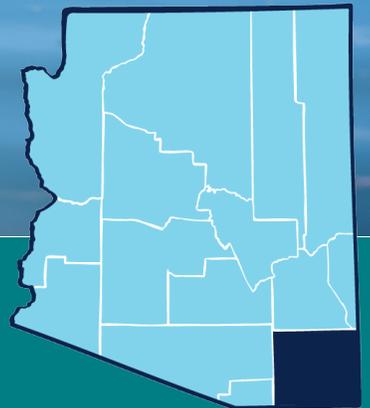




Cooperative Extension
Cochise County



ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Cochise County Cooperative Extension

Engaging with people through applied research and education to improve lives, families, communities, the environment, and economies in Arizona and beyond.

Cochise County Cooperative Extension 2025 Annual Report



Contents

From the Director	1	Economic Development.....	10
Cooperative Extension	2	Water Wise	11
Extension Advisory Board	3	4-H Youth Development	12–13
Ag & Natural Resources.....	4	Family, Consumer, & Health Sciences..	14
Natural Resources	5–6	Building Healthy Communities.....	15
Commercial Livestock	7	Nutrition	16
Commercial Production Agriculture.....	8	Financial Report.....	17
Home Horticulture	9	Faculty/Staff List	18

From the Director



We are pleased to share our 2025 Cochise County Cooperative Extension Annual Report. Our mission is to bring research-based advancements, innovations, and education to Cochise County and beyond. The University of Arizona Cooperative Extension continues to meet the evolving needs of our communities while supporting the rural, agricultural lifestyle and economy that make Cochise County a special place to live and work.

This year, we continued to focus on programs that matter most to local residents, including:

- **4-H Youth Development** – helping young people grow as leaders and learners
- **Rangeland and Natural Resources Management** – keeping our land productive and healthy
- **Economic Development** – supporting local businesses and nonprofits
- **Family, Consumer, and Health Sciences** – strengthening families and community well-being
- **Crop, Orchard, and Gardening Programs** – providing hands-on guidance for growing success
- **Livestock Health and Production** – helping ranchers care for their animals
- **Water Wise Conservation and Education** – promoting sustainable water use in a dry landscape

Through all our programs, Extension brings education directly to the community with the combined expertise of volunteers, faculty, and staff. By partnering with county, state, and federal agencies, we support agriculture, empower youth to become leaders, and strengthen the well-being of families across Cochise County.

We are deeply grateful to Cochise County government, community partners, advisory board members, stakeholders, and volunteers whose dedication and collaboration make our work possible and help sustain Extension’s mission of providing education to rural communities.

Carol Holden

Director, Cochise County Cooperative Extension
carolholden@arizona.edu

Cochise County Cooperative Extension Organization

Cochise County Cooperative Extension (CCCE) is an Extension Unit of the University of Arizona, housed under the College of Agriculture, Life and Environmental Sciences (CALES). We have three locations in Cochise County:



Willcox Office
 450 S Haskell Ave, Ste A
 Willcox, AZ 85643
 520-384-3594

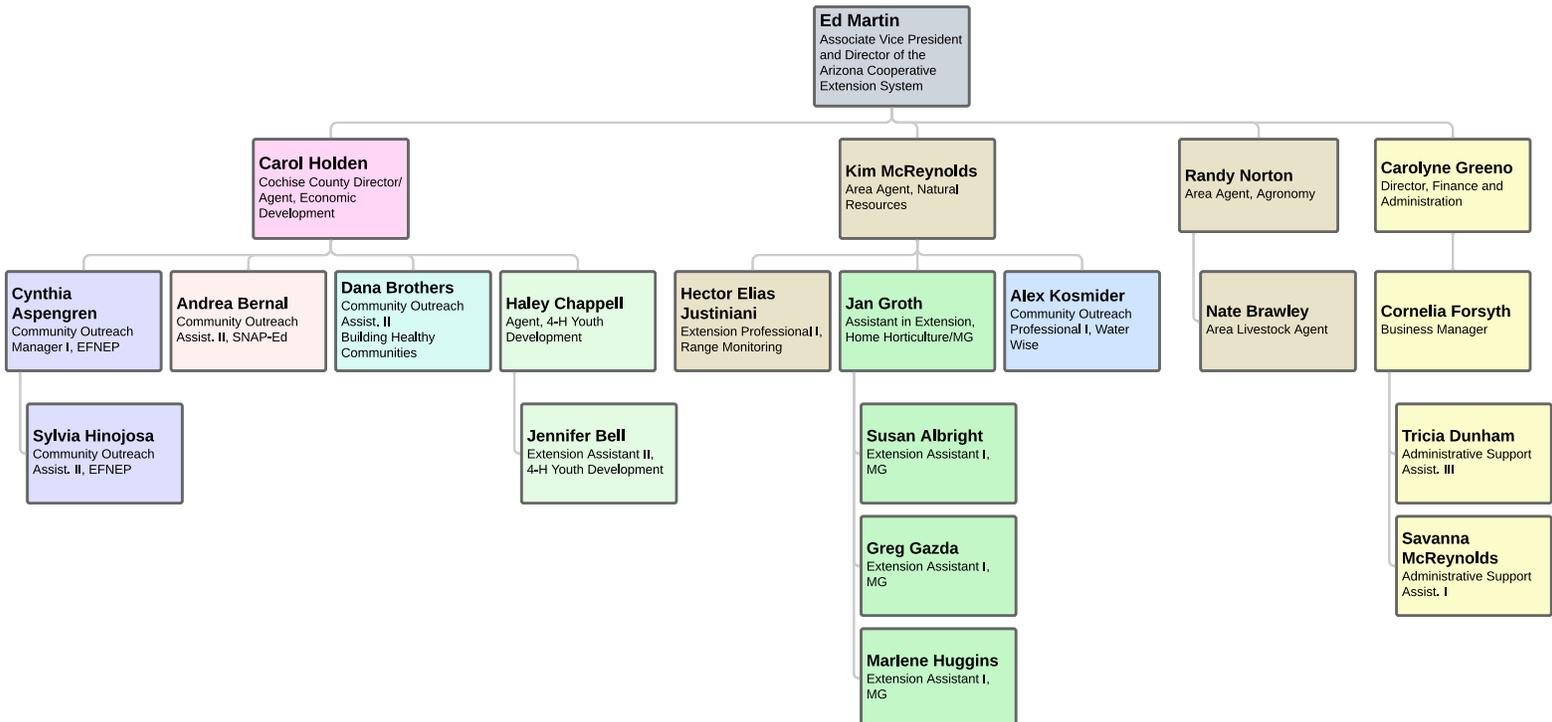


Douglas Office
 (Satellite Location)
 1012 N. G Avenue #104
 Douglas, AZ 85607
 520-626-7271 x9
 (By Appointment Only)



Sierra Vista Office
 (Satellite Location)
 1140 N Colombo
 Sierra Vista, AZ 85635
 520-384-3594
 (By Appointment Only)

Cochise County Cooperative Extension Organization Chart
 Current Employees as of December 31, 2025



Cochise County Cooperative Extension Advisory Board

Per ARS Title 3, the Cochise County Board of Supervisors appoints the Cochise County Cooperative Extension Advisory Board. The Advisory Board meets quarterly, with agendas posted on our website at <https://extension.arizona.edu/cochise>, as well as at our office at 450 S Haskell Ave, Ste A, Willcox, AZ. Meetings are generally conducted in a hybrid format, allowing some attendees to participate online while others attend in person.

Our Advisory Board provides essential input to help us achieve our goals. According to University of Arizona guidance, external advisory boards are not governing bodies; however, they play a crucial role in providing direction, building networks and partnerships, and supporting fundraising efforts.

Continuing Members

Term Expires

Moiria White (Chair) , Ag & Natural Resources/4-H	06/30/2026
Ron Bemis (Vice Chair) , Ag & Natural Resources	06/30/2027
Tyler Curry, Ag & Natural Resources	06/30/2026
Julia Johnson, 4-H	06/30/2026
Amber Morin, Ag & Natural Resources	06/30/2027
Dennis Moroney, Ag & Natural Resources	06/30/2026
Alan Seitz, Ag & Natural Resources	06/30/2026
Jason Zibart, Family Consumer Health Sciences	06/30/2027



Advisory Board Members at Arevelos Farms



Agriculture and Natural Resources

Agriculture and Natural Resources agents and staff provide Cochise County stakeholders and producers with research-based education in natural resources, rangeland management, livestock, and commercial horticulture. In addition, the Master Gardener Program delivers science-based home horticulture education through trained volunteers, and the Water Wise Program provides community education focused on water conservation.



Cross J Ranch



Hector monitoring range grasses on the Cross J Ranch

Natural Resources Program

Rangelands are important to society for the goods and services they produce and for the ecological services they provide (Society for Range Management). There is a need to balance livestock grazing with natural resources. This is especially important as livestock producers have been reducing and managing herds as a result of drought conditions for the last two-plus decades.

The spread of state and federally listed noxious weeds on public, state trust, and private lands threatens biodiversity and native plant species, decreases forage and habitat for domestic and wild animals, and causes economic hardship for landowners. Invasive species in the United States are estimated to cause damages of \$137 billion annually, with non-native invasive weeds making up \$34 billion of that amount (Montana State University, Extension Agricultural Economics). Southeastern Arizona has relatively small infestations of noxious weeds compared to other areas in the West. This continues to give us a unique opportunity to be proactive and control weeds so that it doesn't become economically prohibitive.

In the 2022 Cooperative Extension Stakeholder Survey, **80% of respondents** in Cochise County identified “Rangeland Health” as a top priority under the Agriculture heading. Additionally, **82% of respondents** rated the topic “Identifying and managing pest (insects, weeds, diseases)” as a priority.

In 2025

- Collaborated with the following groups:
 - Fort Huachuca Sentinel Landscape Restoration Partnership
 - Bureau of Land Management, San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area Uplands and Grazing Working Group
 - Natural Resources Conservation Service, Soil Technical Team
 - Upper San Pedro Partnership, Technical and Advisory Committees

Kim McReynolds has served as **Natural Resources Area Agent** for Cochise, Graham, and Greenlee counties since 1995 and also serves as Extension Director in Greenlee County.

In fall 2025, **Hector Elias Justiniani** joined Cochise County Cooperative Extension as an Extension Professional I, Range Monitoring.



Kim McReynolds



Hector Elias Justiniani



Noxious Weed: Stinknet (*Oncosiphon pilulifer*)

Natural Resources Program (Continued)

- Presentation on local noxious, invasive species at the Friends of the San Pedro River, Celebrate the San Pedro! event. From a Friends of the San Pedro River volunteer: “Dear Kim, Thanks so much for volunteering to participate in Celebrate the San Pedro! I so appreciated you speaking about invasive species; such knowledge is needed and the more people learn about them, the better.”
- Field trial work with M. Halldorson on vineyard cover crop project in Kansas Settlement.
- Presented a UA Cooperative Extension update at the Cochise-Graham Cattle Growers’ Annual Meeting.
- With **four local NRCs**, held a “Control of Chihuahuan Scrub and Use of Drones Workshop” in Benson. Overall, participants **rated the workshop at a 4.9** (on a scale of 1 = Not Valuable to 5 = Very Valuable). **93% listed two new things** that they learned. **67% of participants listed at least one new practice** that they intend to implement in the next year.
- The monitoring position funded by the USFS was vacant for 9 months of the year. As part of the Rangeland Monitoring & Inventory Program, **8 sites on 3 Safford Ranger District allotments** were monitored. Monitoring was conducted on an additional **11 sites on 3 ranches** with state and private land.
- A network exists of remotely located rangeland rain gauges at monitoring and other sites. **Twenty rain gauges** in the county are read twice a year and entered into the UA MyRaingeLog website.



Control of Chihuahuan Scrub and Use of Drones Workshop



Commercial Livestock Program

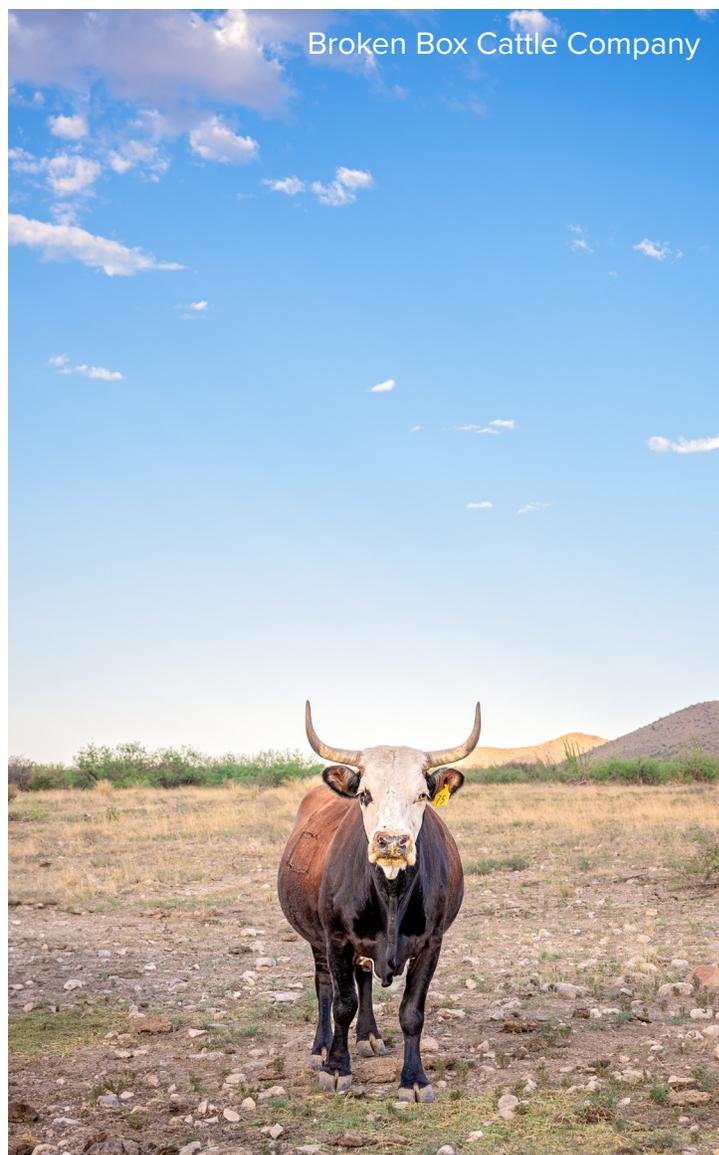
Cochise County is home to a significant livestock industry that contributes to the local economy and supports working agricultural operations across the county. University of Arizona Cooperative Extension provides research-based education to livestock producers focused on animal health, herd management, production efficiency, animal welfare, and industry best practices.

Program Transition in 2025

In 2025, Livestock Extension programming in Cochise County was impacted by staffing changes. A new Livestock Agent was assigned to Cochise County in October 2025. Due to the timing of this assignment late in the calendar year, no county-based livestock programming was delivered during this reporting period.

Looking Ahead

Beginning in 2026, Livestock Extension efforts will focus on reestablishing services for Cochise County producers. Planned next steps include conducting a needs assessment with local livestock stakeholders to identify priority topics and preferred methods of program delivery. This process will guide the development of future livestock programming tailored to county needs.



Nate Brawley has served as an **Area Livestock Agent** with Arizona Cooperative Extension since April 2019. In October 2025, Cochise County was added to his area of responsibility. He also serves Graham and Greenlee counties in his role.





Commercial Production Agriculture Program

Field crop production in Cochise County is highly diverse and includes corn (silage and grain), small grains (wheat and barley), alfalfa, dry beans, cotton, grain sorghum, and potatoes. Growers face increasing pressure from rising input costs, particularly seed, fertilizer, water, and energy, combined with relatively low commodity prices, making profitability difficult to maintain. At the same time, agricultural water use faces increased social and political scrutiny, even though per-acre agricultural water use in the region has declined over time.

Advances in agricultural technology, including transgenic traits, improved pest management chemistries, enhanced varieties and hybrids, and site-specific management tools, offer opportunities for growers to remain competitive. However, adoption must be evaluated under local production conditions. When combined with adjustments in crop rotations, many of these advancements have the potential to improve overall production efficiency, particularly related to water use.

A documented outbreak of resistance in southwestern corn borer (SWCB) populations has recently been identified in western New Mexico, adjacent to primary corn-growing areas in Cochise and Graham Counties. This poses a significant concern due to the potential for spread. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation are underway, along with exploration of alternative

management strategies, including cultural practices and evaluation of currently available corn hybrids with the most recent trait packages suitable for the region.

During 2025, multiple research projects were conducted to refine existing recommendations and evaluate new technologies relevant to Cochise County production systems. These included corn hybrid trials evaluating novel genetic traits for improved corn earworm control; evaluation of cotton cultivars containing the ThryvOn transgenic trait for early-season insect control and mid-season lygus management; and assessment of new herbicide tolerance traits from multiple companies.

Additional work in 2025 included evaluation of more than **25 winter forage varieties** of wheat and triticale to identify alternatives to summer forages such as corn silage and alfalfa. **Adoption of winter forages could reduce supplemental irrigation water requirements by nearly 20%**, improving water-use efficiency in forage systems.

Research findings are shared with growers through field days, individual consultations, and Extension publications and presentations, supporting informed decision-making as producers respond to economic pressures, emerging pest threats, and increasing expectations for efficient resource use.

Dr. Randy Norton, Commercial Production Agriculture Regional Specialist and Area Agent, has served with Arizona Cooperative Extension since 1991 in Cochise and Graham Counties. He also serves as Director of Graham County Cooperative Extension and the Safford Agricultural Experiment Station.





Home Horticulture Program

Master Gardeners (MG) play a vital role in home horticulture education through Cooperative Extension. Founded at Washington State University in 1973 and introduced to Arizona in 1983, MGs are trained volunteers who complete a 16-week class and 50 community volunteer hours for certification. They provide science-based education on sustainable gardening, landscaping, land stewardship, and water conservation. Community outreach includes monthly workshops, farmers’ market presence, a Seed Library, public Q&A, school field trips, and **Discovery Gardens, Cochise County’s first educational botanical garden**. The demand for MG volunteers continues to grow due to new residents, unique High Desert plants, rising interest in home gardening, and increasing requests for gardening advice.

Highlights of the 2025 Master Gardener Program:

- **32 new students** completed the Master Gardener 2025 Class Series.
- **80 students** participated in our School Field Trip Program this year.
- On the first Thursday of each month, our MG info booth at the Sierra Vista Farmers’ Market welcomes an average of **50–60 visitors**.
- Our Seed Library distributes **50–150 free seed packages** each month at the Farmers’ Market and other events, along with expert growing advice.

- Our Docent Program, staffed by MG volunteers in the Discovery Gardens on Tuesdays, hosts garden visitors, providing guidance and inspiration on landscaping and gardening. We are developing a new Japanese Garden including a traditional Torii Gate.
- Approximately **240 public inquiries** were submitted to Cooperative Extension and answered via phone, text, or email.
- We hosted **10 MG Workshops** with a total of **420 attendees**. Workshops and garden talks were presented to groups in Sierra Vista, Bisbee, St. David, Sunsites, and Huachuca City throughout the year.
- We developed and presented **12 Monthly Continuing Education** programs for Active Master Gardeners.
- We hosted our annual “Cocoa in the Gardens with Santa,” a free family-friendly event, which was attended by more than **200 people**.
- **Three Master Gardeners** have taken over the maintenance and new development of the pollinator gardens at Kartchner Caverns State Park.
- Continued to develop and maintain the **Rose Garden** at the UA Sierra Vista Campus.
- Provided assistance with the ongoing development and maintenance of the **Healing Garden** at Canyon Vista Medical Center.

Jan Groth, Assistant in Extension, has served Cochise County Cooperative Extension since 2012 and oversees the Cochise County Master Gardener Program, supported by three Master Gardener Extension Assistants.





Economic Development Program

Community Water Education and Outreach

In 2025, the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension in Cochise County focused on providing community education, technical support, and collaborative initiatives to address local water challenges. Efforts centered on groundwater sustainability, dry well assistance, and promoting innovative solutions such as water recharge projects. Guidance and education were provided related to Arizona Active Management Area requirements. Educational materials were developed and distributed to help property owners navigate assistance programs particularly for dry wells. A water workshop was held in December 2025 with over 40 community members attending to hear guest speakers discuss topics that included groundwater sustainability, water recharge strategies, and community-based solutions to mitigate groundwater depletion.

Support and Education for Nonprofit Organizations

In 2025, Cochise County Cooperative Extension continued to strengthen local nonprofit organizations through governance and capacity-building support. Two established small nonprofits revised policies and procedures to better align with their missions, while board members received education on roles and responsibilities through targeted lessons and a handbook. Procedures were also developed to guide fundraising campaigns. Additionally, a new organization in the early stages of formation received guidance on writing a mission statement, bylaws, and articles of incorporation. These efforts improved organizational effectiveness, enhanced board capacity, and supported the successful establishment of a new nonprofit poised for long-term community impact.

Carol Holden joined Cochise County Cooperative Extension in May 2023 as **Extension Director and Economic Development Agent**, with a focus on rural and agricultural sustainability and economic development in Cochise County.





Water Wise Poster Contest Winners

Water Wise Program

The Water Resource Element of the Cochise County Comprehensive Plan 2045 establishes a framework for managing the County’s water resources to promote sustainability, protect water quality, and ensure long-term reliability. It addresses water supply, conservation, aquifer recharge, and future demand planning to maintain safe and dependable water for residents, agriculture, industry, and natural ecosystems.

In addition, the 2022 Cooperative Extension Stakeholder Survey identified “Quality K-12 education” as one of the top priorities in Arizona. Through our Water Wise Youth program, Cooperative Extension is able to assist K-8 students by providing supplemental programs inside and outside of the school setting to encourage youth to learn more about local water resources and implement simple water conservation strategies.

In 2025, the Water Wise Youth program reached **2,771 students** at **18 schools**, delivering **256 instructional hours**, with an average **knowledge gain of 81%**. Examples of topics where students increased their knowledge included: different properties of water (cohesion, adhesion, etc.),

sources of water found on Earth, the water cycle, and groundwater. The Arizona Project WET Cochise County Water Festival was held for **212 students** from **5 schools** in Sierra Vista and included 4 different learning stations.

Two water conservation poster contests were held in Sierra Vista and Pearce with **192 entries** from students. The theme for Sierra Vista was “Keep Water Flowing, Keep Life Growing!” and the theme for the Pearce area was “Our Water, Our Future.”



Students explore how water travels across land and through local watersheds using the interactive Water Wise “Rolling River” model.

Area Agent **Kim McReynolds** oversees the Water Wise Program. Community Outreach Professional **Alex Kosmider**, who has been with Cooperative Extension since 2021, delivers water conservation education to youth through school-based programs.



Alex Kosmider



4-H Youth Development

4-H is a youth development organization committed to empowering young people with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to thrive. Rooted in the core values of Head, Heart, Hands, and Health, 4-H focuses on developing well-rounded, engaged citizens. In Cochise County, 4-H delivers diverse programming in agriculture, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), leadership, citizenship, and healthy living, creating pathways for youth to grow, serve, and lead within their communities.



Cochise County 4-H members collect community donations in preparation for a countywide youth event



4-H Member, Zoe Willis with her Quilt Project



Sr 4-H Members Seth Callister, Cristyn Bell, Landon Hooper, and Emiliano Chavez at Arizona Nationals



4-H Members Ellie Black, Samantha VanDerSys, Abi Aabye, and Cole Mikrut at the Cochise County Fair

4-H Youth Development Program

The 4-H program is grounded in positive youth development, providing experiences that support youth wellbeing and promote healthy, optimal development. The 4-H Thriving Model identifies key elements of high-quality youth development programming, including fostering passion, building strong relationships, creating a sense of belonging, and encouraging active engagement. Programs guided by this model have demonstrated positive outcomes, with youth showing increased academic motivation and success, reduced involvement in risky behaviors, and a greater likelihood of making healthy life choices.

In 2025, Cochise County 4-H continued to support positive youth development through volunteer-led programming, hands-on learning experiences, and county-wide events. Program impacts included:

Eleven adult volunteers contributed a total of **473 hours of service**, representing an estimated value of **\$15,169.11**.

One hundred eleven youth were enrolled in the 4-H Youth Development program.

Cochise County 4-H Large Stock Day, held on **June 29**, engaged **55 4-H members** and **31 non-4-H youth** in hands-on experiences focused on beef, swine, sheep, goats, and livestock judging.

Cochise County 4-H Smallstock Day, held on **May 10**, provided **30 4-H youth** with hands-on learning opportunities related to rabbits, cavy, pigeons, and chickens.

On November 14, **99 members and volunteers** gathered at the Willcox Elks Lodge to celebrate Cochise County 4-H youth at the **annual awards banquet**.



4-H Volunteer, Jen Barnett at Small Stock Day

Haley Chappell, 4-H Youth Development Agent, has been with Cochise County Cooperative Extension since July 2023. Her focus is on growing the 4-H program in Cochise County, developing engaging youth development programming, and recruiting volunteers to **“Make the Best Better.”**

Jenny Bell, Extension Assistant II, joined the 4-H program in May 2025 and assists Haley with school-based programming and countywide projects.



Haley Chappell



Jenny Bell



Family, Consumer, and Health Sciences

Cochise County Cooperative Extension's Family, Consumer, and Health Sciences programs focus on strengthening families and supporting physical and mental well-being. Through programs such as SNAP-Ed and EFNEP, parents and caregivers gain practical tools to support healthy choices and enrich their children's lives.



Around the Table Class Series - Amistades 2025



Building Healthy Communities Program

In 2018, the Legacy Foundation of Southeast Arizona awarded a Strategic Grant to a University of Arizona Cooperative Extension–led collaboration to expand countywide health efforts focused on food access, nutrition, and active living. In 2023, a three-year USDA NIFA HSI grant was secured to continue advancing food access and community health initiatives in Cochise County.

The resulting Building Healthy Communities (BHC) initiative strengthened leadership development, improved food system access, and supported youth health through school-based efforts.

Because of the BHC Project:

- Community members increased access to fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables through farmers markets, mobile markets, food cooperatives, and distribution sites across Cochise County.
- School and district partnerships expanded nutrition education and Farm-to-School programming, connecting students to local food systems through classes and hands-on learning.

- Community gardens and agricultural sites enhanced food access, skill-building, and engagement, including Annie’s Community Garden, Echoing Hope Ranch, and the Tombstone Community Garden.
- Community collaborations promoted healthy eating and active living through coordinated events and coalition efforts.
- Leadership development efforts, including the Cochise Leadership Academy, strengthened community capacity in food, agriculture, and health-related fields.

After significant local impact and partnership development, the Building Healthy Communities initiative will transition to the School of Nutritional Sciences and Wellness at the University of Arizona, continuing its work outside of Cochise County Cooperative Extension.

Dana Brothers, Community Outreach Professional II, joined Cochise County Cooperative Extension in June 2023 and supported community food access efforts through the Building Healthy Communities program.



Dana Brothers



Andrea Bernal delivering SNAP-Ed Programming

Nutrition Program (SNAP-Ed & EFNEP)

The Cochise County Nutrition Program provides evidence-based education through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed), also known as AZ Health Zone, and the USDA Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). These programs serve SNAP-eligible and limited-resource individuals, families, schools, and communities by supporting healthy eating, physical activity, and long-term wellbeing.

2025 Program Reach and Activities

In 2025, nutrition programming was delivered through partnerships with schools, libraries, community organizations, and local coalitions. Education efforts focused on practical skills such as meal planning, food preparation, budgeting, and strategies to increase physical activity.

Mid-year federal funding changes significantly impacted SNAP-Ed programming capacity, resulting in a transition period and reduced service levels. EFNEP programming remained funded and continued providing direct education to eligible families across Cochise County.

Key Education Areas Included:

- Nutrition and cooking education for youth and families.
- Food budgeting and meal planning strategies
- Youth-focused physical activity and nature-based programming
- Collaborative community partnerships supporting healthy environments

EFNEP Program Outcomes

EFNEP participants demonstrated measurable improvements:

- **95 percent** showing **healthier eating behaviors**
- **91 percent** improved at least one **food budgeting** or **meal planning** practice.

These outcomes reflect continued progress in supporting families with practical skills to improve diet quality and manage food resources effectively.

Cynthia Aspengren, Community Outreach Manager I, has served with Cochise County Cooperative Extension since 2011 and oversees the EFNEP program, working closely with Community Outreach Assistant II **Sylvia Hinojosa**.

Andrea Bernal, Community Outreach Assistant II, provides SNAP-Ed programming in schools.



Cynthia Aspengren



Sylvia Hinojosa



Andrea Bernal

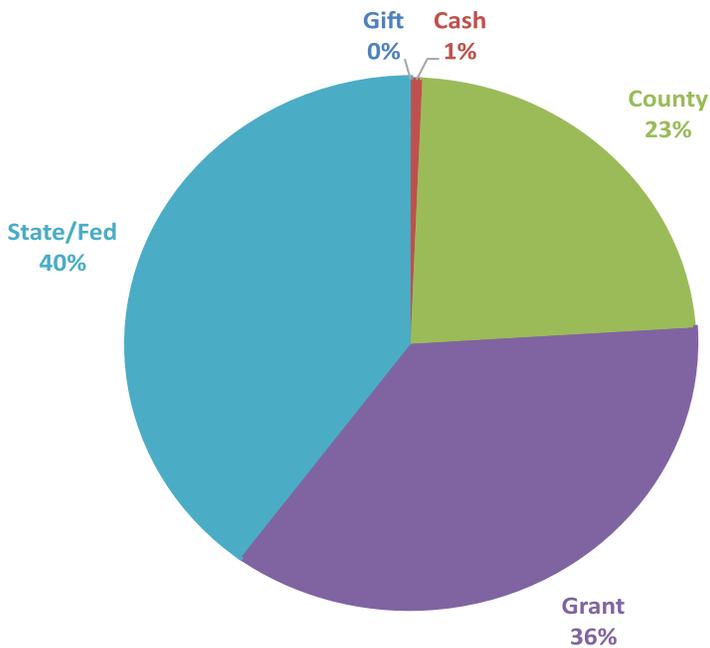
Financial

The following summarizes revenue and expenses for the Cochise County Cooperative Extension. As Arizona’s land-grant institution, the University of Arizona administers a comprehensive funding model that integrates state, federal, and county resources to support Cooperative Extension programming. In addition to these core funds, Extension staff and programs benefit from faculty efforts to secure grants, negotiate contracts, and obtain private donations.

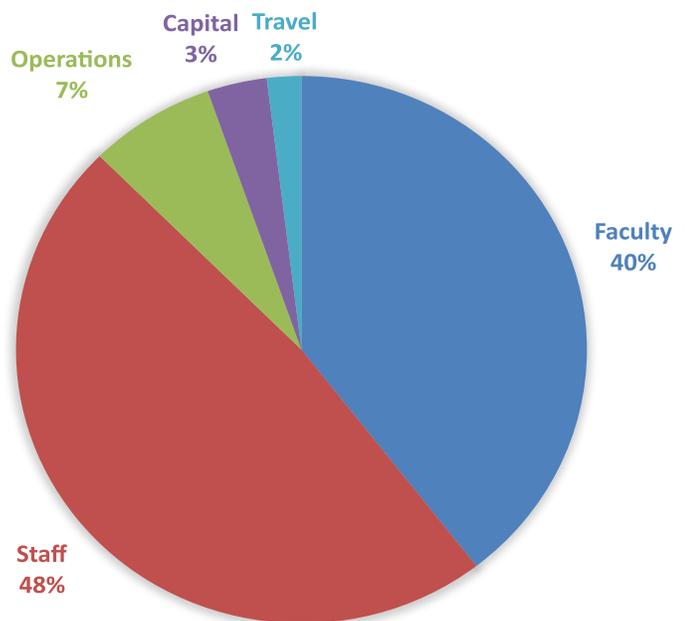
County government support plays a critical role in Extension operations and includes the provision of reasonable office space for the conduct of Extension work, as required by Arizona Revised Statutes, Title 3. For Cochise County Cooperative Extension, the central office in Willcox is provided by Cochise County Government, along with a satellite office and storage space in Douglas. The Sierra Vista satellite office is leased from the University South Foundation.

In addition to the revenue reflected below, some funds are held within University of Arizona Foundation accounts and are earmarked for future program use. As illustrated in the Expenditure pie chart, the operations and supplies category encompasses a broad range of essential costs that directly support program delivery. These include instructional supplies, food for demonstration, training materials, facilities maintenance, utilities, vehicle maintenance, and other standard operating expenses necessary to sustain Extension services throughout the county.

Cochise County Cooperative Extension Revenue 2025



Cochise County Cooperative Extension Expenditure 2025



Cochise County Cooperative Extension Faculty & Staff List



Administration:

Carol Holden, Cochise Director/Associate Agent, Economic Development
Connie Forsyth, Business Manager
Tricia Dunham, Administrative Support Assistant III, Willcox
Savanna McReynolds, Administrative Support Assistant I

Faculty

Haley Chappell, Assistant Agent, 4-H Youth Development
Kim McReynolds, Area Agent, Natural Resources/Greenlee County Director

Program Staff

Cynthia Aspengren, Community Outreach Manager I, EFNEP
Jenny Bell, Extension Assistant II, 4-H Youth Development
Andrea Bernal, Community Outreach Assistant II, Nutrition Education
Hector Elias Justiniani, Extension Professional I, Range Monitoring
Jan Groth, Assistant in Extension, Home Horticulture
Sylvia Hinojosa, Community Outreach Assistant II, EFNEP
Alex Kosmider, Community Outreach Professional I, Water Wise

On-Call Staff

Susan Albright, Extension Assistant I, Horticulture, On-Call
Greg Gazda, Extension Assistant I, Horticulture, On-Call
Marlene Huggins, Extension Assistant I, Horticulture, On-Call



Arizona wild cotton (*Gossypium thurberi*)



Cochise County Cooperative Extension
extension.arizona.edu/cochise