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EXTENSION EDUCATION:  
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OREGON'S  
FUTURE

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OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION SERVICE

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# **Extension Education**

## **Helping Shape Oregon's Future**

- Letter From the Director
- Deciding What We're Going To Do
- The Extension Initiatives
- On-going Program Priorities
- The Challenges We Face

When the Oregon State University Extension Service began developing a long-range plan more than a year ago, little did we realize so many events would help shape the eventual outcome. A property tax limitation, regulations severely restricting logging, listing of some salmon species as endangered on the Columbia River drainage, and efforts to eliminate grazing on public lands affected Oregonians' lives and contributed to a sense of urgency for our organization.

As Extension agents and specialists worked with Oregonians from all walks of life to explore these and other changes in the economic and social fabric of the state, it became increasingly clear that the future would not imitate the past; it would not be business-as-usual. The interdependence of people and environment had become the single most pressing concern for the state. And Extension's unique role of using university research and other knowledge to empower people to act on their own problems and opportunities dictated that our organization would help the state respond to these challenges.

This publication is a summary of Extension's educational program priorities for the next 4 years (1991-95). Much of the credit for what's in it goes to those of you who helped us identify priority issues for the state. You participated in public meetings and focus groups, you shared your ideas with us over a cup of coffee, or you helped us put a perspective on the issues that others identified. You represented yourselves as individuals, your community, your agency, your commodity/interest group, or your organization; and you did it well. We appreciate your contribution. We accept your challenge.

O. E. Smith, Director  
September 1991



## Deciding What We're Going To Do

One of our primary goals in developing a long-range plan for Extension education in Oregon was to identify those *critical issues facing the state* that would require us to *work across disciplines*. We wanted, for example, to encourage agriculture and forestry staff to work alongside home economists and 4-H youth development staff on common problems. We wanted to see the organization grow as a team. And we wanted to reach into areas that forced us to create new ways of carrying out our assignments.

With your help we identified five issues that stand out as being multi-disciplinary and of critical importance to Oregonians. We refer to them as "Initiatives." The next section discusses the five Initiatives. Equally important are the traditional or "on-going" program priorities that Extension will address also during the next 4 years. They are covered later in this publication.

## The Extension Initiatives

The five Extension Initiatives are Communities in Transition, Families and Youth at Risk, Public Policy Education, Systems Approaches for Natural Resources Management, and Water Quality and Management.

While they're discussed separately, the five Initiatives are interrelated, such that one issue could link several or all of the Initiatives. Old-growth forest and endangered salmon issues, for example, might involve all five Initiative teams.

***Communities In Transition***—Oregon communities are facing dramatic changes in the economic, social, demographic, and political structures. The unequal distribution of impacts creates positive situations for some communities and major problems for others.

You told us that Extension's programs should be designed to help these communities shape their own destinies. In response, we're developing educational programs that will help community and business leaders assess trends and develop strategies to address change. They'll be better able to identify and evaluate alternatives for increasing employment by encouraging value-added industries and tourism. Local leaders will better understand how to position the community to plan strategically and manage to attain desired goals. They'll broaden leadership skills and, thus, be more effective in addressing development issues.



***Families and Youth at Risk***—Economic and social change contribute to problems that plague many Oregon families and youth. Child and spouse abuse, violent crime, substance abuse, and teen pregnancy are symptoms of larger problems of self-esteem, low economic status, limited parenting and decision-making skills, and inadequate child care. You suggested that Extension aim at these larger problems.

Through Extension programs, individuals and families will learn how to better manage their resources and how to deal with conflict and stress. Parents will gain new skills in providing for the well-being of their children, including skills for communicating about substance abuse, sexuality, and pregnancy prevention. Child care providers will learn how to better address the developmental and nutritional needs of the children they supervise. And youth will be involved in programs to help build self-esteem and leadership.

***Public Policy Education***—Public policy decisions frequently are made with little input from those most affected. You told us Extension programs should help people better understand the public policy process and how they can influence policy decisions. Those segments of society historically underrepresented in public policy decision-making will become more involved in the process.

You reinforced the important Extension role of providing broad access to the research and knowledge base of the University. Oregonians will have those resources available to help them evaluate options to resolve public policy issues confronting them and their communities.



## ***Systems Approaches for Natural Resources***

**Management**—Oregonians face more natural resource issues than ever before. For years, the state's natural resources have been managed essentially as separate, independent entities. More recently, there's a realization that our natural resources are intricately linked—activities that affect one resource likely affect others as well. Complicating the situation is the link between people and natural resources. Today, natural resources management activities have to take into account the affect on people who use or rely on those resources, as well as those who are concerned about them.

You challenged us to develop educational programs that will help public and private resource managers learn how to manage individual resources as part of a total system. Through Extension programs, they will learn how to involve users and other managers of the resources in decisions that affect the entire system. Range managers, for example, will work with watershed managers and conservationists to insure management practices meet a variety of needs. And food and fiber producers, processors, handlers, and consumers will come to understand and deal effectively with the food and fiber industry—both its problems and opportunities—as a system of interrelated parts.

**Water Quality and Management**—Oregon is known for its rain, yet we don't necessarily have an overabundance of clean water. The central, eastern, and southern regions of the state frequently suffer drought conditions. And, across the state, water quality can no longer be taken for granted. Such problems as nitrate and herbicide contamination of groundwater and bacterial contamination of a variety of water sources have been identified in some sections of the state.

You asked us to conduct educational programs to help farmers and ranchers learn more about keeping soil, chemicals, and animal waste out of surface and ground water. From these programs they'll also learn more about how to protect fragile watersheds and riparian areas. Forest managers will learn how to avoid practices that degrade water quality. Households, landowners, municipalities, and industries will reduce or prevent water quality degradation from sewage, chemicals, and urban storm water runoff.

## **On-going Program Priorities**

When you shared your view of the important issues facing Oregonians today, you identified educational needs that Extension has been addressing for years. Many of these on-going Extension priorities appear to overlap with our Initiatives. They differ, however, in that they generally do not involve interdisciplinary delivery, and they address relatively broad educational needs. Although we will devote a major part of our resources to these on-going programs, they will not receive the same organization-wide emphasis as the Initiatives. Our on-going priorities include:

### ***Productivity and Profitability***

**Audiences**—farmers, foresters, marine industry.

**Sample topics**—alternative crops, business management, marketing, pest management.



## ***Human Resources***

**Audiences**—individuals, parents, 4-H and other youth, community leaders, interest groups, study groups, other organizations.

**Sample topics**—financial management, parenting, family relationships, nutrition and health, aging, life skills, leadership skills, group process skills.

## ***Safety***

**Audiences**—farmers, foresters, small vessel operators, home and commercial pesticide applicators, food processors and handlers, home food preparers.

**Sample topics**—performing high-risk jobs safely, using chemicals safely (avoiding harm to applicator, others, environment), avoiding foodborne illness.

## ***Environment***

**Audiences**—Energy users/managers (home, industrial, commercial), farmers, foresters, natural resource managers.

**Sample topics**—conservation, integrated plant protection (reducing chemical dependency), sustainable agriculture and forestry practices, marine resource stewardship.

## The Challenges We Face

The change that influenced these 4-year plans will continue to make Extension a dynamic organization. As you help us identify emerging issues and needs, we will adjust our programming priorities. As Oregon becomes more culturally diverse, Extension programming for minority audiences will become more common. The need for volunteers to expand Extension outreach will continue and will grow.

You reminded Extension to avoid duplicating what other agencies and groups are doing. Our educational programs *complement* the roles of assistance and regulatory agencies. Through Extension programs, people can learn to solve their own problems, or, better yet, avoid many of the problems in the first place.

Oregon's future is in its people. Extension's challenge is to help shape the future through education, by preparing Oregonians to make effective decisions for themselves and for the state. With your help, we can make that happen.





Extension Service, Oregon State University, Corvallis, O.E. Smith, director. This publication was produced and distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. Extension work is a cooperative program of Oregon State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Oregon counties.

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