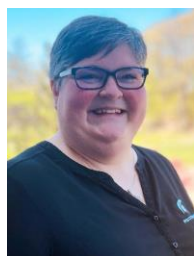


ARENAC COUNTY ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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Message from the District Director

At MSU Extension, we believe that learning and working together make our communities stronger. In 2024, we helped farmers grow food more efficiently and overcome emerging challenges, supported individuals and families in making healthy choices and gave young people opportunities to develop leadership skills and explore interests and careers. Our programs bring people together to solve problems and create new opportunities across MSU Extension's District 4.

We are dedicated to supporting local communities, improving stewardship of our natural resources and helping people prepare for the future. Whether through 4-H youth programs, farming workshops, community development support or health and wellness education, MSU Extension continues to provide valuable resources that make a difference in everyday life.

We are proud of the work we've done and excited for what's ahead. Thank you for being part of this journey with us. Together, we can build a brighter future for Arenac County.

Impact



8 commercial, farm and homeowner soil samples processed



13 answered Ask Extension questions



984 participants from the county attending programs



55 total volunteers serving the county



234 youth enrolled in 4-H



\$1,516.32 an hour value of 4-H volunteers



29,264,562 contacts through social media, web activity, e-newsletters, and handouts



161 programs (across the state) attended by participants from Arenac County

Sustainable forestry for future generations

In 2024, MSU Extension continued its efforts to support the Michigan Agricultural Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) through educational programming in Arenac County. Natural Resources Educator Julie Crick provided information and resources to help landowners better understand sustainable forest management practices aligned with MAEAP's forest, wetlands and habitat system.



308 participants in community, food and environment programs from Arenac County

Through outreach and educational efforts, Crick shared strategies for managing forests in ways that protect water quality, enhance wildlife habitat and promote long-term forest health. By providing science-based information, she helped landowners identify practices that contribute to environmental stewardship and support progress toward MAEAP verification.

MSU Extension's work in Arenac County reflects an ongoing commitment to helping landowners make informed decisions that conserve Michigan's natural resources for future generations.



Supporting local farms

In 2024, MSU Extension Dairy Educator Cora Okkema conducted a consultation visit at Ostroski Dairy in Arenac County. The primary purpose of the visit was to provide training and resources related to animal health monitoring. Specifically, Okkema delivered standard operating procedures (SOPs) for collecting blood samples from animals, analyzing serum protein levels and interpreting the results to assess passive transfer of immunity.



85 participants in county agriculture programs

In addition, Okkema introduced a recordkeeping tool designed to track individual serum protein readings and provided a "grading" system to help operators evaluate management practices over time. This system allows the farm to monitor trends, identify areas for improvement, and support overall herd health outcomes.

This consultation is part of MSU Extension's ongoing efforts to equip Michigan dairy producers with science-based tools and techniques that improve animal welfare, farm efficiency, and long-term sustainability.



Partnerships to support falls prevention

MSU Extension Health Educator Nicole Persing Wethington led a Matter of Balance class in Arenac County, designed to help older adults reduce their fear of falling and increase physical activity. The program was offered in partnership with the Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency and the Arenac County Commission on Aging.

Held at Sunrise Side Senior Services in Omer, the eight-session series engaged 16 participants, providing them with practical strategies to improve strength, balance, and confidence. Participants discussed their experiences, learned exercises to enhance mobility and gained tools to set personal goals for staying active and independent.



140 county residents who participated in health and nutrition programs

This collaborative effort reflects MSU Extension's commitment to supporting the health and well-being of older adults across Northeast Michigan by offering research-based, empowering educational programs.



Fish Camp

To better understand Saginaw Bay 4-H Fish Camp impacts, camp organizers conducted a pre- and post-survey for campers in 2024.

Campers improved their fishing knowledge and skills. Over 75% of campers learned how to make fishing tackle and tie fishing knots as a result of camp. 100% of campers learned about a new fish at camp.

Campers also removed invasive European Frog-bit with Saginaw Bay CISMA (Invasive Species Management Area) and the Arenac Conservation from the Au Gres River. 100% of campers now know how to stop the spread of aquatic invasive species. Close to 70% of campers learned to clean, drain and dry gear to stop the spread of AIS as a result of camp.

"You should definitely come to fish camp next year. It is so fun, and you learn tons of stuff." - participant quote

4-H Engages youth in service to others

Arenac County 4-H members were able to use their "Hands for Larger Service" to make an impact on their community. Throughout the summer and winter, community service activities were provided at various 4-H programming. Arenac County 4-H members worked together to color 42 inspirational pictures for local assisted living residents. Over 65 holiday cards were created for Bridging the Gap for the Elderly, a local organization that provides gifts to low-income elderly residents of our community. Finally, 10 no-sew fleece blankets were hand-tied and gifted to Arenac Christmas for Kids to distribute to local youth.



Cloverbud Day Camp – fun and learning

Cloverbud Day Camp was held on August 15, 2024, for youth ages 5-8. Participants played outdoor games, did science experiments, made crafts, ate a picnic lunch outside and much more! The highlight was making healthy smoothies using the Fender Blender bike! The youth were happy to choose their own ingredients (spinach was mandatory) and use the bike to power the blender. It was fun to hear the youth cheering each other on while they took turns pedaling the bike! The youth were very interested in the mechanics of the bike and how it made the blender work.

"This smoothie does not taste like spinach!" - participant quote



The value of partnerships:

Michigan State University Extension engages community partnerships to leverage resources, expand outreach and address local needs effectively. By collaborating with organizations, businesses and government agencies, MSU Extension strengthens programs in agriculture, health, youth development and community vitality, fostering sustainable solutions and improving the well-being of individuals and communities across Michigan.

Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative (Arenac County): Students engaged in Place-Based Education (PBE) Learning and Stewardship (2023-2024 School Year)

REGIONAL INITIATIVE (COLLECTIVE ENGAGEMENT)

Regionally – 1,803 total students were engaged, through their learning, in Great Lakes and natural resources stewardship projects in nine northeast Michigan counties during 2023-2024 school year. These reflect students we engaged (or continued to engage) in PBE learning and stewardship during the Spring 2024.

IN ARENAC COUNTY

184 students (5 educators) from Arenac County were directly supported in fielding PBE stewardship projects in their communities during Spring 2024 (Jan-June) portion of 2023-2024 school year.

NEMIGLSI NETWORK & SUPPORTS FACILITATED

MSU Extension and Michigan Sea Grant, as Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative (NEMIGLSI) network leadership partners, supported these schools and students in fielding place-based stewardship education projects in this county. Sustained Professional Learning Opportunities (PLOs) provided in support of these PBE efforts via NEMIGLSI, MSUE, MISG Center for Great Lakes Literacy (CGLL) teacher education trainings for educators and community partners throughout year. Examples include: NEMIGLSI networking meeting, Lake Huron PBE Summer Teacher Institute, Great Lakes Bay Watershed Education and Training on preventing marine debris, Vernal Pool Patrol training with Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI), CGLL Teaching Great Lakes Literacy program, providing educational resources (e.g., posters or publications), and more.

All of these partnered efforts are supporting engaged learning that will develop the next generation of stewards for the Great Lakes as a whole, for Lake Huron, and the Saginaw Bay watershed.



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