



AGRICULTURE



If it happens on a farm or in a field, the Extension Institute of Agriculture works with you to achieve better results. Our innovative dairy management programs range from genetics to farm and business management. Extension researchers work hand-in-hand with row crop, forage and fresh produce growers to provide best practices for every aspect of the growing phase. We also advise communities on using sustainable practices to create inviting spaces free from invasive species

Crops

Liz Gortman, Regional Crops Educator

Creation of a data visualization tool for forage growers, crop consultants and livestock nutritionists in collaboration with local forage councils and agribusinesses. The goal is to provide timely, easy to use corn silage dry down data that these audiences can leverage to identify the optimum timing to harvest corn silage in their area which will produce forage more likely to meet animal nutrient requirements to support production.

- Across the state, crops educators and consultants that support forage growers sample and report the whole plant moisture of corn for silage. Whole plant moisture is a key guiding factor for making corn silage harvest decisions.
- There was a need to update the tool used by Extension educators to share this data with our growers. In response to the need, we identified the important data that we need to collect from growers during the dry down events, and created tools to allow for simple data collection at the dry down sites.
- With the help of our data scientist, a tool was created that provides this data, but also allows the user to manipulate the table and maps to see the information that is most relevant to their needs. Color coding data points provides an indication of the suitability for harvest of each data point, making it easy for stakeholders to visualize the data.

A webinar for farmers, crop consultants, and agency personnel, where timely crop and research updates are presented alongside agronomic recommendations from topic experts in the UW system. Through this webinar we inform our constituents so they can make the most economically and environmentally sound decisions which ultimately lead to better sustainability.

- Weather, economics, pest pressure, and research findings all change throughout the growing year. Our audience needs updates on these variables and resources to respond to them.
- We hosted a webinar twice per month and featured one to three topic experts, mainly UW faculty, to share their timely recommendations, research updates, and relevant resources with participants.



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Dairy

Manuel Peña, Regional Dairy Educator

A survey for farmers, employers and employees who have different mother languages (Spanish and English) and do not speak each other's, where they provide information that helps us understand the strategies they use to bridge the language barrier and how that affects the activities at the farm.

Disruption in communications significantly decreases the farm's ability to onboard, manage, and retain employees, a critical task for successful operations. Optimal communications are a central piece to implementing successful workforce development programs. Additionally, the perception of employees regarding the language barriers on farms also remains unknown. A series of in person meetings with farmers, where we can discuss their challenges and the opportunities for the current research and future programming. As a Bilingual Regional Dairy Educator, working with the farms who have language barriers is important. The goal is to develop resources that improve communication, safety, and productivity on farms. This work supports both farmers and their Spanish-speaking employees, and it addresses broader issues by helping create more inclusive and effective workplaces in the dairy industry.

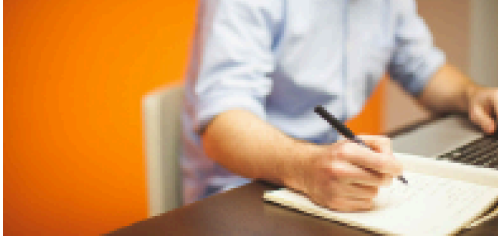


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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



Community Development provides educational programming to assist leaders, communities, and organizations realize their fullest potential. We work with communities to build the vitality that enhances their quality of life and enriches the lives of their residents. In short, the Community Development Institute plants and cultivates the seeds for thriving communities and organizations.

Paul Roback, Community Development Educator

A series of strategies to solicit public input to help inform updates to the Ozaukee County Farmland Preservation Plan. Using several public engagement strategies will engage citizens, farmers, and elected officials who will identify important issues and prepare a farmland preservation plan with realistic goals.

Ozaukee County developed a Farmland Preservation Plan in 2013 “to support and implement policies and programs that balance sustainable rural land uses with urban land uses by preserving productive farmland and ensuring orderly development.” The Ozaukee County Planning and Parks Director contacted Paul Roback to assist with elements of the public participation process for updating the 2013 plan. These strategies will engage citizens, farmers, and elected officials in identifying important issues related to farmland preservation in Ozaukee County. In response, Paul facilitated a process for the Ozaukee County Comprehensive Planning Board to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with farmland preservation in Ozaukee County. Then, Paul facilitated a modified focus group of local farmers involved with Clean Farm Families, who are farmers working together to improve the soil health and water quality throughout Ozaukee County. Lastly, Paul compiled the results of a Public Participation Survey that had close to 400 responses and presented the findings during a meeting of the Ozaukee County Comprehensive Planning Board. Agriculture is an important part of Ozaukee County’s economy. Farmland preservation not only helps ensure that agriculture continues in the county but also helps preserve natural ecological systems and the rural character that exists in parts of the County. The three public engagement strategies Paul facilitated allowed for the participation and input of citizens, farmers, and government officials. The important issues that were identified in this process will help ensure the development of a farmland preservation plan with realistic goals.



4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



Positive Youth Development prepares the youth of today to become the effective, empathetic adults of tomorrow. Our research-based youth enrichment programs like teens in governance build youth and adult capacity and partnerships that help both sides grow. 4-H clubs, camps and after-school programs give young people the hands-on experiences they need to develop an understanding of themselves and the world.

Abi Quinlan, 4-H Program Educator

To prepare for a successful summer camp experience, Ozaukee County 4-H prioritized youth voice and leadership development through a series of hands-on trainings for 14 youth counselors and directors. These trainings—grounded in Wisconsin 4-H Camp policies—equipped youth with tools to lead their peers, manage challenges, and foster a safe, welcoming camp culture. The process not only ensured readiness for camp, but also modeled how young people can lead with purpose, empathy, and responsibility.

Ozaukee County 4-H is facilitating a leadership-driven model for its overnight summer camp at Upham Woods, involving 12 youth counselors and 2 youth directors in essential aspects of the planning and implementation process. These youth leaders are not only designing the camp theme and activities, but are also receiving targeted training aligned with state 4-H camp policy to prepare for camper supervision, behavior management, health and safety procedures, and conflict resolution. By incorporating youth voice throughout the process, camp becomes a platform where young people both lead and grow—setting the tone for a positive and empowering experience for all campers. Youth and families in Ozaukee County have expressed the desire for meaningful leadership roles where youth are trusted and trained to make real decisions. In response, the 4-H Educator facilitated a multi-session training series to prepare counselors and directors for their camp responsibilities. These trainings addressed homesickness, camper needs, medical procedures, youth protection guidelines, and behavior management strategies—ensuring compliance with Wisconsin 4-H policies while giving young people the tools they need to lead effectively. In addition to logistical preparation, youth engaged in reflection, team-building, and communication workshops that promoted a growth mindset and confidence in decision-making. Every session emphasized that youth voice matters, not just in planning, but in building culture and solving problems. As a result of this intentional training process, youth leaders are equipped to manage real-world challenges and lead with care. Their input has shaped daily schedules, mealtime procedures, activity rotations, and conflict protocols. More importantly, these youth are learning to work as a team, lead younger campers, and uphold 4-H values through action. The experience has already deepened their sense of ownership and connection to 4-H. By the time camp begins, these young leaders will not only be ready—they'll be confident, empowered, and prepared to ensure every camper feels safe, included, and inspired.



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We teach, learn, lead and serve, connecting people with the University of Wisconsin, and engaging with them in transforming lives and communities.

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