

ANNUAL REPORT



2021-2022

Piscataquis County

University of Maine
Cooperative Extension



extension.umaine.edu

2021-2022 Annual Report

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

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Photographs by Edwin Remsberg, Donna Coffin, Emily Mott and Laurie Bowen.

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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. Our youth programming also includes our 4-H camps and learning centers which provide opportunities for youth to engage in outdoor experiential learning. Extension also helps support, sustain, and grow the food-based economy across the entire state of Maine. In addition, we provide valuable statewide programming in nutrition education, healthy families and communities and within the aquaculture industry. We also partner with other organizations and programs to provide additional educational opportunities to a diversity of audiences across this state.



Extension faculty and staff across the state have also contributed to significant digital outreach this past year. Our Extension website (extension.umaine.edu), which is a combination of 57 interconnected websites, received 3.1 million views in 2021. We have over 700 research-based publications that are available as free downloads at extension.umaine.edu/publications. And in this past year, we had more than 5,000 customers register for workshops, events, webinars and more through our online registration system.

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

Beth McEvoy, DVM – President
Rick Cabot, MD – Treasurer
Ben Cookson
Steve DeGoosh
Judy Cross

Kim Merritt
Joe Deitz, MD
Sarah Robinson
George McKay – Retired
Dr. Karen Murphy – Retired

Piscataquis County Staff

Donna Coffin, Extension Professor
Emily Mott, 4-H Community Education Assistant
Sheila Norman, 4-H Professional

Anette Moulton, Administrative Specialist
Laurie Bowen, Food Systems Program Associate
Tricia Smith, Home Horticulture CEA - Resigned

Piscataquis County Highlights

Food Safety and Food Preservation

Lunch and Learns, webinars and hands-on workshops provide home food preservationists with the most up to date, tested, food safe recommendations by the USDA. Free canner pressure-gauge testing is provided at all events and in the office. Programs have expanded to include food safe practices and preservation for wild game.

The school Garden in Dover-Foxcroft at SeDoMoCha, provides 2nd graders with education on growing, harvesting and preparing their foods for healthier and sustainable eating, impacting all four classes of 2nd graders.

Cooking for Crowds, a food safety volunteer training program, is designed for non-profit audiences that cook food for the public as part of food fundraisers and providing meals at no cost to the public as well as for large personal gatherings. Cooking for Crowds meets the requirements of the Good Shepherd food safety training requirements.



Piscataquis County 4-H

Staff and volunteers had activities for youth at community events around the county, including the 2021 Piscataquis Valley Fair, 2021 Forest Heritage Days, 2022 Soil Health Day at the Soil and Water District, and the 2022 Whoopie Pie Festival. They also led activities virtually through the 2021 Maine 4-H Virtual Learning Series, and the Paws for a Minute Statewide Virtual 4-H Dog Club. In addition, in-person events included seed bomb making at Thompson Free Library and in-school activities included learning about sauerkraut making, dirt babies, composting, grains and garlic planting. 4-H volunteers also served as judges in the Maine 4-H Public Speaking Tournament.

The Parkman Area Adventure 4-H Club started meeting again for hiking and other outdoor activities in the summer and fall. Enrolled 4-H youth also participated in the 2021 Maine State 4-H Virtual Exhibit Hall, the 2021 Piscataquis Valley Fair, the 2021 Summer Learning Series, and Maine Virtual Learning Hub workshops and series. A Piscataquis County 4-H'er attended the National 4-H Agri-Science Summit in Washington D.C. with financial support from the 4-H Leaders Association.

Lastly, many thanks to the people of Piscataquis County that supported 4-H programs, especially through the Tractor Supply Company Paper Clover campaign in the fall and spring and the belt sale at last year's fair (belts donated by the Dover-Foxcroft Tractor Supply Company).



Extension on the Road



Extension staff traveled around the county to meet and greet residents in area towns. They answered questions and staffed information tables at Forest Heritage Days in Greenville, Milo Garden Club in Milo, Dover-Foxcroft Tractor Supply, Dover Cove Farmers Market in Dover-Foxcroft, Black Fly Festival in Milo, and the From Away Dinner in Dover-Foxcroft.

Piscataquis County Extension Executive Committee members assisted in hosting for teaching programs. Beth McEvoy, DVM co-taught the Winter Care for Equines online program. Ben Cookson, Shaw Road Farm opened his farm to beef producers to learn about low-stress cattle handling.

One Tomato™



One Tomato™ distribution is complete in Piscataquis and Aroostook counties. Over 525 cherry tomato seedlings were distributed. Some lucky gardeners got vegetable or basil seeds to add to their garden.

Preliminary results of the initial survey show about 18% of folks either have never gardened or have not gardened in a long time. The goal of the One Tomato project is to encourage more people to grow their own food. Also, for 30% of people picking up a seedling, this was their first interaction with UMaine Cooperative Extension.

In Piscataquis County we gave out tomatoes in Dover-Foxcroft, Milo, Monson, Greenville, Sangerville, and Guilford. In Aroostook County they were distributed in Presque Isle, Fort Kent, and Houlton. This was the first time three-quarters of folks have participated in the One Tomato™ project.

Our thanks go out to our staff, Master Gardener Volunteers and Executive Committee members for helping with the distribution.

Later this fall a follow-up survey will be emailed or in-person to see how well their tomatoes produced.

Pollinator-Friendly Garden Certification Program

The Pollinator-Friendly Garden Certification Program has certified over 50 gardens as pollinator-friendly since 2021 statewide. The program educates the public on the importance of pollinators and how to support them by providing food, water, shelter and protecting habitat. Outreach to youth groups, schools and the gardening public provide information on pollinators, invasive and native plant species.

The program has evolved to become a collaboration between UNH and the UMaine Cooperative Extension.



Digital Contacts

Central Maine Garden News, Maine Farm News, and the Beef Producers Newsletters have over 1,290 subscribers from Piscataquis County.

Piscataquis Valley Fair

4-H youth, leaders, volunteers, and staff participated in the Piscataquis Fair in 2021 after a two-year hiatus. 4-H youth exhibited their 4-H projects to receive ribbons and premiums. In the 4-H Exhibition Hall all fair goers had the opportunity to do a make-it and take-it craft. We want to thank the Dover Foxcroft Tractor Supply for their generous donation of belts for the 4-H fund raiser. Extension staff had displays on canning, food preservation, gardening, farming, and pest control.



University of Maine Cooperative Extension's Digital Presence

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.

Website

University of Maine Cooperative Extension's website at extension.umaine.edu – a combination of **57 interconnected websites** consisting of nearly **12,000 pages** – received **3.1 million pageviews** from visitors in the 12 months between January 1, 2021, and December 31, 2021. Visitors searched for and found information on a wide variety of topics, including planting in Maine, small business management, harvest and storage of tree fruits, tussock moth caterpillar identification, and tractor safety. Image galleries helped users identify pests, plant diseases, and weeds. A wide variety of interactive web forms allowed users to request assistance, presentations, newsletters, and updates; report volunteer hours; make donations; and respond to surveys. Nearly **65,000 web visits were referred from social media**, more than nine times the previous year.

Social Media

More than **45,000 followers** followed or were subscribed to UMaine Extension's **62 county and program-specific social media accounts** on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram, and TikTok. Nearly **600 educational videos** were available to visitors on our 14 YouTube playlists; many were also embedded in our web pages. Extension's YouTube videos were the most watched on the University of Maine Channel, which received **1.4 million views and 70,000+ hours** of watch time. Top videos included Lobster Cooking and Eating, How to Prune a Blueberry Bush, How Do I Prune Raspberries, Tick Removal, How to Prune a Lilac Bush, and How to Seal Windows for Winter and Summer.

Publications

More than **700 research-based publications** on a broad range of topics were available for free download at extension.umaine.edu/publications. Our most popular fact sheets received tens of thousands of pageviews each. New publications in 2021 included *Tips for Growing Houseplants in Maine*, *Using Checklists to Increase Productivity on the Farm*, *Best Practices for Plant Sale Donors and Buyers in Maine*, *Too Much Water or Not Enough Light? Irregular Growth Commonly Seen on Plants Grown Indoors*, and *How to Cut Up a Whole Chicken*.

Online Registration, Brightspace, MailChimp, and Constant Contact

Nearly **5,000 customers registered for workshops, events, webinars, and more** through our online registration system.

Nearly **200 participants took online courses via Brightspace**. Classes included Master Gardener Volunteer training, a Home Horticulture class, and a 4-H Aquaculture course.

More than **9,500 subscribers received a total of 53,880 e-notifications via MailChimp**. More than **10,650 subscribers received a total of 162,670 e-notifications via Constant Contact**.



Maine Food System

Extension Shares PFAS Resources for Farmers

Relevance — Low levels of PFOS, PFOA and other PFAS are present in our environment. Higher levels are sometimes found near airfields that may have used fire-fighting foams, factories that used these chemicals, or land with a history of using certain waste materials or biosolids containing PFOS, PFOA, or other PFAS. Crops may be grown on soil that has these PFAS, but how much of these chemicals are in the crop depends on the type of crop, what part of the crop is edible, soil properties, and levels in the soil. These chemicals may end up in the milk and meat of animals fed crops like hay containing PFAS. These chemicals can also move from the soil into the groundwater and into well water. Consuming contaminated milk, meat, plants, or water are potential ways people can be exposed to these chemicals. The state of Maine has allocated significant funding for dealing with issues related to PFAS and is dedicated to supporting the landowners who are affected by land application of wastewater sludge and septage, AFFF, Department of Defense sites, landfills or other PFAS sources.



Response — UMaine Extension has made a dynamic set of resources about on-farm PFAS contamination available online to the public in one location: extension.umaine.edu/agriculture/guide-to-investigating-pfas-risk-on-your-farm/. “Guide to Investigating PFAS Risk on Your Farm” is a comprehensive collection of resources about contamination from Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances in Maine. Topics include Maine’s response to contamination at agricultural sites, steps to determining risks and mitigation options for farms, and information on the sources of PFAS contamination. The new website will be updated as the research and resulting information evolves. The resources are from multiple Maine state agencies, including the Departments of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Health and Human Services, Environmental Protection, and Maine CDC. Supporting organizations contributing information include UMaine Extension, Maine Farmland Trust and Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association.

So, You Want to Farm in Maine?

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 — UMaine Extension created the *So, You Want to Farm in Maine* short-course in 2015. Traditionally offered in person, this is the third year it is available online only. It is designed to introduce



farm business management topics to those who are starting farms in Maine. The 2022 session was a bit different as participants include 44 aspiring farmers as well as 13 UMaine undergraduates, providing the opportunity for richer discussions and connections between those interested in starting Maine farms imminently, as well as students with a variety of backgrounds and experience. The undergraduates were teamed with aspiring farmers to create draft business plans over the course of five weeks. Farmers had the opportunity to receive USDA Farm Service Agency borrower training credit, and undergraduates

receive one credit.

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.

Results — Knowledge change was assessed by a post program evaluation. Participants responding to a program evaluation reported having moderate to considerable knowledge and understanding of farm business management plan development because of the program. In 2022, 44% participants received FSA Borrower Training Certification. In 3-months after the program, FSA has awarded over \$40,600 in loans with more preparing their loan applications. In previous years the Farm Service Agency provided \$2.7 million in farm direct loans because Maine farmers attended this approved borrower training program.

Home Horticulture



Relevance — Every day, Maine gardeners are deciding on whether and how to manage pests, what fertilizers to use and how much, what plants to grow, methods to cultivate the soil, and how to utilize water resources to maintain landscapes. Nearly every residential site has a landscape that requires maintenance and decisions made in these sites can have a significant impact on our natural resources. Home gardener success also results in improved food security and has an economic role in our green industry.

Response — In 2021, home horticulture programming directly reached 12,256 adults and 896 youth through over 120 hours of educational programs, both in-person and virtual. This included over 5,223 questions, received via email, phone calls and walk-ins that were answered for home gardeners. An additional 14,579 home gardeners were reached indirectly through garden-related videos, newsletters, newspaper columns, and publications from Extension.

Results — As a result of Extension programs, participants reported developing new or expanding existing gardens; increased their consumption of home-grown food; adopted sustainable gardening practices involving soil quality, improving efficiency, and adopting IPM strategies; and using Extension to identify pest problems and to determine research-based management strategies.



4-H Positive Youth Development

Northeast Collaborative 4-H AFRI Project



Relevance — In 2021, schools were challenged to deliver both in-person and remote learning experiences to students.

Response — A collaboration of Extension 4-H programs from Vermont, Maine, and New Hampshire received a USDA Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) grant to support school enrichment for rural, remote learners. The tri-state Extension Collaborative developed an AgriSTEM curriculum designed to be delivered by 4-H professionals virtually. Local 4-H Centers distributed curriculum kits containing a computer tablet equipped with various synchronous and asynchronous learning tools. The tablets were used to bridge the home learning environment and traditional classroom by encouraging collaborative learning and acting as a means of documenting learning. Curriculum kits also included hands-on materials for each lesson. Each student received their own set of materials to use in the classroom and/or at home and to keep as their own.

Results — In 2021, 594 students participated in the AFRI program across the 3 states. We also delivered programs to campers at local 4-H centers. Classroom teachers reported that students used their tablets as a way to document, enhance, and evaluate their learning during each lesson. Students were able to access lesson materials individually while simultaneously learning in a group setting. This achieved the dual benefits of hands-on learning and social interaction, whether in person or virtually. By performing experiments, gathering data, reviewing content, and reflecting on their learning together, students gained a deeper understanding of AgriSTEM concepts.

Extension Micro-credentialing through UMaine System

Relevance — Research shows that 86% of hiring managers indicate that it is “very important” that recent graduates demonstrate the ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings and only 39% think recent graduates are well-prepared to apply skills in real-world settings. The UMaine System is developing micro-credentials for earners to show their skills. Micro-credentials help earners make competencies visible, beyond what is seen on a transcript or resume; demonstrate skills in real-world settings; gain work experience and receive valuable performance feedback; differentiate and stand out to employers; better articulate the skills developed to potential employers; enhances digital identity; share badges and be recognized. All micro-credentials/badges can be shared on social media and professional sites, such as LinkedIn as well as on your website, e-portfolio or resume.

Response — Aware that UMaine Extension provides valuable skills to both youth and adult learners, we began developing and issuing micro-credentials through the UMaine System. Credentials were created to show skills acquired through the food safety, aquaculture, and 4-H Stem Ambassador programs. Earners ranged from current UMaine System students to general public adults. These credentials can be used to showcase skills earned through the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, and are verified by the University of Maine System.

Results — Extension-generated micro-credentials issued in 2021 included Food Safety, Aquaculture, and 4-H STEM Ambassadors, and 4-H Outdoor Leadership. There is interest from additional Extension faculty, staff, and partners, and future possible Extension micro-credentials include meat cutting; youth aquaculture; Master Gardeners Facilitation; 4-H Volunteers; and Boots2Bushels.



Sustainable Community and Economic Development

Master Gardener Volunteers



Relevance — Successful school and community gardens are an important tool for enhancing public health and providing meaningful community engagement opportunities by increasing access to locally grown food, providing a safe space to connect with neighbors, and offering learning opportunities outside the classroom. Extension supports volunteer leaders and provides educational resources, which are key contributors to the success of these projects.

In 2020, due to the pandemic, gardening and gardening questions increased as much as 70% from last year in some counties. Now more than ever Maine residents need access to reliable research-based information to become successful gardeners.

Response — In 2020, Master Gardener Volunteers (MGV) played a vital role in connecting communities with educational resources through one-on-one mentoring, social media, and virtual programming. The MGV program provides participants with a minimum of 40 hours of in-depth training in horticulture. Trainees receive current, research-based information from our educators and industry experts and are connected with service projects that match their interests, skill set, and availability. MGV coordinators facilitate relationships between MGV and community partners, assisting with needs assessment, program planning, risk management, and problem solving.

Results — The MGV program provides opportunities for gardeners with all levels of experience to connect with meaningful service projects in their communities. Of the 932 active MGVs, 113 were trained in 2020. In total, they donated 7,600 hours to a variety of food security projects and virtual volunteer opportunities. MGVs reported that they:

- increased consumption of home-grown food
- adopted techniques to improve soil quality
- developed new or expanded gardens
- implemented practices that improve efficiency and reduce inputs and negative impacts
- engaged positively with their communities.

Many volunteers enter the MGV program with the goal of improving their gardening skills for their own personal benefit and leave surprised by how deeply involved and passionate they become about community projects.

Mainely Dish Social Media Outreach

Relevance — COVID-19 impacted people’s lives in a variety of ways, including the increased need for easily accessible information about how to cook affordable and nutritious foods at home. EFNEP’s social media platform became key to reaching Maine’s low-income adults, youth, and young adults to share research-based food and nutrition information to meet their needs. By learning more about diet quality, physical activity, food safety, and food resource management the consumers will be able to learn and apply this knowledge to their everyday life.

Response — To increase EFNEP’s virtual presence and reach more Maine people, EFNEP’s social media platforms were expanded beyond Facebook to include Instagram and TikTok. In response to COVID-19, the development of short recipe videos, “Mainely Dish” began. Mainely Dish videos are used by multiple program areas, including 4-H, Food Preservation, Home Horticulture and EFNEP. By using inviting graphics, timely educational content, and Mainely Dish videos, social media reach has grown and EFNEP, social media and online presence has become prominent in Extension and through the state.

Results — In 2021, UMaine Extension’s EFNEP Facebook page increased likes by 90 people for a total of 547-page likes. UMaine Extension’s EFNEP’s Instagram increased followers by 96 people for a total of 191 followers. We created 51 new videos for Extension’s EFNEP Mainely Dish recipe videos for a total of 87 videos created since March 2020.

Financial Support

University of Maine Cooperative Extension Support for Piscataquis County

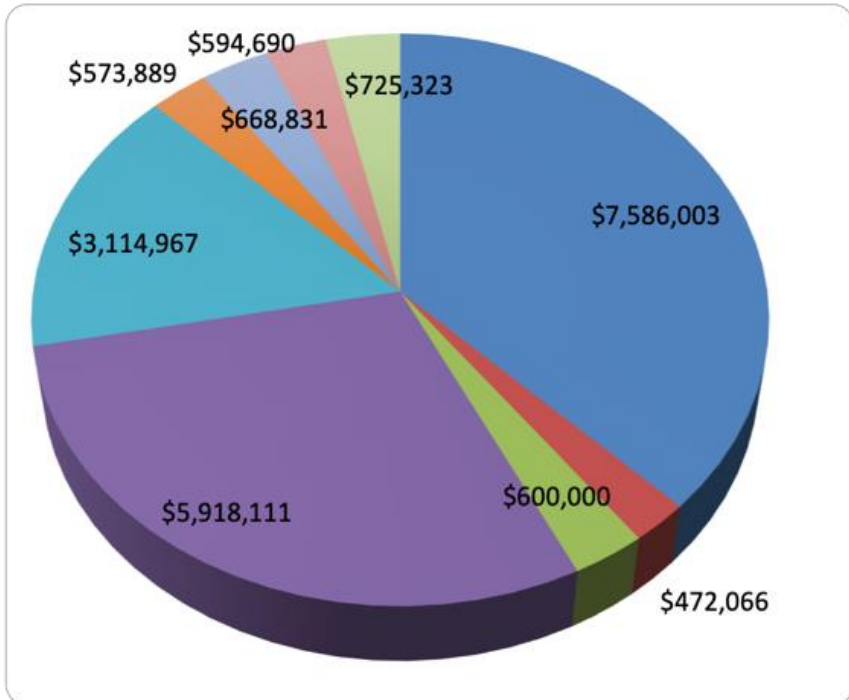
Piscataquis County	State Support 2021	County Support 2021	County Support 2022
Local Salaries and Benefits	\$197,017	\$23,725	\$23,725
Marketing, Publications, Video, Computer Equipment and Networking	\$5,473		
Statewide Animal Diagnostic Lab	\$24,606		
Local Office Supplies & Equipment	\$7,600	\$2,100	\$2,100
Local Programming Supplies & Expenses	\$327	\$1,000	\$1,000
Telephone & Postage	\$10,581	\$625	\$625
Travel	\$2,512		
Local Office Space		\$60,015	\$60,015
TOTAL	\$248,116	\$87,465	\$87,465

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.

Statewide Funding Levels by Source - 2021

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.



Univ. E & G	\$ 7,586,003	37%
MEIF	\$ 472,066	2%
State of Maine - Diagnostic Lab	\$ 600,000	3%
Grants & Contracts	\$5,918,111	29%
Federal Capacity Funds	\$ 3,114,967	15%
Gifts and Fundraising	\$ 573,889	3%
County Funds	\$ 668,831	3%
Income from Operations	\$ 594,690	3%
4-H Camp Operations	\$ 725,323	4%
	\$ 20,253,879	

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 of 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 such other expenses as necessary to maintain an effective county extension program.¹

¹Excerpted from Title 7, Chapter 7 of the Maine Revised Statutes, §191–§195, 1985.

For more information contact:

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Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426
Phone: 207.564.3301 or 800.287.1491 (in Maine)



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