

Fort Peck Reservation



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Fort Peck Cultural Buffalo Herd by Wendy Becker.

The Fort Peck Reservation is located in the northeast corner of Montana. There are 2,094,000 acres, with the southern border along the Missouri River. Poplar is the home to the Tribal Council headquarters. The Fort Peck Reservation is home to two separate American Indian nations: Assiniboine and Sioux, each composed of numerous bands and divisions. The reservation is isolated from Montana's populated areas as well as manufacturing centers, but does overlap oil and gas developments. The largest employer on the Fort Peck Reservation is the Fort Peck Tribes. The main economic driver is agriculture with the land rich in natural resources.

The Tribal Agriculture Series

Extension focuses on deciphering what the current agriculture needs of our region are and responding to those needs. Local agriculture producers require timely and well-thought out programs that can be preventative and responsive. The MSU Extension Fort Peck Reservation Office, along with the Fort Peck Tribes Natural Resources Department and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, collaborate to provide agriculture awareness and bring agriculture programming to fit those needs. The Tribal Agriculture Series was developed to support needs around the Farm Bill, livestock practices, the

Master Gardener Program, and beekeeping workshops. After learning information at the seminars, producers came into Extension to work on Farm Service Agency (FSA) program details, test forages for nitrate, use sampling equipment for soil and hay testing, see area maps of orange blossom wheat midge monitoring, work on budgets for loan applications, and many details related to farm business management.

The Tribal Agriculture Series allows an avenue to learn about other Extension professionals and programs that can assist producers. During 2020, COVID-19 forced other areas of learning as well, many virtual seminars were offered via Webex or Zoom to share information regarding farm program subsidies. There were over 70 individuals who attended trainings in-person, and 110 digital packets (usb jump drives) were sent out with farm business topics and timely economic information.

Fort Peck Buffalo Mini-grant Project

The Fort Peck Reservation has an education program that is tied to their cultural buffalo herd. Fort Peck Reservation MSU Extension received a portion of funds to house an intern and work with school classes to teach about using buffalo meat in sausage and jerky making. There were eight classes of 75 students that participated in two schools. The intern was

enrolled at the Fort Peck Community Project and funded through the Chante Program. The intern helped choose the project to work with area students to guide learning and provide relevant information from the Fort Peck Tribes Buffalo Project and Buffalo Treaty.

Students learned about the health aspects of consuming buffalo meat, the difference in cooking practices for buffalo, the price differences, and what buffalo eat that affects their meat. For the hands-on portion of class, students paired up and created their own recipe for their final project. They cut and ground meat, used two types of grind settings for proper consistency and added spice mixture. After resting overnight, meat was cased into sausage or dehydrated for jerky. It was wrapped, packaged, and labeled for the final product. Students were able to take home what they had created. Youth connected the buffalo meat processing with their culture, as the program was centered around the Montana mandate of Indian Education for All. Youth learned the importance of calculating accurate amounts of critical spices and understood proper kitchen, equipment and food safety. They reported understanding many more new aspects of buffalo meat than they did before, and learning other uses for the meat.



Top: Extracting honey from frames, by Wendy Becker;
Bottom: Buffalo jerky preparation, by Wendy Becker

Fort Peck Reservation Staff



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