

IMPACT

University of Idaho
Extension

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Expanding the reach of University of Idaho Extension

AT A GLANCE

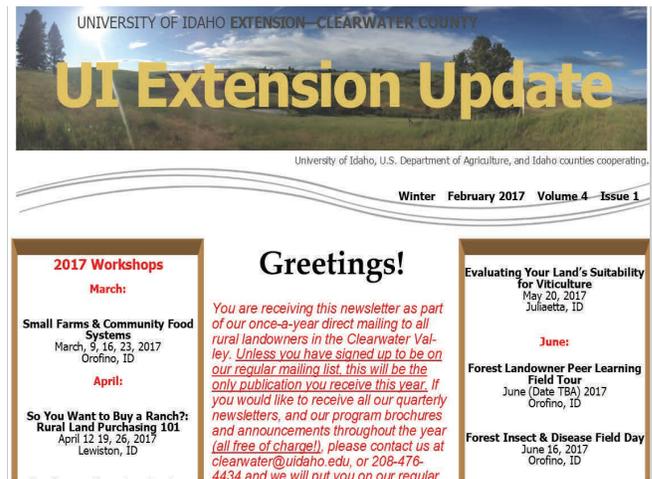
Marketing with direct mail can recruit new clientele to University of Idaho Extension programing and information resources.

The Situation

Some publics are not aware of University of Idaho Extension or what it offers, and the recent statewide UI Extension strategic planning process highlighted the need to reach new audiences. With new residents moving to rural Idaho from more urban areas, and noticing that we often had the same people returning repeatedly to our program offerings with little growth in our mailing lists, we sought ways to better market UI Extension and our program offerings to new landowners. One of the most effective ways to market UI Extension is through direct mail as traditional media outlets such as newspapers and radio are less effective due to dramatic declines in readership and the proliferation of channels and web-based media outlets.

Our Response

In the spring of 2015 a direct mail campaign was started that went to all landowners within Clearwater County, as well as landowners in portions of Latah, Nez Perce, Lewis and Idaho counties who had postal addresses in the communities within the Clearwater River valley. A "landowner" was anyone who owned five acres or more. Addresses were obtained from county assessor databases which can be sorted by parcel, address and acres of land owned.



Our first mailing went to 2,571 addresses in April of 2015 which by February of 2017 had expanded to 3,528 by including additional communities within the Clearwater Valley. In addition to two direct-mailings in 2015 (one was a special mailing in the fall that was a response to the wildfires), we direct mailed our winter newsletter in both 2016 and 2017, which contained a list of anticipated programing for the year.

Notices in the newsletters indicated that recipients who wanted to get all our newsletters and program mailings during the year had to contact our office and request to be on our "regular" mailing list. It was a challenge at first to develop how we would indicate to residents receiving our newsletter that it would be the only one they would receive unless they contacted us, but by 2017 we had improved the notice in a way that was more effective.

Program Outcomes

While the wildfires of 2015 dramatically increased our program attendance to some 631 people, even excluding fire-related programming, we saw an increase of over 100 *new* individuals attend our programming (had not formerly attended a UI Extension program and were not on our mailing list). In 2016 we had 112 new people attend programs (not including wildfire related programming), and in 2017 148 new people attended, with 70 people calling subsequent to our direct mail newsletter in February asking to be placed on our mailing list. This represents a total of 362 new clients since 2015.

Our mailing list includes people who have either attended an University of Idaho Extension program, or contacted the office asking to be placed on the list. This list has increased from a little over 200 addresses in 2012 to over 700 today, with most of this increase since 2015. Quarterly newsletters and other mailings bring landowners articles, information and links to other UI Extension and agency resources and publications, thus creating additional impact beyond workshop events.

Our experience supports the power of direct mail to market UI Extension programs and bring the benefits of UI Extension information and programming to new landowners that formerly had not been UI Extension clients.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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