

2024 IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

Eastern Region

Across Colorado's Eastern Region, CSU Extension specialists are serving their communities and addressing local needs by sharing expertise and resources, delivering educational programming, strengthening partnerships, and engaging youth and volunteers.

Key impact areas for Eastern Region specialists in 2024 spanned topics such as youth outreach, health promotion, food systems, natural resources, gardening, agriculture, volunteer engagement, and more.

Across the state, Extension is where Colorado State University meets community.



COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION



Eastern Region

Extension in Your Region

For over 100 years, CSU Extension has strived to be your trusted partner connecting Coloradans to education and actionable, science-based solutions in your community.

COUNTY EXTENSION DIRECTORS

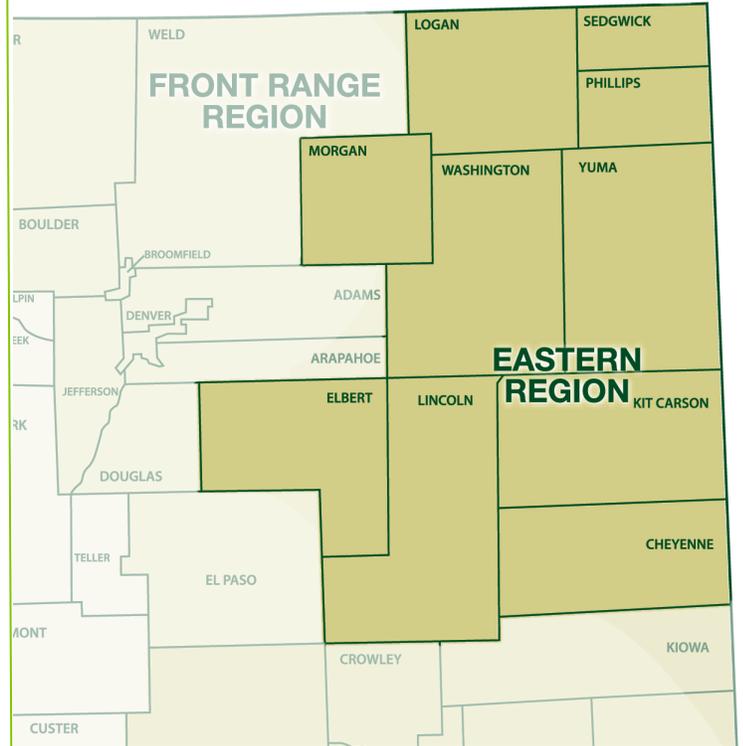
- **Cheyenne County (Part of Extension's Southeast Area):** Lacey Taylor, Extension Specialist; Brooke Matthew, SE Area Director
- **Elbert County:** Mary Anderson
- **Golden Plains Area:** Trent Hollister
 - *Kit Carson, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington, Yuma*
- **Lincoln County:** Wayne Miller
- **Logan County:** Brian Kailey
- **Morgan County:** Robin Halley

REGIONAL SPECIALISTS

- **Vibrant Communities:** Alice Dong
- **Accessible Education:** Sofia Guardado
- **Accessible Education:** Brenda Valdez
- **Behavioral Health:** Jim Kuemmerle
- **Water Resource Specialist:** Joel Schneekloth

RESEARCH & ENGAGEMENT CENTERS

- **Eastern Colorado Research Center:** Austin Couch
- **Northeast Regional Engagement Center:** Tim Stahley, Director
- **U.S. Central Great Plains Research Station:** Kyle Mankin, Co-Director; Peter Kleinman, Co-Director



LEADERSHIP

Dennis Kaan
Extension Regional Director, Eastern Region
Dennis.Kaan@colostate.edu

Lakesha Hershfeldt
Regional Assistant, Eastern Region
Lakesha.Hershfeldt@colostate.edu

James Pritchett
Vice President for Engagement and Extension
James.Pritchett@colostate.edu

Eric McPhail
Extension Field Director
Eric.McPhail@colostate.edu

By The Numbers

STATEWIDE REACH & PROGRAMMING

242.5

CSU Extension Positions Statewide

Statewide Program Highlights:

4-H Youth Development

Agriculture

- AgrAbility
- Agricultural Business Management
- Annie's Project
- Climate Smart Agriculture
- Colorado Building Farmers and Ranchers
- Cropping Systems
- Livestock
- Pesticide Applicator
- Rangeland
- Total Ranch Analysis for Colorado

Community & Economic Development

- Family Leadership Training Institute (FLTI)
- Workforce Development

Emergency Management

Food Systems

Health and Wellbeing

- Behavioral Health & Resilience
- Cooking Matters
- Cottage Food Safety
- CSU Produce Network
- Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)
- Financial Health
- Food Safety, Preservation, Preparation
- Healthy Aging
- Master Food Safety Advisor
- Nutrition, Disease Prevention and Management

Horticulture

- Beekeeping
- Colorado Master Gardener
- Grow & Give
- Landscape for Life
- Seed Saving/Free Seeds

Natural Resources

- Native Bee Watch
- Native Plant Master
- Rocky Mountain Naturalist

EASTERN REGION

32 CSU Positions
31 Positions Fully or Partially Funded by CSU

15 County Positions
Hired/Funded

REGIONAL YOUTH & VOLUNTEER ENGAGEMENT



2,930

4-H Youth Reached

611

4-H Volunteers

Colorado
Master
Gardener

22

Volunteers

1,481

Volunteer Hours

CSU IN THE EASTERN REGION - 2024

12,537 Contacts reached through consultations and presentations

4 CSU Extension Summer Internships based in the Eastern Region. In 2024, interns across Colorado worked with Extension faculty on projects, research, and community engagement initiatives across a range of topic areas including:

- Pollinator health and conservation
- Water quality, water management
- Agricultural literacy, ag education
- Livestock and dairy production
- Crops, food systems, producer support
- Health, nutrition, food safety
- Disaster preparedness and response
- Mental & physical health promotion
- Community engagement
- Youth education, rural outreach
- Horticulture and plant health



2024 Impact Highlights

Elbert County

Suicide Prevention Outreach

CSU Extension joined community leaders, healthcare providers, and grassroots organizations to create a multi-faceted approach for suicide prevention, support, outreach, and education. This integrated effort was developed to address the challenges faced by rural counties where residents tend to be geographically and socially isolated, and where mental health resources, crisis support and suicide prevention services aren't available or not easily accessible.

This integrated partnership approach to suicide prevention combines community outreach efforts, mental health care, telehealth services, early intervention strategies, new support groups to foster social connections and belonging, and a media and advertising awareness campaign.

Kit Carson, Logan, Morgan, Phillips, Washington & Yuma Counties

"A Healthier Weigh" Challenge Program

In early 2024, CSU Extension specialists partnered to launch a wellness challenge program - *A Healthier Weigh* - across six Eastern Region counties. The initiative focused on providing a fun and supportive way for community members to engage in friendly competitions while learning about nutrition and wellness, increasing activity, and adopting healthier lifestyle habits.

During the 12-week program, participants tracked their individual or team progress through regular check-ins and earned points toward prizes for participating in step challenges, recording activity, and for completing online educational lessons on health and nutrition.

Lincoln County

Preserving the History of the Lincoln County Fair

CSU graduate student and Extension intern Aubrey White led a project in Lincoln County aimed at preserving the history and traditions of the Lincoln County Fair. Working under the mentorship of Extension Director Emily Baylie, White conducted a series of oral history interviews with local residents and community partners throughout the course of the summer internship project. White used those stories, along with photographs and other memorabilia, to create a display booth featured at the 2024 Lincoln County Fair.

Golden Plains Area

(Kit Carson, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington, Yuma)

Crops Clinic 2024

Improving crop yields and long-term economic resilience depends on producers understanding a variety of factors, including how different management practices impact soil health. The 2024 Crops Clinic in Sedgwick County brought together 60 participants representing 456,000 acres. The clinic focused on topics including nutrient management, soil and water, pest management, and more. In a follow-up survey, 100% of participants indicated they learned something new and 98% planned to apply information from the clinic in their agricultural operations.

Emergency Management and Community Resilience

CSU Extension intern Lexi Potter, a graduate student in Public Health, supported efforts to evaluate and improve emergency management and response while building community resilience in rural areas across Eastern Colorado.

Under the mentorship of Extension Regional Specialist Alice Dong, Potter worked with Golden Plains Area Extension specialists and Yuma County Emergency Management partners, providing valuable insights into the challenges emergency managers face in Eastern Colorado's rural counties, such as covering long distances in challenging weather, limited staffing, and the importance of community and partner relationship-building for effectively responding to emergencies.

Cropping Strategies to Address Wheat Stem Sawfly

Wheat stem sawfly is a native insect that was first identified by entomologists in Colorado around the late 1800's and primarily fed on range grasses. However, wheat stem sawfly emerged as a Colorado wheat pest in 2010 and damage from this insect has been expanding and increasing since, causing an estimated \$30 million in damage. CSU researchers and Extension agronomists in the Golden Plains Area are focused on researching solutions and cropping strategies to help producers minimize crop losses from these insects, including cropping rotations and developing wheat varieties that discourage wheat stem sawfly from reproducing and damaging plants.

Regional Women's Health Summit

CSU Health Extension specialists hosted the first regional Women's Health Summit in October 2024. Held in Washington County, the Summit featured guest presentations, panel discussions, networking sessions, and a health expo. The event was developed in response to community-identified needs for expanded access to health programming, particularly for women and caregivers in rural areas of Eastern Colorado.

Community members, families, local organizations, wellness-focused businesses, and healthcare providers participated in the event, which covered a variety of topics ranging from mental health and empowerment to nutrition, menopause, pelvic floor and reproductive health, healthy aging, and more.

Northeast Regional Engagement Center

The CSU Northeast Regional Engagement Center (NREC) serves as a partner and connector in Northeast Colorado, working alongside communities to address rural challenges in healthy aging, food system development, and language access. Through programs like digital literacy workshops, caregiver support groups, and cultural initiatives, NREC builds relationships and drives impact where resources are often limited. By amplifying rural voices and tailoring solutions to local needs, NREC positions CSU as a true champion of rural Colorado. This work strengthens the region's prosperity and reinforces the university's role as a catalyst for lasting community-driven change.

Empowering Lives Through Parkinson's Support and Connection

Rural Colorado historically demonstrates a higher need for wrap around resources, connectedness and access in chronic/terminal illnesses particularly in rural areas where prevalence can be higher. In partnership with the Sterling Lions Club and the Parkinson's Association of the Rockies, the CSU Northeast Regional Engagement Center launched a monthly support group to enhance the quality of life for individuals living with Parkinson's disease in northeast Colorado. Over the past year, the group has seen consistent growth in attendance, offering a welcoming space for education, connection, and wellness. Participants report improved mental health, reduced isolation, and greater confidence in managing their condition—benefits amplified through access to regular exercise classes and peer support. This program exemplifies CSU's commitment to building healthier, more connected rural communities.

Strengthening Eastern Colorado's Regional Food System

The CSU Northeast Regional Engagement Center in Partnership with The Block Commissary Kitchen is working to connect producers, food businesses, and support professionals across Eastern Colorado to build a more resilient and collaborative regional food economy. The Soil to Supper event served as a catalyst for strengthening the Eastern Colorado food system by bringing together producers, partners, and institutions to collaborate, learn, and grow. It sparked new business connections, expanded educational opportunities, and laid the groundwork for long-term system development. The event also surfaced key challenges and priorities, helping guide future efforts and investments. Most importantly, it energized a regional movement committed to building a more connected, resilient, and locally-driven food system.

STATEWIDE SPOTLIGHT: YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



Colorado 4-H Youth Development

4-H is delivered by Colorado State University Extension and reaches over 110,000 youth in Colorado annually, helping them to become confident, independent, resilient and compassionate leaders. Colorado 4-H engages with youth across the state through hands-on projects in areas including health, science, agriculture and citizenship.

Across the state, more than 10,000 volunteers and almost 100 4-H professionals and staff members provide support and mentorships to 4-H youth through locally based clubs, programs, and activities.

Colorado 4-H reached **2,930 youth** and engaged **611 volunteers** across Colorado's Eastern Region in 2024.