



Elk Mountain Farms is one of the many stops on the Boundary District - Boundary County Farm Bureau annual farm tours in the Kootenai River Valley. (photo courtesy Capital Ag Press)

BOUNDARY DISTRICT WORKS ON EDUCATION OUTREACH IN COMMUNITY, SCHOOLS

By Steve Stuebner
and Cassie Olson, Boundary SCD

Each year, the Boundary Soil and Water District partners with the Boundary County Farm Bureau to co-host several farm tours to help educate community members and local high school students about the wide diversity of agricultural businesses that operate in the area.

"We have everything from small dairies to wheat farms to the timber industry and even small agricultural businesses that sell flowers," says John Kellogg, Chairman of Boundary County Farm Bureau. "We have a huge variety of ag operations that we try to visit so people can see how unique we are with the crops grown

here."

Hops farms are another tour stop in the Kootenai River Valley. Elk Mountain Farms raises 1,700 acres of hops in two locations in the valley for Anheuser-Busch craft beers.

The District and Farm Bureau also co-sponsor a Forestry Tour for high school students with support from the Idaho Dept. of Lands, Panhandle National Forests, Idaho Forest Group and North Idaho Energy Logs. Students get to tour a local logging operation, the IFG Moyie Springs sawmill and the North Idaho Energy Logs manufacturing plant.

The Farm and Forestry tours take place during National Ag Week

in March. Students aged 14-18, freshmen to seniors, benefit from the tours.

"Students had the opportunity to ask questions about different careers, operate equipment, get a history lesson about farming in the Kootenai Valley, see the process of milling flour and even got to eat barley chocolate chip cookies at the local flour mill," says Cassie Olson, Boundary District Administrator.

"They learned about Hop farming, chemical research and commercial spraying, and had guest speakers talk about their career and educational backgrounds over the course of two days."



*More than 60 community members participated in the Boundary District's Farm Tour in May 2022.
(photo courtesy Boundary SCD)*

The Boundary District also hosts its annual community farm tour in May. Last year, more than 60 people (adults) participated.

"The tour is a great opportunity for networking with other farmers and locals interested in supporting local farms," Olson says. "The tour featured local farms that produce and sell their products in Boundary County, an agricultural research company that conducts trials in three states on 10 different crop varieties, Alta Mill specializing in the production of Western Red Cedar products, and an Equine training and boarding facility.

"It's a well-attended event and a highlight for newcomers and ol' timers in Boundary County."

The Boundary District brings ag and forestry education into the classroom, too. Olson goes into local schools several times a year to provide hands-on ag and forestry education.

"I teach "Where your Food comes

from" - we take Maggie the Cow to the school for 2nd grade kids to milk along with The big Book of Dairy and The big Book of Wheat," Olson says. "We grind wheat and make pancakes after they learn about wheat, and then we make butter for our pancakes after we teach about dairy."

She also does an Arbor Day presentation with 4th grade kids and gives away trees to students to take home and raise on their own. This is all part of the District's county-wide Arbor Day celebration.

Olson assists Kootenai County when they teach Farm to Table to 5th graders. "This year I taught Earth as an Apple for two days at the Kootenai County Fairgrounds," she said.

About the Boundary District

"It is the goal of the Boundary Soil Conservation District elected officials to set high standards for conservation of the natural resources," district

officials said in article in 9B News, a local newspaper.

"Due to its granitic soil type, the Kootenai Valley and surrounding areas have significantly high erosion rates. These erosion rates are often intensified by activities such as livestock grazing, agriculture and removing streambank vegetation.

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The Kootenia River winds through a broad agricultural valley in Boundary County. The large river can cause erosion issues for property owners who live on the river. (photo courtesy "An Outside Chance" blog)



Above, high school students tour the Idaho Forest Group Moyie Springs sawmill as part of the Forestry Tour; left, a student learns how to measure a tree. (photo courtesy Boundary SCD)



Administrator Cassie Olson, left, and Boundary SCD Board of Supervisors L-R, Tim Dillin, Leon Stanley, Chairman Tom Daniel, Spike Maas, Dave Wattenbarger (Associate), Ken Irons and Erik Olson (Associate).

When your land gets washed away by a stream running through your property, you lose useable land and risk damage to nearby fences or structures.

"It can also damage valuable wildlife habitat both in and out of the stream and affect those living downstream."

The Boundary District offers assistance to help landowners in Boundary County slow down and repair problems caused by excessive erosion on their properties. The District offers permitting assistance, consultation about good stream management practices, and planning and designing effective restoration and recovery projects. The Conservation District also provides support for healthy

forest management and locally sourced tree seedlings.

Every year the Conservation District holds a tree seedling sale to help local landowner's reforestation using native species at an affordable price. For more information about the tree sale, contact Olson at Cassie.Olson@id.nacdn.net or 208-946-8896.

Steve Stuebner writes for Conservation the Idaho Way on a regular basis.

Thanks to Cassie Olson for contributing to the story.



Maggie the Cow at the Boundary County Fair.

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