

## Message from the District Director



Mother Teresa said, "I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters and create many ripples." MSU Extension acts as a catalyst for lasting change across the Upper Peninsula and beyond, reaching all ages and communities. Our programs support youth, farmers, older adults, and local economies, making a broad impact.

For over 100 years, MSU Extension has partnered with organizations to bring Michigan State University's knowledge to our communities, amplifying our collective impact. Together, we achieve more than any single entity could alone.

I've been with MSU Extension for nine years, first as a Health Educator and now as District Director for the Eastern Upper Peninsula. I look forward to continuing our work and exploring new ways to collaborate and create positive ripples of impact in Alger County and beyond.

Erin Daines, District 2 Director

## Alger County Staff

- Anna Ellis-UPREC Forestry and Natural Resources Educator
- Abbey Palmer- UPREC Community Foods Systems Educator
- Brian Wibby-UPREC Youth leader for social change Educator
- James DeDecker, Director UPREC
- Mary Ellen Pond- Administrative Support
- Tyreen Prunick - 4-H Program Coordinator
- Vicki Ballas - Community Nutrition Instructor

## Contact Information

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97

EXTENSION PROGRAMS INCLUDING ALGER RESIDENTS

1075

ALGER RESIDENTS ATTENDED EXTENSION PROGRAMS

### Upper Peninsula Research & Extension Center

- The team reached **866** participants at the Chatham Farm throughout 2023
- **22** Alger County residents participated in the Ag For Tomorrow Conference

30

Extension programs held in the county

583

People attended programs held in the county



## REPORTING

35

Extension educators, specialists and program staff reported data for Alger County

27

County direct one-to-one education contact

21

"Ask Extension" questions answered in Alger County

7,470

questions answered across the state

158

Youth enrolled in county 4-H

1,254

Youth participants



## Staff Success Stories

### Vicki Ballas - Community Nutrition Instructor

*"I have been programing at the Trenary Community Center for years using Eat Smart Live Strong for Seniors. There is a women who comes to many of my programs because she is the person who unlocks the doors to let us in. She often stays and participates fully. I was there recently for a One Time Presentation and she was there again to let us in and she also stayed.*



*"While talking about fruits and veggies and asking if anyone knew how many cups of fruit MyPlate recommends she quickly said 1 1/2 to 2 cups and then explained that she was thinking about me recently when she realized that she eats fruit every day now without much effort...it had become a habit. and she gave credit to me for all those years of sending that message and offering ways to make it happen. Sometimes it takes years to change habits from unhealthy ones to healthy ones. Persistence is key."*



*"I eat fruit now Vicki because of you, it finally took hold!" "I eat fruit everyday, remember when I only ate it once in a while!"*



### Anna Ellis - Forestry & Natural Resources Educator

*"On October 28, 2023, I led a Forest Forensics hike in Alger County. Local participants were enthusiastic and thankful to have a free educational event held in their area, and said that they were excited for future programs. This was the first program I organized since starting my role this summer, and it was a success!"*

*"One participant said that creating this space for community members to discuss history and natural resources together is beneficial to the community."*

### Abbey Palmer - Community Foods Systems Educator

*"A NIFA SPECA grant application was written for continued LIFT-UP work to focus on urban farms and schools in urban areas.*

*"The USDA Food and Agriculture Service Learning Project grant, Locally Integrated Food Teams in the UP (LIFT-UP), focuses on student-led interventions to increase Farm to School procurement.*

*A presentation of this work at Association of American Agricultural Educators was carried out in Raleigh, SC.*

*Qualitative data indicate that students felt that their participation in land-based learning projects helped them re-envision school and school lunch.*

*"A full proposal for Michigan Health Endowment Fund's Healthy Lifestyles grant, LIFT-UP: Locally Integrated Food Teams in the UP was funded to Marquette-Alger RESA and 35 percent of my time is a sub-award. Students gathered for a Celebration of Student work at MSU UPREC in May and teachers attended professional development for three days in June. Planning and conducting these events, as well as reporting to the funder, were a major time investment this quarter."*



## 4-H 2023 Recap

2023 4-H Camp at Clear Lake Educator Center

*“Alger County had a wonderful group of 14 youth, 2 teen counselors, 1 adult volunteer, and 1 program coordinator attend U.P. 4-H Camp at Clear Lake Education Center nestled in a lush forest off the grid Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday this week. The camper’s participated in a clue challenge, a dance, arts & crafts, apple play, canoeing, campfire time (skits, songs & smores), ice cream making, introduction to coding, iPad: nature sketching, learning financial literacy through a money carnival, nature hikes, team sports, scavenger hunts, shooting sports (archery & BB guns), swam, and more - all while learning new skills and making new friends. We ended with awards and a slideshow!”*



Tyreen Prunick  
4-H Program Coordinator

## 2023 Alger County Fair

Thank you to all the 4-H families and youth for entering exhibits, marketing the action, raising livestock, participating in the costume contest and scavenger hunt, running games (we had **more than 84 youth** come to the game tent), and all the other volunteering that goes into making this family fun event happen for our community! The decorating and participating in the parade – **our group took 2nd place in the group/organization category!**

For 4-H youth, the fair is an excellent opportunity to showcase and be recognized for what they have learned in the 4-H program during the year. This was a very interactive experience for all that participated.



Thank you also to the Alger County Fair Board for donating the game prizes and the proceeds from the games to the 4-H Council.

## 2023 4-H Recap Continued...

*Life of Lake Superior, at Grand Island in Munising had a fantastic group of **17 curious youth** explorers and a teen volunteer attend this year's programming. The youth learned how Grand Island and Echo Lake are connected to Lake Superior through various hands-on activities. We took the ferry to the island, foraged for and created living museum art masterpieces (and painted images of such to take home if desired), caught, sampled, and sorted macroinvertebrate (crayfish and frogs too), learned some history about the cemetery, and played games.*

They also enjoyed a healthy picnic lunch packed with education about our local fish – including a fish fry (local white fish fried by volunteers) and ice cream making (a bit of extra sugar made for milkshakes instead). A BIG thank you to: Grand Island National Recreation Area, Grand Island Ferry Services, Michigan Sea Grant, Pat's Foods, Seaberg Pontoon Rentals, Vanlandshoots & Sons Fish Market, and the U.S. Forest Service.



*According to research completed by the Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development at Tufts University, 4-H'ers are 4X more likely to make contributions to their communities, 2X more likely to be civically active, and 2X more likely to make healthier choices.*

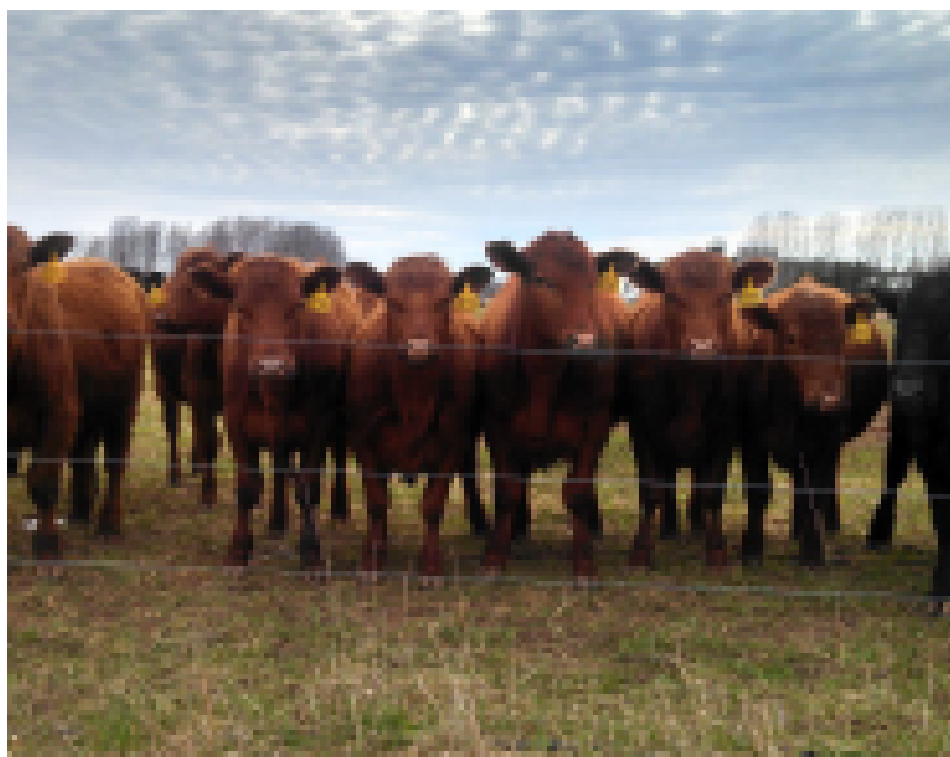


Upper Peninsula Research  
and Extension Center  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY



Founded in 1899, the MSU Upper Peninsula Research and Extension Center (UPREC) is a hub for sustainable agriculture innovation and education that is relevant to the environment, economy and needs of UP communities.

Applied research on forage & beef cattle, field crops, and organic specialty crops is conducted at our 830-acre facility in Chatham, MI, and on collaborating farms across the UP. Outreach efforts focus on expanding capacity in local food and agriculture systems by educating youth, producers and non-farmer audiences about the importance of agriculture for community prosperity.



**Forage and Grass-fed Beef Cattle**

Forage and cattle are the foundation of UP agriculture; grazing can lower producers' costs of production and environmental impact. UPREC maintains a cow-calf herd of 350 Red Angus and Red Angus -Akaushi cross cattle bred for exceptional performance and meat quality when raised on pastures. The cattle are rotationally grazed in summer and fed bailage outside during the winter to integrate them with our cropping system and enhance soil health. UPREC also conducts forage research to identify adapted forage varieties and best management practices for UP cattle producers.



**Commodity Grains and Specialty Field Crops**

Better than 50 percent of the upward trend in crop yields over the last several decades can be attributed to genetic improvements achieved through breeding and selection. UPREC coordinates research projects evaluating new field crop varieties at sites across Northern Michigan. These projects leverage partnerships between MSU and Michigan's Ag industries to provide growers with unbiased information on variety performance. Our research accounts for both yield.

**The Farm Business Incubator Program** aims to serve as the launching point for individuals interested in starting their own farming enterprise. This residential program provides farming entrepreneurs with the necessary tools and assistance needed to ensure a solid start to their farming career. Land, equipment, tools, and mentorship are provided to qualified applicants for up to five years so they can develop a business plan, establish accounts, build capital, and fine-tune skills. Participants will grow alongside the talented North Farm staff and other farmers, sharing ideas, techniques, and labor. The program runs for up to five growing seasons, beginning in March.



## 1.2 Million in Research Dollars Coming into the County

- **\$9,000** Targeted potato research within Michigan's UP to meet producer needs and increase growth of the Michigan potato industry. Michigan Potato Industry Commission
- **\$149,676** Improving beef cattle production with guanidinoacetic acid (GAA) supplement. MAAA
- **\$694,479** The Midwestern Hemp Research Collaborative: Participatory Research and Extension to Grow a Sustainable Hemp Industry. USDA-NIFA Supplemental and Alternative Crops Program
- **\$38,939** Evaluation of Corn Varieties for the Michigan Craft Distilling Industry. MDARD Craft Beverage Council
- **\$72,165** Developing a Forage Grass Maturity Index. Michigan State University Project GREEN
- **\$13,826** Supporting Adoption of Elite Oat and Barley Varieties in Michigan. Michigan Crop Improvement Association
- **\$36,716** Developing Quality Analysis Protocols for Non-Barley Grains Used in Craft Beverages. MDARD Craft Beverage Council
- **\$40,000** On-going Investigation of Winter Hardiness to Advance Winter Malting Barley as a Climate Adaptation Strategy in Michigan. MDARD Craft Beverage Council.
- **\$10,301** Evaluation of a dual-deterrent repellent, Deer Out, to reduce soybean defoliation by white-tailed deer. Michigan Soybean Committee
- **\$49,391** The Seed to Kitchen Collaborative: Identifying Improved Vegetable Varieties for Organic Direct-Market Growers. USDA-SARE
- **\$49,339** The Cultivar Check Program: Utilizing the Midwestern Hemp Database (MHD) and Grower-Cooperators to Assess Variety Performance of High Cannabinoid Hemp. USDA-SARE
- **\$59,247** Developing research and extension collaborations to support climate adaptation by Midwest organic vegetable producers: a planning proposal. USDA-OREI

### Teaching

Locally Integrated Food Teams in the U.P.  
**5 classrooms** studying Ag & Natural Resources in U.P. high schools &

**106 high school students** were engaged in a land-based learning curriculum focused on increasing local food procurement for public school lunch programs

Northern Michigan University - CH420 Medicinal Plant Chemistry

**31 undergraduate students** were introduced to hemp production and research

Northern Michigan University - Earth, Environmental and Geographical Sciences Dept.

**5 undergraduate students** contributed to organic cover crop termination research

MSU Extension Internship Program

**2 undergraduate students** were engaged in UPREC research and outreach

MARESA Internship Program

**1 high school student** was introduced to agriculture production and research

MARESA Transitions Farm Club

**5 young adults with special needs** were introduced to agriculture and related career opportunities

### Outreach

**UPREC direct outreach activities reached over 3,500 people in 2023. Examples include the following:**

Michigan Great Beer State Conference and Trade Show  
**505 brewers, processors and hop/barley growers** received education

Agripalooza Agriculture and Natural Resources Field Day  
**344 U.P. fifth-grade students** were exposed to Ag and natural resources education and career opportunities

American Society of Brewing Chemists Conference  
**224 participants** learned about UPREC malting barley research

Upper Peninsula Food Summit  
**183 participants** learned about current issues in the U.P. food system

Agriculture for Tomorrow Conference  
**121 participants** learned how to improve their farm/homestead

MDARD/MEDC/MSU Michigan Distilling Grain Summit  
**119 grain producers and distillers** explored opportunities for using MI grain in spirits

U.P. School Field Trips  
**82 students** of all ages visited UPREC to learn about Ag topics

UPREC Forage Field Day  
**35 forage producers and researchers** learned about UPREC forage research