

Deer Lodge County



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To the Stack and Back by Michael W. Barton.

Nestled within 741 square miles of forest, lakes, mountains and recreational places stands the world's tallest masonry structure. The 585-foot smokestack overlooks a population of 9,104, where 22.2% are over the age of 65 and 2.5% are foreign-born. The smelter stack proudly salutes 776 United States veterans living in Deer Lodge County. Beneath the expansive shadow of the smelter stack lies 77 farms that report close to 6.5 million dollars in revenue in their agricultural enterprises, ranging from cattle and sheep operations to crops, fruit trees, and eggs. Just west of the nationally-registered historic stack is the county seat, Anaconda, also known as smelter city. Smelter city is comprised of small, local businesses, numerous non-profits, and a profitable tourism and recreation industry highlighting a Jack Nicklaus golf course and blue-ribbon trout streams. The monumental stack's first brick was placed in May 1918, the last brick was put in place November 1918, the first smoke that went through the stack was in May 1919, and the stack was closed permanently in October 1980. In April 1985, through the preservation efforts of the constituents of Deer Lodge County, the iconic stack became a Montana State Park, and on April 9, 1987, the stack was inducted into the National Registry of Historic Places.

Commission Transition

Anaconda-Deer Lodge County (ADLC) is one of two consolidated governments in Montana. ADLC government

structure includes a chief executive officer, elected by a plurality vote on a non-partisan ballot for a four-year term, who oversees and guides five elected county commissioners. County commissioners are responsible for establishing the budget and acting as the county legislative body. Commissioners share administrative functions with several other elected county officials, including the Chief Executive Officer, County Attorney and Chief of Law Enforcement. Commission meetings take place Tuesday evenings alternating between business sessions and work sessions, dispersed with periodic special sessions.

When COVID-19 restrictions went into effect, county government faced the possibility of postponed meetings. Without county commission meetings, county government operations cease to function effectively. Deer Lodge County MSU Extension reached out to the CEO and offered the Montana State University WebEx platform to assist with hosting public meetings virtually. WebEx enabled the CEO and county commissioners to hold public meetings and keep the government business functioning without interruption. Deer Lodge County MSU Extension reduced the learning curve associated with virtual platforms by hosting 14 WebEx training and help sessions prior to an actual commission meeting for the county commissioners, county officials, and county constituency. Since April, Deer Lodge County MSU Extension has facilitated 33 county commission business, work, and special sessions. Interestingly, WebEx meetings have recorded an increase in

county participation—with the smallest meeting having 17 participants and the largest meeting having upwards of 50 participants. ADLC commission meetings are scheduled via WebEx for the foreseeable future, and based on participation numbers and engagement, WebEx may be provided for the county constituency indefinitely.

Tasks with Masks

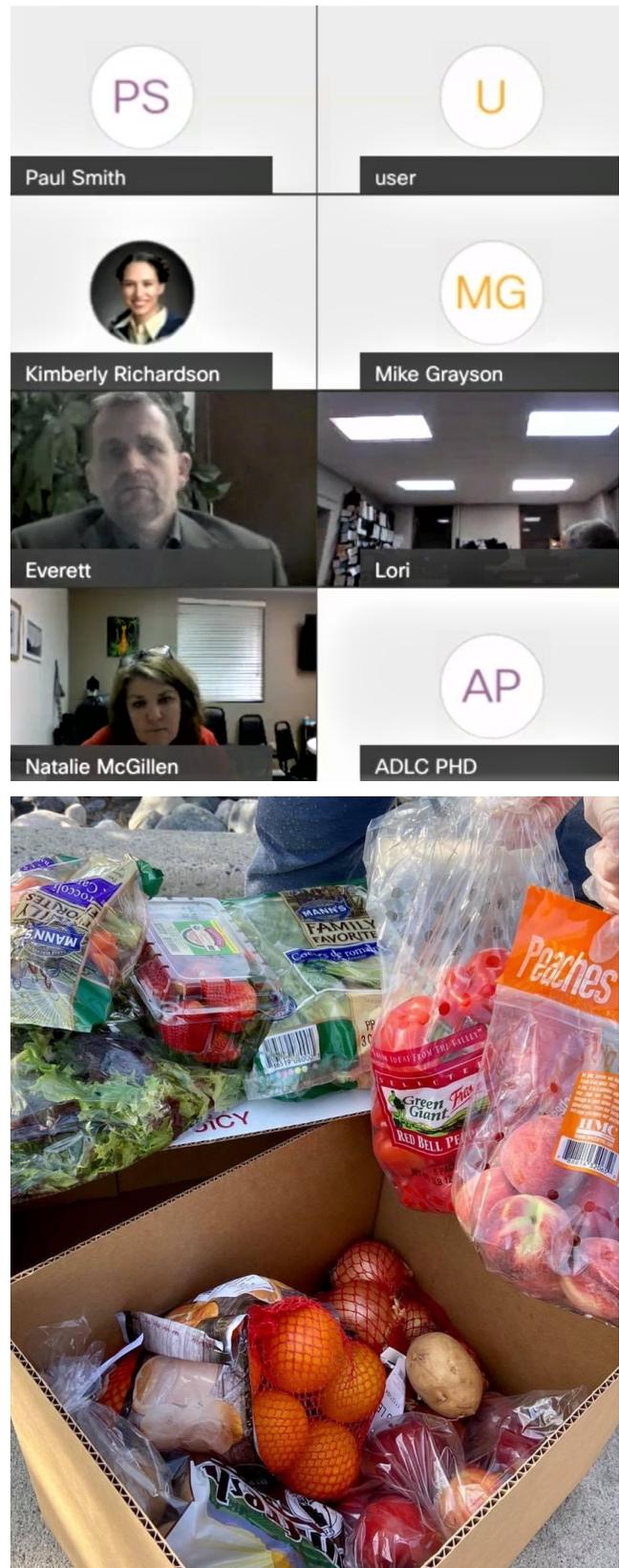
The Tri-County Fair, held the third week of August, is a collaborative effort between Deer Lodge, Granite, and Powell counties. The Tri-County Fair is the highlight and culmination of our 4-Her's projects and 4-H year. Because of the COVID-19 global pandemic, our Tri-County Fair took on a much different form. Initially the Fair Board agreed to hold a traditional fair, but in June, that plan came to a halt when the Deer Lodge Public Health Department cancelled the fair, exempting the 4-H livestock portion.

Facing uncertainty and inevitable changes, MSU Extension agents decided that all 4-Her's should be allowed to exhibit projects and through over 100 hours of dedication from agents and county volunteers, the Tri-County 4-H Event was reborn. Deer Lodge County created a 126-page document outlining a COVID-19 event proposal, incorporating input from county commissioners, county attorneys, MSU Extension agents, market committee members, fair board members, 4-H leaders, 4-H volunteers, and 4-H families and members.

The Tri-County 4-H Event plan was formally submitted to the public health department and was approved and accepted on July 28. The Tri-County 4-H Event hosted a full day exhibit for static projects from baking to woodworking. Animal projects were exhibited on specified days and times. The livestock auction was offered in-person and virtually. Despite all the changes and guidelines, our livestock auction was one of the most profitable on record and our 4-H constituency proved they could overcome challenges to “Make the Best, Better” while donning masks and practicing social distancing. In total we had 150 4-Her's participate in the Tri-County 4-H Event, showcasing 1,023 exhibits which were viewable by constituents on several virtual platforms.

Trees Please

Anaconda neighborhoods are decorated and accentuated with trees of all types and shapes which align with many of the street names in town. Many tree-named streets have residences along them that contain a tree or two of that variety. For many, their impeccably-kept trees are a source of pride and property beautification. Historically Anaconda has received recognition as a Tree City USA from the Arbor Day Foundation, and many constituents in the county are proactive and interested in the care and maintenance of their trees. After receiving more than 20 inquiries about trees and tree disease it was evident that Deer Lodge County MSU Extension needed to offer a





Previous Page: (top) WebEx Commission Meeting footage by Kimberly D Richardson; **(bottom)** The Need for Feed: an example of a food box from the USDA Farmers to Families Food Box program by Abbie Phillip; **Top:** Constituents enjoying soup and fellowship, by Kimberly D Richardson; **Bottom Row: (left)** Kirby Shindurling-Gustafson showing a Holstein calf, by Kimberly D Richardson; **(center)** Peter Kolb, PhD, MSU Extension Forestry Specialist, advising county constituents on planting preparation, by Kimberly D Richardson; **(right)** Blister Beetles consuming lilac bushes, by Christine Mahkuk

tree workshop including hands-on demonstrations from an expert. In July, nine Deer Lodge County constituents welcomed MSU Forestry Specialist Peter Kolb, PhD, to their residences to discuss trees and their tree issues. During the workshop they learned about herbicide injury, pruning and planting techniques, mowing damage, and disease. Homeowners had a variety of trees for Kolb to inspect including Aspen, Apple, Box Elder, Cottonwood, Choke Cherry, Elm, and Limber Pine. Constituents received hands-on pruning demonstrations, advice on soil and planting site preparation, cultivar selection, and overall tree health tips. One constituent wrote afterward, “You must have blessed this tree. Can’t believe it! Thanks Kim.” Based on need and positive feedback, Deer Lodge County is planning an annual spring program to host Kolb and other MSU specialists appropriately titled “Trees Please.”

Ugh, Bugs

Entomology is the study of insects and in Deer Lodge County we receive about 15 inquiries a season for proper insect identification and insect issues in the home and on the farm. Some insects identified in Deer Lodge County have been economically impactful while others are identified out of constituent curiosity. Those with economic impact include alfalfa weevil, codling moths, and bed bugs.

In attempts to better address insects with economic thresholds, Deer Lodge County MSU Extension has cooperated in collection research with Kevin Wanner, PhD, MSU Extension Specialist in Plant Sciences and Plant Pathology, and Katrina Mendrey, Apple Program Coordinator at the Western Agricultural Research Center. This summer we had many inquiries about grasshopper and blister beetle infestations decimating crops, shrubs, and gardens, and interestingly these species life cycles are intertwined. With an influx of one, an influx of another can be expected.

Typically, most insect samples submitted are from constituents wanting information on whether an insect is harmful to humans or beneficial. In partnership with the Montana State University Schutter Diagnostic Laboratory and MSU Extension Entomology Specialist Laurie Kerzicnik, samples are submitted for proper identification, specific insect information, and mitigation techniques. Fortunately, the Schutter Diagnostic Lab has equipped each county with tools and materials needed to diagnose infestations, identify insects, and submit insects for

analysis, so in some instances, agents can provide constituents with immediate results and solutions. In our ever-changing environment, insects are everywhere and Deer Lodge County MSU Extension has helped many constituents with different types of insect issues, despite an initial response of “Ugh, bugs.”

Soups and Groups

One of the fastest growing events in Deer Lodge County is the Soup-R-Bowl held in February, coinciding with the famous NFL football Super Bowl. Soup-R-Bowl is an event sponsored by the local Elks Lodge in collaboration with several community partners, including Deer Lodge County MSU Extension. The county Extension agent has been honored to serve as a soup judge. The event features local food businesses and their culinary delights while encouraging community unity and fellowship. Local businesses compete to be recognized as having the best soup, with two trophies at stake, Judges Choice and People’s Choice. On average, 12 local businesses compete and over 80 community members participate annually.

The Need for Feed

SNAP-Ed (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education) works in partnership with local coalitions, organizations, and institutions to improve the policies, systems, and environments that support better nutritional outcomes of communities. By enhancing access to healthy foods where at-risk people live, work, play, shop, and learn, SNAP-Ed helps promote better community health outcomes and decreases food insecurity. SNAP-Ed is helping communities in Southwest Montana increase food access to families in need during the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 13 weeks, nearly 4,000, 25-pound, individual boxes of fruits, vegetables, dairy and proteins, totaling over 80,000 pounds of fresh food were distributed to local residents, organizations, and smaller area communities. The fresh food is provided through the USDA Farmers to Families Food Box program. Through community partnerships with local food banks and nonprofits, SNAP-Ed is assisting with promotion and the development of new community-based systems to distribute weekly boxes of fresh food to early childhood centers, senior congregate meal sites, and residents experiencing food insecurity or limited access to fresh food as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Deer Lodge County Staff



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

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