



WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

The AG Sounder Newsletter

January 2026

Do you have an event or story you would like featured in
The Ag Sounder? Let us know!



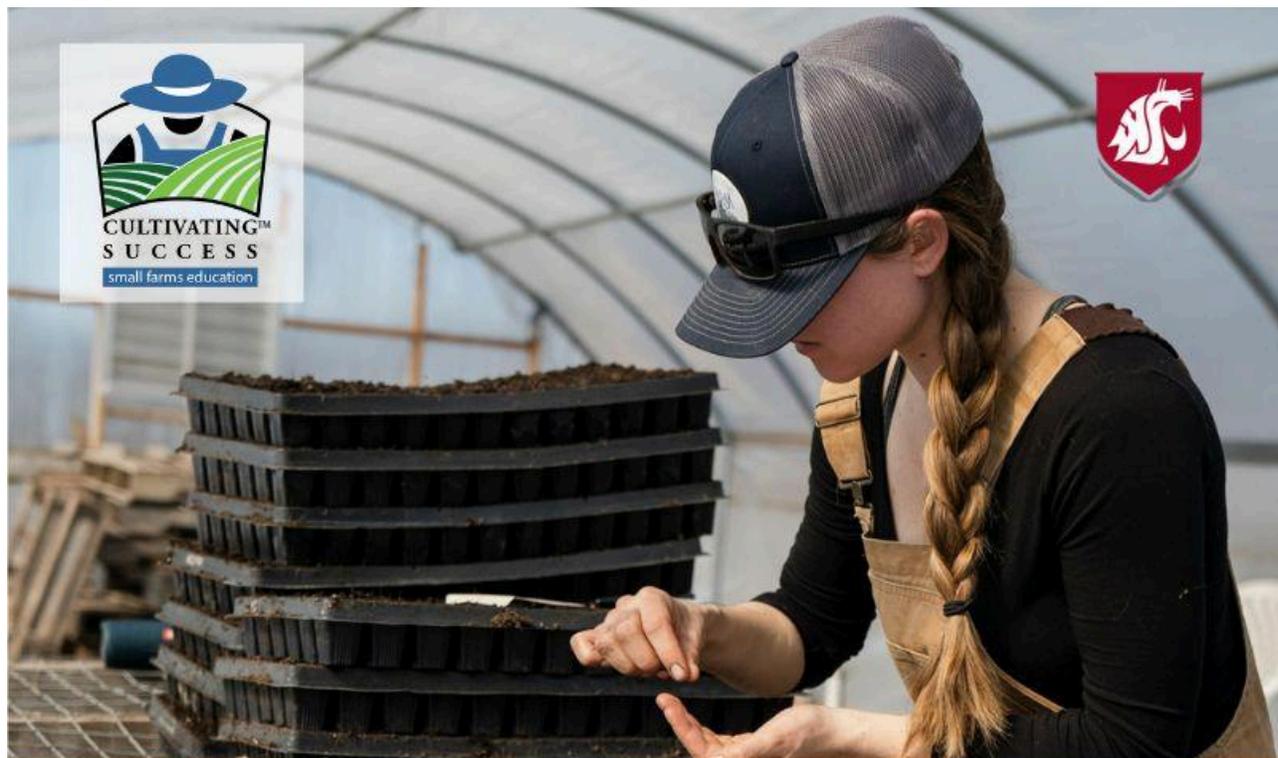
In This Issue:

- Cultivating Success Agriculture Entrepreneurship & Business Planning Course: Jan 20th-March 1, 2026
- WSU Thurston County Grassland Resilience Project opportunity - accepting applications now and throughout 2026

- SW Washington Grasslands & Grazing Photography Competition
- WA State Organic & Sustainable Farming Fund - accepting applications through February 9th
- Celebrate local prairies and grazing lands with the UN International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists. Exhibit visiting Timberland Regional Libraries through 2026
- Ag Youth Career Fair at Avanti High School - February 26th
- Save the Date! - SWWA Grazing School - April 16th-19th

Help support the Cougs with a donation to WSU College of Agriculture, Human and Natural Resource Sciences

Make a Gift Today!



**AGRICULTURAL
ENTREPRENEURSHIP
AND BUSINESS PLANNING**

Tuesdays 01/20- 03/ 10 online via Zoom 6-8pm
with in person intensives on Feb 28 or Mar 7

**EMPRENDIMIENTO
Y PLANIFICACIÓN
DEL NEGOCIO AGRÍCOLA**

*Martes el 01/20 - 03/10 en línea con Zoom 6-8pm
con intensivos en persona el 28 de feb o el 7 de mar*



WSU Extension will be offering our **Cultivating Success** course this winter, and we'd like to share this opportunity offered statewide, online and with Spanish interpretation.

Agriculture Entrepreneurship and Business Planning Course

This course will walk you through the steps to create a farm business plan through weekly online classes with guest speaker farmers and resource providers and connections in regional groups.

Tuesdays, January 20- March 1, 2026, 6-8pm with in-person intensives on Feb 28 and March 7

Location: Virtual, statewide with Spanish interpretation

Cost: \$200 Scholarships available to anyone for whom the class fee is a barrier

Visit the [Cultivating Success website](#) to learn more and to register



WSU's Thurston County Agriculture Team set to implement over \$1 Million in grassland resilience projects on local farms

If you are managing grasslands on your farm and you are interested in improving soil health, converting to rotational grazing, or installing trees and shrubs to build habitat and support your livestock, read on.

Over the next 3 years WSU has funding to improve the mineral balance and biological functionality on 500 acres of local agricultural grasslands. Additionally, this project will help local farmers convert 300 acres of continuously grazed grasslands to rotational grazing through fencing and livestock water projects. And excitingly, we aim to install 100 acres of silvopasture and other agroforestry techniques to begin to understand how these important climate mitigation and habitat tools can be applied locally.

The project is funded by the Department of Defense and Joint Base Lewis McChord's on-going commitment to protecting prairie habitat in the region. Technical partners include the non-profits Agroforestry Northwest and Ecostudies Institute, as well as technical service providers from the Thurston Conservation District.

Applications are being accepted now and throughout 2026.

You can read more and get application materials on our website:

<https://extension.wsu.edu/thurston/rep-i-grant/>

Projects will be selected on a quarterly basis with the first batch of projects identified by April 30, 2026.

Reach out directly to agriculture specialist **Sierra Smith** to discuss potential projects ideas: sierra.smith1@wsu.edu.

ANNOUNCING: SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON GRASSLANDS & GRAZING Photography Contest!



Agricultural photography can convey stories about farming, natural resources, and the day-to-day lives of farmers.

No matter your skills, consider participating in this photography contest to showcase your work and tell the story of local, grass-based agriculture.

Farmers have the inside story, so producers themselves are encouraged to join in!



For more information:
<https://extension.wsu.edu/thurston/iyrp-photography-contest/>

Southwest Washington Grasslands and Grazing Photography Contest

This contest focuses on grazing lands and prairies in Grays Harbor, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, and Thurston Counties, and is timed to generate artistic content for the 2026 United Nations “International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists”. All submissions are eligible for public arts exhibits.

The contest will run from May 1st, 2025 through September 10th, 2026.

Visit the **IYRP Photography Contest** webpage to learn more.



Washington State Organic & Sustainable Farming Fund

Apply online through **Tilth Alliance**.

Tilth Alliance Grant Opportunity!

The **Washington State Organic & Sustainable Farming Fund** is currently accepting applications until **Monday, February 9**. Farmers who currently use or are in the process of adopting regenerative, sustainable, and/or organic principles and non-profit farms are eligible to apply. Applications can be submitted online or in hard copy.

A wide range of project types are eligible for funding, including implementation of climate-smart practices, natural habitat conservation or restoration, native pollinator protection, improving soil health, and preventing erosion. Priority is given to projects that utilize shared resources and increase climate resilience, protect wildlife habitat and water quality, and improve soil health.

Apply online through **Tilth Alliance**.

WHY ARE GLOBAL RANGELANDS THREATENED?

Rangelands and grasslands today are under growing pressure from many directions. Pastoralists, such as herders, shepherds, and ranchers, are finding it harder to sustain their livelihoods, and in many places rural communities are being reshaped by urban migration. Biodiversity is declining, with grassland bird populations rapidly decreasing. Climate change, including prolonged drought, is accelerating large-scale impacts across these landscapes. Invasive and encroaching species are displacing native plants and wildlife. At the same time, perennial grazing lands are being converted to annual row-crop agriculture or fragmented by energy and mining development.

These lands, and the people, livestock, wildlife, and cultures that depend on them, are at a critical moment. But this is not a story of loss alone. It is also a call to care, learn, and act.

- 1 Rangelands Overview**
Grasslands and rangelands are rich with wildflowers, wildlife, butterflies, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and more. Yet they are often defined by what they are not—places without trees or wetlands. Visit a grassland near you and you'll see why that framing misses the point. Rangelands are ecosystems in their own right. In fact, they cover roughly half of the planet's ice-free land area. Sadly, they are disappearing rapidly with up to 80 percent already lost in some countries.
- 2 Land, Mobility, and Water Scarcity**
For people who depend on rangelands, access to land, water, and movement is essential. Across North America and around the world, common or collectively used grazing lands sustain livelihoods. Traditional herders, shepherds, and ranchers rely on seasonal movement of herds and flocks, through practices such as transhumance and nomadism. A central goal of the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists is to secure the rights of these communities to grazing lands and water. Keeping migration routes free of barriers also benefits wildlife. Yet many pastoral communities face land grabbing for mining, large-scale agriculture, and other competing land uses. These practices undermine both livelihoods and long-term ecological health.
- 3 Economics and Livelihood**
Grasslands and rangelands provide meat, milk, fiber, and manure. Globally, one in eight people earns a livelihood from rangelands, and in some countries as many as one in three. In the United States alone, grazing lands support approximately two million jobs. For food security, one in four people worldwide depends on rangelands for their primary protein sources. Beyond food production, grasslands offer enormous ecological value. In regions too rocky, cold, dry or high-elevation for crops, pastoralism provides resilient livelihoods. During times of crisis, pastoralists and ranchers draw on deep knowledge of landscapes, seasonal movement, and cooperation with neighbors. In the U.S., ecosystem services such as wildlife habitat and recreation contribute roughly \$24 billion annually, about one-third of total rangeland economic value. Although often undervalued next to industrial agriculture, pastoral systems are ecologically efficient, locally adapted, and remarkably resilient.

International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists

"Rangelands" or "pastoralists" may not be the first words that come to mind when you think of SW Washington prairies and grazing lands. But these landscapes of ours (and the people who live in, take care of, and work in them) are very much part of the earth's incredible, and threatened, grasslands. The precarious state of these wildlife-rich biomes has been recognized in 2026 with the United Nations International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists. To take advantage of this global 'limelight', a coalition of local partners will be circulating an educational grasslands exhibit through all/most of the Timberland Regional Libraries.

We'll feature local educational resources, some events with local ranchers/livestock producers, emphasize the long legacy of indigenous grassland stewardship, and host farm walks through the SW WA Grazing Association. Big thanks to partners at TRL including the special events team, City of Olympia for opening their doors to a hosted event this summer (July-ish), and the SW WA Ag Park (and Stone City Event Center) in Tenino where we'll host a prairie and grazing lands party this fall with art, food, speakers and more. Reach out with questions and interests in collaborating (bramwell@wsu.edu).

A green-themed poster for an Ag Youth Career Fair. On the left, a white icon of a farm with a house and trees is positioned above the text "Hosted by the SouthSound Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources CTE Advisory Committee". Below this, the event title "AG YOUTH CAREER FAIR" is written in large, bold, white letters, followed by "THURS. FEB 26", "3:00-5:00", and "AT AVANTI HIGH SCHOOL" in smaller white text. On the right side, a circular inset photograph shows several people on ladders working on a large, white, dome-shaped structure, likely a greenhouse or a covered walkway, set against a backdrop of trees and a clear blue sky.

Hosted by the SouthSound Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources CTE Advisory Committee

**AG YOUTH
CAREER FAIR**
THURS. FEB 26
3:00-5:00
AT AVANTI HIGH SCHOOL

Ag Youth Career Fair - Thursday, February 26th 3:00-5:00pm at Avanti High School

CTE Teachers in the Sound South are invited to bring youth (ages 14-20) to a Career Fair on February 26 from 3:00-5:00 hosted by the SouthSound Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources CTE Advisory Committee. Local employers in agriculture and natural resources are invited to table at this career fair – come with your job opportunities (seasonal, one-time jobs, etc.)

Employers: Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resources Employers who will hire youth. Examples: Local Farms, Landscapers, Christmas Tree Farms, City of Olympia Parks Dept., TCD and more

Students: Students interested in a job in the AFNR field should attend. Ages 14-20 invited. Should be reliable and have good people skills.

Teachers: CTE Teachers will promote the career fair to students. We encourage making this a field trip and providing transportation or taking the City Bus to get students there.

Employers and Teachers can RSVP on this [google spreadsheet](#).



**SOUTHWEST
WASHINGTON
GRAZING SCHOOL**
MULTI-DAY INTENSIVE

April 16 - April 19 - Skookumchuck Grange - Tenino, WA - 8:00am-8:00pm

Save the Date!
Southwest Washington Grazing School 2026

The Southwest Washington Grazing School will be held at the Skookumchuck Grange in Tenino, Washington on April 16th-19th, 2026. Registration details will be coming soon! Visit the [Grazing School web page](#) for more information.

Contact [Stephen Bramwell](#) if you have questions!



WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

[Email Us](#)

[Visit our Website](#)



[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!