



Isabella County

2016-2017 ANNUAL REPORT

msue.msu.edu



MESSAGE FROM THE DISTRICT COORDINATOR



Michigan State University Extension is serving the residents of Isabella County by providing a variety of programs and resources through our Land Grant University to help people achieve their greatest potential. Whether it is a youth program designed to help kids learn responsibility, or disease identification for a grower's specialty crop, we've got the backing of researchers and specialists on campus and across the state in each Extension office.

Our staff is trained to connect people to the resources they need to grow food for their family, to prepare food safely and efficiently, to provide nutritious meals for their family, to work together to find common goals, and to help grow our communities.

In this day and age, a simple Google search brings up "answers" to life's many questions. It's easy to get answers. But are they the right ones? How do we know what will work best for us? That's a whole new challenge, and one that we are prepared to handle. We'll help you navigate the wild frontier out there.

Along the same line, technology has provided us with opportunities to teach from a distance. It allows participants to learn in their spare time, on their own schedule, and from the comforts of their own home or farm. MSU Extension provides many opportunities for online learning, as well as the traditional classroom style, office appointment, phone call, or farm visit. Throughout the years we have adjusted our methods to meet the needs of the changing world, but we hold on to some traditional values of face to face interactions and "hands-on" learning.

Whatever the need, we are here to serve you. We will do our best to provide you with the information you need to make your life better. Whether its health related, agricultural assistance, entrepreneurship, or teaching youth skills to carry forward throughout their lives, the cooperative extension service extends the research of the university while meeting the needs of the local community.

We thank our local governments, partners, and residents for providing us with the needed resources to maintain a local office, a strong 4-H program, and a touchpoint for local service.

Shari Spoelman, District Coordinator

MSU EXTENSION'S DIGITAL REACH



More than 3.7 million visitors viewed more than 7.2 million pages.



1.3 million newsletters covering 90 topic areas were sent to about 16,900 email addresses.



MSU Extension has more than 3,500 Facebook followers and more than 2,800 Twitter followers.

MEASURING IMPACT

CONNECTING WITH ISABELLA RESIDENTS

Soil Tests	79
Youth Served	2,536
Health & Nutrition Program Recipients	1,571
Agriculture Program Recipients	305
Gov, Nat'l Resources, and Comm Food Systems	78
Gardening / Consumer Horticulture	58
Early Childhood Education	21

DISTRICT 6 DIGITAL REACH

From Jan 1, 2016, to Dec 31, 2016, 51,592 visitors from the 7 county district viewed more than 138,129 pages of rich, science-based content on the MSU Extension website (msuc.msu.edu). Of those, 52.1 percent were first-time visitors. Search engine rankings make msuc.msu.edu one of the most visited Cooperative Extension Systems education sites in the country.

Developing Youth and Communities



4-H is building communication and leadership skills

To help young people develop communication as an important life skill, MSU Extension's Michigan 4-H has made communication an aspect of nearly every area of its programming. Youth who practice and enhance their communication skills in adolescence will find these skills to their advantage in future employment and adulthood. Youth are required to record their progress on projects, verbally report their activities and illustrate their understanding in a number of ways. In Isabella County, opportunities for enhanced communication skills include:

- 4-H meat and livestock judging where they verbally validated their class decisions.
- Camp counselors, providing hands-on instruction to campers.
- Crafting letters to potential buyers for animal and still exhibit items, and following up with verbal discussion and thank you notes.
- Conservation Project Area and demonstration of knowledge in environmental and conservation issues.
- Mock Interview Day where youth have their resumes and interviews critiqued by volunteer business professionals.
- Public Speaking, Educational and Leadership project areas.
- 4-H State Awards Programs.
- 4-H Club meetings and events which are youth led and youth driven.

Michigan 4-H helps to prepare current and future leaders by offering numerous opportunities for leadership development. From the club experience to statewide youth councils, all youth have the chance to serve in a leadership role. Isabella County 4-H provides youth leadership, programming, educational and competitive opportunities within such areas as:

- Horse Clubs
- Shooting Sports
- 4-H Camps
- Isabella County Youth & Farm Fair
- Livestock Clinics
- Exploration Days, annual youth conference held on the campus of MSU
- Proud Equestrian Program for disadvantaged youth (riding therapy)
- Environmental Education Day for all 3rd graders
- Migratory Bird Day partnered with the Conservation District at the Ziibiwing Center



33
4-H clubs

729
Youth
enrolled in
4-H clubs

310
Adult
volunteer
leaders



Developing Youth and Communities, continued

63

Youth
participated in
camping
programs

19

Youth
attended
State Shoot

22

Youth
attended
Exploration
Days at MSU

506

Youth
participants at
the Isabella
County Youth
& Farm Fair



Talent Show at the Isabella
County Youth & Farm Fair



Rabbit Showmanship at the Isabella County Youth
& Farm Fair



4-H Cloverbud Camp 2016



4-H Summer Camp 2016

Ensuring Safe and Secure Food



32
residents
learned safe
food handling
for crowds

24
attended
Food
Preservation
classes

8
Residents
learned about
Michigan's
Cottage Food
Law to
expand or
develop their
business



When you support MSU Extension's efforts to enhance residents' access to an adequate supply of safe, affordable food, program participants will focus on food safety measures in the field and at harvest, learn proper food preparation and food preservation techniques, and bring community partners together to strengthen access to healthy food supplies. This leads to a healthy population, which in turn helps keep health care costs in check and our communities viable.

Reducing foodborne illness through education of individuals, small businesses

The National Institutes of Health estimates that every year, 48 million people in the United States become ill and 3,000 die from pathogens in food. Causes range from outdated home food preservation practices to unsafe sanitizing practices at public events and small businesses. Since 2013, MSU Extension food safety and preservation programs have taught almost 10,500 Michigan residents safe food handling, food preservation and methods to reduce foodborne illness.

Through face-to-face and online learning, Michigan communities receive high-quality, research-based education using U.S. Department of Agriculture guidelines for safe food preservation.

- 95% of participants report they will follow research-based and tested recipes for home food preservation.
- 86% of youth participants gained knowledge about food spoilage organisms and learned how the organisms' growth can be slowed or prevented.
- 85% of participants can correctly list strategies for cross-contamination prevention.
- 91% know correct methods of cleaning and sanitizing surfaces.



Kara Lynch teaching a youth food preservation class

Ensuring Safe and Secure Food, continued



21
Youth in
6
teams
participated In
Teen
“Chopped”



***“I can’t wait to
participate next
year!”***



Teen “Chopped” Competition

The first annual Teen “Chopped” competition was held in Mt. Pleasant on November 2, 2016. With the ever-popular cooking shows being watched by teens, a local “Chopped” competition was a relevant way to reach youth 13 to 19 year olds, providing them education in a fun and interactive way. In an effort to promote local agriculture, healthy eating and 4-H opportunities, Teen “Chopped” provided education as well as hands-on experience of being paired with a local, experienced cook to prepare a nutritious meal using mostly locally grown food. The teens were provided with a list of mandatory ingredients that they used to develop an entrée and an appetizer. Each team produced a unique, and very tasty creation that was then judged by area celebrities. Prizes were awarded for “Overall Winner”, “Most Creative”, and “Best Presentation”.



Comments were very positive with many youth stating that they “can’t wait to participate next year”.

- 87.5% stated that participation in this event improved their knife safety skills
- 100% felt that buying local foods is more important after they participated in this event
- 100% felt that this event reinforced the importance of eating a balanced diet



*The winning team of the 1st Annual
Teen “Chopped” Competition.*

Ensuring Strong Communities



Residents received education to improve their money management skills



Families were helped with foreclosure prevention



63

Youth from Isabella County were able to practice their interviewing skills with professionals from the community

Homeownership & Foreclosure Prevention

MI Money Health's team of knowledgeable, straight-forward financial pros demystify common money and homeownership best practices with university-backed, research-based programs and resources to help Michigan residents navigate through whatever fiscal challenges life throws their way.

Homeownership Education: This course helps participants make informed choices about the true costs of homeownership. Bonus? Completing the course can help Michigan residents qualify for down-payment and other assistance programs. There were 9 participants in Home Buyer Education from Isabella County.

Money Management: Unbiased education about common money struggles and best practices help Michigan residents at any financial stage in life. These clients were with 1016 Recovery Network. All participants attended a 3 part series.

Foreclosure: Our certified housing counselors help Michigan residents navigate through the tough decisions and explore options to avoid foreclosure whenever possible.

Rent Smart: The "Rent Smart" program covers the financial preparation, basic rental process and continual good tenant conduct. It is designed to help educate individuals or families on how to be good tenants, including the rights and responsibilities of a renter. Ten (10) residents in Isabella County participated in this program.

Mock Interview Day

High school students need the opportunity to practice interview skills in order to be ready for the workforce. Employers appreciate and are more likely to hire candidates who know how to present themselves. To address this need a Mock Interview Day event for Isabella, Clare, and Gladwin counties is planned and held in mid-March every year. Chaired by staff from MSU Extension, other partners include Michigan Works!, Mid-Michigan Development Corporation, Gladwin Economic Development Corporation, Central Michigan University, Clare-Gladwin RESD and Mid Michigan Community College. On the day of the event, about 70 adults from local businesses volunteer their time to interview students, review résumés, and provide short educational workshops. In 2016, 300 eleventh and twelfth grade students from 8 area schools took part in the event.

After the event in 2016:

- 95% of the students who filled out an evaluation felt they would do a better job interviewing in the future
- 96% agree and strongly agreed that after this event, they had more confidence in their ability to do well in a job interview
- 96% felt more prepared to join the workforce

Keeping People Healthy



Improving nutrition and increasing physical activities in Michigan communities

Limited income and poor nutrition affect quality of life and can increase healthcare costs. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that more than 30 percent of Michigan adults are considered obese, and one out of every three deaths in Michigan is caused by cardiovascular disease, influencing the quality of life and adding billions of dollars each year in economic burden.

MSU Extension delivers affordable, relevant, evidence-based education to help residents stay healthy throughout their lifespans. Programs teach participants how to buy and prepare nutritious, budget-friendly foods and increase physical activity. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Education is funded through a statewide grant from the Federal Government (Farm Bill). “SNAP-Ed” instructors provide education either through one time presentations or series. The following programs were delivered in Isabella County in 2016:

Grow it Try it Like it - used for Developmental Kindergarten

Show Me Nutrition - used for Kindergarten - 3rd grade

Cooking Matters - used for teens and adults

Project FRESH - used for participants on Women Infants and Children (WIC) program

Ten Tips to a Great Plate - used for youth and adults

Market FRESH - used for adults over the age of 60

Discover MI Jr. - used for 4th - 6th

Eat Smart Live Strong - used for adults over the age of 55

Eat Healthy Be Active - used for adults

Healthy Eating Adds Up - used for adults with cognitive impairment

- 79% of youth participants improved their abilities or gained knowledge about how to choose foods according to Federal Dietary Guidelines.
- 79% of adult participants made a positive change in at least one nutrition practice, such as preparing foods without adding salt, or using the Nutrition Facts labels to make food choices.
- 73% of adult participants made a positive change in at least one food resource management practice, such as planning meals in advance or comparing prices when shopping.



117

Adults learned better nutrition through a series of classes



243

Adults attended a nutrition presentation



Keeping People Healthy, continued



MSUE partnered with the following agencies or organizations in 2016:

- Isabella County Day Treatment Center
- Commission on Aging
- Pullen Elementary
- Mt. Pleasant Parks and Rec - PEAK Program
- Community Mental Health of Central Michigan
- Central Michigan Health Department
- Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe - Nimkee Center
- Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe - Niibing
- Mt. Pleasant Farmers Market
- Isabella Citizens for Health
- Mid-Michigan Industries

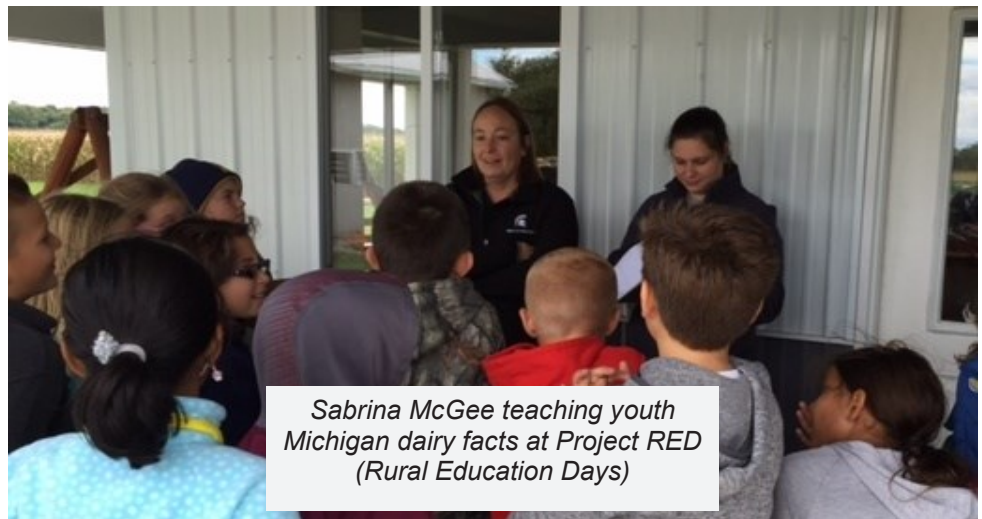


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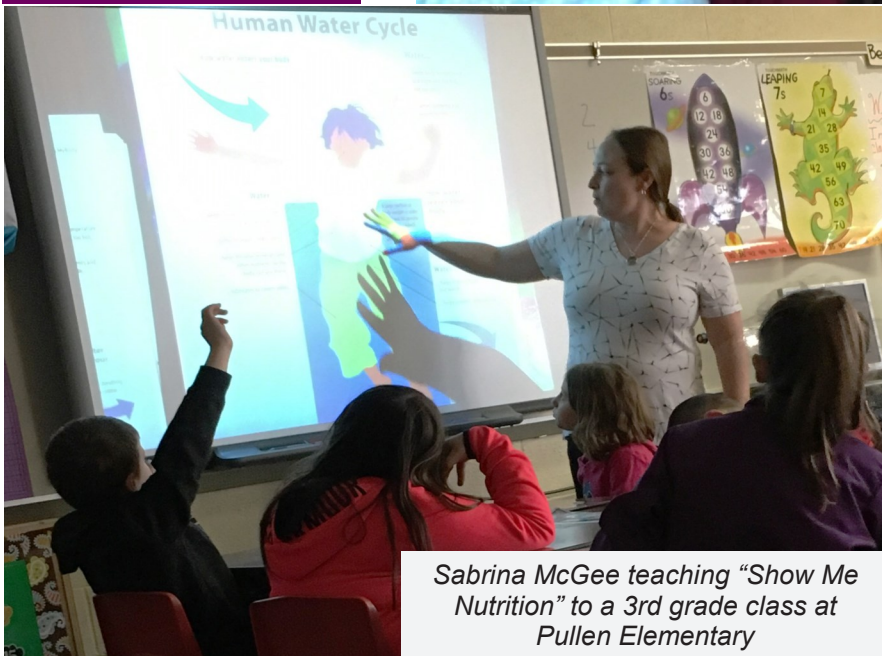
youth learned
better nutrition
through a series
of classes

612

youth attended a
nutrition
presentation



*Sabrina McGee teaching youth
Michigan dairy facts at Project RED
(Rural Education Days)*



*Sabrina McGee teaching "Show Me
Nutrition" to a 3rd grade class at
Pullen Elementary*



*Summer PEAKer spending his
market money he earned at the Mt.
Pleasant Farmers Market*

Making the Most of Our Natural Assets



15

**Land owners
learned how
to better
manage their
woodlots**

When you support MSU Extension's natural resources education programs, participants learn about income-generating opportunities, ecological principles, natural resource issues and the role of natural resource professionals. They also explore public policy issues related to environmental stewardship. Our programs can lead to increased income for

families that retain their natural resource assets, help landowners become better stewards of their land, and protect land management opportunities for future generations. Better land stewardship benefits communities by protecting and enhancing Michigan's natural resource assets.

Woodlot Management

Woodlots across Michigan have been devastated by the Emerald Ash Borer, leaving stands of dead ash trees where lush forests used to thrive. In an effort to assist small forest landowners, particularly farmers with small woodlots interspersed within agricultural fields, Extension Educators Paul Gross and Kable Thurlow contacted MSU Extension's Forestry Educator Julie Crick to initiate two forest management workshops focused on small woodlots and the value of dead or dying ash trees.

The collaborative effort brought an all-encompassing evening workshop focusing on marketing and managing a small woodlot. In addition to MSU Extension, the program featured speakers from the Conservation District and MDARD's Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP). A half day in the field was scheduled on a Saturday following the evening session. This workshop offered landowners the chance to speak informally with professionals about services available, resulting in changes to land management strategies and increased awareness of service providers.



Better land stewardship benefits communities by protecting and enhancing Michigan's natural resource assets.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION



Protecting Your Shoreline: A workshop for lakefront property owners

MSU Extension hosted this workshop in three locations in District 6 – Harrison, Weidman, and Cadillac. Forty participants from 13 counties spent an evening learning best practices and strategies for protecting their shoreline property including designing natural landscapes on lake front property, use of native plants in shoreline landscapes, and common inland lake invasive species. There were 14 participants at the Weidman session.



2016 Isabella County Master Gardener projects

Seventeen Isabella County Master Gardeners contributed 896 volunteer hours in 2016.

The projects included:

- Installing and maintaining landscaping at the Isabella County Building and Commission on Aging
- Supporting the downtown square foot learning gardens
- Providing landscaping at the women's shelter
- Beautifying the gardens at Hospice House



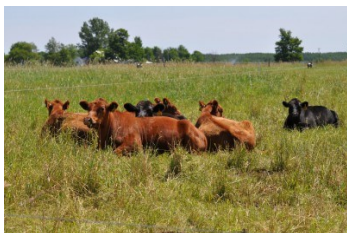
Education and outreach projects include an information booth at the weekly Mt. Pleasant farmers market, and hosting their annual “Spring Into Gardening” conference. The conference had 126 participants. The Master Gardeners participated in 218.25 continuing education hours in 2016.

Wind turbines

Extension Educator Paul Gross was asked by the local farmers to participate in the wind turbine informational meetings to facilitate the process. The committee reached out to farmers across Michigan that had wind farms to learn more about the project and process as it relates to the initial leasing until project completion. Other specialists from MSU were brought in to provide information for the landowners to make good leasing decisions.



Supporting Food and Agriculture



24

August, 2017 is the date of the “Focus on Forages and the Future” MSU Agriculture Innovation Day at the Lake City Research Center

“Forage production plays a crucial role for livestock farmers across the state. This field day puts farmers in front of the leading experts, the latest research...”

- Ron Bates, director of agriculture and agribusiness for MSU Extension.



Michigan agriculture continues to be a growing segment of the state's economy. The production of commercial food and nonfood agricultural operations is growing rapidly. The number of households raising a portion of their own food and raising livestock or gardening for pleasure or relaxation continues to increase. When you support MSU Extension, you help participants learn profitable and efficient business and production practices. Participants also learn how to optimize and reduce the use of pesticides and fertilizers, and how to conserve and protect water resources. This education leads to better use of time, money and human capital, and helps retain and create agricultural jobs. These measures strengthen Michigan's economy while connecting farmers to local food opportunities and global markets. In this way you help MSU Extension encourage growth in a sustainable and prosperous Michigan food and agriculture system.

Preparing youth for future careers in agriculture

As a pillar of Michigan's economy, agriculture must continue to grow and thrive. One way to ensure this success is to prepare an informed and skilled workforce ready for careers in this essential sector.

To meet this need, MSU Extension offers youth a continuum of learning opportunities in the agriculture industry. These opportunities range from interactive experiences such as 4-H Renewable Energy Camp and World Food Prize Michigan Youth Institute, to educational resources such as the Youth Business Guide to Success animal marketing curriculum and zoonotic disease prevention tools. Through these experiences and resources, as well as county 4-H projects, youth are educated about agriculture and prepared for careers in this important industry.

Isabella County youth participated in special classes including:

- 4-H / FFA Livestock Judging
- Numerous educational clinics and trainings at the 4-H Kettunen Center, or on the campus of Michigan State University
- Small animal clinics (showmanship, training, educational, health and care)
- Livestock educational series at Isabella County Youth & Farm Fair





Researchers are focusing on ways cover crops can be used by farmers to bring diversity to the crop system; to reduce reliance on fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides; and to determine the impact of cover crops on overall operation economics.

Raising awareness of the benefits of cover crops

Cover crops are a hot topic in agricultural circles, thanks to an MSU Extension specialist's message that's resonating with the right crowd. Dean Baas, a senior research associate, conducts cover crop and organic agriculture research and education. Together, with local Extension Educator Paul Gross, the word is getting out about the benefits of cover crops for soil and water health.

Cover crops are plants seeded into agricultural fields, either within or outside of the regular growing season, with the primary purpose of improving or maintaining ecosystem quality. Environmental benefits include enhanced biodiversity, increased soil infiltration and attraction of honeybees and beneficial insects. Initial studies have shown that:

- Farming benefits include reduced erosion, improved soil quality through increased porosity, soil organic matter and water-holding capacity, as well as the addition of beneficial microbes.
- Cover crops help retain nutrients that otherwise would be lost.
- Cover crops add nitrogen through fixation while combatting weeds and breaking disease cycles.

Water quality, cover crops & soil health programs

Extension Educator Paul Gross is part of the team that is providing leadership in cover crops and soil health programming. Programs provided to Isabella County farmers all include a component of the benefits of cover crops in their cropping systems. Adding cover crops can improve their bottom line over time through improved soil. Cover crops prevent soil erosion and conserve soil moisture. The impact of soil erosion control and enhanced water infiltration is not only beneficial for agriculture but also for the Chippewa River Watershed as well as the Great Lakes Basin.

Isabella County MSU Extension programming is focusing on farm management practices that build soil health and also reduce the environmental impacts of agriculture. The practices include reducing tillage, no-till, cover crops, crop rotation diversity. These practices reduce the risk of crop loss during unfavorable weather conditions by building resilient soil systems.



Extension Educators Marilyn Thelen and Paul Gross demonstrate soil filtration techniques.

MSU field research in Isabella County in 2016 included

- Soil health and soil fertility testing
- Soybean benchmarking project
- Cover crops
- Evaluation of herbicide resistant weed populations
- Armyworm, black cutworm, and Western bean cutworm trapping program



30
pesticide
applicators
refreshed their
knowledge
before taking
the state
licensing exam

Pest and Crop Management Updates

The Pest and Crop Management Update for field crop producers and agronomists for central Michigan was held in Alma. Eight-two (82) farmers and agribusinesses attended. Dr. Chris Difonzo provided education on insecticide seed treatments after which a number of farmers indicated they will rethink how they use seed treatment to protect pollinators.

Field Days

Shepherd Elevator - MSU Weed Specialist Dr. Christy Sprague was invited to speak at the Shepherd Elevator Field Day. Herbicide resistant weeds were a serious issue in 2016. Management strategies were discussed as well as research sites selected in the area for on-farm research plots in cooperation with the MSU weed program.

Wheat Field Day - This annual event was held at Hauck's Seed Farm. The program includes weed, insects, and intensive wheat management strategies. The presenters included MSU Extension Educators Paul Gross, Martin Naglekirk, and Dennis Pennington, MSU Wheat Specialist.

Milk and Grain Marketing meetings

Marketing Meetings are held quarterly in Isabella County to provide education and support for area producers. Successful marketing strategies have been one of the most important indicators of farm profitability over the past decade. The impact of global economies and markets has created market volatility never before seen. This volatility impacts Isabella County farms. The Milk and Grain Marketing meetings provide technical and fundamental market information and strategies that farmers can implement to manage market risk. Workshops are taught by MSU Extension Marketing Specialists, and Extension Educators.

Managing Dairy Herd Reproduction

A panel of 3 dairy producers and their herd veterinarians shared their strategies on maximizing reproductive performance of their herds. MSU's Dr. Richard Pursley led the panel discussion aimed at showing how these producers manage the various aspects of getting cows pregnant in a timely manner to optimize overall herd profitability.

Prior to the meeting, Kathy Lee and Dr. Pursley worked with the dairy producers and their herd veterinarians to create presentations that covered key aspects of each dairy herd's reproductive management program. This pre-conference session coordinated by MSU Extension was offered prior to the start of the Great Lakes Regional Dairy Conference held in Mt. Pleasant on Feb 4, 2016. Ninety people participated from a large geographic region.

Pesticides training

Pesticide applicator training provides farmers and commercial applicators training on how to safely apply pesticides. The training topics include rules and regulations, integrated pest management, personal protection equipment, calibration, pest identification, pesticides and the environment, labels, and safe pesticide storage and handling. The trainings prepare attendees for the Michigan Department of Agriculture pesticide licensing exam, provide credits toward recertification, or the latest information on pesticide application and pest management for interested farmers. Paul Gross provided this training.

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Christine Hammond

Gladwin County

Terry Walters (Commissioner)
Dick Metz
Ron Morley

Isabella County

Jerry Jaloszynski (Commissioner)
Kathy Methner

Mecosta County

Marilynn Vargo (Commissioner)
Vacancy

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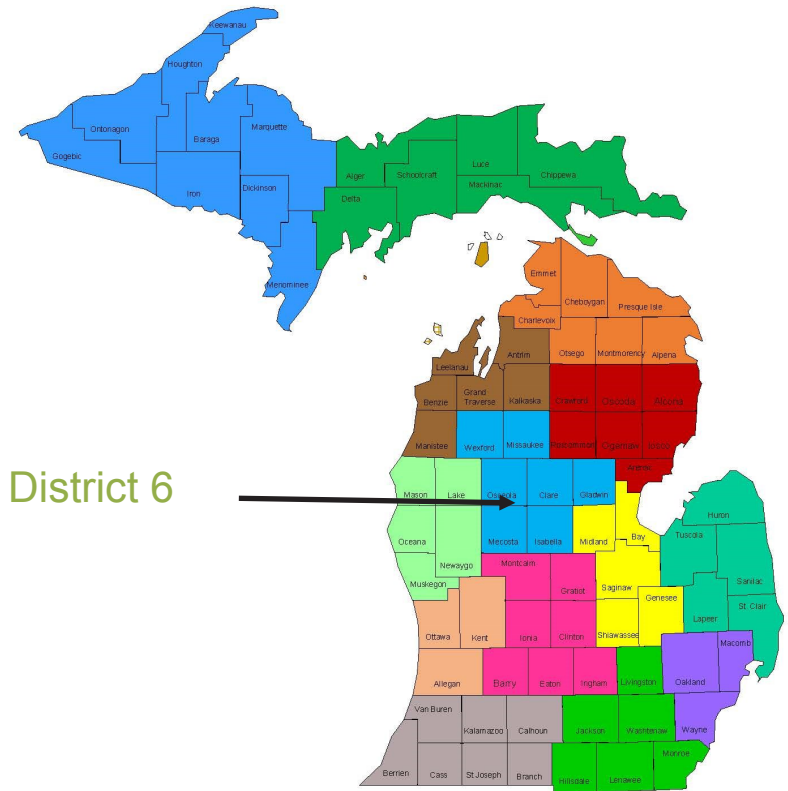
Cindy Jones
Frank Vanderwal (Commissioner)

Osceola County

Chris Gentry
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