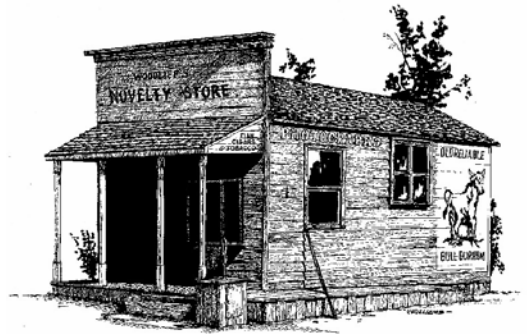


Churchill County

What do you think?



The Woodliff Store can be seen at the Churchill County Museum. Artwork by Vic Williams.

Results from a Needs Assessment Conducted by University of Nevada Cooperative Extension 2003

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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
Bringing the University to You

Special Publication 04-15

Introduction

Churchill County is located 60 miles east of Reno, Nevada on Highway 50 and is home to approximately 24,000 residents (US Census 2000). It encompasses 4,929 square miles. Fallon, the principal city and county seat, has about 7,500 residents. Known as the “Oasis of Nevada” due to its irrigated agricultural production, Churchill County also claims 25 of the state’s 36 dairies. In addition to its agriculture, Fallon and the surrounding county contains many historical and cultural sites. Grimes Point, 10 miles east of Fallon, has one of the largest exhibits of petroglyphs in Nevada, and is also the home of Hidden Cave, a Native American burial site. The Fallon Paiute Shoshone Reservation lies east between Fallon and the Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge. Continuing east 25 miles from Fallon along Highway 50 is Sand Mountain Recreation Area with its 600 foot high, two mile long sand dune. Southeast of Fallon is Naval Air Station Fallon, a training facility for Navy personnel in strategic air warfare. Located in the Lahontan Valley, Churchill County stands on ground that was once covered by a prehistoric inland sea. Due to its geological makeup, Churchill County is

engaged in researching the use of geothermal power.

In fall 2003, Churchill County residents participated in a countywide needs assessment conducted by Churchill County Cooperative Extension. In an effort to identify community needs and concerns, a survey was mailed to 400 residents asking for their opinions regarding six topic areas. These topic areas outlined in Nevada Revised Statute 549.010, which guide Cooperative Extension educational programming, are Agriculture, Community Development, Health and Nutrition, Horticulture, Personal and Family Development, and Natural Resources.

The survey was designed to help University of Nevada Cooperative Extension (UNCE) in Churchill County identify high priority program areas within the community. Through research-based educational programs, members of UNCE can help the community address some of these issues.

Methodology

The survey, and supporting documentation, was submitted to the University of Nevada Office of Human Research Protection (UNR OHRP) for approval prior to the survey being mailed. OHRP survey approval assures participants that certain criteria have been met regarding the use of human subjects and provides ethical guidance to the researcher. Once approved (OHRP E03/04-12), the survey was mailed to 400 residents along with a cover letter explaining the purpose of the survey and completion instructions, and a self-addressed stamped envelope. Approximately four weeks later, an identical survey packet was again mailed to the same 400 residents to help increase participation. Of the 400 surveys mailed, 30 were returned as undeliverable. Of the surveys delivered, 191 were returned completed, giving a 52% response rate on delivered surveys. Names and addresses were randomly selected

from a current voter registration list, limiting one survey per household. Youth under the age of 18 were not asked to participate.

In an effort to provide the survey results in a “use-friendly manner,” community members and University personnel were asked how they would prefer to receive the final report. All stated they would prefer to have each question listed as originally presented in the survey, along with the percentage frequency for each response. Because the questions were presented in a Likert scale format, using a five point scale, each question will have five percentages listed corresponding to a point on the scale. A 6th category is provided on each question for those who chose to circle “don’t know.” Due to rounding errors, totals may not equal 100%.

Agriculture

The following agriculture topics are sometimes identified as educational needs for many communities. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “doesn’t need” and 5 being “definitely needs,” please circle the number that best indicates the level of concern for your community. If you “don’t know,” circle DK.

	Doesn't Need				Definitely Needs	Don't Know
	1	2	3	4	5	DK
Financial planning for farmers	3.2	7.0	16.2	14.1	16.8	42.7
Horse care and training	6.6	11.5	29.0	7.1	9.8	36.1
Livestock health programs	4.9	5.5	23.0	18.0	12.6	36.1
Marketing Churchill County agriculture products	2.7	1.6	9.8	30.4	26.6	28.8
Agriculture cooperatives	3.3	0.5	18.0	23.5	19.1	35.5
Community education about local agriculture	3.3	2.7	20.2	26.8	24.0	23.0
Organic agriculture and education	4.9	5.4	23.9	21.7	19.0	25.0
High density animal operation	7.1	4.9	23.4	13.6	10.9	40.2
Compliance with federal regulations	6.5	5.4	16.8	16.3	17.4	37.5
Alternative crops	3.3	1.1	9.8	27.9	27.3	30.6

*Numbers denote percentages

Community Development

The following needs are common to many communities. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “doesn’t need” and 5 being “definitely needs,” please circle the number that you believe most accurately rates each feature in your community. If you “don’t know,” circle DK.

	Doesn't Need				Definitely Needs	Don't Know
	1	2	3	4	5	DK
More Jobs	3.8	2.2	14.1	22.8	52.7	4.3
Improve road quality	2.1	9.0	25.0	23.4	39.4	1.1
Solicit new industries/businesses	1.6	2.6	18.8	22.0	53.4	1.6
Incentives for small businesses	1.6	3.7	18.8	23.0	45.5	7.3
Support “home grown” businesses	2.7	2.1	20.3	23.5	43.9	7.5
Promote tourism	9.7	8.6	24.7	24.2	27.4	5.4
Expand cultural opportunities	8.1	7.0	37.3	23.2	19.5	4.9
Protect open spaces	7.4	8.0	19.1	25.5	35.1	4.8
Expand recreation	5.4	8.6	28.1	28.1	25.9	3.8
Bike path along roadways	15.2	12.5	18.5	20.1	28.3	5.4
Equestrian trails	18.6	18.1	26.6	10.6	10.6	15.4
Plan residential growth	5.3	5.9	21.4	28.3	34.8	4.3
Affordable housing	3.7	4.8	28.9	25.1	34.2	3.2
Retirement industry development	3.7	6.9	25.5	26.1	25.5	12.2
Expand senior citizen services	3.2	6.8	23.2	29.5	32.1	5.3
Increase gaming opportunities	30.1	18.8	30.1	9.7	5.4	5.9
Public land cleanup	3.8	5.9	21.1	27.6	40.0	1.6
Transfer station for landfill	8.2	4.9	25.7	23.0	25.1	13.1
Expand recycling station	4.8	5.9	17.7	23.1	40.3	8.1

*Numbers denote percentages

Health and Nutrition						
The following are concerns many people have regarding the way their community responds to issues of health and nutrition. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “not a concern” and 5 being “definitely a concern,” please circle the number that best indicates the level of concern for your community. If you “don’t know,” circle DK.						
	Not a concern				Definitely a concern	Don't Know
	1	2	3	4	5	DK
Quality of medical care	2.6	7.4	14.2	26.8	47.4	1.6
Affordable medical care	2.1	2.6	12.1	21.6	59.5	2.1
Public exercise trail	16.4	10.6	31.7	19.0	15.3	6.9
Recreation for the elderly	8.5	8.0	29.8	27.1	20.7	5.9
Residential care facility	5.3	4.3	21.4	20.9	44.4	3.7
Elderly nutrition	5.3	5.8	23.7	25.8	32.6	6.8
Mental health care	5.9	10.1	23.9	24.5	28.2	7.4
Stress management	11.2	10.2	28.9	21.9	18.7	9.1
Drinking water in the schools	22.2	10.1	14.3	15.3	37.0	1.1
Water quality	6.4	2.1	12.3	17.1	61.5	0.5
Drug awareness	5.3	3.7	26.7	26.7	33.2	4.3
Alcohol awareness	5.9	5.3	23.0	27.3	33.2	5.3
Youth nutrition	8.1	6.5	21.6	25.9	30.3	7.6
Fitness trails	17.1	13.4	29.4	17.6	15.5	7.0
Suicide/Depression	12.4	6.5	30.1	18.3	21.0	11.8
Family oriented recreation	8.6	2.2	26.3	25.3	31.7	5.9
*Numbers denote percentages						

Horticulture						
Horticulture has been identified in some communities as a very important component to enhancing the quality of life. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “doesn’t need” and 5 being “definitely needs,” please circle the number that best indicates the need for education on the following topics. If you “don’t know,” circle DK.						
	Doesn't Need				Definitely Needs	Don't Know
	1	2	3	4	5	DK
Gardening	4.9	10.3	33.5	24.9	19.5	7.0
Landscaping	4.3	8.1	29.2	28.1	23.2	7.0
Pest control	2.1	1.6	21.9	29.4	39.0	5.9
Noxious weeds	2.7	1.6	20.3	21.4	46.5	7.5
Fugitive dust	5.4	3.8	25.4	25.4	28.1	11.9
Countywide beautification	4.9	4.3	21.6	23.2	37.3	8.6
Lawn care	6.0	7.7	28.4	30.6	20.8	6.6
Plant disease control	1.1	4.3	25.4	30.3	29.2	9.7
Fertilizer selection and use	4.3	5.9	28.1	28.6	23.2	9.7
*Numbers denote percentages						

Personal and Family Development

The following are topics that often face children, youth and families within communities. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “poor” and 5 being “excellent,” please circle the number that best indicates how Churchill County meets these issues. If you “don’t know,” circle DK.

	Poor				Excellent	Don't Know
	1	2	3	4	5	DK
After school and out of school programs	6.5	13.4	23.7	14.5	15.1	26.9
Elementary education	3.7	4.2	22.2	29.6	19.0	21.2
High School education	5.3	6.3	24.3	26.5	13.8	23.8
Vocational education/Job training	7.4	11.7	21.8	21.3	15.4	22.3
Planning for continued education	5.9	10.1	25.0	23.4	13.8	21.8
Services for special needs students	7.5	7.0	23.7	18.8	15.6	27.4
Services for disabled people	8.6	7.0	26.2	17.6	15.0	25.7
Child care for working parents	13.3	16.0	22.9	11.7	10.1	26.1
Family support groups	6.4	10.1	29.8	12.2	9.0	32.4
Gang/gang violence	8.5	9.0	27.0	16.9	9.5	29.1
Violence/threatening behavior in Schools	10.6	6.3	27.0	14.3	12.7	29.1
Adequate family income	10.4	14.8	36.8	12.6	7.7	17.6
Domestic violence	2.2	8.7	36.6	16.9	8.7	26.8
Services for non-English speaking residents	12.1	11.0	22.0	13.2	11.0	30.8
Workforce preparation for youth	11.4	14.1	29.3	13.0	8.7	23.4
Local jobs for youth	9.2	20.7	29.3	12.0	10.3	18.5
Parenting classes	5.9	8.1	30.3	11.9	9.2	34.6
Child abuse	6.5	10.3	29.9	12.0	11.4	29.9
Threat of crime	2.7	7.1	32.4	23.1	12.1	22.5

*Numbers denote percentages

Natural Resources

The following topics are often identified by communities as Natural Resources issues. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “not a concern” and 5 being “definitely a concern,” please circle the number that best indicates the level of concern for your community. If you “don’t know,” circle DK.

	Not a Concern				Definitely a Concern	Don't Know
	1	2	3	4	5	DK
Safe drinking water	4.7	6.3	12.0	9.9	65.4	1.6
Protection of endangered species	16.3	14.7	25.3	13.2	26.8	3.7
Wetland preservation	6.8	12.1	22.6	24.2	30.0	4.2
Wildlife habitat	5.8	6.9	26.5	24.3	33.3	3.2
Irrigation ditch management	2.6	4.7	23.2	24.7	35.3	9.5
Range management	3.7	7.9	25.9	20.1	29.1	13.2
Open space preservation	8.2	10.3	22.8	20.7	31.5	6.5
Water conservation	4.9	7.1	14.7	21.7	48.4	3.3
Water quality	6.0	4.9	15.3	15.3	57.9	0.5
Soil erosion	4.9	6.5	25.4	21.6	32.4	9.2
Soil quality	6.5	4.9	17.8	25.4	36.8	8.6
Air quality	5.9	9.7	12.9	22.0	44.6	4.8

*Numbers denote percentages

Important Topic Areas

Within each of the six program categories, the following is a listing of those topics that were identified as important by an indication of more than 50% when combining scale points 4 and 5. For example, when using the following topic “Safe drinking water,” the

Example:

	1	2	3	4	5	DK
Safe drinking water	4.7	6.3	12.0	9.9	65.4	1.6

percentages would be added for scale point 4 (9.9) and scale point 5, (65.4) to arrive at

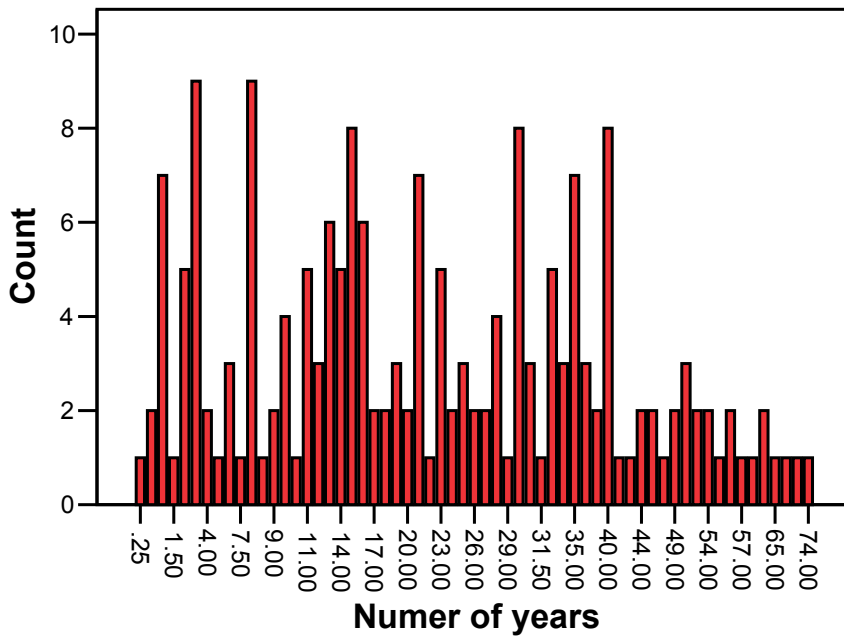
75.3. Because 75.3% is over the 50% minimum criteria used to indicate importance, that topic would be listed in the table below. The following table lists all topics, from the study, that were considered important by more than 50% of the respondents. (Note that in the Personal and Family Development program area, scale points 1 and 2 were added together to ascertain topic importance.) Data is provided in descending order for each program category.

Important Needs			
Agriculture			Horticulture
Marketing Churchill County agriculture products	57.0		Pest control 68.4
Alternative crops	55.2		Noxious weeds 67.9
Community education about local Agriculture	50.8		Countywide beautification 60.5
			Plant disease control 59.5
			Fugitive dust 53.5
Community Development			Fertilizer selection and use 51.8
More jobs	75.5		Lawn care 51.4
Solicit new businesses/industries	75.4		Landscaping 51.3
Incentives for small businesses	68.5		
Public lands cleanup	67.6		Personal and Family Development
Support “home grown” businesses	67.4		None were over 50%
Expand recycling station	63.4		*The percentage range of those
Improve road quality	62.8		responding that they “didn’t know”
Plan residential growth	63.1		(DK) was between 17.6 and 34.6
Expand senior citizen services	61.6		
Protect open spaces	60.6		Natural Resources
Affordable housing	59.3		Safe drinking water 75.3
Expand recreation	54.0		Water quality 73.2
Retirement industry development	51.6		Water conservation 70.1
Promote tourism	51.6		Air quality 66.6
			Soil quality 62.2
Health and Nutrition			Irrigation ditch management 60.0
Affordable medical care	81.1		Wildlife habitat 57.6
Water quality	78.6		Wetland preservation 54.2
Quality medical care	74.2		Soil erosion 54.0
Residential care facility	65.3		Open space preservation 52.2
Alcohol awareness	60.5		
Drug awareness	59.9		
Elderly nutrition	58.4		
Family oriented recreation	57.0		
Youth nutrition	56.2		
Mental health care	52.7		
Drinking water in schools	52.3		
*Numbers denote percentages			

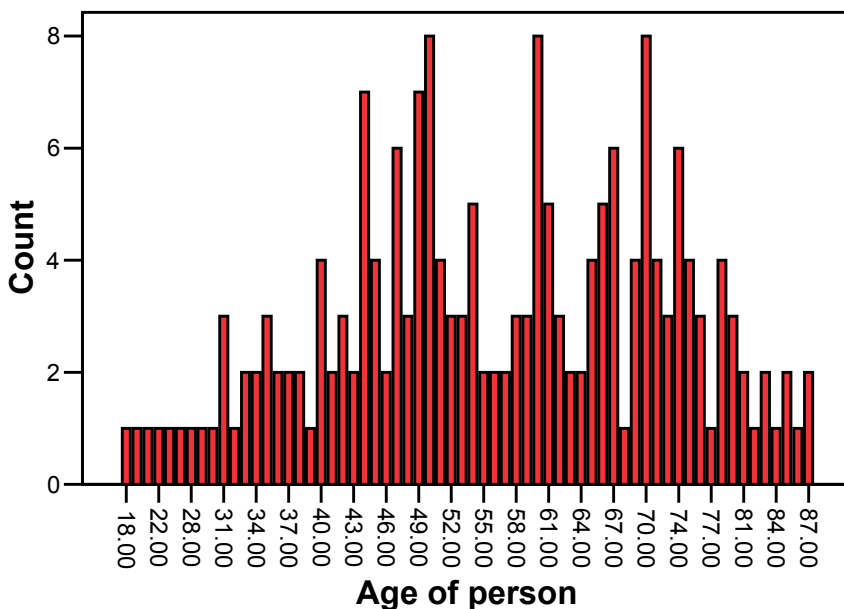
Participant demographics

Each participant was asked various demographic questions as indicated in the following charts. While this information does not identify specific participants, it does provide a basic overview of the respondents.

How many years have you lived in Churchill County?



What is your age?



Furthermore, participants were asked to identify by gender. Of the 191 who responded, 84 were male and 104 were female. Three individuals chose not to disclose their gender. Additionally, respondents were asked to look at a map of the county and indicate which area they lived in. The map divided the county into four quadrants with the dividing axes being Highway 95 and Highway 50. (Those living north of Highway 50 and west of Highway 95, were in the Northwest region; south of Highway 50 and west of Highway 95 were in the Southwest region; north of Highway 50 and east of Highway 95 were in the Northeast region; and south of Highway 50 and east of Highway 95 were in the Southeast region.) Of those who responded, 54 lived in the Northwest region, 61 in the Southwest region, 32 in the Northeast region, and 40 in the Southeast region. Four chose not to provide that information.

While the primary purpose of this survey was to ascertain community issues that may benefit from Cooperative Extension programming, another purpose was to also identify potential methods of program delivery. Respondents were, therefore, asked questions concerning their preferred method of receiving timely community information. Participants could select more than one answer. Of those who responded, 81.2% checked printed material; 23% checked seminars/workshops/classes; 22% checked online, web-based instruction; 34% checked radio and 44% checked television. In addition, 79.1% indicated that they had a computer and 72.3% stated that they used the internet. Over half of the respondents (51.8%) indicated that they had used Extension material in the past.

Community Assets

In assessing the types of programs needed in Churchill County, it is also important to recognize aspects within the community that have been identified by participants as possible reasons why they live in Churchill County. Participants were given 18 community assets from which they could

select one or more. The table below provides the rating of those assets in decreasing order. For example, 56% of the respondents felt that the weather was an asset and may describe why they want to live in Churchill County.

Community Assets				
Weather	56.0		Proximity of recreation	25.7
Personal/Family safety	52.4		Schools	21.5
Friends	50.8		Community services available	21.5
Family lives here	49.7		Medical care	19.9
Location to Reno/Carson City	49.2		Religious organization	14.1
Responsive police/fire	43.5		Shopping	12.6
Beauty of surroundings	42.4		Responsive government	12.6
Employment	29.8		Military stationed	9.4
Housing	29.8		Inability to move	6.3
*Numbers denote percentages				

Conclusions

The survey responses have indicated topic concerns in all five program areas except Personal and Family Development. While individual respondents recognized a need for programming in this area, the majority did not indicate a concern, or they responded that they did not know. In the program area of Community Development 14 topics were listed as important by more than 50% of respondents; Health and Nutrition listed 11; Natural Resources listed 10; Horticulture listed 8; and 3 were listed in Agriculture. It must be pointed out, however, that the survey instrument topics, while broad, may not have provided all of the possible topics available in each program category. Additional topics, as identified, will be added to future needs assessments. It must also be pointed out that a high number of respondents checked the “don’t know”

category in the program areas of Agriculture and Personal and Family Development. These categories will warrant further investigation.

Crucial to identifying community needs, is making sure that the needs identified in prior assessments are still accurate at later dates. Repeating needs assessments and continuing to look at changing demographic indicators will assure that the programs offered to community members are warranted. As communities grow, new concerns arise that require continued investigation and ongoing evaluation of current educational programming. As new data is obtained, and new research is completed, programs will need to be evaluated to ascertain impact and relevance.

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