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WSU Extension, USDA Rural Development and Others to Provide Technical Assistance for Rural Economic Development through National Program

KIRKLAND, Wash.--Washington State University Extension and two multicounty regions in rural Washington and Oregon will participate in a national initiative to help rural American communities develop economic opportunities specific to their regions. The selected regions are the Tri-County Economic Development District, which includes Ferry, Stevens and Pend Oreille counties; and the Mid-Columbia Economic Development District, encompassing Klickitat and Skamania counties in Washington and Hood River, Wasco and Sherman counties in Oregon.

The “Stronger Economies Together” program was launched in 2009 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Rural Development agency with the nation’s Regional Rural Development Centers and their land-grant university partners. In Washington, USDA Rural Development and WSU Extension will offer SET’s second phase, working with the Association of Washington Cities, Washington State Association of Counties and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, as well as other state and local partners.

The SET program helps regional teams develop new approaches to strengthen and enhance regional economic development activities. Multicounty teams receive the latest tools, training and technical assistance to help their region take advantage of opportunities for positive economic growth and quality of life. Participants will receive:

1. Valuable strategic planning resources, including a training program designed to help regional teams with new approaches to strengthen and enhance regional economic development activities;
2. Database tools specifically designed to help regional teams examine critical economic drivers and identify emerging growth sectors and regional competitive advantages;
3. Technical assistance and educational support from the Western Rural Development Center, USDA Rural Development and WSU Extension staff;
4. Specific training from relevant regional and statewide experts; and
5. Educational and information-sharing opportunities with SET program participants around the country.

“Increasing successful rural development means regional partnerships based on a solid plan. We are excited to partner with federal, state and local organizations to provide SET resources to these two rural regions in Washington and Oregon,” said Rob McDaniel, WSU Extension Community and Economic Development, where the SET program will be housed.

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