The Western Rural Development Center (WRDC) compiles this magazine with submissions from university faculty, researchers, agencies, and organizations from throughout the Western region and nation. We make every attempt to provide valuable and informative items of interest to our stakeholders. The views and opinions expressed by these agencies/organizations are not necessarily those of the WRDC. The WRDC is not responsible for the content of these submitted materials or their respective websites and their inclusion in the magazine does not imply WRDC endorsement of that agency/organization/program.

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03 INTRODUCTION
From the WRDC Director

05 CLIMATE ADAPTATION PLANNING IN NORTHWEST ALASKA
Suggestions for Partnering with Rural Indigenous Communities on the Frontline of Climate Change

09 ENHANCING AMERICA’S ‘RURAL LIFESTYLE’
USDA Rural Development Provides Crucial Assistance

13 THE ROLE OF MANUFACTURED HOMES IN MEETING RURAL HOUSING NEEDS
Manufactured Home Living Steadily Increasing in Rural America

21 COMMUNITIES THAT EAT TOGETHER GROW TOGETHER
How One Idaho Community is Tackling Food Insecurity

25 FARM FRESH FOOD BOX
An Innovative New Business Model in Rural Communities

29 ABOUT THE AUTHORS

31 REFERENCES

33 RURAL CONNECTIONS-PAST ISSUES

ON THE COVER - Page 17

ALREADY A LIFESTYLE
How a Rural Nevada Town Used its Natural Assets to Become Sustainable and Successful
By Elizabeth Zach

“The city of Fallon in Churchill County, Nevada, has been successful in developing and redeveloping its natural assets. With a population just under 9,000, Fallon has capitalized on its natural surroundings to become an appealing rural tourism mecca. It also has a thriving food hub, made possible in part by surrounding farms. How city leaders have developed and marketed these economic assets may offer lessons to other struggling rural communities.”

PICTURED: Kelli Kelly, executive director of the Fallon Food Hub, shows off Hopi Orange Winter Squash grown at a local farm. /E. Zach.
“A rapidly changing world has left rural America with significant challenges. These challenges include dealing with basics such as food, housing, jobs, and adapting to a changing environment. The articles in this issue of Rural Connections deal directly with some of these fundamental concerns.”
A rapidly changing world has left rural America with significant challenges. These challenges include dealing with basics such as food, housing, jobs, and adapting to a changing environment. The articles in this issue of Rural Connections deal directly with some of these fundamental concerns and thus help us at the Western Rural Development Center to achieve our goal of enhancing the quality of life for the residents of rural communities. These are excellent articles and I encourage readers everywhere to seek ways to implement these ideas and programs in the community where you live or work.

Many rural communities are struggling with attempting to adapt to a rapidly-changing climate. This is especially true in Alaska where climate changes are especially rapid. An article by Nathan Kettle and his colleagues from Alaska discuss utilizing local and traditional knowledge, as well as scientific information in adapting to a changing climate.

In communities throughout rural America, employment in the traditional industries that have provided the majority of jobs to rural workers have been in decline. In her article, Elizabeth Zach describes how Fallon, Nevada, is using their natural assets to become sustainable and successful. The community is creating economic opportunities based on rural tourism and a local food hub. Similarly, an article by Katie Hoffman describes local approaches to address food insecurity in Lemhi County, Idaho. Diane Smith and colleagues describe the benefits of and ways to enhance the extent to which farmers can get their products directly to consumers.

Another prominent concern experienced by rural communities everywhere is housing. In their article, Lim, Skidmore, and Dyar describe the benefits and concern of manufactured housing as an approach to addressing housing issues. They note that manufactured homes play an increasingly important and affordable way to meet housing needs. Manufactured homes, however, are not as safe as traditional homes in the event of hurricanes or tornados.

Ernie Watson describes how USDA Rural Development helps rural communities meet a fundamental need of obtaining basic infrastructure and other needs that are otherwise nearly impossible for them to afford. Using the example of Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, Watson describes how RD was able to help the community obtain ambulances, police cruisers, and heavy equipment. These programs can certainly benefit other communities.

As always, I appreciate WRDC Assistant Director Betsy Newman for the professional and creative way she makes Rural Connections a publication we can be very proud of. ✪
Alaska’s changing climate contributes to several environmental hazards including floods, storm surge, and erosion. These hazards pose risks to communities, impacting food and water security, transportation, public health, and infrastructure (Chapin et al., 2014). Historically, rural Alaskans have used traditional knowledge to adapt to a wide range of conditions. This knowledge provides a wealth of site-specific information, allowing residents to adapt to shifting relationships with the land. While spontaneously adapting to climate change, tribes also desire to build community resilience via formal planning (Meeker et al., 2017). This need is especially paramount in Northwest Alaska, where communities are faced with increasing vulnerabilities to storm surge and coastal erosion.

The Northwest Alaska communities of Nome and Shaktoolik have undertaken planning efforts (hazard mitigation, economic development, emergency management, and climate adaptation) to respond to climate related hazards over the past decade. We interviewed 15 tribal members and analyzed climate adaptation guidebooks and reports to learn about the challenges facing rural indigenous communities and identify lessons for supporting tribal climate adaptation planning.

CHALLENGES FACING ALASKA NATIVE COMMUNITIES PLANNING FOR CLIMATE CHANGE
Challenges to climate adaptation include lack of information, funding, leadership, coordination, institutional rules, and uncertainty (Moser et al., 2010). Indigenous peoples also face several...
legal and policy obstacles, high employee turnover, limited technical and human capacity, and in some cases, limited trust of external partners (Bronen et al., 2013; McNeeley, 2017). Competing priorities or concerns including alcohol abuse, affordable and safe housing, and suicide prevention, can overshadow climate change initiatives (Black et al., 2015; Wotkyns et al., 2014). Communities can be hesitant to work with outside consultants because of a legacy of limited understanding of local issues, priorities, and ways of knowing. A multi-level governance structure and jurisdictional boundaries make planning and implementing actions challenging. Finally, climate-related vulnerabilities are exacerbated by damaging colonial legacies that changed societal structures, economies, and excluded local experts from decision-making (Marino, 2012).

RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORTING TRIBAL CLIMATE ADAPTATION PLANNING

Based on our experiences and interviews in Nome and Shaktoolik and the literature we propose the recommendations listed below and highlighted in Figure 1.

Building trusted relationships provides a foundation for success and ensures that project partners understand local priorities and objectives. Leveraging existing trusted networks, respecting Elders, upholding cultural sensitivity, and building capacity help build trust.

Do your homework - conduct preliminary scoping of documents and assessments, current climate data and projections, and workshop reports. Community input via interviews or focus groups can provide insight into the multi-level governance context for adaptation planning and avoid duplicating previous efforts. Incorporating information from previous efforts into future planning activities, such as community workshops, helps increase relevance and mitigates against
Recognizing and respecting tribal sovereignty is key in building relationships and successful collaboration with tribes. Before applying for funding, obtain support from tribal leadership and allow ample time for multiple conversations between tribes and outside organizations to clarify objectives and responsibilities. Memorandums of Understanding can be used to clarify responsibilities and, for us, was a key step to affirm support and respect (Black et al., 2015).

Engaging communities in design and implementation throughout the process—grant proposal through implementation—is central to integrating local priorities and assisting communities in achieving goals (Chapin et al., 2016; Cochran et al., 2013). Engagement builds trust and relationships within and between the community and project team. Fostering intergenerational involvement further enhances continuity. Different levels of governance—tribal, local, and regional—may have disparate priorities. We found that establishing a local coordinator and steering committee were especially effective in supporting community engagement, protecting traditional knowledge, navigating local politics, and ensuring tribal priorities were addressed (Lamb et al., 2011).

Respecting local and traditional knowledge on equal footing with western climate science is critical in understanding potential impacts and adaptive capacities, building trust, and developing more effective adaptation strategies. Generalized scientific descriptions provide a broad understanding of large-scale processes, and local and traditional knowledge provide a detailed and nuanced understanding of local conditions. Traditional knowledge also provides an understanding of the relationships between identity and worldview and guidance on responsibilities required for management and stewardship.

Focus on outcomes, not just assessments and plans can prevent participant fatigue. “It just started annoying me that these studies were going on and on and on. Look, we’ve already talked about this six years ago, why are we talking about it still?” (Shaktoolik tribal member). Detailed planning discussions, such as the identification of action steps, required authorities, estimated expenses and timelines, and available community assets can increase opportunities for implementing adaptation actions in planning efforts.

Identify steps required for implementation, including authorities, timelines, costs, and community assets. Implementation should maximize the use of local resources and materials where possible. Leveraging existing networks and partnerships and understanding local contexts and resources increases opportunities for success. If possible, including pilot funds for implementing strategies from the climate adaptation plan can mitigate against feelings of fatigue and provide forward momentum (Lamb & Davis, 2011; Pearce et al., 2012).

Integrate efforts and support capacity building in planning, design, and implementation of climate adaptation strategies. Efforts are more likely to be successful when they support building capacity to address short- and long-term risks (Trainor et al., 2017). For example, climate adaptation planning efforts can be integrated into existing hazard mitigation plans by exploring how existing hazards change over time. Providing financial support for a local coordinator in Nome
“Respecting local and traditional knowledge on equal footing with western climate science is critical in understanding potential impacts and adaptive capacities, building trust, and developing more effective adaptation strategies.”

and Shaktoolik helped build capacity to mitigate overextended local administrative support (Wotkyns & Gonzalez-Maddux, 2014).

Support formal and informal networking and partnerships. Social networks are critical in building capacity. Networking—formal and informal—among communities provides opportunities to share information and experience and overcome barriers (Chapin et al., 2016; Cochran et al., 2013). Formal networking with state and federal agencies can reduce financial costs, and partnerships among consultants and agencies can support planning efforts. Liaisons between tribes and outside entities are useful in navigating and complying with tribal policies (Black et al., 2015). The formal and informal networking in both Nome and Shaktoolik supported trust building and capacity development.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION
Our experiences in Nome and Shaktoolik identified challenges and opportunities for supporting climate adaptation planning and implementation in rural indigenous communities. Funding access to plan and implement climate adaptation strategies was a key barrier. Although some federal funding for planning and implementation in rural Alaska communities is available, (such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Tribal Resilience Program), local grant writing capacity is needed to apply for these programs (Bronen & Chapin, 2013; Marino, 2012). Additional barriers include lack of cultural sensitivity training, jurisdictional challenges, and lack of coordination between state and federal agencies.

As an outside collaborator, we offer suggestions for working with indigenous communities based on our experiences and the literature. Our suggestions include building trust, recognizing and respecting tribal sovereignty, engaging communities, respecting traditional knowledge side-by-side with western climate science, conducting preliminary scoping, supporting capacity building, focusing on process and outcomes, and networking. Our experiences also highlight the need for evaluating process and outcomes of climate adaptation planning and implementation. Evaluations can legitimize efforts, facilitate learning among communities and collaborators, enable course corrections, and increase future funding opportunities (Trainor et al., 2017). *

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“What’s going on?” Passersby ask as they see streets blocked around the Healing Waters Plaza in downtown Truth or Consequences, New Mexico.

Ambulances, police cars, and heavy equipment shut off traffic to the plaza and a large number of police are nearby. A large crowd for this city of 6,000 has formed and mills around the perimeter. Something serious is going on. Something seriously good for Truth or Consequences, its people, and their future.

The USDA Rural Development is conducting a ceremonial “transfer the keys” to the two ambulances, four police cruisers, and massive front-end loader to the city. All vehicles are brand new and purchased with funding from three different USDA Grants through the Community Facility and Economic Impact Initiative Grant programs.
The police cars are equipped for regular patrol duty, but they also double as a mobile command post. The ambulances have the latest medical equipment needed to transport patients to other hospitals. And, the front-end loader replaced a 1993 Cat Loader that was in the shop more than it was on the job.

As he presented the keys to city officials, Eric Vigil of USDA, noted that vehicle funding for Truth or Consequences is a good example how USDA Rural Development (USDA RD) contributes to a better quality of life in rural America.

“Providing this funding shows USDA Rural Development is committed to creating a better lifestyle for those living in rural communities like Truth or Consequences,” said Vigil who has seen many projects funded during his 29 years with USDA RD. “The citizens of our country can rest assured USDA Rural Development is committed to make sure your tax dollars are spent wisely with these types of projects.”

The USDA Economic Impact Initiative Grant provided $72,000 to purchase the four new SUV police vehicles. Two of the new vehicles are equipped with a “Command Console” which includes radio equipment for communication with local, state, and federal agencies. They will be assigned to supervisors who can use the equipment to establish a mobile command post to oversee the management of critical incidents including natural disasters and crime scenes and crimes in progress.

The Truth or Consequences Police Chief Lee Alirez reports it didn’t take long after delivery before one of the new police cars was put into action.

“Right after we got the new police units we had a SWAT standoff. We had a man who was upset and armed with a rifle in front of his house,” described Alirez. “We took control of the situation when we used one of the new vehicles as a mobile command post. Because we had the enhanced radio equipment and the ability to command the situation from one vehicle, we resolved the situation quickly without anyone getting hurt.”

During the key presentation ceremony two new transfer ambulances and equipment were also dedicated. The ambulances were purchased with an $116,230 Community Facility (CF) Grant. The new ambulances were needed because the existing ambulances had high mileage and have had major mechanical problems. One old ambulance was retired because of mechanical problems and another was rebuilt but still does not function properly because of its mechanical issues.

Because the City of Truth or Consequences is 75 miles from Sierra Vista Hospital in Las Cruces, New Mexico, there is a need to continually transport patients to that hospital and other medical facilities. Those hospitals offer acute

PICTURED: One of the new police patrol vehicles is shown to the public during key presentation ceremonies/E. Watson.
critical medical care that is not available in Truth or Consequences.

Javier Marco, the paramedic service director of Sierra Vista Hospital, reports the new ambulances are able to provide the best possible medical care when transporting a patient to another hospital.

“Right after we took delivery of the new ambulances we had an 82-year old man suffer a really bad heart attack.” Marco said, “We had 90 minutes to save his life. He was immediately stabilized and transported in one of the new ambulances to a hospital in Las Cruces and with 30 minutes to spare.” The patient survived because paramedics were better able to do their lifesaving work. Marco added, “The new ambulance did what it was designed to do—that is it provided a lifesaving solution.”

Although a front-end loader is not used as a lifesaving piece of equipment, it’s still one of the most important vehicles in the entire fleet operated by the City of Truth or Consequences.

The new piece of equipment was also bought with a Rural Development Community Facility Grant in the amount of $88,810.

The new vehicle replaced an old 1993 Cat Loader which spent most of its time under repair in the garage. When the Cat Loader was out of commission city workers used a backhoe, which was not as well equipped. The front-end loader is better suited to clearing brush, filling washouts, and removing asphalt, curbs and gutters. The new front-end loader helps the City Street Department employees complete their work in a more-timely and cost-effective manner.

After the ceremonial key presentation Truth or Consequences Mayor Steve Green noted that USDA Rural Development programs fund the health, safety, and future of the city.

“Funding assistance from USDA Rural Development has enabled the City of Truth or Consequences to purchase equipment we would otherwise been unable to do,” said Green. “This equipment is vital to maintaining the infrastructure of our city. The equipment also allows us to take steps toward building a stronger and more diverse economy in our community.”

Mayor Green added, “I advise other rural communities to reach out to USDA Rural Development for their funding programs. With the support of USDA Rural Development’s amazing staff, the entire process was straightforward and attainable.”
USDA Community Facility Program and Economic Impact Initiative Grant Program Highlights

USDA Rural Development provides funding programs to public bodies located in communities with less than 20,000 people.

COMMUNITIES CAN APPLY FOR FUNDING TO FINANCE:

- Health care facilities including: hospitals, medical clinics, dental clinics, nursing homes, assisted-living facilities;
- Public Facilities including city/town/village halls, courthouses, airport hangers, street improvements, and child care centers;
- Public safety projects;
- Libraries;
- Other essential community buildings and equipment.

More information is available at https://www.rd.usda.gov

For more information in New Mexico call 505-761-4950 or send an email to CPAssist@nm.usda.gov.
Over the last 50 years, manufactured homes have increasingly played an important role in meeting rural housing needs. In 1950, just one percent of households lived in manufactured homes, but by 2010 this percentage increased to eight percent. In about 150 U.S. counties, more than a third of households live in manufactured homes. From 1980 to 2010, manufactured home living has increased more in southern states compared to the rest of the United States, as shown in Figure 1. Many believe manufactured homes are predominantly located in “mobile home” parks, but this is not the case; about 70% of them are placed on owners’ property.
Though the terms “manufactured home” and “mobile home” are used interchangeably, there is a difference. “Mobile home” refers to factory-built housing constructed prior to the implementation of federal standards in 1976, whereas “manufactured home” refers to factory-built housing constructed in the years following the federal standards.

The increase in manufactured home living is the result of several factors: 1) improving quality; 2) relative affordability; 3) changing economic and demographic circumstances; and 4) favorable tax treatment. Though there can be stigma attached to this type of housing arrangement, manufactured home living has become an essential component of affordable housing across America. In this article, we summarize the analysis of manufactured home living conducted by Dyar, Lim, and Skidmore (2017) and Lim and Skidmore (2018).

**IMPROVED QUALITY**

Prior to the implementation of federal manufactured home construction standards implemented by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 1976, the quality of manufactured homes varied considerably. Specifically, Manufactured Home Construction and Safety Standards Act imposed standards for light and ventilation, minimum room size dimensions, bathroom requirements, body and frame materials, resistance to elements, structural design, air filtration, cooling and heating, plumbing, and electrical systems. The new federal regulations increased the overall safety and homogeneity of manufactured homes as well as provided a minimum level of quality assurance. Importantly, the federal standards enabled homes to be built in a factory and shipped to any location regardless of local building codes. The size of manufactured homes varies from 320 square feet for a single-wide unit to 2,000 square feet for a double-wide unit. Though less common, even bigger triple-wide units are available. Higher-end manufactured homes allow for customization options that include custom floor plans, vaulted ceilings, modern full kitchens and porches. The overall improvement in manufactured home quality helped to set the stage for more widespread acceptance of manufactured home living as a housing option.

**RELATIVE AFFORDABILITY**

Another important factor in the rise of manufactured-home living is affordability. The average sale prices of traditional single-family homes increased throughout the period from about $170,000 in 1980 to $300,000 by 2010. In contrast, the average sales price of manufactured homes over the same period were much more stable. While manufactured homes are less expensive than a traditional home, it is also true that they tend not to appreciate in the same way traditional homes do. A useful overall measure of costs for comparison across housing types is cost per square foot. Figure 2 (see next page) shows cost per square foot for manufactured homes and traditional site-built homes. In 2013, the cost per square foot of a new manufactured home was $38.36 for a single-wide and $45.70 for a double-wide, whereas costs were $93.70 per square foot for a traditional site-built home excluding the cost of land. The increasing cost of traditional homes over the 1980-2013 period has made manufactured homes relatively more attractive. Of course, as shown in Figure 2 the real estate crisis led to a reduction in real estate prices nationwide and temporarily reducing that trend.
CHANGING ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC CIRCUMSTANCES

Changing economic and demographic factors have also been important for the substantial increase in mobile home living. Recently published work by Dyar, Lim, and Skidmore (2017) used U.S. county-level data over the 1980-2010 period to estimate the determinants of manufactured home living. Their analysis shows that the increase in female-headed households has been an important driver in the growth of manufactured home living. However, it is unclear whether it is single mothers with children or the separated fathers (or both) who are more inclined to live in the lower cost manufactured housing. Also, median household incomes have fallen, resulting in an increase in demand for manufactured home living. Dyar, et al. (2017) also demonstrate that higher rents appear to drive households into manufactured homes. In contrast, they show that both educational attainment and increasing poverty rates reduce mobile home living. Taken together, these findings suggest that manufactured-home living is more desirable for low to moderate income households, but not for higher income households or those living below the poverty line.

IMPORTANCE OF FAVORABLE TAX TREATMENT

Another important factor is the favorable tax treatment manufactured housing receives in several states. Two of the most common tax breaks given to manufactured homes is a property tax exemption for manufactured homes located in “mobile home parks,” and the sales tax break for manufactured homes classified as personal property. As of 2018, in five states—Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, and New Jersey—manufactured homes are exempt from real property tax and are only subject to a special local tax or flat license fee. For instance, in Illinois, manufactured homes in mobile home parks are assessed as chattel and annually taxed at a statutory declining rate, ranging from 7.5 cents to 15 cents per foot depending on the age of the homes.

In Michigan, $3-per-month fees are imposed to these manufactured homes; however, those that are located outside of mobile home parks are assessed and taxed in the same manner as traditional site-built homes. Thus, the property tax burden is greatly reduced due to the special tax treatment for manufactured homes in mobile home parks. A more widespread form

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Figure 2. New Manufactured Homes and New Single-Family Site-Built Homes per Square Foot Cost Comparison (2007–2013). Source: These data are produced by the U.S. Commerce Department’s Census Bureau from a survey sponsored by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
of favorable taxation for manufactured homes is to limit the retail sales tax on the purchase of manufactured homes classified as personal property, by applying a reduced sales tax rate or discounting the purchase price. Given that personal property sales are taxed at a higher rate and taxed in more states than real property sales, the reduced or exempt sales tax for personal property manufactured homes has played a role in enhancing the affordability of manufactured homes. Lim and Skidmore (2018) show that as the costs of traditional housing rose over time, these tax breaks became an increasingly important consideration. Their estimates indicate that these two types of tax breaks induced the share of manufactured homes among owner occupied housing units to increase by 3.74 percentage points, being responsible for 9.4 million more households living in manufactured housing between the 1980 and 2010 period.

CONCLUSION
Rural places experienced the largest increase in manufactured home living over the 1980-2010 period. Nationwide, about 30% of the new housing stock is in the manufactured home category. Manufactured homes are now an essential component of the affordable housing stock in the United States, which has met critical housing needs for lower- to middle-income households. In contrast to many other types of affordable housing options, manufactured homes are unsubsidized by the federal government. If policy makers wanted to reduce reliance on housing subsidies, it could extend loan guarantees to make credit more accessible to those living in subsidized housing who would otherwise prefer unsubsidized manufactured-home living.

It should be noted, however, that in many states manufactured homes are subsidized by local government via tax breaks, which as shown by Lim and Skidmore (2018) induced 9.4 million households to choose manufactured-home living over other housing arrangements. In other work, Lim (2018) has shown that living in manufactured housing increases fatalities from tornadoes, floods, and heatwaves. Taking the works of Lim and Skidmore (2018) and Lim (2018) together, it is estimated that 632 fatalities out of a total 5,887 fatalities from tornadoes, floods, and heatwaves during 20 years from 1996 to 2015 are the result of favorable tax treatment of manufactured housing. The value of life lost is estimated to be $5.7 billion given that a value of a statistical life (VSL) is about $9 million (Viscusi, 2014). While the odds of being killed by disaster due to housing type is quite low, this evaluation suggests that such risk ought to be considered when making decisions regarding housing tax and subsidy policies. Any benefit-cost calculation should weigh the benefits of making such housing arrangements more affordable against the risks of living in structures that are more vulnerable to natural disasters. *
Across the rural West during difficult economic times, small communities have had to rethink how to build independent, sustainable economies. Rather than trying to attract global companies and warehouse manufacturing jobs, many rural leaders sought to reinvent their communities as “rural tourism” destinations. Others tapped into the “farm-to-fork” trend by offering locally-sourced produce to residents and visitors at regional farmers’ markets and in restaurants.

The city of Fallon in Churchill County, Nevada, has been successful in developing and redeveloping its natural assets. With a population just under 9,000, Fallon has capitalized on its natural surroundings to become an appealing rural tourism mecca. It also has a thriving food hub, made possible in part by surrounding farms. How city leaders have developed and marketed these economic assets may offer lessons to other struggling rural communities.
Their work may also help to address one of the gravest problems facing rural areas around the country: young people moving to urban regions in search of work and career advancement. Fallon has managed to retain and attract younger people, particularly those keen to work in farm-to-fork-related industries. It doesn’t hurt that the cost-of-living in Nevada is much cheaper than in neighboring California, in part because Nevadans pay no state income taxes (though they do pay property taxes.) Additionally, recreational activities, from skiing to off-roading, are popular and plentiful in the region.

Nathan G. Strong, executive director of the Churchill Economic Development Authority (CEDA), notes two areas where Fallon and Churchill County are self-sufficient: agriculture and renewable energy. The county is Nevada’s top dairy producer and home to the Dairy Farmers of America’s whole milk dry powder production facility. Agriculture is Churchill County’s main economic driver, employing nearly 600 people. It is also home to the emerging gluten-free and drought-tolerant Eragrostis tef grain industry. And its triple hybrid power plant, the only one in the world, generates ten times more energy than its residents consume.

Leveraging its agricultural strengths, CEDA founded the Fallon Food Hub in March 2016. The hub promotes local and regional farmers; according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture 2012 Census of Agriculture, Churchill County is home to more farms than any other Nevada county. It also employs nearly six percent of the county’s residents. The idea behind the Fallon Food Hub was to have paying members support a market selling locally-raised produce, meat/dairy products, and other consumer goods and services. The Food Hub is in Fallon’s Downtown Historic District across from a vacant grocery store. It has been particularly successful because it has brought back groceries to the older part of town where neither grocery stores nor public transportation exist. It has also expanded to sell health and beauty products, as well as value-added products.

Considering that the USDA defines the popularly used term “locally sourced” as any food product distributed within a 400-mile radius, Fallon’s truly home-grown, farm-to-fork industry may be a rarity in the nation. The Food Hub’s executive director, Kelli Kelly, says that while she moved from San Diego to Fallon to be with the man who would eventually become her husband, she found, that as a sous chef, the cornucopia of locally-grown food was impressive. She first worked at Fallon’s Slanted Porch restaurant, which in 2012 was featured on the Live Well Network cable show Food Rush.

Today, the Food Hub is a vital part of the Fallon Downtown Merchants Association. The organization’s membership reasons that with economic revitalization comes healthy residents. Nearly 30% of Churchill County’s residents are diagnosed as obese, nearly nine percent of its adults have diabetes and nearly

“With a population just under 9,000, Fallon has capitalized on its natural surroundings to become an appealing rural tourism mecca. It also has a thriving food hub, made possible in part by surrounding farms. How city leaders have developed and marketed these economic assets may offer lessons to other struggling rural communities.”
30% have high blood pressure—all figures are higher than the state’s average, and possibly reflective of grocery market closures in the area. As of October 2017, the Food Hub could count 116 active members.

While most of Churchill County’s land is arid, some 50,000 acres are irrigated with water from the Truckee-Carson Irrigation District. Until just a decade ago, the main crop grown on the irrigated agricultural lands in Fallon was alfalfa, which would have to be rotated every three to four years with corn, grain, or hay, says John Getto, who operates Desert Oasis Teff. In 2007, Jay Davison, a crop specialist with the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, studied whether another equally or more profitable crop could be added to the mix, particularly in response to the challenges of farming: prices falling, operational costs rising, drought, and urban areas demanding and siphoning off more water.

Teff requires less water than alfalfa and can be more profitable, Davison found. He began working with 11 farmers in Churchill, Lyon, and Pershing counties to develop Nevada’s first teff crops in 2009. He and his academic colleagues studied teff production, and agronomic and harvesting techniques in Idaho, and returned to Nevada to work with growers on field plantings, fertility management, pest identification, and harvest timing. (http://www.unce.unr.edu/programs/agriculture/index.asp?ID=93)

Nearly a decade later, demand for the grain in the United States exceeds the supply. It is an important source of gluten-free flour and it can also be processed as high-quality horse hay. According to the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, input costs for growing teff are cheaper than alfalfa and the grain requires a third less water.

“This was all part of a federal program for researching these small acreage crops,” Davison notes. “The farmers here are making about $900 per acre whereas before, with farming just alfalfa, they were lucky to break even. The fact that teff uses significantly less water than does, say, corn, also makes this a very good crop.”

Getto recalls the difficulties of starting a new crop and trying to get federal allowances to spray it with herbicides and pesticides. And there’s now growing competition from growers in Idaho, as well as in the eastern United States, although, he points out, the climate there—teff requires hot temperatures—is unsuitable. Regardless, he’s looking ahead, and says his company will expand in 2018. Desert Oasis Teff now grows, cleans, and sells the teff grain; it will next aim to produce the flour. He is also thinking about branching off into other gluten-free grains.

“Teff production will probably level off,” he says. “So other grains, like buckwheat, sorghum, we’re trying to venture out to those. We know we need to look at other products.”

Aside from the thriving agriculture, it seems there would be little here to attract the random tourist. But Fallon doesn’t see it that way, and more than two decades ago, it started investing in what could draw visitors who would in turn enrich the local economy. According to Jane Moon, the Fallon Convention and Tourism Authority recognized more than a quarter century ago that the natural surroundings could attract visitors. It believed that Fallon and its surrounding area could overcome western Nevada’s reputation as desert landscape to simply drive through en route to...
elsewhere. Fallon, either fortunately or unfortunately, sits along Highway 50 and the Nevada stretch of the road is referred to as the “Loneliest Road in America.”

But Fallon today is part of the Pony Express tourism circuit, and the Fallon Convention and Tourism Authority has successfully marketed itself based in part on its proximity to Reno and Lake Tahoe across the Sierra Nevada range to the west. To the east are the Stillwater Mountains and in the Lahontan Valley below, the Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge; further eastward is the Sand Mountain Recreation Area. This “off-roading paradise” consists of sand descend from the ancient glacial Lake Lahontan that mostly dried up 9,000 years ago, and it attracts enthusiasts from near and far. Some say it is the best Off-Highway Vehicle destination in the United States.

She also cites the Churchill County Arts Council, which this year is putting on its 32nd annual events season, as an engine for attracting visitors – this, she adds, combined with the farm-to-fork movement have led to a quiet yet concrete shift in how both locals and visitors view western Nevada. As Moon puts it, “Farm to fork was already a lifestyle for us. What you see around the nation is the way we’ve lived for years. It’s something embedded in our community.”

Similarly, Strong quotes former congressman John Salazar, who said, “…there is only one thing that can bring our nation down–our dependence on foreign countries for food and energy. Agriculture is the backbone of our economy.”

PICTURED: Kelli Kelly, executive director of the Fallon Food Hub, shows off Hopi Orange Winter Squash grown at a local farm/E. Zach.
Food security is one of the largest challenges facing rural towns across the nation. Lemhi County, Idaho, is no different. According to feedingamerica.org, 17% of Lemhi County residents are food insecure. Twenty-seven percent of the county’s children are food insecure and 18% of the population lives in poverty (Map the Meal Gap, 2015). A group of concerned citizens approached the University of Idaho Extension, Lemhi County office to organize a hunger summit to address food security in March 2015. In partnership with food system VISTA volunteers and Salmon Valley Stewardship, the first Lemhi County Hunger Summit was held.
FROM HUNGER SUMMIT TO COMMUNITY DINNERS

This first summit served to raise awareness of the problems facing the food insecure in Lemhi County and concluded with the development of four priorities that would guide the future planning of outreach and events. The four priorities that emerged were: 1) A Community Dinner Table; 2) A Hunger Resource Directory; 3) An event to continue work on hunger; and 4) A surplus harvest preservation program. A hunger resource directory including area food banks and other resources was quickly developed by the Lemhi County Extension Office. A second Hunger Summit was planned by a volunteer committee and headed by the Lemhi County Extension office, and surplus produce sharing and gleaning was mildly successful throughout the following growing season as headed by a VISTA volunteer.

In 2016, citizens reconvened to evaluate the progress that had been made in addressing food insecurity and revisited the priorities established the prior year. The surplus harvest team rallied again to begin work at the start of the 2016 growing season. The directory was updated and redistributed and the second Hunger Summit was successful with almost 30 community members in attendance. The then largest priority for the team was a Salmon Community Dinner program. Salmon is the county seat of Lemhi County and the hub of most community events. An action team was established and decided to offer a free community meal once a month to help community members fill their food gap and bring members of the community together.

The action team for the Salmon Community Dinner program identified its first goal was to feed hungry community members while secondarily building healthy relationships throughout the community with hopes of moving members out of poverty. In Ruby Payne’s book Bridges out of Poverty, Social Capital development is an important piece in helping individuals move out of poverty (Payne, 1999). Social Capital is best defined as a culture of trust and tolerance where networks and associations can develop (Inglehart, 2015). Social networks are valuable places where similar people bond and diverse people build social bridges (Dekker et al., 2006). The Salmon Community Dinner program capitalized on the rich social capital environment developed during the dinners with participating members from several socio-economic classes, religious affiliations, and lifestyles.

The first Salmon Community Dinner, hosted by the Salmon Community Dinner Table Team, was held in August 2016 with two-hundred community members in attendance. Members from the Salmon Valley Local Foods provided fresh salads with harvests from their gardens, and the event was held at Railroad Park, a park privately owned by the local grocery store and provided for free for the event. The dinner was the first of 13 community dinners held to date. An average of 200 community members attend

“The action team for the Salmon Community Dinner program identified its first goal was to feed hungry community members while secondarily building healthy relationships throughout the community with hopes of moving members out of poverty.”
each dinner with the record of 400 members at the 2016 December dinner. Menus have ranged from baked potatoes to turkey dinner. The dinners are offered August through June. They began as a once-a-month offering in 2016 and have now expanded to twice a month during the winter months when food security is more of an issue for the community’s citizens.

**VOLUNTEERS LEAD THE WAY**
The volunteer-led committee is headed by a local businessman concerned about hunger in the community. The group meets twice monthly under the guidance of the University of Idaho Extension Lemhi County office to organize dinners. Dinners are held at the Salmon BPOE Elk’s Hall in the winter and Railroad Park in the summer and are free to the public. They are hosted by a different organization each month. The hosting organization or organizations provide a majority of the food and supplies and help to serve the dinner. A volunteer musical group has played during most of the dinners. The group has received one grant from North West Farm Credit Services to purchase tables and chairs for the outdoor dinner and the remainder of the operational funds have come from private and local business donations. Hosts have included four faith-based organizations, two non-profits, a local business and the school district. There is a waiting list for dinner hosts six dinners in advance to date.

**SURVEYING THE COMMUNITY DINNER ATTENDEES**
During the 2017 March and April dinners, attendees were surveyed with either an on-the-spot survey or a written survey. 219 adult dinner attendees participated in the on-the-spot survey conducted at the door while attendees waited in line to receive food. 78 adult attendees participated in the written survey that was located on tables with pencils and survey drop boxes. In total, the team collected 297 completed surveys.

The on-the-spot surveyors asked attendees to
place sticker dots under the headings that best represented the two main reasons they attended the community dinner:

- 71% reported that a sense of community was one of the most important reasons they attend the dinners;
- 37% stated that the meal was an important reason for attending;
- 32% came to meet new people, and these were followed by the music, conversation, and something to do, respectively.

When asked what had changed since first coming to a community dinner:

- 36% of respondents said their sense of community had improved
- 83% of survey participants said they met new people at the dinners

Although only 34% of participants said they were dependent on the meal, it is indispensable to others. One participant reported, “I would be home struggling to feed me and my family. People care and are concerned for my situation. It reminds me that there are still good people in Salmon and that people in the community care.”

One respondent stated they have made associations with new people and another was inspired to do more in their community. Another reported that the dinners changed their mind about a particular hosting organization, noting how kind they were to donate a community dinner.

In addition to feeding Salmon’s hungry, the dinners are bringing several diverse audiences together. Anecdotally, committee members have reported that their fellow church members had never been inside the Salmon BPOE Elk Lodge because of fear it would violate their church’s abstinence from alcohol since the building houses a bar. But now they are partnering with other faith-based organizations to host dinners and crossing religious affiliations to collaborate on these efforts.

**SUPPORTING ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY PROGRAMS**

In September 2017, the group began to reach out and serve other food security programs in the area including the school backpack program, which sends children in need home with backpacks of food to feed them over the weekends. Youth, who may not have access to food in the home, are provided with a backpack full of ready-to-eat or easy-to-make foods. The program currently serves 84 youth in the school district.

The group has also helped local boy scouts build Little Pantry boxes housed at three locations throughout town. The pantries are stocked by volunteer donations with food and personal hygiene products. The group plans to begin implementing a summer sack lunch program in June 2017 and offer it twice a month to youth in need during the area schools’ summer recess.

The committee has been excited to see both resource-limited and resource-abundant community members coming together and meeting each other at the community dinners. One participant reported, “These dinners have changed how our family views ‘community.’ We have never lived in a place, until Salmon, that brings the community together like this. We love it.” Another stated that, “A town that eats together, stays together.” ✨
Rural communities have experienced a dramatic increase in farms selling directly to consumers (DTC) — through farmers markets, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm shares, roadside stands, and directly at the farm though U-picks and on-farm stores. Other access points include Farm to School, institutions, and restaurants. However, many small retailers in rural communities have gone out of business as shoppers switch to other shopping options in their community and neighboring cities.
Additionally, farmers’ livelihoods are often challenged as the growth in farmers’ markets and CSA’s flattens due to market saturation. To better understand the motivation of consumers, farmers, and retailers participating in direct markets and to pilot an innovative DTC approach, a multi-state collaboration between Extension and research was formed – the Farm Fresh Food Box (F3B). This National Institute of Food and Agriculture USDA grant-funded project (VT-0075CG) tests an entrepreneurial model in which farmers and rural retailers partner to offer pre-ordered boxes of fresh local produce to local consumers. The benefits and obstacles of this model will inform how rural communities can maintain economic vitality while providing local, seasonal produce at an affordable price point in the community.

THE FARM FRESH FOOD BOX MODEL

Farm Fresh Food Box (F3B) is a novel direct marketing approach designed to open new market venues for farmers, enable small rural retailers to carry fresh produce at low risk, and increase convenient access to affordable local produce for consumers. Customers pre-pay a set price when ordering from participating retailers for a box of farmer-selected seasonal produce for pick-up later in the week. Unlike a CSA, there is no upfront seasonal commitment, and customers can shop in convenient surroundings. For an equivalent amount of produce, F3B prices are typically set lower than farmers’ markets but higher than CSA prices. Contrasted with farmers’ markets, F3B offers farmers guaranteed sales. It also allows retailers to expand their produce offerings without investment in new coolers and without the risk associated with stocking highly perishable items. It may also result in collateral sales. The Farmer receives the amount paid by the customer for each F3B, and the retailer receives a small transaction fee of $2.00/box, paid for from the research grant.

Currently, F3B is being piloted in Skagit County, Washington; Sonoma County, California; and Brattleboro, Vermont. County-based Extension faculty recruit local farmers and retailers to identify pairs to team-up for the harvest season. Marketing material—posters, handbills, newspaper articles, Facebook page—promote the program in the local community and alert consumers of the contents in the weekly food box. Other promotional tools, such as attractive sandwich boards, are placed at the retailers with the name of the partner farm and photo of the farmer who provides the weekly box. New wax, single-use boxes are provided to the farm at the beginning of the program as part of the research grant. The research partners collect survey and interview data from participating farmers, store
owners, and customers. The F3B research aims to identify and measure the success of this new market channel for delivering local food and associated economic benefits to farmers, retailers, and communities.

BACKGROUND
Overall, in 2015, more than 167,000 farms sold locally-produced foods through “direct to consumer” (DTC) marketing practices, resulting in $8.7 billion in revenue (USDA, 2016). The “Trends in U.S. Local and Regional Food Systems Report,” estimates that between 2002 and 2007 farms selling DTC increased by 17% and sales increased by 32%. However, between 2007 and 2012, farms selling DTC increased by only 5.5%, while DTC sales remained flat (USDA, ERS 2015). This plateau in DTC revenues may be due in part to the growing popularity of locally-grown foods being offered in grocery stores, restaurants, and institutions, which compete with DTC consumer purchases.

FARMER MOTIVATION
Local DTC markets typically involve small farmers, heterogeneous products, and short supply chains, with farmers handling storage, packaging, transportation, distribution, and marketing for their own products. For farmers, the main attractions for selling DTC are better cash flow, control over production planning, the ability for greater flexibility in product offering, and relatively higher price points compared to other marketing channels. Farmers have been shown to benefit from CSAs via improved financial security, decreased time and money spent on marketing, particularly during their growing season, and reduced production costs. Indeed, compared to farms selling through conventional markets, farms selling local food through DTC marketing channels were more likely to remain in business between 2007-2012 (USDA, ERS 2015).

CONSUMER MOTIVATION
From a customer perspective, the growing interest in local foods in the United States is attributed to an interest in environmental and community concerns—supporting local farmers and the local economy with increasing interest in access to healthful foods (Martinez, 2010). Customers who “buy local” often perceive the quality and freshness of local food to be superior to that of conventional produce.

Consumers who are willing to pay higher prices for locally-produced foods place importance on product quality, nutritional value, methods of raising a product and those methods’ effects on the environment, and support for local farmers (Vasquez, 2017). However, convenience, related to shopping, preparing, storing and preserving food, also plays a role (USDA, AMS 2017).

FINDINGS
The Farm Fresh Food Box is a promising DTC model that benefits both the farmer and consumer while increasing access to local food. Initial feedback from a Washington state customer speaks to the perceived value of the food box. She was impressed with the quality and price of the items in her weekly box stating, “When I go to the local store to purchase cilantro, the bunches are small and wilt quickly, but the cilantro from the Food Box lasts longer, is a larger bunch with a fragrant smell, and though the cost is comparable to the grocery store where I shop, the value from the Food Box is definitely better.” One week, kohlrabi was included in the box offering, prompting the store clerk to investigate online to learn about this root vegetable he had not heard of before, and was pleasantly surprised by the experience.

Retailers shared that though the offering of a F3B did not significantly increase overall stores sales, F3B was a service they felt added value to their store’s place in the community and expressed...
interest in continuing to partner on the project in the upcoming year.

For one Washington farmer, F3B was an opportunity to establish a business relationship with a rural store owner that was located not too far from his farm. “I have tried for a couple of seasons to get the owner to sell my produce without success. The F3B was my entry into a business and personal relationship. The owner and his wife have been great to work with.”

One risk of this experimental sales channel for the farmer and retailer is that there may be no or few orders, resulting in ineffective use of time. Both phone and text messaging were used by the farmers to communicate harvest items offered in the weekly box and the retailer on the number of box orders each week. In one farmer-retailer pairing, the farmer discontinued offering the boxes since orders were only one or two per month, and the location of the store was not on his usual route.

DISCUSSION
Several limitations have been identified in the pilot phase:

1. Initially, there was concern that small rural stores would not have adequate refrigerator space to accommodate additional inventory. However, the schedule for drop off and pick up did not prove to be a concern for the retailers.

2. Although the 2014 Farm Bill included provisions to allow SNAP benefits to be redeemed at non-traditional retailers to improve access to healthy food options (Bolen et al., 2014), the new rules stipulate that SNAP payment must be made directly to the farmer with only a 14-day window between purchase and delivery. SNAP benefits may not be used to pay retailers in advance for groceries/food that is then picked up at a later date. Since the F3B program requires the customer to prepay for the food box, SNAP benefits cannot be accepted for the F3B at this time. Researchers are investigating strategies for preorder and acceptance of SNAP EBT for payment so that SNAP shoppers can take advantage of the F3B opportunity.

3. Since orders are placed in person at the retailer, the customer has an extra shopping trip—one to order and pay for the produce box and again the following week to pick up the produce box. An online order and payment system may help to reduce the number of trips to the retailer.

CONCLUSION
The local food movement, still small in comparison to conventional food consumption methods, is gaining momentum in connecting food producers and food consumers in the same geographic region. F3B is a low-risk opportunity for farmers that extends their marketing beyond current well-defined DTC farmers’ markets while strengthening community vitality. Other business models are emerging to take advantage of the growing demand for local food, including online grocery delivery and larger supermarkets featuring local produce. The Farm Fresh Food Box model offers an alternative to the complex supply, demand, and distribution challenges faced by producers and retailers of fresh, local foods while overcoming barriers that consumers face in accessing affordable, healthy food.
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THE ROLE OF MANUFACTURED HOMES IN MEETING RURAL HOUSING NEEDS
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COMMUNITIES THAT EAT TOGETHER GROW TOGETHER
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THE ROLE OF MANUFACTURED HOMES IN MEETING RURAL HOUSING NEEDS

THE ROLE OF MANUFACTURED HOMES IN MEETING RURAL HOUSING NEEDS - CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE


COMMUNITIES THAT EAT TOGETHER GROW TOGETHER


FARM FRESH FOOD BOX


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The authors’ references provide you with a ready-made reading list!

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