



Welcome to Powder River County

Powder River is a rural, agricultural county of 3,297 square miles, located in southeastern Montana. The county was created from Custer County on March 17, 1919, and named for the Powder River which runs through it. The Powder River was named because of the gunpowder-colored sand on its banks. Total acres in Powder River County equal 2,109,728 million, most of which are used for rangeland.

The population of Powder River County is 1,773, according to the 2015 census figures. The population is aging, with 52 years as the average.

The county has limited oil and timber production. Most of Powder River County is grazing land. Since 1954, farm acreage has fluctuated between 1.54 and 1.72 million acres. The number of ranches has decreased and their average size has increased.

The annual Powder River MSU Extension Weed/Range Tour was attended by 70 people on a hot July day. Held at the Gay Ranch, the program featured the use of drones for weed detection, checking water and cattle distribution and other agricultural uses. MSU Extension Rangeland Weed Specialist Jane Mangold discussed cheatgrass and houndstongue control and MSU Extension Range Specialist Jeff Mosley talked about the role of Little Bluestem on grazing lands.

The summer of 2017 was dry and due to drought conditions, annual grain crops were cut for forage. Stressed cereal forages often accumulate high levels of nitrate. MSU Extension tested a total of 27 samples for 19 producers with varying degrees of nitrate levels. Producers were able to make grazing and winter feeding decisions based on the results of tests.



Left: MSU Extension Range Specialist Jeff Mosley discusses the role of Little Bluestem on grazing lands. Above: Powder River County Summer Weed Tour from a drone camera view.

A mile wide and an inch deep is a favored description of the largest river running through **POWDER RIVER County**.

Community & Family Health and Wellness Education

Powder River County increases mental health awareness

Mental health programming was identified by the Youth Issues Coalition, an advisory council, as an important focus for youth and families in Powder River County. The coalition represents local faith and school communities, a school psychologist, parents, and youth organizations. In 2017, we organized educational events that improved the lives of children and their families:

- Active Parenting, a six-week parenting education course, was presented to 13 parents of 5-12 year old youth. Parents reported that they learned:
 - to be more forgiving of myself and my kids;
 - how to address problems in my household;
 - how to structure good habits;
 - how to reinforce encouragement when my kids need it;
 - to reaffirm love even in disciplining children;
 - to follow through, and find a balance between giving in and not budging;
 - to make mistakes is okay;
 - an “I message” is a good way to convey goals;
 - giving a child options is important for their self-esteem;
 - it is never too late to change parenting behavior;

- Mark Reddick, Miles City Police Department, taught 25 parents how to protect their children and families from the risks of social media;
- Matt Byerly, Director for the Center for Mental Health Research and Recovery, shared suicide prevention programs to approximately 20 Broadus Schools teachers and staff;
- THRIVE, a computer-based Cognitive Behavioral Therapy pilot project was promoted. Twelve individuals are participating;
- Mental Health First Aid training was provided to 22 teachers, healthcare workers and clergy.

MSU Extension staff were trained to facilitate the Youth Aware of Mental Health program with high school youth, which was taught to 23 youth in the Broadus Schools. The students learned that stress is a mental health issue, to develop positive strategies to deal with stress, and how to get help for someone who has severe depression or suicidal thoughts.

Powder River County MSU Extension staff presented at a Southeastern Montana meeting of healthcare professionals to discuss Powder River County MSU Extension’s role in mental health programming and promotion.

“We have a mental health crisis in our community and are in need of mental health education and services. MSU Extension helps bring awareness of the communities struggle with mental health issues and shortage of mental health professionals.”

--Dr. Jaci Phillips

Powder River Medical Clinic, Broadus



Powder River County participants in a Mental Health First Aid training taught by MSU Extension agents Jackie Sutton and Jackie Rumph.

Fostering health in Powder River County

Powder River County MSU Extension's health education and physical activity classes targeting men and women ages 40 and older continue to grow. The classes provide health education, relaxation techniques and exercises to increase physical activity, strength and flexibility. Held in Broadus and Ashland, over 65 people have participated in the program. Testimonials of results include:

- “The classes provide incentive I need to keep moving.”
- “My last bone scan showed improved bone density.”
- “I’ve strengthened my arm after shoulder surgery.”
- “I am more flexible, feel better, and have more energy to get up and about to do different little jobs on my own, and to help my aches and pains.”
- “The classes provide good information on health issues.”
- “The classes kept me from gaining weight.”

One participant reported that she was the only person in her elder hostel who could climb to the top of Mount Sigiriya in Sri Lanka. She credited MSU Extension – Powder River County's exercise program for her success.

Baseline fitness testing by Kristy Elgin, Physical Therapist, and Darlynn Williams, County Health Nurse was completed for 20 individuals. The testing occurred when the classes began in the fall, and again when they ended in the spring. Individuals are provided educational information on how their health and fitness compares with people in their age range.

POWDER RIVER HEART CLUB... CREATING A HEALTHY “BUILT” COMMUNITY

The goal: to increase access to a healthy lifestyle for all ages by providing a well-lit, well-marked walking path with safe crosswalks and rest areas along the route.

The Powder River Heart Club, an MSU Extension-initiated group, boasted many successes. Together, the team:

- received a \$3,000 grant from the School Community Development Council to place a bench on the walking trail;
- received a \$12,000 grant from the Montana Recreational Trails program to build a new trail north of Broadus;
- raised \$1,300 by organizing a community event, the Moonlight Walk. Sixty-nine people walked the golf course during the Harvest Moon; and,
- learned about resources needed and available to build and improve a walking trail system by attending a Building Active Communities Initiative.

Clockwise from top: Powder River County residents stretch during an exercise class held in Broadus; Darlynn Williams, Powder River County Health Nurse, tests Lula May Bruce's blood pressure; Youth and adults participate in the Moonlight Walk to promote fitness and raise funds for the Broadus Trails.



Intentional Youth Development

Youth development doesn't just "happen" in Powder River County. MSU Extension purposely offers a multi-faceted program to meet the needs of youth in our county. Involvement in 4-H is an excellent way to capitalize on the resources we have to offer; however, all youth in our county can benefit from many of our programs. The 4-H program remains strong with an enrollment of 78 members and 25 volunteer leaders. Workshops and activities are planned throughout the year to provide leadership opportunities, increase communication skills, develop project skills and knowledge. Clinics and workshops throughout the year focus on shooting sports and livestock health, training, nutrition, fitting and showing.

With input from youth and volunteers, agents planned the Southeastern Montana OREO trip for the second consecutive year for seventh and eighth grade youth in our district. Forty-two youth, six adult volunteers and three extension agents chaperoned and drove participants to a variety of activities. The participants developed team building and communication skills through participating in aerial adventure, paintball, an escape room, and climbing the rock wall at the Campbell County Rec Center.

Another district-wide effort this year was hosting the State 4-H Rec Lab in Miles City. We worked with district agents, volunteers and youth to coordinate the three-day leadership event.

It was attended by 185 youth and adults from throughout the state. Powder River County 4-H solicited workshops and locations, and assisted presenters with set up.

Forty elementary-aged children participated in the Summer Fun Day, a morning of activities led by Teen 4-H members. The teens gain insight by engaging with the youth; teaching new skills and communicating effectively with each other.

The literacy-based after school program happened at three sites in the school and community. Thirty-nine youth read 240 books over the five-week program, and 46 youth and adult volunteers read, taught activities and provided a safe, structured environment for children after school. "Reading is a Hoot" was the theme and included an educational program on raptors and owls for 100 youth at the school and after school program.

Thirty five youth attended the 23rd annual 4-H Mini-Congress organized and taught by nine 4-H teens, who developed leadership, communication and organizational skills by providing a fun, educational event for kids in grades 3-7. A local sponsor donated \$250 for snacks and participants also brought canned food donations to be given to the Broadus food bank.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Challenging climbs and heights were part of the OREO adventure; participants in the after school program learn to throw a lasso; young readers share good books during the MSU Extension literacy-based after school program.



Empowering Women in Ag

MSU Extension planned and facilitated Annie's Project, a program designed to empower women in agriculture. Fifteen women attended the six-week program, receiving 18 hours of instruction in areas of production, financial management, human resources, marketing and the legal field.

Lessons Learned from Annie's Project:

– “The most important thing I learned was how much I still need to learn. Tax planning/banking records were very beneficial; as well as cattle nutrition and vaccination.”

– “The pasture lease formula website looks like something we can really put into use!”

– “I learned how to utilize all the data collected all year and to put it into a usable format that myself and others can use on our operations.”

– “Loved the ‘hands-on’ vet!”

Ninety percent of the workshop presenters were women sharing knowledge and experience from their careers in agriculture. The discussions and information shared between participants aged mid-20s to early 70s covered decades of differing life experiences; yet, they discovered commonalities within their roles as family members involved in agriculture. One of the more popular workshops was Real Colors, used



ABOVE: Margaret Taliaferro and Nikala Smith market their produce at the farmer's market in Broadus.

RIGHT: Annie's Project enhanced financial knowledge and skills for women in agriculture.

to identify personal temperament and how to distinguish the personality type of co-workers. Understanding those you work with leads to better communication and more successful relationships, whether sorting cattle, paying bills, or haying together.

Extension also hosted the Women in Ag webinar, sponsored by Washington State University. Eight women attended and were inspired by Alexis Taylor, Oregon Department of Ag Director and Anne Schwartz, farmer, to seek leadership roles in agriculture and positively impact local communities. The program stressed the importance of encouraging other women to take active roles in agriculture and to serve as mentors. MSU Extension provided the location and technology, and facilitated a local panel featuring women agriculture leaders.

Do you have your ducks in a row?

Transitioning the farm or ranch from one generation to the next is near and dear to the hearts (and financial statements) of many families in Southeastern Montana. The transfer of control from senior partners to younger family members can be extremely difficult. An advocate for agriculture family business, Jolene Brown, herself a farmer, consultant and public speaker, helps families work through that process. MSU Extension, working with an estate planning committee, raised \$10,500 through sponsorships and workshop registrations to host Brown at an Ag Family Business workshop attended by 167 people, and in several cases, attendees were multiple members and generations of same families. The



title of the workshop was the “Top Ten Mistakes That Break up a Family Business.” The workshop included a local panel of advisors: an attorney, accountant and a financial planner who discussed what information was needed to be successful in helping family businesses achieve goals.

Immediately following the workshop, participants took action steps toward operating their farm or ranch as a business rather than a lifestyle. Specific steps included creating a list of assets and how they are titled, and initiating conversations with family members. Several have established or reviewed their wills and many have evaluated long-term care options. Participants also indicated that they had visited an attorney regarding inheritance; accelerated giving stock shares; leased part of the ranch to a relative and implemented a will.

Comments from members of the estate planning committee included, “conversations are taking place at our house that didn’t happen before!” One member reported, “We are committed to holding monthly meetings, whether everyone shows up or not.” Other comments included praise that the program reached all generations, charging each with equal responsibility; frankly addressed sweat equity and its value; and discussed sensitive topics with warmth and compassion.

Later in the year, an estate planning program was offered by MSU Extension Family Economist Dr. Marsha Goetting. Thirty-five people learned what happens to property when people die without writing a will; why putting bank accounts in joint tenancy isn’t always a good idea; and the use of beneficiary deeds. In addition, Goetting met individually with seven people to provide information specific to their ranch situations. One participant stated, “She was so helpful when I was trying to settle my Mother’s estate. Her knowledge, experience and support were paramount to the process.”

Speaker Jolene Brown invites comments from participants at an Ag Family Business workshop held in Broadus.



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