

Director's Message

The United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development defined sustainable development as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

Sustainability necessarily involves stable employment opportunities that pay livable wages while being buffered from national and international economic trends that result in job losses in a community. Sustainability means that everyone has access to adequate education and lifelong learning opportunities that prepare them for meaningful work and a high quality of life. Sustainable development must assure that the integrity of the environment is maintained for future generations. In sum, the goal of sustainable development is to improve lives while expanding opportunities for all members of the community regardless of gender, age or ethnicity.

From the time of their initial settlement, rural communities have struggled to achieve sustainability. Many rural communities' economic bases have depended on resource extractive industries. Unfortunately, when used unsustainably, the resource becomes exhausted and the community withers.

Consequently, mining and timber ghost towns are scattered across the west. Other communities are currently dealing with severe environmental scars including toxins and dangerous pollution that severely impact the quality of life in the community

and opportunities for future development.

Finally, some communities have become heavily dependent on an industry that later closes because of technological or economic changes or because the corporation chooses to outsource to a foreign country resulting in job loss and serious economic impacts.

In this issue of *Rural Connections* we focus on sustainable development. Scholars from across the country portray various aspects of sustainability and describe several successful sustainable development programs. Articles include discussions of entrepreneurial-based economies where communities encourage the development of businesses that take advantage of local culture and resources. Other articles describe the importance of conservation and the need for equity.

Not only is the need for sustainable development in the rural west great, but also opportunities to achieve this goal are available that previously did not exist. Modern information and communication technology allow businesses to locate where they wish and still be connected to the necessary clients and customers. Communities can thus seek to attract or retain a wider variety of businesses that will improve the quality of life in their community both now and in the future.

The WRDC is committed to helping the communities of the rural west achieve these goals. 🏡



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Call for Information!

Our nation's rural areas are desperately seeking means by which to maintain and build sustainable communities.

At a time when our local and national leadership is dedicated to encouraging entrepreneurial investment in our rural communities, what has Cooperative Extension been doing across the country to further enhance our communities'

abilities to effectively plan for and attract businesses?

How do communities assess their priorities for business recruitment? What role do our natural resources play in supporting and furthering our economic and community development efforts?

How can we provide our youth with the business savvy they need to become entrepreneurs?

The contributors in this issue of *Rural Connections* shed some light on a number of projects underway across the nation to assist our rural communities with their efforts to build and sustain their economies and way of life.

The WRDC acknowledges there are numerous rural community development projects being studied and implemented throughout the nation. This issue focused on 17

Cooperative Extension projects and studies each of which was presented at the NACDEP Conference held in San Diego, California, in April 2009.

We welcome you to contact us with news about your research projects, businesses and tools so we may share them with our stakeholders.

Please send details to the WRDC at wrdc@usu.edu.