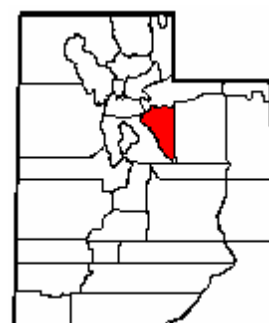


Size and Scope of Wasatch County Agriculture 2019

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Location

Wasatch County is located in the northeast quadrant of the state. Other surrounding Utah counties include Summit, Duchesne, Utah, and Salt Lake. The largest city and county seat is Heber. The population of the county was estimated at 32,106 as of 2017.

Land Ownership

The land ownership within the county is divided as shown in Figure 1.

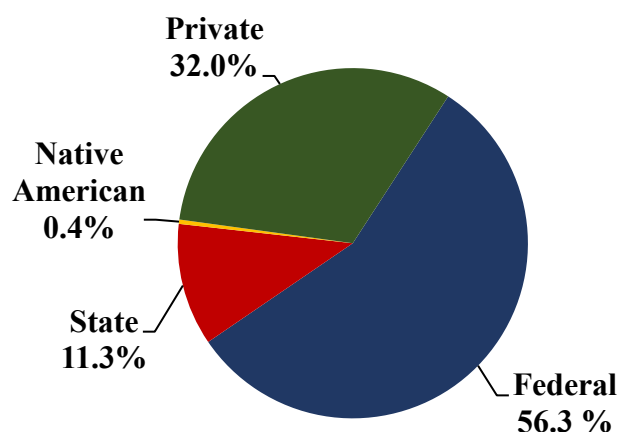


Figure 1. Wasatch County Land Ownership.

The majority of the federally owned ground, or about 99%, is under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). The state owned ground is primarily part of Utah state parks, recreational areas, and wildlife preserves. A portion is also under the jurisdiction of the Utah School and Institutional Trust Land Administration (SITLA). The private ground is primarily farm ground and grazing areas.

The 2017 Census of Agriculture indicated that there were 97,098 acres in farms or ranches in the county with an average size of 204 acres and an average value of \$5,557 per acre. The county had 8,845 acres in cropland of which 7,836 acres were harvested. There were 11,252 acres of cropland and pastureland that were irrigated.

Growing Season

The growing season in Wasatch County averages about two and a half months. The short growing season is a result of a high average elevation. Table 1 displays some of the details on climatology in three areas of Wasatch County according to the Utah Climate Center (2019).

Table 1. Wasatch County Annual Precipitation and Average Frost-Free Days				
Location	Annual Precip.	Last Spring Freeze	First Fall Freeze	Freeze-free Period
Deer Creek Dam	22.2 in	June 8	Sept. 12	96 days
Heber	15.8 in	June 11	Sept. 8	89 days
Soldier Summit	14.2 in	July 3	Aug. 24	54 days

Crop Production

Hay is the primary crop grown in Wasatch County. Total acres harvested and yields for 2017 are displayed in Table 2. Approximately 50% of the hay production is alfalfa and 50% grass. The grass is primarily meadow hay and triticale or 3-way. The majority of the hay is used within local livestock operations as feed.

Table 2. Utah County 2017 Crop Acres and Yields			
Primary Crops	Yields	Harvested Acres	Average Yield/acre
Hay	32,899 tons	10,910	3.0 tons

Source: 2017 USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture

Typical ground preparation for planting alfalfa begins by spraying Roundup in the fall or early spring to kill the quack grass prior to disking. The ground is then harrowed and planted. The procedure is the same for planting small grains except Roundup is not typically used prior to planting grains. About 98% of small grain is planted in the fall of the year.

The most prevalent crop rotation that producers practice is to leave alfalfa in for 7 years, plant 3-way hay or oats for 2 years, then replant alfalfa. Producers typically get two to three cuttings of alfalfa each year. About 25% of all inputs (e.g., seed, fertilizer, pesticides, etc.) are purchased locally while the remaining 75% are bought in a neighboring county.

Irrigation water comes from various sources including the Provo River and its tributaries.

Livestock Production

The inventories of the major classes of livestock produced in the county as of 2017 compared with 2012 inventories are listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Major Livestock Commodities			
Livestock	2012	2017	% Change
All Cattle	9,537	7,325	-23.2%
Beef Cows	6,452	4,987	-22.7%
Milk Cows	517	662	28.0%
Sheep & Lambs	27,919	13,390	-52.0%

Source: 2017 USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture

Wasatch County is one of the fastest growing counties in the United States; as a result, much acreage has been lost to housing. Declining acreage results in declining livestock numbers and loss of hay ground and pasture.

Sheep production declined the greatest since the last census of agriculture. The decline can be attributed to many factors. Some production was converted to cattle operations, other producers sold out because of low income or they had no one to carry on the operations.

Cattle are wintered on permits on the west desert or fed hay on local properties and summered mostly on forest permits or private pastures. Most cattle are sold as feeder steers and heifers in the fall by various methods including video auctions, contract buyers, or at state auctions

Farm Income and Age of Operator

Cash receipts from 2017 crops equaled \$1,892,000 and cash receipts from livestock totaled \$6,910,000. Total 2017 cash receipts were \$8,802,000, down \$3,379,000 from 2012 (\$12,181,000). The average age of the primary farmer or rancher was 59.1 in 2017, which is the highest average age since before the 1997 census. The average age of the principal operator is graphed below in Figure 2 for all

USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture years since 1997.

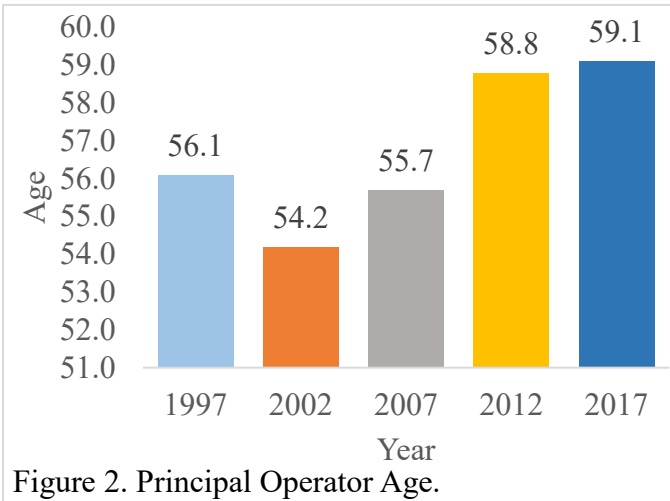


Figure 2. Principal Operator Age.

Source: 2017 USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture

Sources

- United States Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service (2019). 2017 Ag Census Data. Retrieved from: https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/Online_Resources/Census_Data_Query_Tool/index.php
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