

MID-COLUMBIA SMALL FARMS AND ACREAGES PROGRAM

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Demographic and economic trends in the Mid-Columbia region of Oregon and Washington have resulted in increased demand for Extension programs for small producers and alternative agricultural enterprises. In 2000, OSU and WSU Extension agents from four Mid-Columbia counties developed a cooperative regional effort to combine technical and financial resources and provide a cost-efficient and effective response to this demand. Since the inception of the Mid-Columbia Small Farms and Acreages program, a bi-monthly newsletter has been published; it is now distributed both electronically and as a paper copy to over 1,000 small farmers and agency staff in a twelve-county area of the Columbia Basin of Oregon and Washington. The Mid-Columbia Small Farms and Acreages Web site hosts the newsletter and serves as a library of technical papers, newsletters, and other resources for small farmers and public and private agencies; it receives over 2000 hits per month. Thirty-five technical papers have been developed on topics such as livestock production, timber management, pasture management, tree fruit and small berry production, weed control, irrigation and financial management. More than 1800 small farmers and landowners have participated in 27 regional educational programs. A USDA SARE professional development program grant was secured to support educational program development in the region. Local, regional and national presentations have been given about this program. Results of program evaluations and a reader survey continue to shape the direction of the program, which will evolve to serve the changing needs of the residents of the Mid-Columbia region.