

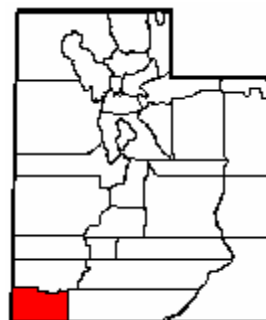


Size and Scope of Washington County Agriculture 2019

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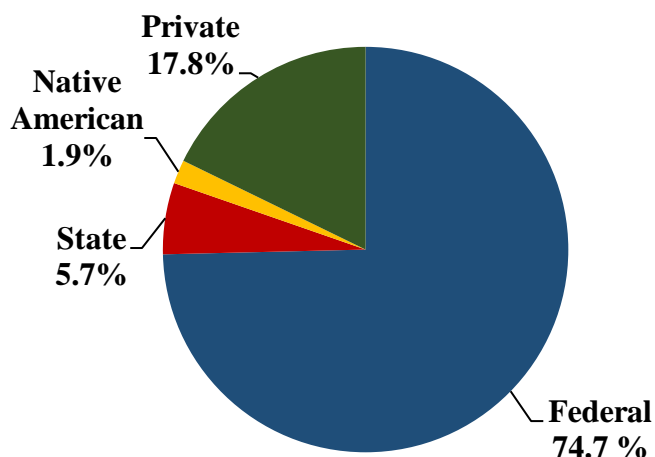
Location

Washington County, named for the first president of the United States, George Washington, is located in the southwest corner of Utah. It is bordered by Nevada on the west and Arizona on the south. Other surrounding Utah counties include Iron and Kane. In 2017, the population was estimated at 165,662. Much of the terrain is rough and arid with little area conducive to agriculture.

The majority of the federally owned ground is under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The state-owned ground is primarily under the jurisdiction of the Utah School and Institutional Trust Land Administration (SITLA). Portions of the state-owned land are wildlife preserves. The private ground is primarily farm ground and grazing areas.

Land Ownership

Figure 1 shows the division of land ownership within the county.



The 2017 Census of Agriculture indicated that there were 155,047 acres in farms or ranches in the county with an average size of 289 acres and an average value of \$3,737 per acre. The county had 22,347 acres in cropland, of which 9,231 acres were harvested. There were a total of 12,984 acres of cropland and pastureland irrigated.

Growing Season

The growing season in Washington County is one of the longest in Utah. It averages about five-and-a-half months. Table 1 displays some of the details on climatology in three areas of Washington County according to the Utah Climate Center (2019).

Figure 1. Washington County Land Ownership

Source: 2017 Utah Counties Fact Book

Table 1. Washington County Annual Precipitation and Average Frost-Free Days				
Location	Annual Precip.	Last Spring Freeze	First Fall Freeze	Freeze -Free Period
Enterprise	14.6 inches	May 23	Sept. 30	131 days
St. George	8.2 inches	Apr. 2	Oct. 29	209 days
Zion National Park	15.1 inches	Apr. 16	Oct. 30	199 days

Crop Production

Hay is the major crop grown in Washington County. Total acres of hay harvested in Washington County as well as yields are displayed in Table 2. Producers typically get four to seven cuttings of alfalfa each year. About 70% of all inputs (e.g., seed, fertilizer, pesticides, etc.) are purchased locally while the remaining 30% are bought in neighboring communities.

There are two typical ground preparation methods for planting alfalfa. When flood irrigation is used, the ground is moldboard plowed and then furrowed. If a pivot is the irrigation system, then the ground is disked and cultipacked.

The most prevalent crop rotation that producers practice is to leave alfalfa in for four to six years, small grains for one year, and then replant alfalfa.

Another important crop that has historically been grown in the county is sorghum. Once used to produce syrup, sorghum is now primarily grown in Hurricane and Virgin for silage.

Fruit Production

Washington County also ranks highly among Utah counties in peach and nut production and has approximately 70 acres of peach orchards and

111 acres of nut production. The majority of the nuts produced in the county are pecans with some almonds and pistachios as well. Other fruits that are grown in the county include melons, apples, grapes, raspberries, and cherries.

Most peach, cherry, nut, and melon production take place in the Hurricane, Leeds, and Santa Clara areas. Apple and berry production take place in New Harmony, Enterprise, and Springdale. Melon production has become an important crop in recent years, primarily grown in Hurricane and Leeds. Sweet corn is also grown in Enterprise.

Table 2. Washington County 2017 Crop Acres and Yields			
Primary Crops	Yields	Harvested Acres	Average Yield/Acre
Hay	35,346 tons	8,507	4.2 tons

Source: 2017 USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture

Irrigation

The majority (about 60%) of the irrigation water available in Washington County is from the Virgin River and its tributaries. About 5% comes from stock ponds and the remaining 35% comes from deep wells.

Due to the high sediment levels found in the Virgin River from high water events during each year, flood irrigation is the most prevalent form of irrigation in the county. Other irrigation systems include hand lines and wheel lines. Center pivots can also be found in some areas of the county, primarily communities not found near the Virgin River drainage.

Livestock Production

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	14,526	12,670	-12.8%
Beef Cows	10,291	8,564	-16.8%
Sheep and Lambs	666	766	15.0%

Source: 2017 USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture

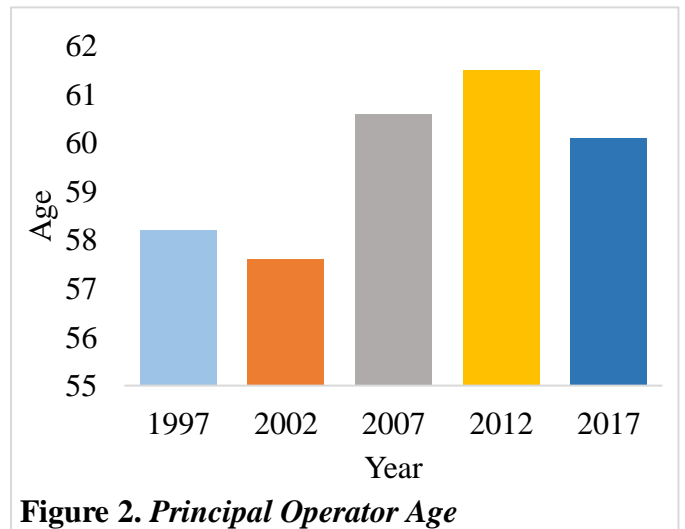
The majority of ranches use a combination of private and public lands to raise cattle. Ranchers utilize the opportunity to purchase grazing allotments each year to run cattle on public lands for grazing use. The majority of these allotments are located on the Arizona Strip BLM District.

Sheep are raised on different mountain allotments and pastures in Hurricane and Washington. Sheep herds are taken off the mountain pastures in winter months and moved in town to graze dormant pastures.

Farm Income and Age of Operator

Cash receipts from 2017 crops equaled \$6.4 million and cash receipts from livestock totaled \$10 million. Total 2017 cash receipts were \$16.4 million—up nearly \$4 million since the previous Census of Agriculture record from 2012 (\$12.6 million). The primary farmer or rancher average age was 60.1 in 2017. While the average age is down from 2012 (61.5), it is still quite high relative to other counties. Washington County ranks second in average age of

the principal operator. Figure 2 below graphs the principal operator age for all USDA-NASS Census of Agriculture years since 1997.



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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