

2022 MSU EXTENSION HIGHLIGHTS

Madison-Jefferson Counties



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The 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 MSU Extension services have been available in Madison and Jefferson counties since 1936, and there was a sole agent in Madison County as early as 1917. Currently the office staffs two MSU Extension Agents and one support position, who offer programs in agriculture, natural resources, and 4-H youth development.

Field Days

The summer season provided ample opportunity for field day workshops in Madison and Jefferson Counties. We brought together landowners around topics of cattle nutrition, backyard composting, pollinator habitat, fruit tree pruning, and soil fertility. Attendees appreciated the opportunity to engage with the content in a very hands-on and interactive

style. We led local ranchers through pastures as we walked down into freshly dug soil pits and assessed the health of the plant community. Our horticulture workshop was held at the Redman Orchard, south of Whitehall, established as an MSU Extension Fruit Research Site in 2014. Attendees eagerly grabbed pruning shears after some instruction, practicing what they learned on the apple, pear, plum and cherry trees. Participants left our workshops better equipped to make informed land management decisions, one stating that “the session helped improve my understanding of pasture and cattle health” and another sharing “I learned what I can do to increase habitat for pollinators.”

Land Stewardship Workshop

In October, we teamed with our local partners at the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Ruby Valley Conservation District, and the Madison Conservation District to hold a Land Stewardship for Small Acreages Workshop. One major goal for this event was to introduce smaller-acreage landowners to common land use topics and associated

resources. More than 50 Madison County residents gathered to hear from local experts on wildlife, water rights, noxious weeds, pasture management, and understanding soils. The information shared provided attendees with resources and ideas on how to be responsible stewards of the land. One participant shared “You did a remarkable job of bringing a broadly diverse representation of numerous agencies, and the tone of them all was ‘we are here to help’.” A workshop recording was posted on the MSU Extension YouTube page for those who could not attend.

4-H Program Thrives

The Madison-Jefferson 4-H Program hosted two very successful fairs this year. Volunteers from both counties went above and beyond to provide youth and families with healthy competition, sale opportunities, community awareness and fun. The Madison-Jefferson 4-H & FFA sale had participants filling the grandstands as more than 300 buyers closely watched the homegrown and prize-winning animals. In addition to the livestock sale’s economic impact, donor contributions for program awards and sponsorships nearly doubled compared to previous years. As we prepared for Achievement Day, we were excited to recognize our youth and their many 4-H experiences. We specifically highlighted youth who raised animals that meet very high standards: 30 Symbol of Excellence pigs and 17 Lambs of Merit.

The 2022-2023 Montana 4-H Ambassador Officer Team includes one of our members, Abigail Curtis. Her demonstration of leadership and passion for developing and refining the skills of the Madison-Jefferson 4-H members is an inspiration to us all. Curtis also serves as the youth representative on our program’s 4-H Council. She shared “I wanted this position because I know the value of youth advocacy, and I want to give the youth of my county a voice on our 4-H council. I am excited to work with the Madison/Jefferson County 4-H council this year.”





Previous Page: (top) Pruning at the Redman Orchard, by Erika Malo; **(bottom)** Local agency staff take questions during the workshop, by Kaleena Miller; **This Page:** 2022 4-H Ambassador Officer Team (Abigail Curtis is third from the left), by E. Brush Photography

Madison-Jefferson Counties Staff



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