

El Paso County

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Texas Community Futures Forum

In the spring of 1999, residents of El Paso County came together to identify issues and concerns affecting our community. They also set priorities and developed action plans to address these issues.

We have prepared this report to inform Futures Forum participants and other community leaders about the progress made so far. The most Prevelant Issues that were identified in 1999 for El Paso County were:

- Education. k-12,higher,outreach,adult,etc.
- Water - includes quality, quaninty, new sources, reuse, conservation.
- Health Care
- Community & Economic Dvelopment
- Border Issues

Priority Issues

Issue: **Education. k-12,higher,outreach,adult,etc.**

Goal: To increase the quality of education to all age groups by providing curricular support to formal providers of education and providing community-based non-formal educational opportunities.

Response: Extension is an educational agency by design and a member of The Texas A&M University System. The enabling legislation that created Extension established

it as an institution that extended the knowledge resources of land grant institutions to the local level through non-formal educational methods. As such, Extension is in a position to support formal education with research-based information and curriculum and provide direct non-formal educational programs, continuing education, training, and technical assistance to the community in a variety of subject matter areas. Examples of these educational programs are outlined below.

To support expansion of Distance Education opportunities for El Paso, Extension established video-conferencing facilities capable of delivering university level graduate courses and continuing education courses from Texas A&M University and Texas Tech University to El Paso County residents.

The Master Gardener Program provides 14 weeks of intensive training in the areas of ornamental horticulture, vegetable production, agronomy, entomology, plant pathology, and other disciplines to a corps of 25- 35 volunteers.

Agents and Master Gardeners provide Continuing Education Programs in Home Horticulture through UTEP's Center for Lifetime Learning and EPCC's Continuing Ed. Dept.

The South Texas AmeriCorps Initiative provides on-the-job training and higher education credit to program participants in El Paso, some of which return to work for Extension.

A series of Landscape Schools for Homeowners were provided in cooperation with El Paso Water Utilities' Turf Rebate Program to provide homeowners with the knowledge to design their own home landscape.

Plant Clinics are provided at the Ft. Bliss PX (Post Exchange) for military and civilian personnel on base.

Community Presentations in Horticulture are provided to civic groups, garden clubs, schools, non-profit groups, and others on a request basis to support their club's community programs.

The Junior Master Gardener Program provides youth education in natural resource issues and was implemented at Pebble Hills Elementary for their after school academy.

Weekly Gardening Articles in the El Paso Times provide the community with information to improve their quality of life.

“HOMEGROWN” is an educational segment on NBC’s KTSM Channel 9 television station that provides helpful information to homeowners and improves their quality of life.

Kids & Kows & More Expo reaches 30,000 children annually with science-based education related to food and fiber, including water issues affecting El Paso.

The school-based Cylinder Gardening Program provides a science-based curriculum for children that supports and enhances public education.

A Youth Leadership Team of 4H members receives training and opportunities for experiential learning as they plan and implement events and activities to support the El Paso 4H program.

Extension provides structure and support for a 4H Teen Council that helps plan and guide the El Paso County 4H youth program.

Extension provides structure and support for a 4H Adult Leader Association that helps plan and guide volunteer and parental support of the El Paso County 4H youth program.

Through Paso Del Norte Health Foundation’s Youth in Action Initiative, Extension supports a lower valley youth leadership group and is integrating it into the county 4H Program.

The 4H Good News Program brings the benefits of the traditional 4H program into urban areas with the support of a county 4H program assistant.

Through Kellogg and USDA funding, limited resource youth at Lindbergh and La Union Elementary Schools are learning more about careers in agriculture and the importance of a higher education through the Agricultural Literacy Project.

Strengthening Our Capacity to Care (SOCC), a joint project with juvenile probation, provides youth opportunities for juvenile offenders.

Club Management Training is provided for all volunteers who provide organizational support for 4H Clubs operating in El Paso County.

Texans Building Character, Extension’s character education program, provides school-based programs and activities that support the district’s goals in student character development.

4H Roundup provides opportunities for youth in El Paso County to develop public speaking and decision-making skills through county and district-based contests.

4H Master Volunteers are provided with in-depth training in a specific area, enabling them to better support and assist youth with projects of interest.

Tri-County Camp is a annual three-day event for youth in Hudspeth, El Paso, and Doña Ana Counties that provides leadership training through recreational activities hosted at the Scott Able Camp.

The Egg to Chick Program is a science-based school curriculum that provides support for public schools through an interactive demonstration project.

The Mobile Dairy Classroom, sponsored by the Southwest Dairy Farmers, is a live demonstration of the milking process and the dietary value of milk.

Nutrition, Food Safety, and Food Resource Management is taught to El Paso County food stamp recipients through Better Living for Texans, a program funded by the Texas Department of Human Services.

The Texas Master Naturalist Program was initiated in El Paso County and is training a corps of volunteers in environmental sciences and natural resource management.

Extension educational programs support Irrigation Licensing and Continuing Education Units for Irrigation companies operating in El Paso County.

Turfgrass Management Programs are provided to the public, city & county parks departments, and school grounds maintenance departments to support training and education for employees.

Sports Athletic Field Education (SAFE) provides educational and technical support to schools and parks departments who are responsible for the maintenance of sports and athletic fields.

Cotton & Pecan Agronomy education programs are provided for agricultural producers in the upper and lower El Paso Valley.

Waste management courses in composting and recycling are provided to schools and the public to support their capacity to implement best management practices at the homeowner level.

Water conservation education programs are provided to schools and the public to support their capacity to implement best management practices at the homeowner level.

Soil conservation education programs are provided to schools and the public to support their capacity to implement best management practices at the homeowner level.

The Pesticide Education Program, sponsored by El Paso Water Utilities, targeted homeowner users of pesticides with information about the safe use, storage, and disposal of pesticides and their containers.

Pesticide Applicator programs provide private, commercial, and non-commercial applicators with the necessary training and testing to obtain and maintain licenses allowing them to purchase and apply pesticides.

A Cotton Scout School and a Workshop Under the Trees were sponsored by Extension to provide educational support for effective pest management strategies in agricultural production areas.

Outcomes: A sampling of reported outcomes provided by Extension agents include the following.

1. Established video-conferencing capability in the county office and a community-based distance learning center.
2. Improved knowledge and skills for over 50 volunteers enrolled in Master Gardener and Master Naturalist programs.
3. Enhanced higher education opportunities for El Pasoans through Extension's AmeriCorps program.
4. Established mass media presence through weekly gardening articles and television program on gardening.
5. Increased awareness in food and fiber among youth participating in Kids & Kows, Mobile Dairy Classroom, Egg to Chick program, and other curriculum enrichment and Ag. Awareness programs.
6. Increased knowledge and involvement of 4H volunteers in youth development projects and programs.
7. Recertification of 111 licensed irrigators and 52 licensed irrigation installers in El Paso area.
8. Certification of 14 landscape irrigation auditors trained to conduct irrigation audits and recommend irrigation management practices to school districts, parks, homeowners, and others.
9. More than 75 homeowners trained in turf rebate program and methods to design a "water smart" home landscape.
10. Increased knowledge and skills among youth audiences with regard to water and other natural resource issues.

Issue: **Water - includes quality, quantity, new sources, reuse, conservation.**

Goal: Conserve and protect the quantity and quality of water resources necessary to

sustain the quality of life in this desert community.

Response: Extension has the capacity to support water issues through training and education, applied research and demonstrations, and technical assistance based on credible, reliable, and proven research. In cooperation with the research arm of the nationwide land grant system, Extension can also link research and researchers to local problems and work cooperatively with local partners to solve these problems. Below are examples of such efforts.

The Pesticide Education Program (PEP) has resulted in consistent negative test results, assuring effluent that meets government water quality standards for the City of El Paso.

Landscape Irrigation Audit programs have developed a corps of certified irrigation auditors in El Paso County that have the skills to effectively measure the efficiency of irrigation systems in homes, businesses, parks, and golf courses.

The Sports Athletic Field Education (SAFE) Program has been shown to save over 1 acre-foot of water, some 380,000 gallons, on a football field over the course of a season and has helped reduce player injuries by 40%.

The Texas Master Naturalist program has provided a corps of volunteers who are supporting the development of the Rio Bosque project and other community efforts to enhance natural resource treasures.

The Texas Master Gardener program established and maintains a community native plant demonstration garden at the Texas A&M Research & Extension Center and supports community programs promoting Xeriscaping in this desert environment.

The Windbreak Tree program introduces thousands of water-smart trees annually that require very little water, beautify the community, and reduce the negative impact of high winds.

Irrigation Courses have enhanced the skills of irrigation installers and the efficiency of irrigation systems installed in El Paso area landscapes.

The On-Site Wastewater Treatment Center has provided a community resource for training and continuing education that helps septic tank installers assure safe on-site wastewater treatment systems in areas of the county that are not served by the city's wastewater system.

Community Presentations on water quality and conservation to schools, civic

groups, and community organizations have helped raise awareness of water issues in the county.

Water Career Exploration exhibits through fairs and class presentations raised awareness of careers in the area of water.

An Aqua Food youth program demonstrated how food is grown using the medium of water.

Kids & Kows & More Expo provided for a Water Exhibit that showed the hydrologic cycle and the methods in which water can be polluted by runoff.

Community Tree Plantings were conducted through grant funds, helping provide water-smart landscaping for selected schools.

The Tri-County 4H Camp focused on water issues and methods to conserve and protect water quality.

Outcomes: The following are examples of outcomes resulting from educational efforts as reported by Extension agents in El Paso County.

1. Over 7,500 trees introduced annually into the El Paso community through the Windbreak tree program.
2. A corps of volunteer irrigation auditors to support efficient irrigation practices in turf and other landscape applications.
3. Establishment of a native demonstration garden for use as a model in designing home and commercial landscapes with "water smart" plants.
4. Sports Athletic Field Education that has saved an average of 380,000 gallons of irrigation water per athletic field while improving the quality of playing surfaces and reduced player injuries by over 40%.
5. Pesticide education program has supported a public information campaign that has helped to reduce the presence of pesticides in the wastewater effluent for the City of El Paso.
6. Irrigation programs have provided educational and technical support for irrigation companies and parks/maintenance personnel that have helped redesign irrigation systems and promote best management practices.
7. The Texas Master Gardener and Master Naturalist Programs have provided a corps of over 100 volunteers to support community-based programs in gardening, school-based programs, support of the Rio Bosque project, and other community programs.

Issue: **Health Care**

Goal:

Goal #1: Families, children & entire community will be enriched in knowledge in health- mentally, physically and all aspects of emotionally. Goal#2 After School Programs. Goal#3: Schools, Churches and Social Service Agencies 'A Community Free of Violence'. Goal4: Citizens will Use Self Prevention(vaccines, seatbelts) exercise. Citizens will not induce disease(substance abuse) Goal 5: Community: Gardens, recycling, mass transit(improved), more bus routes, health education.

Response:

As an organization charged with non-formal education, Extension's capacity to address health care is largely focused on prevention education that seeks to improve health by improving knowledge, skills, and behaviors positively. Extension does not provide direct health care, but can also impact the quality, access, and affordability of health care by linking with these providers and providing support services that can have an impact on these issues.

The Expanded Nutrition Program targets 32,000 limited resource families with a nutrition education curriculum that includes an 8 lesson series and improves family diets, while stretching food dollars.

The Expanded Nutrition Program provides for a six lesson series that targets youth with educational programs to improve diet and health.

The Expanded Nutrition Program supports a Teen Parents Conference (TAPS) that teaches teen parents about proper infant and child nutrition.

Summer Youth Nutrition Camps are sponsored by nutrition program assistants to promote healthy diets and lifestyles among youth.

Extension is a participant in the Paso Del Norte Health Foundation's Que Sabrosa Vida nutrition program.

Extension sponsors and promotes a public promotional campaign on Nutrition during March, a month designated for nutrition awareness.

Extension promotes and supports healthy lifestyles, good diets and nutrition, and disease prevention through Health Fairs in schools, local conferences, and other public venues.

Extension promotes health through a comprehensive 4H Food & Nutrition Program for 4H youth.

The Better Living for Texans programs promotes health through programs in food safety, wellness, and food resource management.

The Mission Possible Environmental Conference promotes community health through changes in behaviors and practices that promotes a healthy environment.

The Pesticide Education Program (PEP) has helped reduce the presence of pesticide residue in the city's wastewater effluent.

Outcomes:

Issue: **Community & Economic Dvelopment**

Goal: Goal #1: More jobs entry to higher education. Goal #2: Better trained workforce. Goal #3: Create a more favorable business climate. Goal #4: More support from Federal State Government.

Response: Community development, and economic development as a significant component, is a broad issue for which Extension has limited capacity to support formally and directly. Much of Extension's support for community and economic development comes from the benefits that its educational programs provide and the corresponding improvement in the quality of life that results.

Extension, in cooperation with Prairie View A&M University Cooperative Extension, established a New Position in El Paso for Community & Economic Development.

Extension brings the resources of The Texas A&M University System to the El Paso area, bringing in federal, state, grant, and in-kind support exceeding \$1.5 million and helping to support a \$100 million agricultural industry and community needs in diet & nutrition, family development, youth development, and health.

Small Farmer Outreach Program has helped small growers avoid foreclosure, secure loans, reorganize debt, and in some cases, expand operations. It has also led to a \$138,000 grant program to expand efforts in this area.

The Cotton Pima S6 Seed Production project and Cotton Variety Trials seek to

protect the profitability of a \$25 million cotton industry.

Pink Bollworm/Boll Weevil Eradication Projects save cotton producers hundreds of thousands of dollars in damage that could otherwise be caused by these pests.

Applied research and demonstration projects for Pecan Nut Casebearer Management protect a Pecan industry that generates more than \$12 million in sales alone.

The Youth in Action initiative has helped expand youth development efforts in the Lower Valley.

4H Good News program efforts are helping bring 4H opportunities to inner city youth. Kids & Kows & More provides a unique educational experience for youth.

Outcomes: The following are examples of outcomes resulting from educational efforts as reported by Extension agents in El Paso County.

1. Extension has drawn over \$700,000 in grants and special project to support programs in El Paso County.
2. The S-6 Pima Cotton propagation project supports a \$25 million cotton industry and has the potential to provide over \$250,000 in revenue in seed sales.
3. Pink Bollworm and Boll Weevil Eradication programs help reduce the costs of production and increase yields in cotton production, expanding the profitability by hundred of thousands of dollars annually.
4. A Community Development agent position was established to support and coordinate Extension programming efforts in this program area.
5. The Small Farmer Outreach program has helped small growers avoid foreclosure, secure loans, and in some cases expand operations. It also led to a \$138,000 grant from USDA to help socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers in the area.
6. Extension educational efforts help support and maintain a \$100 million agricultural industry in the county.

Issue: **Border Issues**

Goal: Goal 1: Reduce member of people under Welfare Goal 2: Technical Training School and Curriculum Goal 3: Increase Health Insurance Goal 4: Address

common environmental programs and air quality.

Response: Border issues are diverse and complex. Extension is in the best position to help with issues for which it has subject matter expertise and technical knowledge. Cooperative bi-national approaches to border issues require the cultivation of relationships on both sides of the border. Extension has the capacity to respond to this issue by developing programs that engage our neighbors in the State of Chihuahua and increase understanding and appreciation of each other.

Extension has initiated cooperative discussions with Juárez-based INIFAP's research station in the State of Chihuahua to explore possible cooperative ventures in applied research and community education that benefits both the El Paso and Juárez communities.

Extension provides support to the Sanidad Vegetal for binational efforts to effectively management pests on agricultural crops.

The Kellogg 2020 Vision Project provided collaborative support for youth development efforts in El Paso, Las Cruces, and Juárez.

The annual Mission Possible Conference addresses a variety of environmental issues and involves binational participation.

Extension supports the Tri-State, Tri-City Water Fest which provides a regional focus on water, involving the three major regional cities of Las Cruces, El Paso, and Juárez.

Extension support the Border Cities Recycles Day, sponsoring the event jointly with the City and County of El Paso and targeting youth and the community.

Extension supports and participates in projects sponsored by the Solid Waste Regional Advisory Committee of the Rio Grande Council of Governments.

Extension supports and participates in the Far West Texas Water Planning Group sponsored by the Texas Water Development Board.

Extension is a co-sponsor of the Sun Country Tree Conference cooperatively with the West Texas Urban Forestry Council.

Extension supports and participates in the Environmental Summits cooperatively with the office of Senator Shapleigh and County Attorney Jose Rodriguez.

Outcomes: The following are examples of outcomes resulting from educational efforts as reported by Extension agents in El Paso County.

1. The Kellogg 2020 Vision project is a bi-national effort to expand youth development opportunities in the area and is supported by \$100,000 in funding from the Kellogg Foundation and USDA.
2. Extension was a lead partner in developing the bi-national Mission Possible Environmental Conference, now in its third year.
3. Extension has initiated cooperative discussions with Juárez-based INIFAP's research station in the State of Chihuahua to explore possible cooperative ventures in applied research and community education that benefits both the El Paso and Juárez communities.
4. Extension provides support to the Sanidad Vegetal for binational efforts to effectively management pests on agricultural crops.

Looking Ahead

The Texas Community Futures Forum begun in 1999 was planned to continue through 2004. Some of these priority issues will continue to be addressed through the completion of this planning cycle. However, the following is a list of new issues that have been identified during the varification process. They Include:

Thank You

In 2004, the process will begin again, with Open Forums inviting the community members to identify new needs and concerns to be addressed in 2005-2008. We hope you will again be part of the Texas Community Futures Forum, continuing our community's growth and progress.

Thanks so much for your time!

Sincerely,

The El Paso County Texas Cooperative Extension Office.

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