



Conference Overview

Mountain and Plains Subregional Conference

Wyoming, host of Western SARE's fourth subregional conference at the Plains Hotel in Cheyenne, has been a good partner with the SARE program, said Steve Miller, Associate Dean of the University of Wyoming College of Agriculture, in welcoming conference participants.



"The University of Wyoming has relied heavily on the SARE program over its 20 years," said Miller. "We've clearly gotten our fair share of support from Western SARE."

Miller noted that Wyoming has developed its own Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Center (SAREC), a facility near Torrington that he said is patterned a lot on the SARE program.

"We hope it will be a focus area for this region as a sustainable program," he said.

The Western SARE Mountain and High Plains Subregional Conference, the fourth of seven subregional conferences scheduled from late 2007 through early 2010, was held October 28 and 29, 2008.

Phil Rasmussen, coordinator of Western SARE, headquartered at Utah State University, explained to the nearly 70 participants from Wyoming, Montana and northern Colorado and Utah that the purpose of the conference was to showcase what Western SARE has accomplished. But more importantly, he said, the conference was designed to solicit their feedback to six critical questions regarding the future of agriculture in the mountain and high plains region.

"We will capture every response, all of which will be forwarded to our Administrative Council to help them guide the SARE program," said Rasmussen. "This will set the stage to implement a better sustainable agriculture for the future."

Jim Freeburn, Western SARE Professional Development Program coordinator who helped develop Wyoming's SAREC facility, set the conference table by profiling the host state.

He noted the Cowboy State's progressiveness, being the first in the country to grant voting rights and the first to elect a woman as governor. The state is No. 1 in high school graduation rate, with more than 91 percent receiving their diplomas.



Wyoming is sparsely populated, Freeburn noted, with 500,000 residents, about five for each of its 100,000 square miles.

The state is energy rich, providing the source for about 20 percent of the nation's electricity, and one county, Campbell, if it were a nation, would have the third-largest coal reserves of any country.

Wyoming also has a respectable agriculture industry, generating more than \$1 billion a year in farm and ranch receipts, with 84 percent of that coming from livestock. The state's cattle industry generates \$815 million a year, followed by hogs at \$25 million.

At an average size of 3,473 acres, Wyoming has the largest farm size in the country.