



Sunset entering into Meagher County by Meagher County Chamber of Commerce.

Meagher County is nestled between the Little Belt, Big Belt, Castle, and Crazy Mountains. The county is a hot spot for the outdoor enthusiast during every season of the year. Recreational opportunities include hunting, camping, fishing, snowmobiling, and skiing at Showdown, the oldest running ski hill in Montana. After enjoying outdoor activities, many visit White Sulphur Springs, the county seat, for a soak in the historic hot springs, to enjoy a locally-crafted beer, and to have a meal at one of the town's eight restaurants. The county is home to approximately 1,900 people inside the 2,395 square miles of rolling hills and mountains. Meagher County MSU (Montana State University) Extension provides unbiased, research-based resources to meet the needs of residents of Meagher County. Programming is concentrated in the areas of agriculture, natural resources, and 4-H youth development. However, the office also provides resources in the areas of community development, economics, and food and nutrition.

Assisting MSU Extension Clientele, Individually and in the Classroom

Meagher County MSU Extension saw an increase in office visits in 2022. The office completed five nitrate tests for producers, which was an increase from none in 2021. The nitrate tests provided an opportunity for one-on-one consultations with agriculture producers about nitrates. There was also an increase in residents utilizing the Extension office for weed and insect identification. The community also utilized MSU Extension diagnostic services for diseases of plants, trees, and lawns.

In addition to office visits, Meagher County MSU Extension also hosted educational programming for residents. In April, an Initial Private Applicator Training provided residents with the opportunity to receive a Private Pesticide Applicator license and for current license holders to receive recertifying credits for the current cycle. The program had 34 attendees, 18 received their license and 16 received recertifying credits. In the fall of 2022, Meagher County

MSU Extension agent Makayla Paul invited three MSU Extension faculty to present topics at a local Rancher Roundtable Discussion. The producers in attendance investigated weed seed dispersal, forage insects, and supplementation of beef cattle. In evaluations, producers rated the program as excellent and said they learned something new. One producer in attendance noted “he was glad he came because everything discussed related to his personal ranch.” Lastly, Agent Makayla Paul noticed a call for information about canning to preserve foods on a local Facebook gardening group. To address the need, she offered a program on canning salsa, with assistance from Katrin Finch, Cascade County MSU Extension agent, and Sarah Bock, Fergus County MSU Extension agent. Attendees reported they enjoyed the program, and would like to attend more canning classes for further education.

Growth in Meagher County 4-H

Meagher County 4-H had vast growth in 2021-2022. Youth membership increased from 44 to 60 members and volunteer participation increased by enrolling nine new volunteers. Educational opportunities increased from previous years. Nutrition workshops were hosted for live-stock members and eight members attended animal quality assurance training. A Record Book educational workshop was hosted to teach members about 4-H record books and how to correctly complete them. There were 22 members at the training and one member wrote in their record book “record book training was good, as I had never really been told what goes in this.” Educational opportunities provide members with the resources needed to be successful in their individual projects.

In 2022, Meagher County 4-H teen members took advantage of leadership training opportunities during the 4-H year. It has been five years since Meagher County had members participate in statewide events such as Rec Lab and Montana 4-H Congress. Two members participated in the Leadership Academy hosted by Montana 4-H. One member attended Rec Lab, a statewide leadership camp for members 13 years and older. This camp provides members with the opportunity to enhance their leadership, communication, and team-building skills. The event also provides an opportunity for members to meet 4-H peers from across the state to build relationships. Three teen counselors attended the 2022 Multi-County 4-H camp; it was the first time in four years Meagher County had teen counselors attend. In July, two members attended Montana 4-H Congress. One

member placed first in the Illustrated Talk competition and earned a trip to National 4-H Congress. This member also applied and was accepted to be on the National 4-H Leadership team, which will include travel to Atlanta, GA.

As a result of increased participation in youth leadership opportunities, members learn how to voice their thoughts and ideas, build their network of peers and adults, and develop their skills to plan and facilitate activities. They are also able to evaluate activities and identify their own strengths and weaknesses to become better community leaders. The members who have taken the opportunity to expand leadership skills have brought those skills back to Meagher County. They are leading workshops, committees, and continuing to become influential leaders of the Meagher County 4-H program and their local communities. Meagher County hopes to use this momentum to increase member participation in youth leadership.



Top: Attendees of the Private Applicator Initial Training hosted in April 2022, by Makayla Paul; **Bottom:** (Left to Right) Sheila Hamlen, Dillan Lester, Makayla Paul at Montana 4-H Congress in July 2022, by Erin Brush Photography

Meagher County Staff



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

Makayla Paul

4-H/Youth Development and Agriculture Agent