

LEELANAU COUNTY

2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT



Photo by Tom Sovereign



MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR

I'm excited to share the results of another successful year of partnership between Leelanau County and Michigan State University (MSU) Extension. Thanks to your ongoing support, we've been able to make a meaningful impact on the lives of youth, families, businesses, and communities throughout the county.

MSU Extension continues to offer a wide array of research-based educational outreach to our residents. Over the past year, we've empowered individuals and families to lead healthier lives, supported local and new businesses, provided opportunities for youth leadership development and career exploration, assisted farmers with business management and mental health support, and so much more. Our team lives and works alongside county residents, building strong community relationships and staying responsive to local needs.

We remain committed to delivering our programs in personalized formats and locations that are convenient and accessible to our participants. This ongoing success is possible because of our strong partnership with you. On behalf of the MSU Extension team serving Leelanau County, thank you for another outstanding year. We look forward to your continued support and hope you will join us in our upcoming programs.

Jennifer Berkey
District 3 Director

Impact

 **234**
Programs accessed by residents

 **4,708**
Reached through programming

 **75,892**
Reached by social media



NWMHRC BUS TOUR

The Northwest Michigan Horticultural Research Center (NWMHRC) was proud to be a stop on the inaugural Michigan State University Spartan Bus Tour on October 22, 2024. The tour was hosted by MSU President Kevin Guskiewicz, a neuroscientist and concussion research leader who joined MSU in March 2024. He came to us from the University of North Carolina, and in keeping with a tradition he started there, he hosted a bus trip through a slice of Michigan for 60 MSU faculty and staff.

NWMHRC was honored to be selected as a stop to share the latest in tree fruit research with the group.

Heather Leach led a lab tour and shared updates on the entomology research she is conducting in NW Michigan. Erin Lauwers, IPM Educator, led a wagon tour and explained various research trials that are going on in the field. Board members Mark Miezio and Bruce Veliquette offered

valuable insights into the complexities of cherry production, helping connect visitors, many new to agriculture, with the region’s unique challenges. Both of our board members did a terrific job, and their messages were engaging, insightful, and delivered from the heart. Their information really resonated with the group, and there was a plethora of interesting and engaging questions from the audience.

Thanks to everyone that contributed to make our bus tour stop a success! It was a fantastic opportunity to share the impactful work happening in Northwest Michigan with the broader MSU community.

INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT UPDATES

These updates feature timely discussions of pest challenges and management options dictated by weather and pest biology. Attendees are encouraged to bring

examples of pests and damage found on the farm for identification and discussion. Additionally, we host invited speakers from local organizations and Michigan State University. Updates were held bi-weekly in Grand Traverse, Antrim and Benzie Counties. A virtual option was also available during Wednesday meetings.

HARVEST – A CELEBRATION OF FOOD, FARMS & CULTURE

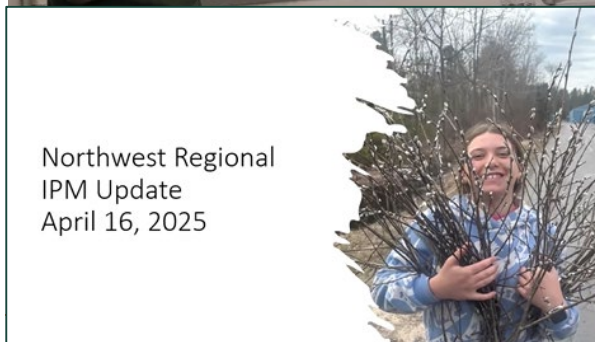
Hosted by the LC Collective, the Leelanau Conservancy’s Next Generation Council

We hosted an evening of music, local food, and thought-provoking discussion on the intersection of food, farming and culture in the beautiful surrounding DeYoung Natural Farmstead.

Music was from *Breathe Owl Breathe*



AgBioResearch
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY



Northwest Regional IPM Update
April 16, 2025

Tue 4/15 41° / 34°F Few Snow Showers 0 in	Wed 4/16 46° / 29°F Partly Cloudy 0 in	Thu 4/17 44° / 50°F Mostly Sunny 0.3 in	Fri 4/18 40° / 34°F Thunderstorms 0.25 in	Sat 4/19 47° / 32°F M Clouds/PM Sun 0 in	Sun 4/20 50° / 40°F Partly Cloudy 0.06 in	Mon 4/21 52° / 47°F Showers 0.41 in	Tue 4/22 50° / 40°F M Clouds/PM Sun 0 in	Wed 4/23 54° / 44°F Partly Cloudy 0 in
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Careful pruning on Friday; overnight of 32F

- Watch out for dry conditions for pruning sweet cherries
- Bacterial canker is a concern in cold, wet conditions



Local Food & Drinks curated by Kelsey Duda, featuring the best of Leelanau’s local flavors and protected farms and wineries

Leelanau Food & Farming Panel 5:45 PM – 6:15 PM, Moderated by Jacob Wheeler, this discussion will feature perspectives from local food and farming experts:

- Tera John — *Indigenous Knowledge Keeper & Traditional Agriculture / Food Sovereignty Coordinator for the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa & Chippewa Indians*
- Nikki Rothwell — *Director of MSU Extension Horticultural Station & Tandem Ciders co-owner*
- Nik Theisen — *Farmer at Loma Farm & co-owner of Farm Club*

Celebrate the harvest season and the rich food and farming culture of Leelanau County with music, good food, and meaningful conversations. This event is perfect for Conservancy friends new and old, including families, foodies, and farm lovers alike. This event is in conjunction with my role on the Leelanau Conservancy's Farmland Committee, which meet monthly.

INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT UPDATES

These updates feature timely discussions of pest challenges and management options dictated by weather and pest biology. Attendees are encouraged to bring examples of pests and damage found on the farm for identification and discussion. Additionally, we host invited speakers

from local organizations and Michigan State University. Updates were held weekly in Leelanau and bi-weekly in Grand Traverse, Antrim, and Benzie counties. A virtual option was also available during Wednesday meetings.

April 24, May 1, May 8, May 15, May 22, May 29, June 5, June 12, June 19, and June 26 meetings are hybrid, held at the NWMHRC 6686 S Center Hwy Traverse City, MI 49684

May 2, May 16, May 30, June 27 meetings held in Antrim at Jack White Farms 10877 US-31, Williamsburg and Grand Traverse County at Wunsch Farms.



Year-end tax estimate meetings provided farmers with the opportunity to save nearly **\$54,000**, allowing for investment back into the farm business to help build farm resilience



FARM BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Farm Business Management Educator Chris Bardenhagen works with area farmers on succession planning, financial management, and cost of production budgeting—both at the individual level and across the broader industry. In 2024, Chris assisted nine area farms with Telfarm program outreach, helping to determine end-of-year tax strategies and annual balance sheet analysis. Farmers who participate in the program gain a greater understanding of their farm's financial strengths and weaknesses, and how they can improve upon their financial standing.

These farms represent about \$5 million in sales in 2024. Despite a challenging year for many farms, year-end tax estimate meetings provided farmers with the opportunity to save nearly \$54,000. Strategizing on year-end taxes goes beyond saving money—it can also support investments and upgrades in equipment

and infrastructure, boosting the farm's long-term resilience.

Succession planning was another key focus this year. Chris worked closely with more than 10 families as they navigated important decisions about transferring their farms—a topic that continues to gain interest among producers. He also helped organize a well-attended seminar in partnership with Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, drawing in more than 40 attendees. The workshop featured presentations on the structure of the planning process, legal instruments including trusts, and critical considerations necessary for advancing a farm succession plan. Related topics included the use of conservation easements in estate planning and the role of Michigan Farm Link in connecting land-seeking farmers with landowners. Succession planning tools and resources help farm families to make informed choices to successfully transfer business knowledge, responsibilities, and assets to the next generation of farmers.

In 2024, Chris also continued work on cost of production studies that provide tools to area growers. This year work was done to develop cost budgets for peaches, apples, and blueberries, and work began on a new cost study for chestnuts—a promising crop for former tart cherry sites.

Through his efforts, Chris provides essential resources that help farmers strengthen their businesses, plan for the future, and remain competitive in a rapidly evolving agricultural landscape.



9 area farms
representing nearly
\$5 million in revenue
in 2024



2024 saw an increase of **1,130 participants**, representing a **131% increase**

FARM STRESS & AGRABILITY

Michigan AgrAbility empowers individuals in the agricultural industry to continue working despite injury, illness, or disability. The program’s mission is to enhance quality of life for farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural workers with disabilities, so that they, their families, and their communities continue to succeed in rural America. In 2024, the program served 212 clients and reached 7,725 people through workshops and trainings, with 428 direct interactions across the state.

Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS) supported clients by providing \$368,590 in funding for assistive technology projects, benefiting 23 farm clients. Community partnerships also played a vital role—Alpha Gamma Rho’s (AGR) Tau Chapter at MSU contributed \$37,000 in 2024, surpassing \$150,000 in total donations since 2013. Its February Beef Preview event continues to be a major fundraiser, directly supporting technology solutions for small farms and independent growers.

AgrAbility also collaborated with MSU’s College of Engineering for Design Day. In Spring 2024, students created a portable swarm trap hive lifter for a disabled

veteran beekeeper and Heroes to Hives instructor. In the fall, they developed a mechanized kneeler cart for a client with severe foot pain to tend rows of low growing plants, which won the Edison Award for Best Design Project. Free downloadable design plans for both projects are available at www.canr.msu.edu/agrability.

In July, AgrAbility hosted a Regional Training Workshop in Ann Arbor with national staff and 44 participants from across the U.S. and beyond. This hands-on event strengthened the broader AgrAbility network and promoted greater understanding of assistive technology in agriculture.

prices, Michigan’s agricultural community faces significant stress. Whether stemming from financial pressures or everyday hardships, MSU Extension is here to help.


In 2024, our Managing Farm Stress team delivered 45 programs reaching 1,992 people—more than double any year outside of 2023. This marks a 131% increase from 2022, highlighting the program’s growing reach and effectiveness.


A major milestone this year was the creation of the MSU Farm Stress Endowment, approved by the Board of Trustees in December 2024. With seed funding from Cherry Republic, this endowment ensures long-term support for Michigan’s agricultural community.

We also continue to offer free counseling with farm-informed therapists and financial assistance for those in Michigan Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries. Learn more or access support at: https://www.canr.msu.edu/managing_farm_stress/teletherapy-program

Farming is tough, but you don’t have to do it alone. MSU Extension stands by our farmers and is ready to support you.

MANAGING FARM STRESS

 **45** programs

 **1,992** participants

MANAGING FARM STRESS AT MSU EXTENSION

Farming is inherently demanding. From job-related injuries to volatile commodity



VITICULTURE OUTREACH

MSU Extension continues to drive progress in advancing Michigan's wine and grape industry, particularly in Northwest Michigan. Through educational programs, direct vineyard support, and research-driven initiatives, MSU Extension empowers growers and winemakers to enhance sustainability, productivity, and quality. In 2024, MSU Extension led key initiatives to improve vineyard management, elevate wine quality and address pressing industry challenges.

EDUCATION & INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT

MSU Extension organized and co-hosted numerous programs for winegrape growers, including workshops, conferences, and field days focused on climate adaptability, pest and disease management, and sustainable practices. These events featured expert speakers from across the country, providing hands-on training and the latest research insights. A highlight of the year was the **Northwest Michigan Orchard and Vineyard Show**, where leading industry experts shared best practices and innovations in vineyard management.

DIRECT SUPPORT FOR GROWERS

Extension staff provided 22 in-person site visits across Northwest Michigan, offering customized vineyard assessments and recommendations. Additionally, 16 scouting reports were delivered during the growing season, offering real-time updates on vine health, pest outbreaks, and weather trends, helping growers make informed decisions.

DIGITAL RESOURCES

In 2024, MSU Extension broadened its digital outreach, publishing a range of educational articles, videos, and scouting reports to support growers statewide. These resources offered practical, research-based guidance on vineyard management, fungal disease prevention and soil health. By leveraging digital platforms, MSU Extension ensured timely, relevant information delivery—empowering growers to make informed decisions and fostering collaboration across Michigan's winegrape industry.

DIRT TO GLASS 2024

Dirt to Glass™ remains a premier statewide event for Michigan's viticulture and enology industry, held annually in Traverse City. Organized in partnership by MSU Extension, AgBioResearch, and Intentional Agriculture, this conference aims to elevate fruit and wine quality, bolster sustainability, and position Michigan as a nationally competitive wine region.

The conference brings together leading experts from around the world to share research, expertise, and practical insights that inspire and inform local growers and winemakers. By showcasing successful strategies from international leaders, Dirt to Glass™ offers attendees valuable tools and approaches that can be tailored to Michigan's unique terroirs.

Since its launch, Dirt to Glass™ has become an essential platform for collaboration, education, and innovation within Michigan's grape and wine community. The 2024 conference welcomed 186 attendees and featured 18 speakers, including 11 local, 5 national, and 2 international presenters. Planning is already in full swing for the 2025 event in late August.



680 Extension Master Gardener Hours volunteered, valued at **\$23,657**

These hours were dedicated to educating residents and preserving the natural resources of Leelanau County



EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER

This year, through volunteer outreach, MSU Extension Master Gardeners continued to share science-based gardening knowledge, engaged citizens and empowered communities in environmentally responsible gardening practices. Currently, MSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteers are actively volunteering in 12 volunteer projects throughout the county. In 2024, Leelanau County MSU Extension Master Gardeners volunteered for 680 hours, a time contribution valued at \$23,657. MSU Extension Master Gardener volunteer activities impacted county residents by improving quality of life, empowering youth, protecting waterways, and improving food security. Projects in 2024 included the Native Plant Demonstration Garden at the Leelanau County Government Center,

Leland Public School Gardens and the native habitat restoration project at the Leelanau County Government Center (Garthe's Gardens).

County residents are always welcome to call, visit, or email the MSU Extension office for assistance with horticultural issues. Additionally, MSU Consumer Horticulture staff and MSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteers hosted a plant diagnostic clinic every Wednesday June through September of 2024. Residents were welcomed to bring samples of plants, insects, diseases and other problems; MSUE staff and Master Gardener volunteers provided the expertise to diagnose problems and provide management recommendations for 88 county residents last year. In addition, Leelanau County residents were able to receive answers to their horticultural questions by using either the online service Ask Extension or MSUE's

statewide Lawn and Garden Hotline (1-888-678-3464), which are hosted by teams of MSU specialists, educators, and MSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteers.

In addition, through the Get Started Gardening program, county residents had free access to beginner vegetable gardening kits this year. Thanks to a partnership with Leelanau Christian Neighbors, nearly 50 county families received garden kits including vegetable seeds, a garden plan, gardening tipsheets, and recipes to use with the produce they grew. Residents also had the option to attend a Get Started Gardening workshop in the Community Room at the Leelanau County Government Center, or to watch a pre-recorded webinar to help them learn how to use the seeds in their garden kits.



2024-2025 HOP RESEARCH, EDUCATION & OUTREACH

RESEARCH AND GRANT FUNDING

MSU Extension Educators, professors, specialists, and graduate students continue to secure federal and state funding for hop research in Leelanau & Grand Traverse Counties and beyond.

Based upon requests from the Michigan Brewers Guild and the Hop Quality Group, MSU designed a survey instrument to collect cultivar, acreage, yield, and hop quality data from all Michigan hop growers. Those who responded accounted for 85% of the total hop acreage in Michigan. Brewers, growers, and MSU researchers will be able to use the information to improve plant selection, improve hop quality, incorporate Michigan hop varieties into new beer recipes, and more. Presentation of the survey results spurred conversation with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. We are in conversation to codify collection of this important data on an annual basis.

MSU ANNUAL SPRING HOP KICKOFF MEETING

MSU Extension hosts the annual online ZOOM meeting with hop growers, researchers, specialists, and additional stakeholders. The meeting includes important updates to the MSU Hop Management Guide, pest control options and recommendations, irrigation and fertility best practices, and updates from the Hop Growers of Michigan. The 2025 kickoff occurred April 17 and featured Dr. Tim Miles, MSU (Hop Diseases and Control), Dr. Erin Hill, MSU (Weed ID and Control and MSU Plant and Pest Diagnostic Services), Abe Isaak, Agroliquid (Hop Fertility Management), Erin Lizotte, MSUE (Hop IPM), Rick Kawalski, Hop Growers of Michigan (Seasonal activities).

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

MSU extension educators, professors, and graduate students continue to deliver educational content in a variety of forms including conference presentations, the annual MSU Hop Management Guide for

growers, peer-reviewed journal articles, and more. MSU Hop Chat Webinar Series 2024-2025. Bi-monthly May-August

MSU Extension hosts a bi-monthly online meeting that brings together hop producers, educators, scientists, state and national industry experts, and more to discuss current growing conditions, best management practices, and pertinent issues such as potential changes to maximum residue limits that may impact Michigan hop exporters.

MSU EXTENSION REGIONAL HOP GROWING REPORTS

In 2024 Dr. Rob Serrine produced bi-monthly hop reports for 7 regions across Michigan during the growing season. The reports included up to date precipitation levels, daily temperature, and accumulated growing degree days as well as temperature, soil moisture, growth, disease, and insect pressure forecasts.



MI GREAT BEER STATE CONFERENCE & TRADE SHOW

MICHIGAN’S GREAT BEER STATE CONFERENCE & TRADESHOW

(January 8-10, 2025), Radisson Plaza Hotel at Kalamazoo Center, Kalamazoo, MI. Organized and hosted by the Michigan Brewers Guild, MSU Extension, and the Master Brewers Association of the Americas-District Michigan.

The premier Midwest brewer-grower conference and tradeshow

- Dr. Serrine hosted and moderated a brewer panel that focused on purchasing Michigan ingredients and included Scott Stuhr (Silver Spruce Brewery, Traverse City, MI)
- Dr. Serrine presented on the ‘State of Michigan’s hop industry’
- 6 invited conference speakers were from Michigan State University
- +500 speakers, trade-show representatives, and attendees from

across the U.S.

- \$200,000 = Direct economic contribution to the local economy.

This includes hotel rooms, conference facility costs, transportation and does not include indirect or induced economic benefits.

2ND MICHIGAN CRAFT BEVERAGE SUMMIT

March 11-12, 2025. Lansing, MI. The Summit was organized by the Michigan Craft Beverage Council.

The summit aimed to educate and connect growers, producers and other industry suppliers and to create collaborative partnerships and advance an ever-growing state craft beverage industry. Dr. Serrine (MSUE), Dr. James DeDecker (MSUE), and Dr. Tim Miles (MSU) were invited to participate on a speaker panel discussing the role of MSUE and MSU in Michigan’s

craft beverage raw material supply sector.

COLLABORATION

MSU Coordinates the Great Lakes Hop Working Group, a multi-state collaborative, comprised of university scientists, specialists, and government agriculture workers, that develops hop research and education priorities to meet the needs of hop growers across the Central and Eastern U.S. and Canada. The group meets virtually every month during the growing season.

MSU works hand in hand with the Hop Growers of Michigan, a 501(c)(5) non-profit organization, whose mission is to: advance the interests of Michigan hop growers and the Michigan hop industry through support of research and educational initiatives and promotion of Michigan-grown hops.



**WELCOME DANNY SCHAUB,
MSU EXTENSION LEELANAU
COUNTY 4-H PROGRAM
COORDINATOR**

Danny Schaub grew up in Leelanau County and is a proud 4-H and Michigan State University alumnus. His deep-rooted passion for agriculture and education has led him to serve as the new 4-H Program Coordinator for Leelanau County.

With a strong background in animal science, agriculture, and science, Danny is eager to support and enhance 4-H programming for local youth. Danny holds a Master of Science in Animal and Range Sciences from Montana State University and a Bachelor of Science in Animal Science from Michigan State University.

His academic and professional experiences include conducting genetic and nutritional research in livestock,

teaching university courses in sheep production and sustainability within agriculture and managing operations on his family’s lamb farm.

Through these roles, he has gained expertise in animal care, sustainable agriculture, and scientific research, all of which he hopes to incorporate into his work with 4-H.

Passionate about mentoring young people, Danny has assisted students in learning about and performing scientific research and practical farm management, ensuring they develop essential skills for future careers.

Outside of work, Danny enjoys snowboarding and exploring outdoors.

With his professional experiences in STEM and agriculture, as well as his personal interests, he hopes to expand current programs and create new opportunities where interest exists.

Overall, he is excited to bring hands-on learning experiences to 4-H members, helping to inspire the next generation of leaders. He looks forward to supporting and growing 4-H programs in Leelanau County, fostering youth engagement in agriculture, science, and leadership.

"4-H has been a major part of my life—it’s where I first learned about animal agriculture, how to snowboard, and developed a love for the outdoors. The programs taught me the value of dedication, hard work, and collaboration, shaping who I am today."

**— Danny Schaub,
Leelanau County 4-H
Program Coordinator**



4-H SPIN CLUBS & ACTIVITIES

Leelanau County 4-H offered the annual **4-H Tractor Safety** program held at the Northwest Michigan Horticultural Research Center during the month of May with the final testing in June. Two volunteer instructors, Mark Miezio & Clinton Warren, teach the program using the Purdue Extension Gearing Up for Safety Curriculum. There is classroom work along with hands on driving of the tractors in preparation for the final exam. Nine students signed up to participate and get certified this year. Certificates are given to all of those who pass and are licensed to operate tractors safely.

Tiny Tappers for Cloverbuds (ages 5-

7) and **Tap Time** (for youth ages 7-9) continue to be a popular and active club, extending the dance lessons for another session. In partnership with Suttons Bay Congregational Church these tap dance classes were able to take place after school in a church funded and created place to tap in.

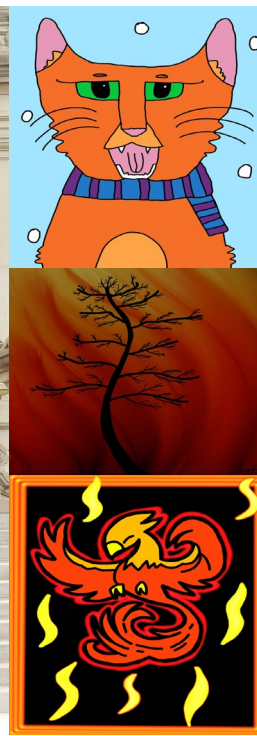
The Leelanau **4-H Smoothy Bike** was a popular activity during the Halloween event held at the Leelanau Government Center. Kids were able to ride the bike to create paintings in a spinning attachment that is on the front of the bike. The smoothy bike will continue to engage children in community events in 2025.

EMBRYOLOGY

In April, Glen Lake Public Schools offered an embryology program to 17

youth in the High-Five Program. Using the new embryology equipment purchased last year—including an automatic egg turner, candling light, and brooder—students explored the chicken life cycle firsthand. This year they set 22 eggs and hatched out 11. They learned about egg candling, identified fertilized eggs, and observed chicks hatching in real time. Moreover, youth learned developmental stages of chickens and how it can be applied to humans. The instructor, Marini LaPaugh, hopes to continue this program next year.





TECHNOLOGY

Leelanau County 4-H continues in its third year with the MSU Extension/4-H Apple Education Community Initiative grant. Apple iPads, Apple pencils, headphones, Sphero robots for STEM-focused learning and a charging cart have been used in partnership with clubs, local events and schools. The Suttons Bay School District 6th-8th Grade students have been using iPads throughout the 2024-2025 school year for digital drawing and animations. The curriculum used may have been Everyone can create, Everyone can Code, and Swift. One student used the iPads to create stickmen animation through the Stick Nodes app, utilizing a traditional 3D animation feel.

Leland Public Schools also utilized the I-Pads for in and after school programming. Youth were able to use the I-Pads for DnD and board game sessions after school. In school, youth learned to control drones and utilize robotics.

STATEWIDE 4-H

County youth continue to participate in

statewide events such as the 4-H Spectacular Youth Leadership Institute, 4-H Capitol Experience and 4-H Exploration days.

4-H Exploration Days is held on the campus of Michigan State University where youth experience a pre-college event, living in the dorms and attending educational classes and workshops. 13 youth from Leelanau County participated in this 2-day event, along with 3 chaperones. Two buses with bus drivers from Leland Public Schools drove youth from several area counties along with Leelanau County youth.

This MSU pre-college program is designed to:

- Increase responsibility, confidence, independence, accountability, problem-solving, decision-making and time management skills.
- Increase communication, teamwork, citizenship, and leadership skills.
- Foster ability to meet new people and make new friends from different places and backgrounds.
- Develop and expand career and personal interests.

- Increase college exploration and access to the Michigan State University campus and its resources.
- Develop social and academic skills needed for a successful transition to college and life as an adult.
- Give youth opportunities to try things that aren't available in their county.

CAPITOL EXPERIENCE

The 4-H Capitol Experience offered to youth in 9th grade through age 19 is held at our state capitol. Youth registrants select an issue group according to their interests, which was led by a teen facilitator. Issue groups provide a space for youth to meet peers from across the state while talking about their ideas and what they learned.





2024 NORTHWEST MICHIGAN FAIR

LIVESTOCK COUNCIL PROGRAM 2024

The Northwest Michigan Fair 4-H Livestock council held its annual 4-H livestock auction in August 2024.

Youth and volunteers participated by training and then showing their animals at the fair. Participants showed a variety of animals including lambs, goats, poultry, swine, and cattle. Later youth were able to sell their market projects at the 4-H livestock auction. Leelanau County 4-H youth had a strong showing at the fair.

Violet C. earned Grand Champion in Rabbit Showmanship, while Adeline A. received Grand Champion in Dairy Feeder Showmanship. Isabelle P. was awarded Reserve Grand Champion for Production

Chickens, and Kinsley C. earned Reserve Grand Champion in the Llama-Alpaca Obstacle Course. Judy S. took home Reserve Champion in both Goat Showmanship and the Goat Obstacle Course. Nora V. received Reserve Grand Champion for Junior Beef Market Heifer, and Callan B. earned Reserve Grand Champion in Dairy Feeder Market. Adrian C.'s heifer also won Reserve Grand Champion in the Market category.

There were also opportunities to show off youth's work with individual and club displays in the tanner building. One youth participated in 4-H mock interviews at the fair and won the prized Clover Award.

In partnership with the Northwest Michigan Fair 4-H Livestock council 4-H staffers put on an education expo held at the Grand Traverse Resort. Expert educators were taken from throughout the state to give interactive lectures. Fifty-two

Leelanau youth and 414 total region youth participated in 23 different workshops learning about livestock industries, showmanship, veterinary health, 4-H generally and more.

This event was able to award 725 educational credits to youth, required to participate in the Northwest Michigan Fair and auction. This event was a success with many youth reporting the need for it in future years.

2024 NORTHWEST MICHIGAN FAIR

- **385 youth** across several counties participated
- Auction brought in **\$1,193,962.05** in gross sales
- **9 Jr. Beef** were bought and donated back to kids to take back to fair as large beef



PANTRY TO PRESCHOOL

- 10 childcare sites
- 182 families served



ONGOING COLLABORATION WITH LEELANAU CHRISTIAN NEIGHBORS

MSU Extension continues its long-standing partnership with Leelanau Christian Neighbors Food Pantry. This collaboration includes providing pantry-friendly recipes and conducting on-site food demonstrations that inspire and educate pantry visitors.

participating site since the program's launch in 2020.

Families receive boxes twice a month, each containing ingredients for a nutritious, family-friendly recipe, along with pantry staples and a printed recipe card. The goal is to make healthy cooking more accessible and support families during times of rising food costs.

MSU Extension continues to support Northport Public School. This year, MSU Extension remains committed to supporting Northport Public Schools by providing valuable education and resources to the high school science class, which is available to both 7th and 9th grade students. The curriculum includes comprehensive nutrition education, emphasizing how nutrition impacts each body system. Students also participate in hands-on cooking lessons that bring these concepts to life.

NUTRITION EDUCATION AT BENODJENH HEAD START PRESCHOOL

Preschool students at Benodjenh Head Start are engaging in nutrition education provided by MSU Extension. The program introduces children to the five food groups and teaches them how food fuels their bodies. Students have the opportunity to try new foods, including fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, helping to build healthy habits from an early age.

WHAT FAMILIES ARE SAYING:

- “We’ve tried vegetables included in the boxes that our family wouldn’t have purchased or known how to prepare otherwise. This is a wonderful way to try new foods.”
- “With the rise in grocery prices, this program has helped us financially, we are so grateful.”

To further enhance learning, MSU Extension secured funding to purchase tower gardens for the classroom. These hydroponic systems allow students to grow their own vegetables while exploring the environmental benefits of hydroponics and how it can increase access to fresh, healthy produce.

CONNECTING EARLY CHILDCARE TO NUTRITIOUS FOODS: PANTRY TO PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

MSU Extension continues to partner with the Father Fred Foundation Food Pantry through the Pantry to Preschool Program. This initiative serves 182 families across 10 early childcare sites, including the Grand Traverse Band Benodjenh Center in Leelanau County, a

We at MSU Extension support individual and community level, or public health approaches, to prevent obesity. Through the United States Department of Agriculture Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed), we provide a combination of educational strategies, accompanied by supporting policy, systems, and environmental change interventions aimed to increase the likelihood that limited resource youth, adults, and seniors can make healthy choices.

In collaboration with ShareCare of Leelanau and the Friendship Center in Suttons Bay, MSU Extension offered a “Cooking for One” class series for older adults. The program focused on shopping, meal planning, and preparing healthy meals for one person. A highlight of the class was the hands-on cooking and tasting sessions. Participants shared that they learned new culinary techniques and discovered practical ways to incorporate more whole grains and produce into their meals.



“This was a phenomenal summit. The organizers did a great job of bringing so many voices and perspectives to the table from many key facets of this multidimensional industry.”

— Agritourism Summit attendee

AGRITOURISM SUMMIT

MSU Extension, in partnership with local leaders, proudly hosted the first-ever Agritourism Summit on May 7-8, 2024. This exciting event brought together farmers, elected officials, and community members from across Michigan to explore how supporting on-farm tourism and small businesses can strengthen rural communities. Through presentations, tours, and discussions, the summit showcased how agritourism can create jobs, attract visitors, and build stronger connections between agriculture and the public. It also emphasized the role of agritourism in preserving farmland, celebrating local culture, and boosting the long-term success of rural communities.

The two-day event kicked off with a guided bus tour through the Grand Traverse region, where 65 participants visited several agritourism spots, including Jacob’s Farm, Leelanau Cheese, Tandem Cider, and Nine Bean Rows. The tour concluded with a celebratory soiree at the Farm Club in Leelanau County, where attendees enjoyed locally grown food and spent the evening building

relationships and sharing ideas. On May 8, the Agritourism Summit convened 165 participants from 32 Michigan counties at the Hagerty Center in Traverse City. The day was filled with panel discussions that featured a wide range of speakers, including local farmers, city officials, and experts from MSU Extension. Panelists openly shared their real-life experiences—the good and the challenging—giving attendees a deeper understanding of how agritourism really works. Within MSU Extension, teams from the Community, Food & Environment Institute (CFEI), the Agriculture and Agribusiness Institute (AABI), and the Health and Nutrition Institute (HNI) worked closely together to make the event a success.

Presentations addressed critical topics such as farm stress, entrepreneurship, rural economics, the Michigan Right to Farm Act, and the evolving landscape of local policy and regulation.

Evaluation results reflected the summit’s strong impact:

- **85%** of participants reported a better understanding of the needs of farmers, elected officials, or others working in agritourism
- **88%** felt their knowledge was enhanced in ways that will help them be more effective in their roles
- **91%** said they plan to apply what they learned to future decision-making

Following the success and excitement of the first summit, MSU Extension is thrilled to announce that the next Agritourism Summit will be held in Antrim County in 2026! Plans are already in progress to engage local partners, showcase regional agritourism businesses, and strengthen collaboration between farmers, policymakers, and community leaders.

“The tour of the various farms was eye opening. Size didn’t matter—being creative, willing to take a leap of faith, and working within agritourism made the difference.”

— Agritourism Summit attendee

PRODUCT CENTER IMPACTS

- **19** Businesses
- **82** Counseling Hours
- **\$41,276** total sales growth in 2024
- **Over \$30 million** in annual sales (combined)
- **109** total employees (combined)
- **2** jobs retained
- **4** new license secured



MSU PRODUCT CENTER BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

The Michigan State University Product Center supports entrepreneurs in Northwest Michigan who are launching or growing businesses in food and agriculture. From farm-based products to value-added goods, the center provides expert guidance through business planning, market research and feasibility analysis.

Through its Traverse City-based innovation counselor, the Product Center offers personalized guidance to help local entrepreneurs turn ideas into viable products and services. In 2024 alone, staff worked with 19 entrepreneurs in Leelanau County, delivering 82 hours of direct client support.

By fostering local business development, the Product Center plays a key role in strengthening the regional economy and building a resilient, community-based food system.

EXPLORING COOPERATIVE SOLUTIONS IN A CHALLENGING MARKET

Farmers across Michigan are navigating

mounting pressures—from rising input and marketing costs to volatile commodity prices and broader affordability challenges. These conditions make it harder for individuals and small businesses to thrive independently.

Cooperative business structures offer a powerful alternative. For farmers, co-ops can lower costs and strengthen market access through shared efforts. For individuals, they can provide collaborative solutions to sourcing goods and services that might otherwise be out of reach. When used effectively, cooperatives create flexible, community-driven responses to economic challenges.

To help farmers explore this model, MSU Extension partnered with the Crosshatch Center for Art & Ecology to present “Co-ops 101” an event introducing cooperative principals and the steps to co-op development. Held in Traverse City on March 2, 2024, “Co-ops 101” brought together entrepreneurs and cooperative experts in a hybrid virtual and in-person format. Presenters Dr. Chris Bardenhagen and Parker Jones, MBA, offered in-depth insights on legal due diligence and business planning, complemented by community-based perspectives from Daniel Marbury of the Crosshatch Center.

The event demonstrated how technical expertise and local knowledge can work together to support sustainable, regional economic growth.

By equipping people with the tools to assess and implement cooperative strategies, this program supports informed decision-making and builds momentum for resilient, people-centered economies.

CONNECTING ENTREPRENEURIAL COMMUNITIES CONFERENCE

Held May 30-31, 2024 in Cadillac, the annual Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities (CEC) Conference brought together 111 attendees from across the state, including 21 from MSU Extension District 3, to explore strategies for building resilient local economies.

Designed to support chambers of commerce, downtown development authorities, municipal leaders, and economic development professionals, the conference focused on practical approaches for strengthening entrepreneurial ecosystems through community collaboration and place-based innovation.



BEBOT & PIXIE DRONE



What's behind the decline in northern Michigan's whitefish population?

by Trevor Roubadeaux | Mon, August 5th 2024 at 9:33 AM
 Updated Mon, August 5th 2024 at 6:47 PM



MARK BREDERLAND
 MICHIGAN SEA GRANT EXTENSION PROGRAM EDUCATOR

NEW COMMISSIONER SCHOOL

New Commissioner School 2024 offered foundational training for both newly elected and experienced county commissioners, equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary to govern effectively. This comprehensive program provided participants with a deeper understanding of the complexities of county governance, clarified the roles and responsibilities of commissioners, and offered practical insights into county finance, budgeting, and strategic decision-making. In addition, attendees explored best practices for collaboration, communication, and policy development to better serve their communities.

The 2024 New Commissioner School was designed with flexibility in mind, offering a hybrid learning format. Participants could choose between self-paced online modules or live webinars held throughout November. These virtual sessions were followed by full-day, in-person workshops held in December, providing an opportunity for hands-on learning, peer networking, and engagement with subject matter experts.

SEA GRANT

In 2024, the Michigan Sea Grant Extension

program continued its mission to deliver high-impact outreach and education, supporting Great Lakes stewardship across coastal communities—including Leelanau County and the surrounding region. With its mission to bring science to the shoreline, Michigan Sea Grant led a variety of initiatives focused on environmental resilience, water quality, and sustainable use of Great Lakes resources.

A key highlight of the year was the Freshwater Summit, held in October of 2024, where over 85 people gathered for a full day of presentations and dialogue on critical regional water issues. Topics included Grand Traverse Bay fisheries and ongoing Lake Whitefish restoration, updates on the FishPass project at Union Street Dam, and a broader view of Great Lakes ecosystem challenges. The event provided a valuable opportunity for local leaders, researchers, and residents to engage with cutting-edge science and policy developments.

Sea Grant also advanced its work on shoreline stewardship and marina sustainability, including support for the Clean Marinas Program. This included the use of innovative tools like the PixieDrone and BeBot beach robot, which help remove macroplastics from beaches before they break down into harmful microplastics.

These efforts directly support cleaner, healthier recreational and working waterfronts.

In addition to public events and field work, Sea Grant Extension professionals were a trusted resource for local residents, answering questions on a wide range of topics—from invasive species and boat wash stations to fluctuating lake levels, erosion, fisheries trends, and resilient shoreline development. These efforts ensure that Great Lakes communities, including those in Leelanau County, have access to the best available science and practical guidance to support sustainable, thriving shorelines.

RENEWABLE ENERGY EDUCATION

October 9, 2024-Leelanau Planning Commission invited MSU's own Mary Aitken Reilly, MS, AICP to give a program, "Changes Ahead Renewable Energy Permitting in Michigan". The program was held at the Leelanau County Government Center, and about 15 people attended. The 1.5 hour program covered changes due to renewable energy permitting for utility scale wind, solar and battery storage systems due to the adoption of new state legislation.

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