

RuralCONNECTIONSMONTHLY

A newsletter of the Western Rural Development Center

CENTER NEWS ENGAGING WITH A NEW PARTNER

Earlier this month Don and Betsy connected with staff from the University of Montana Rural Institute's [Research and Training Center on Disability in Rural Communities](#) (RTC:Rural). They had an informative conference call with the RTC:Rural's Executive Director Martin Blair, the Center's Director of Knowledge Translation Tracy Boehm, and Naomi Kimbell, training associate. The WRDC and RTC:Rural discussed potential collaborations and agreed to begin sharing information with each organizations' networks. We are pleased to include in this newsletter an introduction to the RTC:Rural.



WORKING TO SOLVE RURAL PROBLEMS

Research and Training Center on Disability in Rural Communities



Innovative studies on issues in rural America are underway at the University of Montana Rural Institute's [Research and Training Center on Disability in Rural Communities](#) (RTC:Rural) thanks to a five-year grant of \$4.38 million through the [National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research](#) (NIDRR), a component of the U.S. Department of Education's [Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services](#).

For more than 25 years, the RTC:Rural has worked to improve the ability of people with disabilities to engage in rural community living. "This new award marks a major advance in our understanding of living in rural communities," said Tom Seekins, Director of the Research and Training Center. "We will be developing new methods and measures to study the places where we live, how those places affect the quality of our lives, and how we can use that knowledge to improve our communities." RTC: Rural will conduct 10 new research projects over the next five years that allow researchers to develop new techniques to improve health, employment, and participation in community life.

To read news and updates on specific RTC:Rural projects, please view the latest [newsletter](#).

Connect with the RTC:Rural in [Facebook](#) or the [Rural Institute](#).

Follow the RTC:Rural in Twitter [@RTC_Rural](#)

[Visit the Research and Training Center on Disability in Rural Communities website.](#)

RANCHING AND ENERGY ECONOMICS IN SAGE-GROUSE COUNTRY

Topic of Two New NARDeP Policy Briefs



By September 2015, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) must either list the Greater Sage-Grouse as an endangered species, or remove it altogether from its current status as a candidate species. The economic ramifications of an endangered-species listing on western ranchers and the energy industry are the focus of two new policy briefs issued by the National Agricultural and Rural Development Policy Center (NARDeP).

The first brief, titled "[Ranching Economics and Sage-Grouse in the West](#)," explores this issue from the perspective of western ranchers, many of whom rely on public lands to meet their animals' grazing needs. Their future access to this land may change as a result of proposed conservation measures designed to protect the Greater Sage-Grouse. The brief, co-authored by John Tanaka (University of Wyoming), Neil Rimbey (University Idaho), and Allen Torrell (New Mexico State University) explores the economic implications of two of these proposed conservation measures, and provides several policy options and recommendations for minimizing their economic impacts.

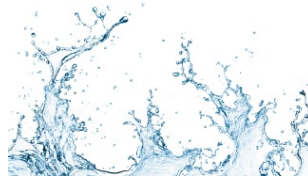
The second policy brief, titled "[Implications of a Greater Sage-Grouse Listing on Western Energy Development](#)," discusses the protection mechanisms that would be invoked with an endangered-species listing, and the potential effects these mechanisms could have on current and future western energy projects. The brief, written by Temple Stoellinger (University of Wyoming), also explains that the sheer volume of energy projects in the region will likely magnify these effects.

Both briefs are available online at the NARDeP website. NARDeP was organized in 2012 by the four US Regional Rural Development Centers and is funded by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) under a competitive grant (Number 2012-70002-19385). A virtual center based at Penn State University, it engages land-grant universities as well as national organizations, agencies, and experts to develop and deliver timely policy-relevant information around signature areas identified by its advisory boards. More information about NARDeP is available at <http://www.nardep.info>.

[Visit the NARDeP website.](#)

WATER IN THE WEST

Topic of Two New NARDeP Policy Briefs



Water scarcity in the Western U.S. is the topic of two new policy briefs from the National Agricultural and Rural Development Policy Center (NARDeP). The briefs describe the water-supply situation both in California and in the Colorado River Basin and provide recommendations for communities and policy makers who face insufficient water supplies.

"**Water Scarcity and the California Economy**" is a three-page brief that, with economic and water-use data, illustrates the state's successes in adapting to a variable water supply and highlights innovative approaches that have helped Californians to prosper economically while also reducing water usage.

"California's per capita water use has steadily declined in the last 15 years, while its economy and population have grown. Clearly, the state has been coping well with limited water supplies," said Ellen Hanak, a senior fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California and the brief's author. "That said, crises such as the current drought provide us with opportunities to assess vulnerabilities and to consider policy changes."

The second brief, "**Facing an Uncertain Colorado River Basin Future**," provides a detailed explanation as to how the Colorado River is allocated in the region, and how the release of a 2012 Colorado River Basin Water Supply and Demand Study has galvanized working groups within the region to examine the potential ways in which municipal and agricultural sectors can close the projected gap between supply and demand.

"One thing this study makes clear is that communities throughout the Colorado River Basin must consider their water futures," said Sharon Megdal, director of the University of Arizona Water Resources Research Center and author of the brief. Megdal poses several discussion questions that will help communities in the Colorado River Basin and beyond as they plan for their water futures.

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[Visit the NARDeP website.](#)

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Drought is a Priority for the National Integrated Water Quality Program

Application Deadline: July 3, 2014

[View the RFA.](#)



An excerpt the RFA describes the drought priority: Key to reducing drought impacts on agriculture and drought preparedness is the recognition of threshold indicator values that tie the levels of drought severity with appropriate responses to maintain agricultural production. These indicators or triggers are used to determine drought aid and eligibility. Thus sustainable production under highly variable moisture conditions requires readily understandable, scientifically sound drought triggers at appropriate temporal and spatial scales and specific to local production systems and conditions. Applicants must develop the science behind the most appropriate drought triggers and provide an understanding of the connection between trigger levels and drought management responses or decisions. This priority seeks the development of a trigger or triggers and appropriate science-based management decisions, practices, and/or responses with broad applicability across the states and territories of the U.S.

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Application deadline is July 3, 2014.

[View the RFA.](#)

CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS, TRAININGS

NACDEP 2014 - The Art of Reinvention

National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals

22-25 June 2014

Grand Rapids, MI

[Details.](#)

Community Development Society 2014 Conference

20-23 July 2014

Dubuque, IA

[Details.](#)

Equity, Democracy, and the Commons: Counter-narratives for Rural Transformation

Rural Sociological Society Annual Meeting

31 July - 3 August 2014

New Orleans, LA

[Details.](#)



University Economic Development Association Annual Summit 2014

28 September - 1 October 2014

Santa Fe, NM

[Details.](#)

California Naturalist State-Wide Conference

17-19 October 2014

Pacific Grove, CA

[Details.](#)

EXTENSION'S ROLE IN SUSTAINABILITY

In this issue of *Rural Connections* Western Extension Agents, Faculty, and Specialists examine the 100-year history of Cooperative Extension and its unique position to effect nationwide change as it pertains to sustainability outreach and education.

[Read Rural Connections.](#)



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