

# RuralCONNECTIONSMONTHLY

A newsletter of the Western Rural Development Center

## COUNTY ECONOMIES 2015 OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES



"As Americans prepare to cast their first votes in presidential primaries, the **National Association of Counties** has released its annual look at recovery patterns across the nation's 3,069 county economies," writes Dr. Brian Knudsen, NACo Research Analyst, in this article wherein he breaks down the data and takes a closer look at western county economies.

**County Economies 2015: Opportunities and Challenges** analyzes annual changes of four economic performance indicators - economic output, also known as gross domestic product (GDP), employment, unemployment rates and home prices - between 2014 and 2015 across county economies. In addition, it explores 2013-2014 wage dynamics as well as 2009-2014 trends in productivity and wages in county economies. 2014 is the latest year for which wage data are available.

The focus of the report is on the county economy, not the county government. County economies are the building blocks of regional economies (metropolitan areas and micropolitan areas), states and the nation. Small county economies - those in counties with fewer than 50,000 residents - are here viewed as rural. Over 69 percent of all counties are small, as well as about 65 percent of western counties.

[Read the article.](#)

## Save the Date for the 2016 Community Development Extension Institute

May 22-24 - Jackson, Wyoming



The Western Rural Development Center's Community Development Extension Institute will be held in Jackson, Wyoming, on May 22-24, 2016. Stay tuned for the detailed agenda and registration details.

[Take a look back at CDEI 2014.](#)  
[Join the CDEI 2016 mailing list!](#)

## Extension Sustainability Summit

[View the schedule!](#)



The 2016 Extension Sustainability Summit will be held April 5-7 in Portland, Oregon. The presenters have been selected so [check out the schedule](#). We are finalizing the study tour details and once that's done we will open registration. Stay tuned!

[Visit the website for details.](#)

## NEW DIRECTORS JOIN REGIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT CENTERS

NORTH CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN REGIONS



**Mark Skidmore** has been named director of the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development (NCRCRD) effective January 1, 2016. Prior to this new position, he was a Michigan State University Extension public policy specialist and a professor in the MSU departments of Economics and Agricultural, Food and Resource Economics.

The NCRCRD, a 12-state collaboration, works on innovation diffusion for rural development, sustainable communities, leadership development and entrepreneurial communities. It collaborates with Extension professionals, researchers and their partners to enhance rural development outcomes in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

"I look forward to building on the center's many strengths as well as expanding efforts to assist communities in improving local government fiscal sustainability and community resiliency," Skidmore said.

[Read the full announcement.](#)

A longtime department head at Mississippi State University has been named the new director of the Southern Rural Development Center.

**Steven Turner**, who has served as head of the MSU Department of Agricultural Economics for 12 years, officially began as the center's director Jan. 1.

MSU Extension Service Director Gary Jackson said Turner will work with 29 land-grant institutions in 13 states to address critical contemporary rural development issues affecting the well-being of people and communities in the rural South.

"Improving the capacity of land-grant universities across the South to address rural development issues improves the quality of life for the people those universities serve," Turner said. "I am honored that I have been asked to lead that charge."

[Read the full announcement.](#)

## WESTERN RURAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER PROUDLY SUPPORTS 2016 NACDEP/ANREP CONFERENCE

June 26-29, 2016 - Burlington, VT



For the first time, NACDEP and ANREP are teaming up for a joint annual conference at the Sheraton Hotel in beautiful and vibrant Burlington, Vermont. Between the two memberships, conference organizers are anticipating over 350 attendees, providing an excellent opportunity to broaden your Extension Network, present and learn from your peers, and learn from an expanded topic menu. The Burlington location features an impressive diversity of both established and new, innovative, and best practice programs from community and economic development, forestry, water quality, housing, local food, social justice, placemaking, environmental education, arts and culture, sustainability, public and private initiatives - plus many more.

[Visit the NACDEP/ANREP Conference website.](#)

## CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS, TRAININGS



### **New Partners for Smart Growth: Practical Tools & Innovative Strategies for Creating Great Communities**

11-3 February 2015

Portland, OR

[Details.](#)

### **WEBINAR: Art Works: Challenge American Guidelines Workshop**

9 March 2016

Webinar

[Details.](#)

### **Extension Sustainability Summit**

5-7 April 2016

Portland, OR

[Details.](#)

### **Community Development Extension Institute**

22-24 May 2016

Jackson, WY

Details coming soon!

### **NACDEP/ANREP Conference**

26-29 June 2016

Burlington, VT

[Details.](#)

### **Rural Sociological Society Annual Meeting**

7-10 August 2016

Toronto, Canada

[Details.](#)

[Visit our website for more event listings!](#)

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