

# Granite County



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*Willow Creek Reservoir near Hall, MT, by Karen Palmer.*

**G**ranite County is a rural natural-resource supported county in central Western Montana. Winter and summer recreation draw visitors to the scenic beauty year-round, while agriculture is the economic base. Georgetown Lake provides a variety of recreational experiences, and is next door to the Anaconda-Pintler Wilderness. The population of the county is about 3,000, and the county seat of Philipsburg has a population of around 900. The other incorporated town in Granite County is Drummond, with a population of around 300. Montana State University Extension in Granite County is supported by three strong and important partners. County, state and federal funding sources work together to assure that MSU Extension in Granite County has the resources to provide timely and relevant education addressing locally-identified issues. Montana counties provide about 40 percent of the funding to support local offices, state funding provides about 40 percent, and federal partners about 20 percent. Like many Western Montana communities, the Granite County area has a rich mining past, but agriculture has provided the base of economic activity through the boom and bust cycles associated with historic mining. Granite County... Montana at its best!

## 2020 Tri-County Fair: 4-H Finds a Way

The Granite County 4-H program is comprised of 64 members and 19 leaders participating in various projects. The 4-H program in Granite County combines efforts to share the unique hands-on learning experience that is 4-H. Members have the opportunity to learn at several different county events: Project Possibilities, Foods Fair, Stir-Ups, Quality Assurance, Countywide Communications, International Program for Young Adults (IPYA) Presentations, and Showmanship Clinics. Granite County has three 4-H clubs that host and coordinate activities throughout the year. In the spring of 2020, COVID-19 restrictions put many 4-H activities in doubt. The Tri-County Fair became a priority as 4-H youth had already invested time and money into livestock and other projects. Through the efforts of the county Extension offices, fair board, and market committee, a plan was developed to maintain a fair that would be as close to normal as possible and fall within COVID-19 guidelines to ensure the event was as safe as possible. 4-H members were given the opportunity to have all projects judged, from livestock to sewing. With the generous support of the community, the sale generated near record breaking

prices for the market livestock exhibitors. What everyone learned in the second half of the 4-H year is that with perseverance and hard work, 4-H is able to overcome extreme adversity.

## 25th Annual Herdsmanship School

Cattle ranching is a primary driver of Granite County's economy, creating \$14,057,000 of revenue in 2016. Ranch inputs for many operations remain fairly constant year-to-year, but market volatility can lead to slim profit margins for ranchers. It is important for ranches to minimize losses and implement proper management strategy in cattle herds. To meet some of these challenges, in January of 2020, Granite County MSU Extension invited a group of MSU Extension Specialists to engage with local ranchers as part of the 25th annual Herdsmanship School. Over three weeks in January, area ranchers took part in seminars on a range of topics, including calving management, mineral supplementation, marketing, range and pasture seeding, and livestock mortality management.

Livestock mortality management was an area of concern since the Granite County livestock composting site was going to no longer be used. Tommy Bass, MSU Extension Livestock Environment Specialist, was on hand to inform ranchers about the importance of having a way to deal with livestock carcasses correctly to keep away predators and disease. With the loss of the county site, it was important that ranchers could learn how to easily construct their own livestock composting site.



**Top:** A Granite County 4-H member preparing his dairy herd for the show, by Teresa Mentzer; **Bottom:** Cows on a cold October day in Granite County, by Ben Hauptman

## Granite County Staff



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