

Arizona Rural Development Roundtable



Summary of Arizona Rural Development Roundtable

Casa Grande, Arizona

June 4, 2009

Those in Attendance:

Don Albrecht – Western Rural Development Center
Sheldon Jones – Farm Foundation
Mark Apel – University of Arizona Extension
Kirk Astroth – Arizona 4-H
Barbara Clark – The Nature Conservancy in Arizona
Jim Christenson – Director, University of Arizona Extension
Darcy Dixon – University of Arizona Extension
Dean Fish – University of Arizona Extension
Cynthia Flynn – University of Arizona Extension
Rick Gibson – Director, Pinal County Extension
Bill Lofquist – Retired
Ed Martin – University of Arizona Extension
Dan McDonald – Pima County Cooperative Extension
Pam Moseley – Marana School District
Susan Pater – University of Arizona Extension
Alan Quan – U.S. Forest Service
Tauhidur Rahman – Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of Arizona
Everett Rhodes – University of Arizona Project Center for Rural Leadership (CENTRL)
George Seperich – Arizona State University, Morrison School
Russ Tronstad – Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of Arizona
Sabrina Tuttle – University of Arizona Extension
Jeff Williamson – Arizona Zoological Society

Session One: What do we value about the rural areas of Arizona?

Participants were asked to list their two-three most important positive features about Arizona's rural areas. Their responses were:

1. Vast open spaces that include extensive biological diversity, aesthetics and scenic assets. Much of this open land is public and reservation land. There is a desire in the state to protect these lands.

2. High quality of rural life that individuals can enjoy. Included among the qualities appreciated are safety, less traffic, self-paced life, quiet, and living next to wild.
3. Sense of community where people take care of one another. There is a sense of culture and history.
4. Rural Arizona has extensive cultural, ethnic and economic diversity.
5. There is potential for sustainable economic development.

Session Two: Priorities for Strengthening the Future of Rural Areas

Participants were asked: As you ponder the future of your state’s rural areas, which of the following general rural development topics would you (personally) identify as being of highest priority to promoting the long-term survival and strength of these areas? That is, what **THREE** broad areas listed below would you select as being of “highest priority” for the future of rural counties and communities in your state?

- Economic Development
- Economic/Social Inequality and Poverty
- Education and Workforce Development
- Health and Nutrition
- Housing
- Information and Communication Technologies
- Leadership, Citizen Participation and Rural Public Policy
- Population Change/Migration Patterns
- Public Land Use and Management
- Public Services/Public Infrastructure
- Renewable Energy Development
- Rural and Entrepreneurial Development
- Rural-Urban Interface and Growth Management
- Water, Biodiversity and other Natural Resources
- Other areas not listed above (please list):

Then the group narrowed down the individual responses into the following three priorities:

1. Rural and entrepreneurial development
2. Rural/urban interface, public land policy and growth management
3. Water/biodiversity and other natural resources

Session Three: Digging Deeper into the Three Priority Areas

Next participants were asked to take these three priority areas they identified during Session Two and identify challenges and strategies/initiatives that could be launched to address the challenges. Their responses were:

1. Rural and entrepreneurial development
 - a. Specific challenges faced by rural areas in Arizona
 - i. Inadequate leadership skills in some rural communities and a lack of involvement in leadership positions among young people.
 - ii. Inadequate education levels and work force skills.
 - iii. High poverty levels, high rates of unemployment and underemployment.
 - iv. Lack of employment opportunities and services in rural communities.
 - v. There is a need to develop skills to better cope with rapid change.
 - vi. There is need to find a way of getting involvement of all segments of the community. This includes racial and ethnic minorities, the young and old, males and females, and both green hearts and rednecks.
 - b. Strategies/initiatives that should be launched
 - i. There is a need to develop jobs that are economically competitive, contribute to the local community, and retain values and lifestyles of the community.
 - ii. Develop sustainable employment opportunities that have long-term benefits for the community.
 - iii. The WRDC and Extension could highlight successful models that work.
 - iv. Provide training so that community leaders have skills to understand and cope with rapid change.
 - v. Implement leadership development training programs.
 - vi. Give young people exposure to employment and leadership opportunities through internships or other means.
 - vii. Define different types of rural communities. There is no "one size fits all."
 - viii. Capitalize on the ecosystem services provided by rural areas.
 - ix. Provide community development and entrepreneurial development training programs.
 - x. Find a way of bringing diverse groups together and help them appreciate the knowledge and values of each.
 - xi. Build local capacity for facilitation to allow open dialogue among groups who disagree on issues.
2. Rural/urban interface, public land policy and growth management
 - a. Specific challenges faced by rural areas in Arizona
 - i. Rapid growing populations coupled with inadequate subdivision legislation have led to the uncontrolled spread of housing developments.
 - ii. There is an extensive loss of agricultural and range lands and the associated open space.
 - iii. There is a lack of mandatory smart-growth legislation.

- iv. Communities provide cheap land and services, while the true costs of development are deferred to future generations.
- v. There is a lack of dialogue on growth management issues.
- vi. New residents of urban Arizona come from other environments and they are unaware of fragile western ecosystems where their rural recreational patterns have more environmental impact than traditional consumptive industries.
- vii. There is a lack of certainty about who has responsibility or jurisdiction on some decisions. There is a lack of regional planning authority.
- viii. Land management agencies lack the resources to effectively manage their stewardship.
- ix. Rural land use patterns are not sustainable. This is especially true of exurban development.
- x. Patterns of development have resulted in more serious wildfire problems.

b. Strategies/initiatives that should be launched

- i. Educate and make people aware of these issues.
- ii. Provide a forum to share information so policy makers can become aware of rural concerns.
- iii. Develop a list of best practices and share this information across the region.
- iv. Conduct high quality research so that there is a better understanding of both intended and unintended consequences.
- v. Facilitate dialog and engage people on divisive issues.
- vi. Implement youth education programs utilizing modern communication tools.
- vii. Develop economic models that encourage stewardship of resources.
- viii. Develop and utilize leadership skills.
- ix. Implement regional decision making.
- x. Present good information in a way that reaches the public and changes behavior.

3. Water/biodiversity and other natural resources

a. Specific challenges faced by rural areas in Arizona

- i. Major water issues exist because Arizona is arid. Rainfall may even decline in the future.
- ii. With rapid population growth and unregulated urban uses, there is increased demand for scarce water and other resources.
- iii. There is an inadequate definition of assured water supply, and no legal connection between ground water pumping and surface water flows and vice versa.
- iv. There is growing concern with water quality because of high levels of both salinity and nitrogen.
- v. There is concern with water rights issues on reservations.

- vi. There is a rapid increase in invasive species.
 - vii. There is reduced habitat for wildlife – especially grassland habitat.
 - viii. More and more habitats are being disrupted through fragmentation, which results in the reduction of genetic exchange.
 - ix. There is an increased intensity and frequency of wildfires.
 - x. Pathogens are being found in reptiles and amphibians.
 - xi. Air quality is a growing problem.
 - xii. Colorado River has less water than in the past and Arizona has lowest priority among basin states for this water. Of the water that Arizona gets, agricultural use is the lowest priority.
- b. Strategies/initiatives that should be launched
- i. Develop education programs that will increase water conservation, recharge and augmentation.
 - ii. Create water management and water use policies that result in behavior change.
 - iii. Create water policy at different jurisdictions, such as at the watershed level.
 - iv. Look at models and programs that have worked and share best practices.
 - v. Facilitate effective water market/pricing strategies.
 - vi. Improve our understanding of rainfall patterns throughout the state.
 - vii. Invest in innovation technologies that improve irrigation efficiency.
 - viii. Find effective means of reaching key individuals to implement policy.
 - ix. Find a way of making incentives work.

Session Four: Research and Extension Needs and Potential Partners

Finally, participants were asked to identify what they felt are the most critical roles that should be played by your state's land-grant universities in relation to the THREE priority areas identified in Session Two and discussed in Session Three. Their responses were:

1. Research Needs
 - a. Determine what are the best practices?
 - b. Develop a review of literature on issues so that we can dialogue with facts.
 - c. Define what is quality of life in rural areas? What is valued? How is this achieved?
 - d. How do you get feedback from real rural people? What is an effective approach for listening to rural people?
 - e. What are the goals and desires of rural communities?
 - f. There is a need to have a better understanding of rainfall patterns, climate changes, and implications for life in Arizona.

2. Extension/outreach concerns
 - a. Develop train-the-trainer programs to deal with many of the issues previously discussed.
 - b. Build local community capacity.

- c. Leadership development curriculums, such as ACT, need to be used in the community.
- d. Develop education programs to help the public become informed about important issues.
- e. Implement community development and entrepreneurial development programs.

3. Partners

- a. Public officials and policy makers, especially those who are advocates of the rural Arizona described in Session One.
- b. Local First Arizona
- c. State and Federal land management agencies, including NRCS.
- d. Tribal entities
- e. Utility companies – especially cooperatives
- f. Rural community leaders
- g. School districts
- h. Community colleges
- i. Coalitions and organizations that work on these issues, such as the Farm Bureau
- j. Foundations
- k. Nature Conservancy
- l. Zoological society
- m. State association of county supervisors