

# Extension Sustainability Summit

Outcomes and Impacts of the 2013 Summit





Extension Sustainability Summit

Outcomes and Impacts of the 2013 Summit written by:

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*It is always terrific to see what Extension colleagues are doing in other states. Thanks so much for letting us participate. As an Extension Specialist for 33 years, I thought it was very worthwhile.*

– Phillip Rasmussen, Western SARE

## summit summary

The 2013 Extension Sustainability Summit was developed by Roslynn Brain, Utah State University Extension Sustainability, and the Western Rural Development Center to bring together Extension professionals to share Extension programs and research in Environmental Sustainability.

Extension educators designed the Extension Sustainability Summit for Extension educators to assess what major environmental sustainability programs are currently being delivered through Cooperative Extension in the West, and to envision our future direction. Environmental sustainability is envisioned to encompass five thematic areas: Land

(conservation, reduce, reuse, recycle), Air (quality, climate change), Food (local food, sustainable food systems), Water (quality, conservation), and Energy (renewable, sustainable).

The Extension Sustainability Summit was held October 2-3, 2013, in Park City, Utah.

## summit team

Developing and organizing the Extension Sustainability Summit took vision and dedication from numerous people without whom the Summit would never have been. We thank them for their contributions.

### Chair

Roslynn Brain, Utah State University  
Extension Sustainability

### Summit Coordinator

Betsy Newman, Western Rural  
Development Center

### Summit Sponsor

Western Sustainable Agriculture Research  
and Education (SARE)  
Sponsorship - \$5,000

### Summit Host

Western Rural Development Center  
Dedicated 13 months time, \$4,436 in-  
kind.

### Keynote

Jake Pollack, Program Manager,  
Sustainability Leadership Certificate,  
University of Oregon

### PLANNING TEAM

#### LAND

Mark Apel, University of Arizona  
Cooperative Extension – Community  
Resource Development

#### AIR

Gregg Garfin, University of Arizona  
Cooperative Extension – Climate, Natural  
Resources and Policy

#### FOOD

Rose Hayden-Smith, University of  
California Cooperative Extension –  
Sustainable Food Systems

#### WATER

Bob Simmons, Washington State University  
Cooperative Extension – Water Resources  
Educator

#### ENERGY

Milton Geiger, University of Wyoming  
Cooperative Extension – Energy Extension

# summit presentations and exhibits

## PRESENTATIONS

### SESSION 1: SUSTAINABILITY

The Sustainability Revolution  
Sustainability Camp  
Lessons from the U.S. from the EU ISLE Project

### SESSION 2: FOOD 🌿

One Sky One Earth Food Coalition  
School Garden Food Safety  
Grow LA Victory Garden Initiative

### SESSION 3: ENERGY ☀️

Community Engagement in Bioenergy & Renewable Projects  
Green AND LEAN? Helping Ideas to Reality  
Energy Independent Communities: State-Local Partnerships  
Building Sustainable Biofuels Programs through Networks

### SESSION 4: WATER 💧

Sustainable Stormwater Management & Treatment  
Native Plants for Sustainable Landscaping  
Water Conservation & Water Quality Education Efforts/UBC

### SESSION 5: AIR QUALITY & CLIMATE CHANGE 🌩️

Air Quality & Climate Change Lightning Session

Solutions from the Land

### SESSION 6: LAND 🏡

Farmer-to-Farmer Education: No-Till Adoption  
Payment for Ecosystem Service  
Sustainable Rangelands Roundtable  
Land Lightning Session

## EXHIBITS

Bicycle-Powered Blender Rallies Youth around Leafy Green Vegetables

Protectors of Urban Pollinators Program

Eat Wyoming - Local Food Expo Model

One Sky One Earth Food Coalition: The Power of Community Action

Wisconsin Extension Sustainability Team

Building Sustainable Biofuels Programs through Regional & National Networks

Community Engagement in Bioenergy & Renewable Projects

Sustainable Rangelands Roundtable

Energy Conservation Demonstration and Teaching Tools at the USU Botanical Center

Western SARE (Sponsor)

Utah State University Extension

USU Extension Sustainability

## by the numbers

**35** presenter abstracts submitted

**18** oral presentations accepted

**14** exhibits displayed

**51** registered participants

## in the media

The Extension Sustainability Summit was featured on Utah Public Radio's Access Utah. The full 57-minute segment plus extras are available online.  
<http://upr.org/post/extension-sustainability-summit-wednesdays-access-utah>

## on the web - video presentations

Utah State University Extension generously provided staff time and resources to record each of the 23 Summit presentation. These are available for viewing online.  
[http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMnDQoXFVBEaiZ7L8Mfkq7\\_H7Gcq8FT3i](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMnDQoXFVBEaiZ7L8Mfkq7_H7Gcq8FT3i)



*I've been with Extension for more than twenty years, and this was one of the best meetings I've been to. I've found myself sharing things about the stories I heard, and distributing the materials to other people. It was an engaging meeting. Part of it was format, part of it topic, part of it the people.*

— Rose Hayden-Smith, University of California Cooperative Extension, Sustainable Food Systems

## reported changes as a result of the summit

23 participants listed specific action items they plan to take as a direct result of information they learned at the Summit. A few are highlighted below.

*I want to assist with a follow-up report, have sent info to several presenters, and I want to connect presenters with the National Network for Sustainable Living Education.*  
 – Viviane Simon Brown, Sustainable Living, Oregon State University.



*I would like to model the local food guide from Wyoming and Utah in Washington. Also follow-up with Michigan attendee regarding the “20 minute” local food presentations.* - Bob Simmons, Washington State University Cooperative Extension.

*I’ll contact several of the presenters and others I met at the lightning sessions to set the scope of a new book. I’ll also send emails to thank several presenters and seek additional info in their areas of Expertise.* – Gary Austin, University of Idaho Cooperative Extension.

*I will share what I have learned with our Sustainability Team in Wisconsin, and will be following-up with several speakers and others I met at ESS!* – Joshua Clements, Sustainable Communities Specialist, University of Wisconsin Extension.



*Great to learn about other aspects of sustainability that influence the fields of rangeland sustainability but aren’t always front and center in discussions.*

– Kristie Maczko, University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension

## survey results: the highlights

25 participants responded to the Extension Sustainability Summit Survey and the next few pages contain highlights from the survey.

The unabridged survey results are available for viewing/download on the Western Rural Development Center's website. [http://wrdc.usu.edu/files/publications/publication/pub\\_\\_\\_1890009.pdf](http://wrdc.usu.edu/files/publications/publication/pub___1890009.pdf).

### EXAMPLES OF HOW PARTICIPANTS PLAN TO APPLY WHAT THEY LEARNED AT THE SUMMIT

I have already given information gleaned from the Summit to other Extension professionals and local teachers. I will also be looking into the possibility of implementing some of the food programs in my county.

There were topical areas presented at the summit that we do not currently address in our CES. We will consider for the future.

The school garden food safety project that was presented is highly applicable to my work and I hope to replicate in my community.

Will likely integrate use of lightening sessions into future meeting agendas. Have also invited a speaker from Solutions from the Land to attend and present at our next meeting.

The biggest take-away were meeting the other presenters so that follow-up would be possible. I am exploring planning a similar summit in the Midwest in 2015.

Already contacted colleagues in California, Arizona, and Washington about collaboration on sustainability Extension programs.

First of all, I was inspired. That has given me a lot of energy for everything I am doing. I came away with a lot of ideas. A few examples: I have been sharing the climate change information and incorporating the concept of resiliency into my environmental education and grant applications. I am inviting the Benewah County Master Gardeners to perform some of their service hours on the Reservation in our school and community gardens, inspired by the LA County Master Gardeners. I would like to emulate some of the aspects of the UO Sustainability program. I will be reflecting more on the presentations as I go forward.



*Very beneficial to have Extension colleagues from a wide range of differing fields sharing their experiences in promoting sustainability. Much can be gained from seeing programs working toward a similar goal but from a whole different perspective.*

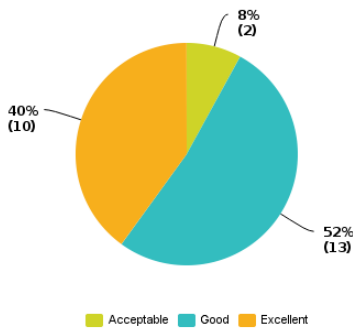
— Bob Simmons, Washington State University Cooperative Extension



# survey results: the highlights

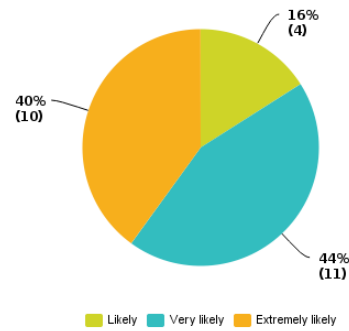
**Q1 Please provide your insight based on this experimental summit:  
Overall, how would you rate this event?**

Answered: 25 Skipped: 0



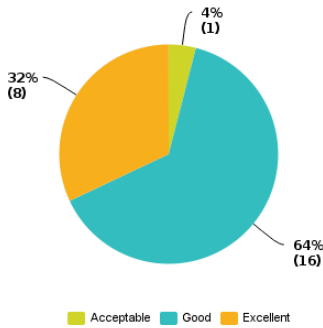
**Q2 If this event takes place in the future, how likely are you to recommend it to a colleague?**

Answered: 25 Skipped: 0



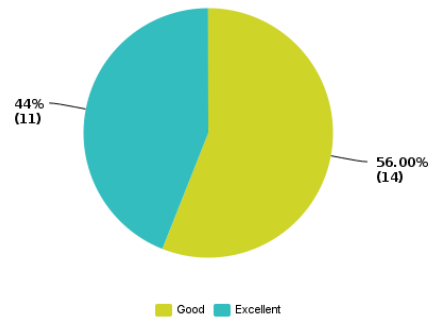
**Q6 Overall, how would you rate the presenters at the Summit?**

Answered: 25 Skipped: 0



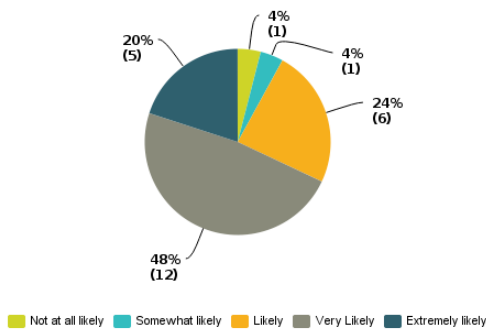
**Q8 Overall, how would you rate the quality of information presented at the Summit?**

Answered: 25 Skipped: 0



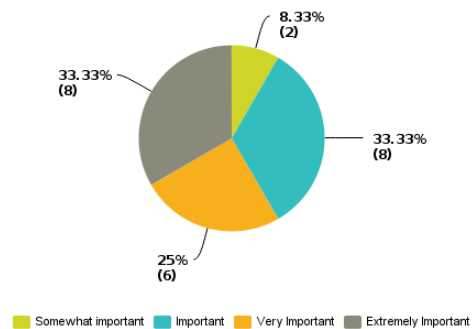
**Q9 How likely are you to implement something you learned at the Summit?**

Answered: 25 Skipped: 0



**Q11 The Summit was designed to provide a venue dedicated to sustainability work in Extension programming. How important do you believe it is to have a specific event with with a focus on the West?**

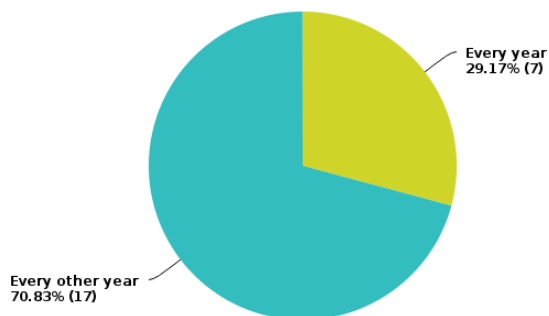
Answered: 24 Skipped: 1



# survey results: the highlights

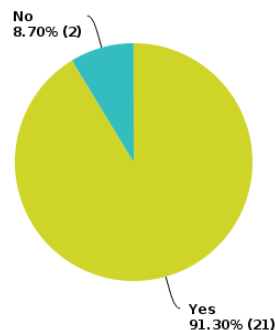
**Q12 If it is important to have an event with this focus, how often should it occur?**

Answered: 24 Skipped: 1



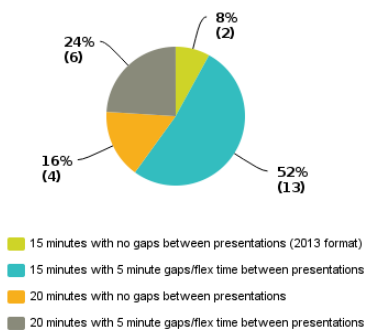
**Q13 Our major sessions included Sustainability, Air, Land, Food, Water, and Energy. Was this a good structure for the Sustainability Summit?**

Answered: 23 Skipped: 2



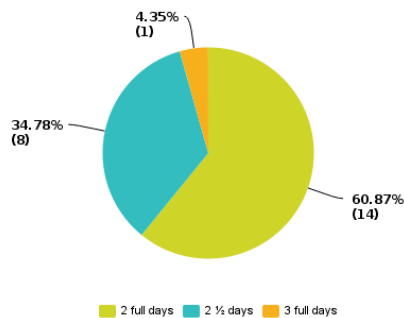
**Q15 What do you think is the best length for presentations?**

Answered: 25 Skipped: 0



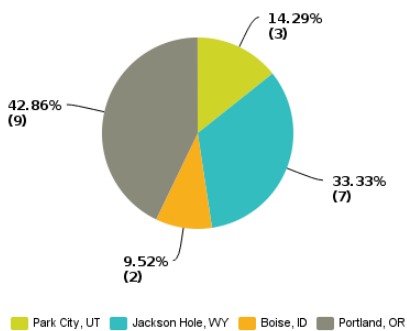
**Q16 What would be an ideal number of days for a future Extension Sustainability Summit?**

Answered: 23 Skipped: 2



**Q17 If we hosted this event again, what location do you prefer?**

Answered: 21 Skipped: 4



# survey results: the highlights

## WHAT PEOPLE LIKED MOST ABOUT THE SUMMIT

The structured format (by topic) and the lightening sessions

Gathering of ideas from each other. I also enjoyed networking and seeing what some of the other states were doing. I appreciated that presenters were held to a time limit.

Learning from colleagues both program offerings and situation

Location, range of topics, lightning rounds - although synthesizing that information and making it meaningful seems difficult

Multiple opportunities to talk about what we heard

It provided insight concerning successful programs in a variety of disciplines, as well as an opportunity to discuss thought provoking questions regarding sustainability.

1. Learning about the many and diverse sustainability initiatives. 2. The lightning discussions, and opportunities to get to speak with many colleagues.

Well done - for the most part the thematic sessions and lightening sessions were both informative, inspiring and thought provoking. The food, water and air sessions were especially engaging. The people. No doubt. Learning things outside my skill set/comfort zone (lean) I thought the topics were engaging and

interesting. Nice to see these things being done in Extension.

The lightning rounds were great--they provided everybody an opportunity to engage in the topics on which we had just heard inspiring presentations. This format works really well, from my perspective, when the group is small (as was the case here) and when participants' backgrounds and relationship to the issues discussed are diverse (also true here).

I liked the short presentations--15 minutes is a great length.

I think the lightning rounds were helpful to put the presenters lectures into perspective and into our daily lives as extension staff. We had the chance to exchange ideas and analyze the questions and how we fit into the bigger picture. I also enjoyed the size of the conference. It was personal and easily allowed for one on one conversation and interaction.

Opportunity to have discussions with each other after each focus area presenters.

The lightning rounds were excellent.

The lightening sessions were an interesting format variant. They seemed to work well and help participants interface with each other.

It was a good format, non-track oriented with a fair amount of time for interaction with colleagues and having posters right in the same room.

Small group, different cross section of colleagues, location, discussion themes

The moderate size was great - as I was able to interact with most of the attendees. The location in Park City was awesome - a great destination. The moderate cost was also a big plus in terms of obtaining institutional support to attend. The focused nature of the conference on Extension and Sustainability allowed for focused learning.

Ample time for discussion

Lightning sessions, interactive, shorter, quality presentations.

Presentations, format, and sense of collaboration.

I like the diverse group of educators and time to connect during the lightning sessions.

First attempt to illuminate existing and possible future Extension efforts in sustainable development.

## survey results: the highlights

### ELEMENTS THAT DIDN'T QUITE WORK

- Rushed presenters/compressed format
- Energy session speakers
- Limited chance to question presenters
- Take people downtown instead of same-venue social on first day
- Not much attention to exhibits
- Do not rush keynote
- No field tour
- Switching groups during lightning sessions

### SUGGESTIONS TO MOST IMPROVE THE SUMMIT

- Include administrators
- More time to ask questions to presenters
- Add section on sustainability offered by non-Extension/University-types
- Breakout sessions – giving people a choice
- An immediate oral report back from lightning sessions
- Slot time for exhibitors to stand by exhibits and engage with people
- Personally invite extension directors to event
- Bigger (but not too much) – engage the locals more
- Include a field tour
- Have lightning sessions right after presentations without a break in-between
- Second track if conference gets much bigger
- Time gap between presentations
- Social/mixer before conference kicks off

### TOPICS SUGGESTED FOR FUTURE SUMMITS

- Economics
- Evaluating sustainability initiatives
- How to help sustainable businesses
- Sustainability of Extension
- Rangeland/wildlife/recreation
- Organizational/institutional change
- Community planning
- Invite other groups who have a common interest to participate
- Landfill issues
- Culture
- Health
- Consumption
- Developing an eXtension national sustainability program



*This was a great opportunity for me to learn more about how Extension deals with sustainability issues, as I haven't had a lot of experience with that or Extension in general. It definitely showed me various career opportunities as well.*

– Julie Koldewyn, USU Extension Sustainability graduate student

## lightning sessions summary results

The Extension Sustainability Summit was organized into sessions based on the five themes of Environmental Sustainability: land, air, food, water, and energy. The Summit also included a general session on Sustainability. At the end of each session, the group broke out into smaller groups for the 'lightning sessions.' These were similar to the world café. Below are summaries from each lightning session.

### SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is long-term. Sustainability means environmentally responsible, socially beneficial, productive, and economically viable. Minimize inputs, maximize environmental, over time.

Sustainability concepts encompass all Extension program areas. Extension needs to be in it for the long haul.

Target audiences: everyone. Focus on finding Extension colleagues eager to work on this stuff. Find the 'choir members' in communities to help us. Empower them to take individual action Use multiple approaches. Use other words – adaptability, resilience, and self-sufficiency – if audiences balk at 'sustainability.' Tie sustainability into cash flow; it has to make economic sense.

### LAND

While agricultural and range management efforts in sustainability are very important, especially in the West, there are other ways that Extension can be involved with land use as it relates to sustainability and sustainable development.

Assisting small acreage, 'ranchette' landowners, using the 'Living on the Land' curriculum developed by University of Nevada and Montana State University is an appropriate and time-tested role for Extension agents.

In other efforts, becoming involved with training local officials and communities in the fundamental principles of land use planning and zoning is also appropriate – thereby creating opportunities to infuse those trainings with sustainable development principles. The capacity to do this will vary from state to state and depend on the receptivity of local officials to Extension's resources and areas of expertise.

In addition to bringing the latest in research-based information to clients, Extension also excels in being 'conveners.' This is a very appropriate role in the arena of land use and sustainability, since there is generally a variety of stakeholders and players, such as conservation and development interests,

in addition to landowners themselves, involved with large landscape decisions. Well-connected Extension agents are in a strategic position to bring together outside expertise, such as experts in conservation easements, estate planning, and range management (NRCS) that may benefit landowners and contribute to the goal of maintaining and sustaining our rural landscapes.



# lightning sessions summary results

## AIR

Climate change is still too much of a hot-button issue for Extension to tackle head on. This is especially true in the Intermountain West, where climate change science results conflict with religious beliefs and other values. In some cases, Extension and university leadership do not accept the science as credible. Nevertheless, many states have explicit climate change programs. (E.g., Alaska, Florida, Indiana (Purdue), Kentucky, Michigan, New York (Cornell), North Carolina, Oregon, Utah, Wisconsin).

In order to address climate change, Extension needs to communicate effectively about managing (resources, agriculture, etc.) in a highly variable climate; preparedness for climate variability is a strong and necessary focus. Cooperative Extension has a long and strong history of discerning the needs and concerns of clientele, and grounding discussion in ways that build bridges to solve problems. Extension personnel will be most effective by framing discussions in terms of climate variability, improving the resiliency of systems, and managing risk, or by addressing specifics, such as preparedness for drought, natural disaster, or coastal erosion. To keep pace with issues and to be prepared to discuss climate issues, with a wide variety of clientele, Cooperative Extension needs to have expertise in climate change. The backing of university administration and government officials will aid Extension to engage more confidently with clientele, given sensitivity about this topic.

While some states have explicit climate change Extension programming, sustainability programs should be conversant with climate change issues, but not fuse with climate change programming. Combining the topics could raise issues that distract effective programming. Both topics are important, but should maintain separate identities. For example, Extension is well positioned to address issues of energy efficiency, and sustainable resource management.

One group cited one of our speakers - "We can't keep doing the same things of the past and expect to solve the problems of the future."

## WATER

Extension should be involved with urban/suburban water quality and stormwater management issues.

Extension can be proactive and visionary in this area.

Extension generally does need to develop capacity in this area. It also needs to better utilize campus expertise and resources.

Extension should evolve a portion of what we do to be more urban/suburban focused. Extension could focus on the municipal/local leadership, as well as professionals and others in the community interfacing with more urban/suburban audiences such as nursery/landscape businesses, developers, realtors, Master

Gardeners, etc.

Extension can get funding from local governments with NPDES requirements to provide the outreach that is a required element of their NPDES permits.

There is a strong existing niche and need for Extension amongst small acreage landowners – especially in the fringes of suburban/urban areas.

There is a higher potential and need for Extension outreach on the range of water sustainability issues in rural communities, where there is less town/county capacity.

Extension has the credibility and ability to partner with a range of organizations to address water and sustainability issues i.e.: Sea Grant, Association of State Floodplain Managers, state agencies, county government organizations, tribes, NGOs, Conservation Districts, NRCS, water treatment/wastewater treatment departments, federal agencies, irrigation companies and districts.

Extension already has a number of programs for youth audiences that we can use and also build upon.

# lightning sessions summary results

## ENERGY ⚡

Climate change and energy – The inclusion of climate change, as a core component of energy programming is a regional/local decision. Caution concerning its inclusion is rooted in the perception that a global issue, such as climate change, may turn off some audiences that could otherwise relate to the economic and social benefits of energy efficiency and/or renewable energy.

Niche and Extension's role in energy education – The local nature of Extension is perceived as an asset not possessed by other state and national organizations. The rapport of Extension in local communities enables the presentation of new information, such as energy, from a position of trust. This allows Extension to be more effective than other, outside, entities. Energy issues also seamlessly integrate into other Extension discussions, such as soil health or community development. Energy education can engage a great variety of Extension's existing clientele.

Ultimate goal of energy education – Personal energy literacy is an overarching goal, where Extension clientele can make informed decisions about how they use energy. It is not just “coal is bad” or “renewables are expensive,” but a more informed discussion about the costs and benefits of our individual and collective choices.

## FOOD 🌱

To educate the public and youth about sustainable food systems, we need to document with producers the story behind food production via videos, national geographic-style photos, and intriguing stories. Infusing technology will help with this. Partnerships will be critical, involving moving past compartmentalization. Having kids grow their own food is a large component of this type of education.

Urban agriculture can act as a catalyst for urban economic development and support of small-scale agriculture (examples Milwaukee Growing Power, vibrant farmers markets, etc.). Also, from an Extension or land grant perspective, accessing urban agriculture gives us another way to communicate with a new constituent.

Need to focus as well on food-waste diversion from landfills and into compost, recycling, etc.

Some urban systems can be tremendously inefficient in terms of energy...but the reason for doing it include the “larger part of the whole” such as building communities. Thus, urban agriculture can be tied directly in with community development.

Programs connecting rural and urban audiences, such as breakfasts on the farm, fundraising dinners, etc., will help bridge the gap. Bridging will also require addressing food justice issues.



*The Lightning Sessions gave me an opportunity to explore the presentations and the subject in more depth. Conferences don't usually give us that opportunity.*

– Monica Pastor, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension



we'll be back!

# Extension Sustainability Summit 2015

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