining enterprises take place on a small scale.

The MSU Central Ag Research Center is located in the county. The Judith Basin 4-H programs consist of 90 youth members and 29 volunteer leaders in four organized clubs. The county offers a variety of recreational opportunities, which include hiking, hunting, fishing, camping, snowmobiling and skiing (a major ski area is about 45 minutes from Stanford). The Judith Basin was the home of the legendary western artist

Charlie Russell. Many of his paintings were scenes captured by the artist between Lewistown and Great Falls.

Stanford and nearby Utica have several museums of interest. Recreation opportunities abound in the nearby Lewis and Clark National Forest, Judith River Wildlife Management Area and Ackley Lake State Park. The Judith River Wildlife Management Area, at the edge of the Little Belt Mountains, is a good place to view large elk herds in late fall and winter. Raynesford is an agriculturally-rich area. The homesteading boom from 1908 to 1915 and the extension of the Great Northern Railroad played an important role in the development of this area. Moccasin also began as a homestead community. In 1908, the Montana State legislature created the Central Montana Agriculture Research Center, three miles west of Moccasin. The center's purpose was to teach the newly arrived homesteaders dryland farming techniques. Even after the homesteader's bust, the center developed machinery and new crops, improving the area's wheat yields.

Stockgrowers Spring Fling

The MSU Extension Agent in Judith Basin is the de-facto secretary for several local boards and councils, and as such is integral in helping to plan and carry out meetings and seminars for these organizations. This year the Judith Basin Stockgrowers held their spring event at Judith Basin County Farms just outside Hobson. The evening began with a social hour, a tour of the facility led by Andy Kellom, and then a wonderful dinner catered by Full Curl Smokers. The tour was divided into two groups due to the high turnout at the event. Kellom took producers and industry professionals around and through the inner workings of the feedlot. He explained in detail the receiving and loading out process, and what happens to cattle that leave the facility. For most attendees, it was the highlight of the night. The informational portion of the evening was rounded out with an update from the Montana Stockgrowers Association, and local veterinarian Laurie Gaugler. The evening was a resounding success with good discussion and camaraderie.



4-H Camp at Rotary

Every summer is filled with 4-H camps and activities. This year, 75 campers and counselors attended our six-county 4-H Camp held at Camp Rotary near Monarch. Counselors and adults convene on Monday of the camp week and finish preparation and training. Tuesday afternoon, campers arrive for three nights of exciting activities and learning experiences. Coming from a very wide swath of the center of the state, from Townsend to Roundup, and Stanford to White Sulphur Springs and Harlowton, the participants get to meet other 4-H members from a variety of backgrounds. Workshops included building rollercoasters for marbles, mining for minerals, building treasure boxes, archery, and campfire cooking. When asked if the kids had fun, the only answer was YES!

Drought and Post-Fire Pasture and Range Management

The Fall of 2021 brought three major fires in the greater Central Montana area. Part of one of those fires started in Judith Basin County, and rapidly moved east into Fergus. The extremely dry and windy conditions that led to the fire and then continued through the winter season took a heavy toll on the grazing land that it covered. In May, Judith Basin MSU Extension hosted a drought management and post-fire recovery workshop. Jeff Mosley, MSU Extension Range Management Specialist, and Hayes Goosey, MSU Extension Forage Specialist spoke about grazing decisions, weed control after fire and drought, drought management in improved forages, and IPM strategies for grasshoppers and blister beetles. After a delicious lunch catered locally, the attendees went to the Ward Ranch north of Stanford to look at the burned area and how it was recovering. MSU Extension Agent Katie Hatlelid also demonstrated some useful scouting techniques for weeds and insects and shared some plant and weed identification tools.





Previous Page: (top) Andy Kellom gives the Montana Beef Council Update, by Katie Hatlelid; **(bottom)** Standing on the line between the burned and unburned land by Katie Hatlelid; **This Page:** Campers work on making treasure boxes, by Katie Hatlelid

Judith Basin County Staff



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

Katie Hatlelid
Extension Agent

Rebecca Martin
Administrative Assistant