2015


Donna Coffin

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Making a Difference in Piscataquis County

For more than 100 years, University of Maine Cooperative Extension has worked with Maine volunteers to offer community-driven, research-based educational programs in every county.

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

extension.umaine.edu
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biocontrol systems. Of the 12 respondents to the post-workshop survey, all said they had instituted better pest monitoring and scouting methods; planted habitat to raise natural enemies of aphids; and cleaned their greenhouses better. Three-quarters of respondents also implemented better recordkeeping and planted habitat for other beneficial bugs. The total reported impact on the 11 businesses responding was $2,925. If just 10% of the approximately 550 commercial greenhouses in the state adopted these measures, it could save at least $14,625.

Low-Stress Cattle Handling Clinic a Success!

Curt Pate, a Stockmanship Trainer from Montana with Beef Quality Assurance did an outstanding job demonstrating low-stress cattle handling at the two live demonstration sessions before the Maine Beef Conference. Over 60 producers were able to watch Curt quietly put a small bunch of cattle through gates, chutes and pens. He talked about getting the cattle to see him, point of balance and training cattle to respond to your movements. One of the sessions was held in Charleston so Piscataquis County beef producers could attend.

Stockmanship is handling cattle with the intent of enhancing profitability through the following avenues:

• Improve consumer confidence that cattlemen are good stewards of livestock
• By working with the natural instincts of cattle during handling, safety of animals and handlers can be improved
• Low-stress handling techniques enhance animal.

Summer of Science: Sparking an Interest in Science, and Reducing Summer Learning Loss

Improving student proficiency in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) can improve job opportunities and encourage youth to higher education. In Maine, testing showed that more than 33% of 5th graders and 45% of 11th graders lacked proficiency in science. The achievement gap widens in summer for low-income students, who often lack out-of-school learning opportunities.

UMaine Extension created and delivered 4-H Summer of Science curricula to underserved youth in grades 3–8. About a quarter of participants were minorities and more than half were girls. The experiments helped them return to school with reduced summer learning loss and increased interest in science.

UMaine Extension trained and supervised 18 teens to deliver the curriculum, fostering career development, leadership, and responsibility. A post-teaching survey found that:

• 100% are now more likely to volunteer in their community and feel that they can make a difference through community service.
• 92% would return to teach again.
• 62% were born in Africa or the Middle East.

Using Social Media to Advance Sustainable Agriculture

More Americans, including farmers, are integrating online resources into their daily lives, so UMaine Extension must increase its use of social media tools to reach its audience. This project sought to provide agricultural educators the skills to effectively incorporate social media, including Facebook, Twitter, blogs, webinars, and YouTube, into their sustainable agriculture programming. Trainees increased their knowledge of social media tools, learned which tools are most effective for specific objectives, and implemented and evaluated at least one social media tool for their work. Because of the program, 30 of the 34 educators (88%) created and/or changed sustainable agriculture material for at least one social media tool, collectively reaching at least 228,790 farmers and others.

For More Information About the
2015 Highlights Report President’s Letter

Friends and neighbors,

As you may know, the very name “Extension” is meant to identify our mission of extending the vast and varied resources of the University of Maine system into our local communities. It is my honor and pleasure to again offer some observations regarding that challenge in this annual report to the citizens of Piscataquis County.

A unique aspect of UMaine Extension is that every County has an Executive Committee of volunteers is charged with the responsibility for securing and managing county funds and support. This same committee, in collaboration with paid extension staff, serves as both a resource and a monitor to ensure programming is relevant to local needs and opportunities. In simple terms, our challenge is to “make sure our citizens get the most bang for their buck.”

During the past year, your Executive Committee and Extension Staff have worked hard to meet the needs and opportunities of our County. The intent of this highlights report is to share just a few accomplishments and I hope you’ll find it both informative and entertaining.

I’m especially pleased to report that we have expanded our Executive Committee and now have ten volunteer members from different communities with different backgrounds and skills. We also have two youth involved who, while not formal members, bring us both a youthful outlook and connection to our younger citizens. This diversity on the committee allows us to approach decisions and planning with a variety of perspectives and fosters full awareness of community resources as well as needs for Extension services and programming.

We have become increasingly aware of our reliance on the involvement of volunteers ranging from the Executive Committee to Master Gardeners to 4-H Leaders and hope to further develop volunteer involvement. While University resources extend into our communities, it is the combining of resources and energy that makes us effective—whether we are talking about funding, programs, or people. Individually we are drops; together we form an ocean.

These are some of the reasons why we are able provide a good return on the investment we receive from Piscataquis County Taxpayers. We appreciate the building we occupy in the county complex and the county’s contribution to our operating and support costs. I would note that while we have little ability to control the costs associated with the building, our budget request for 2016 is responsible and our operating fund request still remains at a level significantly below 2009. Not too many organizations can boast of actually increasing services and accomplishments while operating at budget levels less than five years ago.

You are certainly part of everything we do. This brief report is really only an introduction and I’d encourage you to stop by the office, contact a staff or executive committee member and learn about the depth of our resources. Better yet, ask how you can help! There’s a place for everyone at UMaine Extension.

Walter Boomsma, President
Piscataquis County Extension Association
The first year approximately thirty classroom teachers signed up for a volunteer to visit and activities were developed for kindergarten through third grade. The program has grown to more classrooms but continues to focus on the same grade levels and has reached an estimated 3,000 kids since the program launched!

**School Gardens**

In the past four years Food Corps members have worked with the SEDOMOCHA teachers to encourage students to try new foods like hummus and do hands-on horticulture activities like the living necklaces and lettuce growing in the classroom. Also, at SEDOMOCHA, a raised bed garden near the school has been developed and planted with kale, onions and pumpkins. It has been raided many times by the town deer herd. Thanks to a generous donation of labor and materials from Foxcroft Agway and a gate made by Richard Neal, the deer will have to find another garden. The next challenge is getting water to the garden. A Pumpkin Legacy Project will try to save seed from this year’s pumpkin crop to be planted next spring.

Milo Middle School 4-H SPIN Club included a session “Dig Into Spring Gardening” led by former 4-H member & Milo Farmers’ Market Organizer, Haley Emery.

**4-H Clubs**

Piscataquis County 4-H Clubs have been very active this year with projects, fundraisers and trips. Two youth attended the Citizenship Washington Focus (CWF) a six-day 4-H leadership program for high school youth, ages 15-19, from across the country. CWF delegates learn about the democratic process and their role as citizens while they experience our nation’s capital. They also get the inside scoop about how government really works from prominent guest speakers and interact with Maine’s state senators and representatives and/or their staffers. Program fellows lead bill writing workshops, as well as a national issues forum and mock elections. There are congressional sessions that prepare youth for leadership now and in the future.

Seven Piscataquis County youth attended 4-H@UMaine: Connecting Kids to Campus. This program is a fun-filled, educational opportunity for youth 12 – 18 where the youth experienced sleeping in the dorm, eating in the cafeteria, and learning from professors and graduate students in many different disciplines on the Orono campus.

**Adventures in Health Science**

The Adventures in Health Science program at the C.A. Dean Memorial Hospital in Greenville, lead by Dr. Robert Bowie, was an overwhelming success. Youth 12 to 18 were able to explore the central nervous system and emergency medicine though this three-day summer immersion experience. The hands-on activities were fun as well as educational and offered the youth the opportunity to learn about careers in the field of health care through direct interaction with medical professionals who practice in Piscataquis County.

**Statewide Highlights**

**STEM Ambassadors…Sparking Student Interest in STEM Careers**

4-H can encourage youth to higher education and successful careers, especially in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). Of the 25,000 youth that Maine 4-H engages annually, 52% engage in a STEM program, 83% want to finish college, and 73% want science-related jobs. Nationally, girls involved in 4-H are twice as likely to pursue science careers. UMaine Extension trained college students to facilitate STEM activities across the state as STEM Ambassadors. The short-term pilot program increased student leaders’ comfort level with and knowledge of STEM teaching. To increase the future STEM workforce in Maine, we are now developing a statewide network of STEM Ambassadors.

**Wild Blueberries…Allowing Maine to Remain**
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.

University of Maine Cooperative Extension Support for Piscataquis County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2014</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Salaries and Benefits</td>
<td>$288,179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Equipment &amp; Networking</td>
<td>$6,994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statewide Animal Diagnostic Lab</td>
<td>$2,346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing, Publications, Video</td>
<td>$1,875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Programming Supplies &amp; Expenses</td>
<td>$674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postage</td>
<td>$3,032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>$1,514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>$9,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$313,669</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Without statewide support, UMaine Extension would not be present in this 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, programming, publications, postage, telephone, and travel.

The County Extension Act

*Excerpted from Title 7, Chapter 7 of the Maine Revised Statutes, §191–§195.*
Farming Programs

Weed Identification Walk

The first step in managing weeds in any crop is to know what weed it is. Once you know what it is, you can find its vulnerabilities out in the field and use them to reduce the competition with your crop. Over twenty people attended the session at Stutzman’s Farm and Café in Sangerville to learn how to sight identify at least ten weeds at this year’s Weed Identification Walk. Information on management and control techniques for the various weeds were also shared. Both Agriculture Basic and Private Pesticide Applicators received two-hours of recertification credit. UMaine Extension staff led the walk and a Maine Board of Pesticide Control Inspector gave a brief update of things that she has seen when going from farm to farm.

Farm EstateSuccession Planning

The University of Maine Cooperative Extension Piscataquis County, in partnership with the Piscataquis County Soil and Water Conservation District, held a Farm and Estate Succession Planning Workshop in Dover-Foxcroft. Presenters for this workshop included Paul O. Dillon Esq., Maine Farmland Trust and UMaine Cooperative Extension. Thirty participants learned about the legal aspect of a succession plan, how to have a successful farm transfer, programs in Maine available for farmers looking to sell their farm and also farm/business record keeping. A Farmlink mixer, hosted by Maine Farmland Project, was held right after the workshop to pair beginning farmers with established farmers that were looking at options for transitioning their farm.

In Piscataquis County, the number and size of farms is dramatically increasing once again, according to the 2012 Census of Agriculture. There are more beginning farmers in the county, and the organizations that presented at the workshop are all committed to helping farmers keep their land in farming. As a follow-up American Farmland Trust met with 13 Piscataquis farmers to learn about the issues that farmers face as they try to transfer their farm to either a family member or other new farmer.

Gardening – Growing Our Own

UMaine Extension horticulture staff in Piscataquis County have taken a multi-prong effort to help gardeners be more successful in their home garden and to help young gardeners learn how their food grows.

Master Gardener Volunteer Training

This year Piscataquis was the host site for a three county Master Gardener Volunteer Training utilizing the Tandberg Video Conference system in the office. Eighteen new MGVs and three returning MGVs participated in fourteen weeks of classes including soils and fertility, botany, insect & disease management, vegetable production, weed management, composting and volunteering. Piscataquis gained five new Master Gardeners: Christine Cannon from Dover-Foxcroft and Galen Durose Jr., Shannon Durose, Lisa Cantara and Karen Chandler all of Greenville. And the three returning MGVs include: Dotty Hadler, Janet Yelch-Weatherbee and Anita Perkins.

One Tomato

Distributed over 330 cherry tomato plants in 2015 to the Dover-Foxcroft and Greenville Food cupboards, Black Fly Festival in Milo and the Piscataquis Extension Office with the wonderful assistance of Master Gardener volunteers and Executive Committee members. Some of the seedlings were provided by the Penquis Valley High School Horticulture Class and Richard Neal. All other seedlings were purchased from local growers; Leaves and Blooms, Spruce Mill Farm and Rockwall Gardens; to invest in our local economy.

This is the first time gardening for 15% of the folks and 21% have only gardened for a couple of years (some of
Piscataquis County Budget

Each year, Piscataquis county tax dollars support UMaine Extension with physical office space, support staff salaries, office supplies, equipment and some programming expenses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Piscataquis County Funding Support History</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>County Support</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Operating Funds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building Funds</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>County Total Support</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State Support</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating Funds</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Budget</strong></td>
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Financial Support for Piscataquis Extension Office Over Time

The Extension is a priceless tool for networking with local growers, educators and policy makers to improve the dynamics of agriculture in Piscataquis County for the current and future generations of farmers.
these folks had their first garden year in 2014 when they received a One Tomato.

Last year we distributed plants to 170 people and at the end of the season checked back with them on their success. Those who were contacted at the end of the season 44% planted their tomato in a container. Their plant’s health was rated good by 80% of the gardeners. The estimated value of the tomatoes harvested was $830.

We are expecting a greater yield in 2015 since we started distributing plants a couple weeks earlier. The value of this project should be over $1,250 worth of tomatoes grown.

The One Tomato project is a great way to introduce folks to UMaine Extension. This year 35% of people receiving a tomato plant had never heard of UMaine Extension.

Garden Displays

Over 500 people learned how to remove ticks and where to get them identified at the UMaine Extension Tick display at Piscataquis Fair at Dover Foxcroft and Forest Heritage Day in Greenville.

Gardening Questions

Home Horticulture Staff fielded gardening inquiries from folks who visited the UMaine Extension Office, called, emailed, texted, or messaged through Facebook. The method of contact may have changed and expanded but the questions are very similar: Why isn’t my plant growing? What is this insect, disease, or plant? What can I use to control this pest? How can I make my garden more productive?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>No. of plants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abbot</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atkinson</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beaver Cove</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blanchard Twp.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowerbank</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brownville</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brownville Jct.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derby</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dover-Foxcroft</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellsworthville</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenville</td>
<td>53</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greenville Jct.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilford</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake View Plt.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medford</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milo</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monson</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orneville</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkman</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sangerville</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sebec</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirley</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>TIR9</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4-H Youth Programs

4-H Clubs, Teams and Afterschool Groups

Towns listed are where the clubs, teams, or groups meet, but youth from anywhere are welcome to participate if they are willing to travel.

- Parkman Adventure Club – Parkman
- Piscataquis 4-H Animal Club – Dover-Foxcroft
- Adventures in Health Science – Dover-Foxcroft
- Greenville Super Science 4-H Club – Greenville
- 4-H Afterschool – Milo
- Rainbow Unicorns – Milo
- 4-H MYCA/HAWT/YVYC - Milo

With the help of youth volunteers we reached

- 21 youth in four 4-H clubs
- 55 youth in three after school programs
- 955 youth in gardening, farming & nutrition in-school programs

GrowME

The GrowME program is a collaboration between Valley Grange, PCSWCD (Piscataquis County Soil and Water Conservation District) and UMaine Piscataquis County Extension.

The program aims to utilize local volunteers who work with teachers to schedule an agricultural activity in their classrooms during Maine Agriculture Week each year. The collaboration developed in 2011 as an outgrowth of Valley Grange’s agricultural activities with Piscataquis Community Elementary School in Guilford. The informal group saw an opportunity to provide hands-on activities that would develop agricultural literacy. The program is called GrowME to reflect our mission of developing agricultural literacy by growing plants, animals and kids!

“Walter Boomsma, a GrowME developer, believes the popularity and success of the program stems from the fact that "we keep it simple and consider this a partnership with school administration and teachers. Our only objective is to engage the kids, have some fun, and leave them with a little better understanding of agriculture. We make it easy on the teacher and fun for the kids."
Piscataquis County Extension Association
Executive Committee

PRESIDENT: Walter Boomsma - Abbot
SECRETARY: Karen Dolley - Charleston
TREASURER: Janet Yelch-Weatherbee – Dover-Foxcroft
MEMBERS: Tish Dutson – Willimantic
George McKay – Dover-Foxcroft
Thelma Regan - Wellington
Wally Sinclair – Brownville
Natasha Colbry – Dover-Foxcroft
Richard Neal – Parkman
Dotty Hadler – Dover-Foxcroft
Georgia Underwood – Dover-Foxcroft

Volunteers help expand the reach of our programs by donating their time, energy and enthusiasm as well as the use of their farms, homes, businesses and supplies for our activities. This adds an estimated value of $72,000 to our programming efforts.

Local Partnership

Our County Extension Association is the vital link between the county, our communities and UMaine. The Association’s Executive Committee is comprised of local volunteers who represent community interests by advising UMaine Extension staff on educational programs, advocate for and secure funding from county government to support the county office, oversee the office budget and facilities, and guide UMaine Extension staff in identifying their programming goals.
Competitive in the Global Market

About 100 million pounds of wild blueberries are produced in Maine, contributing over $250 million to the state’s economy. Because they must remain competitive as production increases worldwide, research-based field management and yield information from UMaine Extension helps current blueberry growers define the risk and returns on investment and assists new growers in understanding what is needed for optimal production. Growers who sample to determine pollinator density in their fields can decide if they should change their investment in rented honeybees or if they should enhance native bee populations by planting pollinator pastures. Total net pollination income is $257/hectare for rented honeybees and $171/hectare for native bees. Our decision-making tools help growers determine how much to rely on rented honeybees versus native bees.

AgrAbility…Supporting Farmers of All Abilities To Remain Active on the Farm

The average U.S. farmer is 57 years old, and farming is the seventh most dangerous job. The Maine AgrAbility Project provides no-cost aid to farmers and their families and workers facing physical or cognitive challenges. Since 2010, UMaine Extension and its partners have conducted more than 70 on-farm assessments to suggest ways that farmers with disabilities could keep working. More than half of participants surveyed reported some increase in quality of life from their participation and remained productive in agriculture. The renewed grant allows Maine AgrAbility to work with forestry and fisheries workers, as well as farmers.

Barley Disease Control…Increasing Yields and Profits

Barley is grown on about 22,000 acres in Maine for livestock feed and malt production, and the acreage is increasing. Maine’s 2013 barley crop was worth $3.7 million, but fungal diseases can limit yield and malting quality. UMaine Extension ran trials aimed at improving grain yields and malting quality through disease control. Researchers sought to identify when and if fungicide was necessary. More than 75 growers deployed a disease control program on 16,000 acres of barley. They received over $200,000 in increased revenue from greater yields and grain quality with the disease control program, which they plan to continue.

Helping Farmers Optimize Forage Production and Quality

Recent USDA incentive programs encourage cover cropping after corn silage harvest. New England’s short growing season and commonly used longer-season hybrids have hampered adoption of cover crops. UMaine researchers organized field trials to determine the benefits of cover crops, no-till, and shorter-season silage varieties. Farmers planting with no-till reduced fuel use by about 5.7 gal/ac and time in the field by 2.75 hr/ac, for total savings of about $50/ac. At $30/ac, the cost of planting cover crops effectively replaced nitrogen fertilizer. Shorter-season corn had similar yields but higher quality than longer-season varieties. On one ME farm, researchers estimated that switching from a 94-day to an 85-day variety would increase income by $670/ac, because milk production/ac increased by 3,350 lbs.

Maine Grass Farmers Network…Increasing Profitability of Dairy Farms

More than 274,000 acres of hay/pasture are grown in Maine, which can improve profitability for livestock operations. Organic dairy farmers must pasture their animals during grazing season. The demand for grass-fed livestock products is rising, but these operations need to improve profitability. The Maine Grass Farmers Network, with UMaine Extension, ran cultivar trials to evaluate grazing and harvest management response in perennial rye grass. As plants mature, digestibility and the concentration of crude protein (CP) decline. Improving forage and pasture management to ensure high CP and digestibility improves animal performance and farm profitability. For example, if organic protein is valued at $1.10 per pound, an increase of 3% CP would yield about 60 additional pounds of protein per ton of feed. Assuming a yield of 4 tons per acre, that’s about $240 in protein from forage per acre, or $24,000 on a farm that harvests 100 acres of hay/pasture. Building efficiencies into grass-based feeding can greatly improve profitability and animal performance.

Preventing Greenhouse Pest Diseases

Many greenhouse managers want to use biological pest control, but hands-on experience is critical. UMaine Extension and partners offer a workshop featuring extensive hands-on activities related to greenhouse
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    Helping Farmers Optimize Forage Production and Quality
    Maine Grass Farmers Network...Increasing Profitability of Dairy Farms
    Preventing Greenhouse Pest Diseases
    Low-Stress Cattle Handling a Success
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University of Maine Cooperative Extension’s successful educational programs result from a federal, state and county government partnership. Since 1919, when the Maine Legislature passed the County Extension Act*, the University of Maine has been in all Maine communities with a county office whose operations are funded by county government. Our educational programs anticipate and respond to local and state needs and issues. We also communicate those issues and opportunities to UMaine faculty to influence their research and development plans.

A sampling of our educational program areas:

- 4-H
- Agriculture
- Business & Community
- Food & Health
- Gardening & Horticulture
- Home, Family & Youth
- Insect & Plant Disease Management
- Maine Food System
- Natural Resources
- Safety & Preparedness
Join us at our annual meeting!

Celebrating and Supporting Farming in Piscataquis County

with John Piotti,
President and CEO of Maine Farmland Trust

Farm to Table Meal by
Spruce Mill Farm, Dover-Foxcroft

Friday, October 30th
6 pm dinner
7 pm program
Congregational Church in Dover-Foxcroft

Tickets are available for dinner at the Piscataquis Extension office. RSVP with payment of $10 by October 23rd guarantees a meal. Proceeds to benefit the school gardening project.

The University of Maine does not discriminate on the grounds of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, including transgender status and gender expression, national origin, citizenship status, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status in employment, education, and all other programs and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding nondiscrimination policies: Director, Office of Equal Opportunity, 101 North Stevens Hall, Orono, ME 04469, 207.581.1226.