

# Mineral County



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*Mariposa lily in the forest, hiding in plain sight, in Quartz, MT, by Dave Brink.*

**T**ell someone you're an Extension Agent and they have no idea what that is. But mention 4-H or weeds or pests or gardening or community development and they know exactly who to turn to, at least in Mineral County.

"The historical mission of the Extension Service, extending the knowledge discovered at the university to the community, often requires integrating more than one discipline. It also requires a thorough understanding of problems in the community, a thorough understanding of what has been learned through research, and insight into unique ways this research might be applied to solving problems" (Journal of Extension, 1998).

In Mineral County, MSU Extension programs and expertise serve the needs of an ever-increasingly diverse clientele at the local level, face-to-face. Every dollar of county support for Extension in Mineral County leverages three times as much support from federal and state partners to meet the needs of our clients. MSU Extension continually adapts to changing times and landscapes, and new and emerging issues in a manner well suited to local needs.

In short, the local MSU Extension office is a key information and learning exchange resource hiding in plain sight, right in your backyard!

## Successful Local Engagement

MSU Extension facilitates efforts of the Mineral County Resource Coalition (MCRC) to increase the scale and pace of forest restoration, improve recreational opportunities, and develop and improve road systems across forests in western Montana. MCRC continues to provide input from public field trips, supportive written comments, and hundreds of hours on the ground on numerous projects each year. MCRC proposed the Deemer-Henry project in August of 2018 as a Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) project to complement work already scheduled with the MT Department of Natural Resource Conservation (DNRC) ReDeemer project. This project was awarded in July 2022. With all fieldwork nearly complete on the A-BLT project, we hope to see it awarded in the fourth quarter of this fiscal year. Initial fieldwork has been completed on the Superior North project and is currently in

the scoping process. All combined, these three projects will treat over 20,000 acres with non-commercial and commercial treatments, creating jobs and generating millions of board feet of commercial products that will support the economic structure of our local communities and contribute to the regional and national need for timber to support our vital forest products industry.

Other projects supported and monitored by MCRC through MSU Extension's facilitation include the following: Redd Bull, Sawmill-Petty, Gold Butterfly, Bitterroot Front, Mudd Creek, Sorrel Springs GNA, Highway 83, Brewsters Kitchen, and Wildfire Adaptive Missoula. These projects represent tens of thousands of acres of treatments and hundreds of millions of board feet of commercial products. In addition to these projects, MCRC has a strong recreation committee that continues to develop and improve recreational opportunities throughout the region. Four MCRC members serve as board members for the newly established Mineral County Rails-to-Trails, a 501(c)(3) organization. Although a separate entity, it is anticipated that these two groups will work closely together to promote trails through public lands.

Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP) awarded a Trails Stewardship Grant due to the collaborative efforts of MSU Extension and MCRC. This grant funds the installation of two vault toilets on public land near a popular recreation area. Extension personnel and members of MCRC wrote the grant and will continue to monitor and administer it in coordination with Mineral County. In addition, MCRC solicited and wrote letters of support for three other FWP Grants prepared by the US Forest Service (USFS) that were fully funded. The largest of the three is a Recreational Trail Program grant for constructing the Route of Olympian Trailhead located at the USFS compound adjacent to St. Regis Park. The other two Trails Stewardship Grants awarded: the "Thompson Creek Trail Improvement Project" located in Superior and the "Completing the Falls Flats Trail" located in both Mineral and Sanders counties.

## Leveraging Funds to Support Mineral County

Mineral County MSU Extension in coordination with the Mineral County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC) was selected to manage \$521,000 in Minimum Allocation Grant (MAG) funds on behalf of Mineral County. MSU Extension serves the county with grant writing, grant and program administration, and facilitating procedures to utilize funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to get where they need to go to make a difference in Mineral County. So far, the county has allocated funds to the St. Regis Sewer District and the Towns of Alberton and Superior to improve sewer and water systems. Additional projects are currently under review or in the process of submission.

Mineral County MSU Extension continues to facilitate and administer over \$450,000 in funds reserved for small

business development through the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF). There are currently five small businesses utilizing these funds and two local companies, Superior Meats and Western Montana Specialty Foods, were able to expand their facilities, processing, employment creation, and national marketing opportunities. RLF funds have contributed to the continued success of many small businesses and provided the capital needed to successfully startup the Moxie Market, a small family-owned store in St. Regis that sells only Made in Montana products.



**Top:** Mineral County Rails-to-Trails members discuss an upcoming project in Saltese, by Diane Magone; **Bottom:** Montana Moxie Market, located in St Regis, a successful RLF project, by Marlys Schwaderer

## Mineral County Staff



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

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