



# INTRODUCTION

By Don E. Albrecht  
Director, Western Rural Development Center

**“In reading these articles, I continue to be amazed by the quality and breadth of the work of our colleagues and partners. Our hope is that others in the region working on these same issues can benefit from the shared knowledge presented in this issue of *Rural Connections*.”**

We are pleased to present another issue of *Rural Connections*. This issue has 13 high-quality articles on a variety of issues that are critical to the rural West. Through the years, I have had the privilege of interacting with numerous extremely capable professionals who are attempting to address the problems and concerns of Rural America. As we are all seeking the same goal, there is no question that we can be more effective by partnering with and learning from one another. Partnering and working together was never more important than now when resources are limited and uncertain. At the Western Rural Development Center, we are committed to this objective and *Rural Connections* is a tool to help us achieve it.

The topics covered in this issue include: coping with reduced water resources as a result of climate change and dealing with other climate change issues; coping with the closure of rural hospitals; creating economic development plans; addressing transit problems; helping farms prepare for disasters; effectively utilizing beetle kill

and other wood products; the feasibility of using renewable energy on farms; the characteristics of the hired farm labor force; and how Extension assisted a community recovering from a disastrous land slide. In reading these articles, I continue to be amazed by the quality and breadth of the work of our colleagues and partners. Our hope is that others in the region working on these same issues can benefit from the shared knowledge presented in this issue of *Rural Connections*.

Another goal of *Rural Connections* is to represent the geographic diversity of the work being conducted in the West. The authors in this issue represent eight western states: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Montana, Oregon, Utah, and Washington.

As always, I appreciate the many talents of *Rural Connections* editor Betsy Newman. It is a pleasure to work with her and I look forward to reading many future issues.\*