



University of Maine  
Cooperative Extension —  
**Piscataquis County**

**Annual Report  
2020 - 2021**



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*Photographs of people not wearing masks were taken prior to the coronavirus pandemic. The University of Maine, University of Maine at Machias, and University of Maine Cooperative Extension follow federal and state Centers for Disease Control and Prevention health and safety guidance, which currently includes social distancing and use of face coverings.*

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# Office of the Dean

*Welcome to the University of Maine Cooperative Extension! We are located across the state in 16 county offices, research farms, 4-H camps and learning centers, and online. We are the largest outreach component of the University of Maine and reach more Maine people than any other entity within the seven campus University of Maine System. Our work is focused on helping Maine communities thrive and we do so by connecting people to research-based information, education and services. UMaine Cooperative Extension conducts the state's most successful out-of-school youth education program through 4-H, empowering young people to reach their full potential. Extension also helps support, sustain, and grow the food-based economy across the entire state of Maine. In addition, we partner with other organizations and programs to provide additional educational opportunities to a diversity of audiences across this state.*



*UMaine Cooperative Extension is determined to make a positive difference in our areas of excellence and beyond for the citizens of Maine. Explore our website, visit a county office, and contact our enthusiastic workforce.*

— Hannah Carter, Dean

## **Piscataquis County Extension Association**

### **Executive Committee:**

Dr. Beth McEvoy - President  
George McKay - Secretary  
Dr. Karen Murphy - Treasurer  
Ben Cookson  
Steve DeGoosh

Judy Cross  
Dr. Rick Cabot  
Gretchen Huettner - Retired  
Carole Boothroyd - Retired

### **Piscataquis County Staff:**

Anette Moulton, Administrative Specialist  
Donna Coffin, Extension Professor  
Emily Mott, 4-H Community Education Assistant  
Laurie Bowen, Food System Community Education Assistant  
Sheila Norman, 4-H Professional  
Trisha Smith, Home Horticulture Community Education Assistant

**Putting university research to work in homes, businesses, farms,  
and communities for over 100 years.**

Our annual report features highlights of recent accomplishments  
and the difference we make in the lives of Maine citizens and their communities.

# University of Maine Cooperative Extension's Digital Presence and **Pandemic Response**

In 2020, University of Maine Extension's website at [extension.umaine.edu](http://extension.umaine.edu) – a composite of 58+ interconnected websites – received over 2.8 million pageviews. More than 50,000 followers followed or were subscribed to UMaine Extension's 58 county and program-specific social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, and Instagram. More than 93,000 web visits were referred from social media. More than 400 educational videos were available to visitors on our YouTube and Kaltura channels or embedded in our web pages. More than 8,350 clients used our online registration system to register for classes, workshops, events, and more. In the wake of COVID-19, UMaine Extension quickly moved its workshops, classes, and events online. Between March 1 and December 31, 2020, unique pageviews on the UMaine Extension website increased nearly 30% over the same period of time the previous year.

- New resources were created and added to the website and social media, including COVID-19 support for Maine farmers, livestock producers, U-pick operations, cut flower and seedlings industries, and consumers.
- Weekly Zoom meetings allowed producers to share what was happening on their farms. New “Learn at Home” resources provided educational opportunities for parents, teachers, and youth during school closures.
- Horticulture and food preservation videos, webinars, interactive forms, and virtual office hours provided answers to an increased number of questions from home gardeners.
- A new interactive locations map allowed clients to find Maine farm and seafood products; the map has been viewed 190,000+ times since it became available to the public on March 20, 2020.
- With the closing of state and county fairs, the first-ever Maine State Virtual Fair was created to recognize 4-H'ers for their efforts on projects they completed and skills they gained over the past year.
- More than 180 online events were promoted through Facebook, which had a reach of 470,000 views and 11,7000 responses.
- Our popular Ask the Expert online form received 346 questions from Maine home gardeners between March 1 and December 31, 2020, nearly twice the number during the same period in 2019.
- 42 new publications were published specifically in response to the pandemic. These included: *Finding New Markets for Maine Farmers*, *Managing Garden Centers and On-Farm Seedlings Sales Safely in Maine*, *Best Practices for Washing Produce*, *Use of Sanitizers on Commercial Farms*, *Tips for Starting a Healthy Garden*, and *Maine Maple Tours: Guidance During COVID-19*. Extension typically publishes 22 new publications in a 12-month period.
- **Piscataquis County Staff contributed by writing & editing new publications & websites; conducting & promoting online events through newsletters & social media; and responding to individual clients that had questions.**

# COUNTY HIGHLIGHTS—

## MAINE FOOD SYSTEM

### Home Gardening

The 2020 - 2021 pandemic brought out the home gardener in more people in Piscataquis County. Learning to garden for the first time, renewed garden interest, and willingness to share garden expertise with others all have helped increase the amount of food people have been able to raise for themselves. Piscataquis County staff assisted with the development of numerous home gardening videos, factsheets, school garden, and Zoom programs. Individuals were assisted with insect, disease, weed, and vertebrate pest identification and management information.



**One Tomato** - This is the 8th year that the Piscataquis County Extension Association has purchased cherry tomato seedlings to distribute in the county to encourage people to grow their own food. 414 seedlings (total 3,085 in eight years) were distributed in 2021 in Piscataquis County at grocery stores and other venues. Through a harvest survey we estimate each seedling produced over \$8 worth of cherry tomatoes. Over 80% of folks were new to this project in 2021.

This year we again purchased the seedlings from Ellis Greenhouse in Hudson and partnered with the Dover-Foxcroft Food Cupboard and their Garden in a Box program as well as the following stores: Indian Hill in Greenville, KC Store in Parkman, Whitney's Family Supermarket in Guilford, Tradewinds in Milo, and Robinsons Convenience Store in Brownville. One Tomato seedlings were also available at the Dover Cove Farmers' Market, school gardens, and at the Extension Office in Dover-Foxcroft.

This year, we had a limited number of direct sow vegetable seed grab bags with 10 to 15 different types of vegetables that we offered to folks that got the One Tomato seedlings. Our thanks go to the following businesses that donated the seeds: Bangor Walmart, Erickson's Hardware (Hampden), Hampden Hardware, Hutchen's Greenhouse (Eddington), and Blue Seal Grow Center (Bangor). Also, our thanks to Master Gardener Volunteers Karen Marysdaughter and Jude Thompson who collected, organized, and packaged the grab bags.

UMaine Extension colleagues in Aroostook County expanded the One Tomato program by distributing 250 seedlings in Presque Isle and Fort Kent. This fall we will again be surveying those who received the seedlings to see how well they grew and produced during the summer.





## Extension on the Road

UMaine Extension provides free research-based information to farmers, gardeners, natural resource-based businesses, value-added businesses, and 4-H Youth through our Piscataquis County Office in Dover-Foxcroft. This year, staff traveled to Greenville, Milo, and Guilford to bring “**Extension on the Road**” on the first Fridays of the month, April-October. We have soil testing kits, gardening fact sheets, starting a farm, and 4-H Youth information available.

“**Extension on the Road**” is a great opportunity for you to share your gardening questions and successes, pick up some factsheets on raising livestock, find 4-H Youth program information, and get to know Piscataquis Extension staff. You could bring a diseased plant or tree branch for diagnosis, a bug or weed for identification, or a soil test to transport to the lab. We have fact sheets and program information to help you make decisions about managing and marketing crops, livestock, and value-added food products. If you are interested in making a difference in the lives of local young people or your kids or grandkids are looking for ways to channel their creativity, 4-H has opportunities for youth and adults to get involved.



UMaine Extension staff have expertise in different areas, and we do our best to answer your question immediately. We sometimes need time to research your issue, to consult with UMaine Extension Insect and Disease Diagnosticians, or other UMaine Extension experts to determine options and solutions available. We may even recommend you contact another agency or organization. Our goal is for you to have the best information possible.

Check out our website for the next time “**Extension on the Road**” is coming to a town near you.

# COUNTY HIGHLIGHTS —

## 4-H POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



### Rural Youth Futures Survey



As rural communities face changes in local economies, populations, and workforce needs, what does the next generation of residents and workers value and want? That question was the motivation for the Rural Youth Futures project. Researchers and extension agents from several universities including Dr. Jessica Leahy, UMaine School of Forest Resources, joined forces with local non-profits to find out what middle and high schoolers think in two forest-dependent regions: Piscataquis and north Somerset Counties in Maine and Coos County in Oregon.

Increasing the number of young people and working families is a critical issue in many rural towns. Natural amenities and attachment to community can retain young people or attract in-migration. We asked students to tell us about their community to better understand what the community has to offer. We also asked them where they want to live in the future to see if there's an interest in living in these places among young people.

Piscataquis County Extension staff are involved in the Boston Fed Maine Highlands Working Community Challenge Grant project to empower and

enable low-income individuals of Piscataquis County to become healthy, independent and engaged members of the community by reducing youth/young adult disengagement and disaffection, focusing attention on training and mentoring skills needed to successfully obtain and maintain local quality employment, and working with local employers to develop local professional and technical training programs to meet their employment needs.

Where do you want to live and expect to live when you are 30 years old?



### Piscataquis County 4-H Clubs, Spin Groups, and School Programs

- **Super Science Club**
- **Wild Blueberry Adventures Club**
- **Outdoor Activities SPIN – cross country skiing & snowshoeing**
- **Public Speaking Tournament - Virtual**
- **Tractor Supply Clover Promotion**
- **Choose Health-Food, Fun, and Fitness Spln**
- **Independent members**

School Quarantine Activities with Piscataquis County 4-H & Garden UMaine Extension Staff

- **Art of Math Virtual Classes with Brownville Elementary School**
- **Grow Microgreens Garden Activity with SEDOMOCHA Elementary Students**
- **Soil Your Undies with SEDOMOCHA Elementary & Piscataquis SWCD**

# COUNTY HIGHLIGHTS —

## COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Master Gardener Volunteers

The 2021 crop of Piscataquis County Master Gardener Volunteers were trained virtually through Brightspace online learning class. It was a first time for the instructors (county and state Extension staff) as well as the volunteers. Videos, readings, discussion topics, assignments, and Zoom meetings were all used to connect experienced gardeners from throughout the state.

Piscataquis MGVs joined with Penobscot and Aroostook to form a cohort for more localized online programs. Piscataquis MGV are working on the Sedomocha school garden and the Sedomocha Nature Trail. The nature trail has been neglected for years and along with the Piscataquis County Extension Executive Committee, MGV hope to improve the trail so residents can again enjoy quiet walks in the woods where they can learn a little more about the local flora and fauna.

### Food Insecurity

Piscataquis County staff have been involved in a number of projects that have impacted food insecurity in a positive way in the county.



**Garden-in-a-Box** - is a collaborative project of [Piscataquis Regional Food Center](#) and UMaine Cooperative Extension Piscataquis County. Funding for Garden in a Box resource binders (with DVDs and print publications) for individuals and libraries, plus a 15 gal cloth container, soil, plants, supplies, tools, and individual coaching for Garden in a Box gardeners are made possible by the Quimby Family Foundation.

Garden in a Box Resource Binders are available to the general public in six Maine Highland area libraries (Abbott Library in Dexter, Thompson Free Library in Dover-Foxcroft, Guilford Memorial Library in Guilford, Harvey Memorial Library in Parkman, Monson Public Library, Shaw Public Library in Greenville). Beginning gardeners will find a wealth of information to support their efforts, whether they grow in containers or according to more traditional methods. Participating libraries will host a Garden in a Box "Salad Garden" planted with tomatoes, cucumbers, and lettuce. Patrons can check out the Garden in a

Box Resource Binder like they would any other library book, and follow the progress of the library's salad garden over the growing season.

**Share Shed**- located outside the Piscataquis County Extension Office next to the courthouse is a community sharing space where anyone can "*Share what you can, and take what you need!*" Our neighbors have shared their excess seeds/seedlings and produce and others were able to pick up FREE items that their families could use. Last year we estimated 232 pounds of food was dropped off during the season. Staff posts on Facebook when large amounts of produce is shared and typically the post is shared and viewed by hundreds of folks.

# STATEWIDE HIGHLIGHTS—

## MAINE FOOD SYSTEM



### Selling Meat in Maine

**Relevance** — Livestock producers in Maine have found many ways to sell their animals for farm income including the live animal market channels, such as auctions, as well as wholesale and retail market channels, such as carcass sales or cuts of meat direct to restaurants or consumers. As livestock farmers get more and more animals, their attention to marketing becomes more diversified and they look to places that give a higher return. Many look to meat sales direct to consumers to try to increase their market options. Meat sales require a higher level of involvement from the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry (MDACF) as these animals need to go through a state or federal inspected facility to be sold in commerce. The farm’s label doesn’t need to be attached if they use the slaughterhouse “house” label and have the licenses to distribute.

**Response** — The details of this market method may seem daunting, but the University of Maine Cooperative Extension (UMaine Extension) and the MDACF sponsored two sessions on “Selling Meat in Maine” for red meat producers and for poultry producers by Zoom, live-streamed to Facebook and recorded sessions for those unable to attend the live sessions in the spring of 2021. Speakers were from UMaine Extension, MDACF, and farmers who produce and processor livestock.



**Results** — Using traditional and social media to promote the sessions, 101 people signed up for the program or program materials that were sent afterwards. 67 attended one or both sessions live. Another 208 were reached through the Facebook live-streaming of the program. When registering people were asked if they raised livestock (75% yes) and what type of livestock they raised. And they indicated 47% chickens, 33% beef, 23% swine, 18% sheep, 14% turkeys, and 13% goats.

In a post program evaluation, participants estimated an average of \$94.50 per animal increase in income as a result of these sessions. The average number of animals for these respondents was 29, so an estimated increase in income per person who attended the sessions was \$2,693. The staff with the MDACF reported that they had one new 1,000 exemption and custom exempt farm, one new licensee, and a home processor, and received 4 other inquiries about livestock processing from program participants.

### Victory Gardens for ME

**Relevance** — In 2020, the pandemic created a significant increase in demand for home food production information, particularly from beginning gardeners, and simultaneously put a stop to UMaine Extension’s ability to provide in person programming to support that interest.

**Response** — In response, Extension created a 10-part video series for Mainers growing their first vegetable garden, with episodes including Vegetable Gardening, Planning Your Garden, Preparing Your Garden Soil, Get Planting, Managing Weeds, How to Water Your Garden, What’s Wrong With My Plant?, What to Do With Your Harvest, Pain-Free Gardening, and Preparing Your Garden for Winter. Extension also created a series of thrice-a-week online “Garden Chats.”



**Results** — The Victory Garden series has had more than 5,000 views, and over the 10 weeks they ran the Garden Chats had 1,155 participants.

### Victory Gardens for ME

Video series for Mainers growing their first vegetable garden

## STATEWIDE HIGHLIGHTS —



### 4-H POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

#### 4-H Volunteers Go Virtual to Help Youth Thrive in the Pandemic

**Relevance** - As the pandemic progressed there was widespread concern for youth who were experiencing isolation and loss of daily routine and social outlets. 4-H is well-positioned to help families reduce isolation and increase social interaction, and while it could not be done in person, it could be done with virtual platforms programming. “4-H can build intentional programs for youths as we move from reaction to recovery and rebuilding...ensure that young people not only survive but thrive in this time like no other” (Arnold and Rennekemp, 2020). To help youth to thrive, UMaine Extension staff recognized it would be crucial to have confident and capable volunteers on board. However, many 4-H club volunteers were not confident in adapting from in-person to virtual programming.

**Response** - Extension created a collection of six tip sheets: *4-H Volunteers Can Go Virtual!* The tip sheets and embedded videos provided tangible ideas to help volunteers navigate how to set up and run virtual meetings. Topics included:



- 1) Tips for Hosting a Virtual 4-H Club Meeting
- 2) Components of a Virtual 4-H Club Meeting
- 3) Ice Breaker Ideas for Virtual 4-H Club Meetings
- 4) 4-Hing at a Distance Activity Ideas
- 5) Virtual Judging Workshop
- 6) Virtual Skill-a-thon

**Results** - These resources were widely shared through a variety of means, including a website that has received more than 5,206 views from individuals located across 44 states and 16 countries.

## Web-based Resources for Families, Caregivers, and Educators

**Relevance** - The pandemic caused Maine schools to close and left families and children with huge gaps in daily structure and educational experiences.

**Response** - UMaine Extension responded by creating a web-based resources center for families, caregivers, and educators. We assembled a collection of activity books, guides, and resources with topics ranging from science to financial literacy to help children remain engaged in educational experiences throughout the time period of school closures. The resources were arranged by age range and subject area for easy searchability. We also created and organized a daily schedule of video clips to engage youth and families in additional learning:

- Mondays - Stir Together (nutrition)
- Tuesdays - Teen Science Cafe (science)
- Wednesdays - Wednesday in the Woods (environmental and arts)
- Thursdays - Growing Maine Gardeners (gardening)
- Fridays - 4-H Fridays Fun (fun and creativity)



**Results** - In just over 6 months our website “Learn at Home: Educational Resources to Use During School Closures” had more than 11,100 page views, and our educational video clips had over 8,100 views.

# STATEWIDE HIGHLIGHTS —

## SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### So You Want to Farm in Maine? On-line

**Relevance** – Current farmers thinking about changing farm enterprises and new farmers interested in starting a farm may lack the skill, knowledge and confidence to investigate their options to start, adapt, and maintain a profitable land-based business. Major issues farmers and potential farmers (whether full-time or part-time) need to overcome include access to capital, understanding of rules and regulations affecting agriculture operations, and marketing options.

**Response** - To enhance the business management knowledge, skills, and confidence of new and established farmers, UMaine

Extension developed the “So, You Want to Farm in Maine” (SYWTFIM) series. Since 2015, 292 people have participated through face-to-face, video-linked, webinar, live-streamed, Zoom, and archived sessions to learn about agriculture enterprise selection, business planning, record keeping, market research, regulations, and resource identification. In spring of 2021 the class was all virtual with 68 people registered.



**Results** - Knowledge change was assessed by a post program evaluation. The 47 participants (16%) who completed an evaluation, all reported having moderate to considerable knowledge and understanding of the following topics following the program: Goal Setting and Farm Business Management Plan Development, Marketing and Market Research, Recordkeeping (Production and Financial).

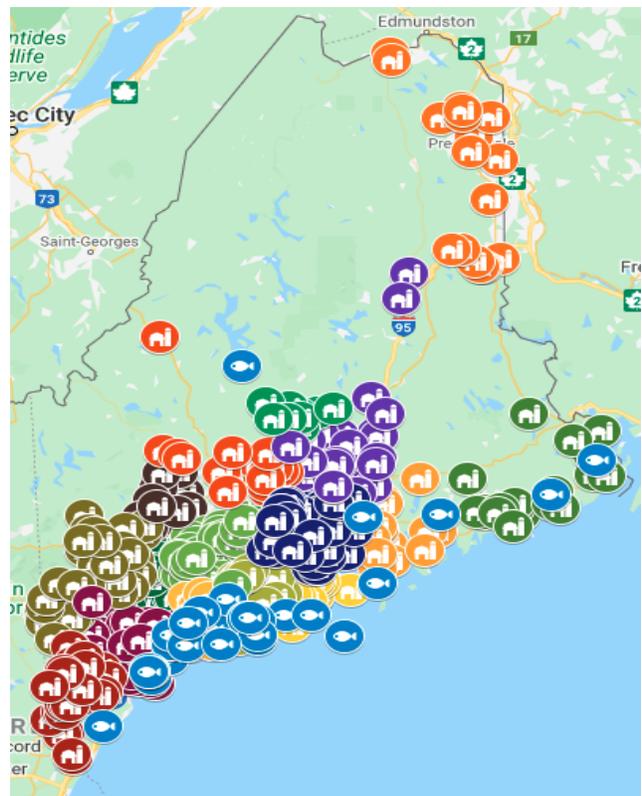
In 2021, the participants who chose to get the FSA certification included enterprise budgets that totaled \$138,009 in projected income. Overall, participants increased their understanding of the 10 major topics presented by 59% for 2021 class. Farm Service Agency provided **\$2.7 million** in farm direct loans as a result of Maine farmers attending this approved borrower training.

## Maine Farm and Seafood Products Directory Helps Consumers Find Vendors

**Relevance** — The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic created widespread fear about what would happen to the markets and businesses of Maine-based farmers. The nearly overnight shutting of restaurants and institutional markets (such as colleges and industrial campuses) and temporary closing of farmer's markets appeared to directly shut off farmers from the majority of their markets. This impacted farms and food-based businesses of all types and scales, including vegetable, meat, dairy, cut flower, seafood, and bakeries.

**Response** — In March 2020, an innovative farmer reached out to UMaine Extension for support in promoting a simple spreadsheet that she'd created for seven neighboring farms including their contact information, products available, immediate needs on the farm, and COVID-19 protocols that they had incorporated into their marketing strategies. Extension used our statewide networks and staff to expand on this idea, developing a process for farmers throughout the state to join the list, creating a website to promote the effort, and creating a public-facing map and spreadsheet for viewing the farm information. The farm community saw the value of this marketing tool for connecting with direct-to-consumer sales and quickly signed up.

**Results** — Within a month there were 405 farm and seafood vendors listed and more than 100,000 views to the page, and there are now nearly 500 (13 from Piscataquis County). While the community demand for local food and direct-to-consumer sales have significantly increased as a result of the pandemic, farmers have attributed much of their new customer base this year to the popularity of this list. The directory has also assisted farms in finding complementary partner farm business with which to build collaborative marketing systems. This transition of markets also includes farms that were primarily wholesale farms transitioning to marketing through established direct-to-consumer farms.



# FINANCIAL SUPPORT

## University of Maine Cooperative Extension Support for Piscataquis County

Without statewide support, UMaine Extension would not be present in your county. Funds for projects are provided through the University of Maine, Federal Formula Funds, grants, contracts, and fees. Dollars from other sources support salaries and benefits for Extension specialists, county educators, Extension administration, computer equipment and networking, publications, postage, telephone, and travel.

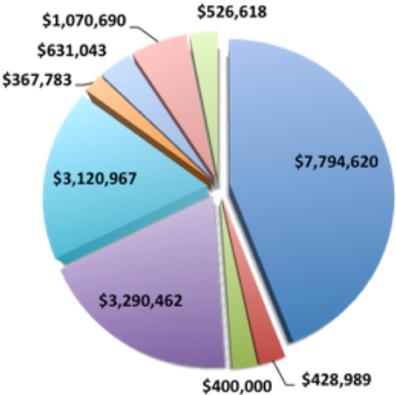
Piscataquis County	State Support 2020	County Support 2020	County Support 2021
Local Salaries and Benefits	\$201,381	\$23,725	\$23,725
Marketing, Publications, Video, Computer Equipment & Networking	\$3,629		
Statewide Animal Diagnostic Lab	\$4,790		
Office Supplies & Equipment		\$1,900	\$1,900
Local Programming Supplies & Expenses	\$6,468	\$1,200	\$1,200
Telephone & Postage	\$1,903	\$625	\$625
Travel	\$3,166		
Office Space		\$60,015	\$60,015
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$221,337</b>	<b>\$87,465</b>	<b>\$87,465</b>

## Statewide Extension Funding

As a unique partnership among federal, state and county governments, UMaine Extension uses funding from Maine counties and the University to match and leverage support from the United States Department of Agriculture, other federal grantors, state agencies and private foundations. Each county UMaine Extension office is also part of a statewide organization and the national Extension system.

This pie graph illustrates the financial resources for programs offered, supported and managed out of the Piscataquis County office. Each year, Piscataquis County tax dollars support the UMaine extension with physical office space, support staff salaries, office supplies, equipment and some programming expenses.

## Funding Levels by Source - 2020



Univ. E & G	\$7,794,620
MEIF	\$428,989
State of Maine - Diagnostic Lab	\$400,000
Grants & Contracts	\$3,290,462
Federal Capacity Funds	\$3,120,967
Gifts and Fundraising	\$367,783
County Funds	\$631,043
Income from Operations	\$1,070,690
4-H Camp Operations	\$526,618

\$17,631,172

# The County Extension Act

The County Extension Act explains the role of county government in funding local Extension offices.

Cooperative Extension work shall consist of the giving of practical demonstrations in agriculture and natural resources, youth development, and home economics and community life and imparting information on those subjects through field demonstrations, publications and otherwise. For the purpose of carrying out this chapter, there may be created in each county or combination of two counties within the State an organization known as a “county extension association,” and its services available to all residents of a county. The county extension is viewed as a unique and important educational program of county government. The executive committee of each county extension association shall prepare an annual budget as requested, showing in detail its estimate of the amount of money to be expended under this chapter within the county or counties for the fiscal year. The executive committee shall submit to the board of county commissioners on a date requested by the county commissioners, and the county commissioners may, if they deem it justifiable, adopt an appropriate budget for the county extension program and levy a tax therefore. The amount thus raised by direct taxation within any county or combination of counties for the purposes of this chapter shall be used for the salaries of clerks, provision of office space, supplies, equipment, postage, telephone, a contribution toward the salaries of county educators and

## **For more information contact:**

University of Maine Cooperative Extension Piscataquis County  
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Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426  
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