

# **Tenured Faculty Review Document**

## **Scott Reuss**

### **Marinette County Agriculture/Horticulture Agent**

#### Situation Overview

The Marinette County UW-Extension Agriculture/Horticulture Agent position primarily develops and implements appropriate educational, research, and demonstration programs in the areas of crops & soils management, home horticulture, and commercial horticulture as appropriate in Marinette County, Oconto County via a formal two-county agreement, and Florence County via a 10% purchase of services agreement. The Oconto County agent provides all dairy-related programming and takes the lead in most other livestock programming, with the exception of poultry. Another neighboring WI county (Forest) does not have ANRE presence, and the three neighboring Michigan counties have had neither a crops educator nor home horticulture educator until just recently. Lastly, this position has offered horticultural programming in Menominee County, Wisconsin on at least an annual basis, in collaboration with UW-Extension personnel there and the College of Menominee Nation.

Marinette, Oconto, and Florence Counties are agricultural transitional counties. Each has a significant agricultural community, but agriculture is not the major economic driver of any of the three. The 2012 Census of Agriculture found that there were just over 1,550 farms in the three counties, with total sales of approximately \$268 million dollars. Dairy accounts for just over 50% of sales. Small farms (farms with under \$10,000 in total sales) predominate in this area, encompassing 846 of the 1,550 farms. Farms within this definition are often the ones who rely on UW-Extension resources the most, as they do not have access to as many agricultural professionals as full-time, larger farms. Additionally, a segment of these farms are new to farming or are transitioning from one type of production system to another.

Another factor helping set educational programming is the overwhelming desire by producers to have UW-Extension personnel serve a public education role regarding agricultural realities, as self-reported by producers in Oconto and Marinette Counties in the 2014 needs assessment conducted by Oconto Agent Mills-Lloyd. This desire is partially due to the realities of transitional geography, and due to a growing percentage of the area's resident and non-resident population not having direct linkages with agriculture.

Many families are either raising their own fruits or vegetables for the first time, or expanding their home produce raising opportunities. This creates both a need and an interest for home horticulture programming across all of the programming area covered by this agent. Home horticulture programming can play a significant role in the marketing plans of an UW-Extension office by offering locally-relevant, research-based programs in many areas of the county that have been traditionally underserved. UW-Extension's ability to offer horticulture programs that meet the needs of those residents where they live can create positive public relations for UW-Extension, as well as make them aware of the opportunities available to them via either other UW-Extension program areas or other county departments.

This document reviews program delivery of the Marinette County Agriculture/Horticulture Agent in the years 2012 through 2016, during which time Scott Reuss has served in that role, as well as serving as Marinette County Department Head. In that five-year span, Reuss' time has been split (on average) into Agricultural Programs = 45.3%, Horticultural Programs = 39.2%, and Administrative Duties = 15.5%.

## Program Development and Implementation

The maintenance of a two-county specialization agreement with Oconto County allows for more consistent programming from year to year than an absolute generalist position. However, analysis does need to be done each year and an appropriate plan of work prepared, presented to oversight officials, and worked toward meeting those goals. It is critical that UW-Extension personnel hold themselves accountable to their program planning and development processes, while still being nimble enough to respond to changing economic or climatic situations within a programming year.

A key strength of UW-Extension agriculture and horticulture programming in the Marinette County area is the partnerships built through the years. Partnerships are actively maintained with other county agencies (Land & Water Conservation, Law Enforcement, and the Marinette County Consolidated Library System), state agencies (DNR), federal agencies (NRCS, FSA), UW-Marquette (a two-year college), two Master Gardener Volunteer Associations, Marinette County Dairy Promotions and Holstein Association, and working relationships with many clubs, civic groups, and school districts. Program implementation is sometimes complicated by working with partner organizations and sometimes simplified. Either way, the long-term benefits of increased clientele exposure, clientele access to UW-Extension information, and good will are worth the additional efforts.

Another layer of partnerships has been formed with media personnel in the multi-county area. Throughout my career, I have emphasized the use of mass media to deliver both program marketing and timely programmatic content, and as a cornerstone of public agricultural awareness efforts. The local Oconto County radio station and I coordinate on two monthly radio shows – Horticulture on the first Friday and Agriculture (in conjunction with the Oconto County Ag Agent) on the third Wednesday. These shows are each 50 minutes in length, allowing for both call-in questions and in-depth discussion of pertinent topics. The opportunity is also available to do additional discussions if an event warrants. Radio discussions are also held via the Marinette and Iron Mountain stations on as-pertinent or scheduled basis, but not with the regularity of the WOCO arrangement.

Newspapers also form a critical mass media piece, with six weekly papers and two daily papers housed in the primary geographic area and one other Green Bay daily also a significant source. Those newspapers are all utilized as ways of disseminating event and programmatic topic information. One of the most consistent relationships is a weekly article within the Oconto Falls Times Herald, alternating between the two ag agents serving Oconto County (myself and Mills-Lloyd).

Although mass media can be very important, discussion and producer evaluations have consistently borne out the importance of timely, specific agricultural information sent directly to farms via the agriculture newsletter. The 2014 needs assessment bore this fact out, as producers self-identified the paper newsletter as their desired, and most important, source of UWEX Agricultural information. Thus, Marinette County UW-Extension maintains a paper newsletter, mailed to approximately 825 residences in the region. In the last few years, Oconto and Marinette County UWEX have co-coordinated this newsletter, alternating its publication and delivery, with Marinette County delivering the newsletter at the beginning of odd months.

The large geographic area served through this position allows for some level of program efficiency, as certain types of programs can be delivered multiple times in different venues and not being repeated in any given locale. Geographically based program delivery is a main tenet of both agriculture and horticulture programming, as we strive to offer programs in most/many

areas of all three counties each year. There are also certain topics that can be offered annually and always have a clientele group interested in that topic, an example of this would be fruit tree pruning workshops. A significant positive aspect of proper program planning and implementation is that clientele come to know UW-Extension as a resource of non-biased, research-based information within certain topic areas and watch for those types of programs. That facet has also led to the ability to expand my programming impact by being asked to deliver programs in many different Wisconsin counties, as well as in many different locales in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The 2016 Marinette & Florence County Agriculture/ Horticulture Plan of Work has been submitted as a supporting document to see the types of programs that are coordinated annually.

The remainder of the programming discussion is going to be performed through the major program emphases worked toward in the last five years. Those major programs are:

- Farm Management
- Forage Crop Management
- Home Food Production
- Small Farm Management
- Community Awareness of Agriculture
- Master Gardener Volunteer Training

### **Farm Management**

Farm Management programming often becomes a conundrum for UWEX Agricultural Agents. The information is highly important, highly relevant (if we are doing our jobs correctly), and can be critical to the success of an individual farm. However, it is also somewhat difficult to evaluate, very difficult to achieve good attendance, and may require significant pre-programming work. I have placed at least a fairly high level of importance on such programs, with the understanding that attendance will not be significant. I have informed oversight committees of this issue, while also discussing and reviewing the relevance and importance of said programs. They have consistently agreed that such programs should be offered, even though participating farm numbers are often low. A prime example of this would be youth Tractor/Machinery Safety certification, which is offered annually, but with an average participation of 7 youth. However, certain topics that fall under this general category do acquire significant interest in occasional years, such as crop insurance, FSA programs, land rental valuation, and commodity marketing.

Farm Bill Education: One major area in which I focused within these years was related to the 2014 Farm Bill. I was selected as one of the program delivery specialists in this arena. As such, I delivered both acreage/crop based programming (the ARC/PLC decision) and dairy risk management (Dairy MPP) programming. The opportunity to change FSA base acres and sign up for ARC/PLC was the first order of business regarding these programs. Between the fall of 2014 and the deadline in spring of 2015, I delivered programs in Calumet, Door, Kewaunee, Brown, Oconto, Outagamie, Marinette, Florence, Forest, and Manitowoc Counties, along with individual inquiries, directly reaching approximately 560 landowners, producers, and agricultural professionals. As reported in a 2015 Results Narrative regarding these workshops:

" Many of the 334 attendees of the 2015 programs... shared that they were very glad to have been able to attend the program and that they valued the offer of individual assistance provided by Reuss. Attendees often shared that they learned more about the grain crop programs by attending these workshops than by doing all the other individual or workshop-based work that they had done previously. FSA personnel shared with Reuss that they were very happy with the overall rates of program signup and that very few producers were simply using the default option, indicating that they understood at least the basics of the programs and were analyzing their options."

The other portion of this Farm Bill programming role was to deliver information regarding the Dairy Margin Protection Program during the initial signup period in the fall of 2015, as well as annual opportunities for producers to learn about the program thereafter. The MPP only affects dairy producers and is voluntary. As such, the effort was smaller, but I have delivered programs in Oconto, Marinette, Door, and Kewaunee Counties and had direct discussions with other producers. In total, I contacted 60 dairy producers and ten ag professionals regarding this program. This programming was very valuable for producers, and met a key need, as FSA personnel were not equipped to be able to deliver the information that producers needed for their decision-making processes. Producers were appreciative of both portions, particularly for the forthrightness and methods of delivery utilized for the grains programs. MPP workshop participants consistently gave feedback indicating that they were thankful for the opportunity to compare their options and that they learned how the program worked and gained confidence in being able to make an appropriate decision for their farm.

Grain Marketing and other programs: Another area of annual programming within farm management, since 2013, is that of grain marketing. The significant ups and downs of grain price, and overall economic situation for grain producers, have created an interest in understanding grain marketing tools and techniques. This effort began in early 2013 in cooperation with Nick Schneider (former Winnebago Cty. UWEX Ag Agent), conducting the training in two places, reaching 34 producers and professionals. Since then, I have annually offered at least one day of grain marketing education, often reaching producers from outside my primary programming area. These efforts are a prime example of low numbers, high impact; as recent, average annual attendance is only 4 farms. However, their increased understanding of grain marketing tools and cycles gives them information and confidence to successfully implement grain marketing plans that do increase their bottom line.

Some program topics are delivered annually in the three-county area, such as crop insurance updates and land rental workshops. The land rental workshops prove to be fairly popular, as producers and landowners both like reviewing economic information and market-based realities of how farm land should be valued, or could be valued based on current conditions. As there are few other places in the state that offer these programs, attendees have often traveled from many different counties for them. This general topic has also been a focal point of newspaper and newsletter articles, further expanding the reach of this information. Evaluation results from workshop attendees consistently indicate that attendees learn things that assist them in the process of working with farmland rental agreements. 2012 was a significant year for this type of program, please see the 2012 success story related to this effort, attached as a supporting document.

Other programs are consistent, but vary in either topic or location. An annual Florence Farm Management Update program has been held each spring, but with topics chosen appropriate to that year. Another program conducted in a similar manner is the Heart of the Farm workshop, usually conducted annually between a three-county cooperative of Marinette, Oconto, and Shawano Counties. Other higher impact farm management programs are being conducted through this three-county alliance now, such as workshops regarding farm succession. This type of arrangement again allows for very local program delivery, but with variations in topic selection and less individual work for an agent. I have allowed partner agents to lead these efforts, supporting them by leading occasional topics of discussion and conducting promotion.

## **Small Farms Management**

Efforts within this realm are diverse, including individual work, small group settings, and media work. I will only touch on two topics herein: Fruit Management and Poultry. I have served as one of the few UW-Extension agents in NE WI conducting poultry management programs, in part due to my role on the Small Farms Program Team. In the past 5 years, I have conducted poultry management programs in Florence, Marinette, and Oconto Falls, as well as at county fairs and other events. 2016 was the most significant programming year, reaching at least 250 individuals through 3 production workshops, displays at the Marinette and Oconto County Fairs, and at the Fall Family Fun Fest.

Fruit Management programming has been focused toward home growers, but I have begun to be recognized by commercial growers as a source of fruit management knowledge and am working toward increasing my role within that industry. The following 2014 impact statement summarized one key program initiative: “In conjunction with other Northern WI UW-Extension Agriculture Agents, Marinette County UW-Extension hosted and facilitated a six-session Commercial Fruit Production series. Between 3 and 8 current or potential fruit growers attended each of the sessions, through which they gained knowledge of individual fruit crop production practices, economic realities of said crops and production costs, and learned from current local producers regarding local marketing and production challenges. At least one producer expanded their crop species as a result of this series, while at least one other producer decided not to invest in a planned new crop after learning more about the crop’s challenges.”

During 2016, I co-coordinated a berry grower’s survey with Dr. Brian Smith, UW-River Falls. I served as the developer and publicist for the survey. It was delivered as both paper and electronic versions and had two primary publicity pushes, one early in 2016 and one later in the season. In total, the survey was completed by 45 growers, encompassing all regions of WI. State fruit specialists were pleased with the quantity of results and are using same to guide their programming, as will the rest of the Fruits Team. I am currently in charge of coordinating the Fruit Production Theme area within the Farm Technology Days Education Tent for 2017.

## **Forage Management**

Due to the importance of cattle to area agriculture, forage management education efforts are a consistent need. The first cut Scissors Clip project and Corn Silage Whole Plant Moisture Monitoring are conducted each year across the three counties. As the area covers 100 miles north to south and 70 miles east to west and has highly variable soil types, these are significant efforts, with both harvests often spread out over a month or more. The information is disseminated via direct phone calls to participating producers and to all interested producers via web pages, radio programs, newsletters, and news releases in papers, as well as a toll-free telephone line. In this past five-year time frame, these efforts have been even more critical due to three of the five years having extremely challenging climatic or economic conditions. Those conditions necessitated producers pay extremely close attention to forage quality and quantity interactions. Within these projects, I make certain to pass along other forage management information, not just current crop maturity. This allows significant information transfer to some farms that seldom otherwise utilize UW-Extension. Past evaluations have indicated the need for these projects to continue, however, it has become apparent that producer use of this data is declining, so I plan on changing the mechanics of both these efforts in 2017 and then re-analyzing those practices and results to move forward effectively, yet efficiently.

In addition to newsletter articles regarding timely forage management topics, I utilize other agricultural community events such as the Holstein Association Twilight Meeting, agribusiness events, and others to further relay current UW-Extension forage management information, as forages are a uniting topic for nearly all producers. Specific events or opportunities have arisen that necessitate certain types of information to be transferred, such as the alfalfa winterkill that occurred over the 2012-13 winter. Otherwise, I have focused on individual work, in addition to guest speaking opportunities, such as with the WI Bison Producers' Association. I have presented at two winter meetings and one field day for this association in this time period, presenting on forage storage and pasture management.

### **Community Awareness of Agriculture**

As stated previously, I make a concerted effort to use mass media to enlighten the general populace about the realities and impacts of agriculture. The Marinette County UW-Extension office maintains a large display and education area each year at the Marinette County Fair, serving as a key avenue of agricultural awareness education. I have also served as education coordinator at the Marinette County Breakfast on the Farm these five years and have been an active member of the Marinette County Dairy Promotions my entire career, allowing the opportunity to piggyback UW-Extension information with agricultural awareness information and funding from that group. I also participate in activities where I can speak about agriculture and its impact to various civic groups, volunteer groups, and elected officials. I do not shy away from difficult topics. I have initiated a series of programs, starting in March of 2016, centered on GMO's in agriculture. At the Marinette Spring Garden Conference, I led a mini-session regarding GMO's with over 70 participants (in a 60-seat room), and have conducted a producer-oriented 'how do you respond' session, as well as consumer-oriented sessions on this topic.

The following was reported as part of a 2013 Success Story, and provides a summary of my agricultural awareness activity.

#### **Marinette & Florence Counties Agriculture Public Awareness Activities – 2013 Response:**

UW-Extension Agriculture Agent Scott Reuss coordinates the educational activities at the Dairy Promotions' sponsored Marinette County Breakfast on the Farm. Reuss works with committee members, WMMB representatives, local governmental agency personnel, and most notably the host farm to develop educational materials and displays. These include an overview of the event and of agricultural economics that is available to all attendees; an educational display building that has all UW-Extension program areas and any other local, state, or federal agencies that wish to be involved; and informational signs or displays on all buildings, structures, pieces of equipment, and all potential points of interest on the farm. Subject matter ranged from biosecurity to manure storage, feed storage, and equipment safety.

Reuss utilizes mass media to share information regarding agriculture and its impact to the region. These efforts include cooperating with the Oconto County Agriculture Agent on a monthly agriculture radio show on Oconto-based WOCO and a weekly article in the Oconto Falls newspaper, and utilizing news releases in all other area newspapers to share timely or pertinent agricultural information. Reuss also seeks out opportunities to share agricultural information with community groups, organizations, and elected officials, as well as having agricultural impact displays at community events such as farmer's markets and county fairs. Lastly, Reuss organized a Local Foods Tour of Northern Marinette and Florence County farms.

**Results & Evidence:**  
Approximately 4800 persons attended the 2013 Breakfast on the Farm event, put on by nearly 200 volunteers. Reuss and other committee members consistently observed attendees

reading the informational signage, reviewing display material, and discussing the information with family, committee members, and/or the host family. These observations suggest that approximately 75% of attendees (nearly 3,600) reviewed multiple educational displays or signage. Many attendees commented verbally to committee members that the materials added to their understanding of agriculture, why certain things happen on farms, and about dairy farming in general.

Although the weather-impacted Local Foods Tour only had 50 attendees, the associated media work for the event resulted in a pair of feature newspaper stories, a radio show related to local food production, and web page presence. Reuss presented an agricultural impacts discussion or display at four other area events, sharing information with 150 other persons. Lastly, Reuss developed 30 news articles, fifteen additional agriculture-related news releases, and participated in 13 agriculture-related radio shows. Indirect educational contacts are very difficult to assess regarding impact, local UW-Extension staff do receive comments regarding those opportunities, indicating that area residents are gaining information from them.

### **Home Food Production and Home Garden/Landscape Pest Management**

As discussed prior, home horticulture education is utilized to both convey research-based information to area citizens, but also to showcase the availability and applicability of UW-Extension resources. I make certain to utilize resources from other UW-Extension program areas as appropriate and discuss all program areas as part of the introduction to any horticulture event. I also relay current research-based information to commercial horticulture entities and try to maintain positive relationships with them, including inviting their staff to events that may serve as training opportunities. These relationships allow them to know that they can refer consumers to UW-Extension when in need of more information, want a second opinion, or have an issue with which their staff cannot assist. I have conducted between 35 and 60 home horticultural education sessions each year and answer a large number of individual inquiries. I have had direct educational contact with an average of over 2,000 individuals each year, mostly in the area of home food production. As an example of the scope and scale of this programming, please see the Home Food Production Results Narrative I filed for 2016, attached as a supporting document.

### **Master Gardener Volunteer Training**

In tandem with home horticulture programming performed by UW-Extension personnel, successful training of Master Gardener Volunteers (MGV) is critical to maintaining program strength, improving the outreach of UW-Extension horticulture, and maintaining horticulture demonstration projects. In Marinette County, the Northern Lights MGV's are the primary source of inspiration and perspiration for the Harmony Arboretum Demonstration Gardens. They also sponsor educational events and work community projects, annually volunteering approximately 4000 hours back to the community. The Glacial Gardeners MGV's are based in Florence and serve extremely critical roles in horticultural programming, offering multiple educational opportunities each year, serving on many community organizations as a liaison for UW-Extension Horticulture, and performing extremely valuable horticultural demonstration or assistance projects. They annually volunteer approximately 2300 hours each year.

I provide the training for new MGV's and advanced training for continuing MGV's of both associations. I have offered basic MGV training annually in Florence or in Marinette, providing nearly 90 new potential volunteers the training they need to initiate their volunteer career. I have continued to refine the personally delivered, 14-week course through which the primary MGV training information is tailored to Northeastern Wisconsin and Upper Peninsula growing conditions. The strength of this programmatic delivery has been the training content.

However, the overall volunteer management has not always been at as high of a level as may be warranted. Toward that end, I just completed the on-line course, Achieving the Extension Mission through Volunteers, with the intent of improving the overall experience for volunteers, and thus the overall impact which they have on our communities. In addition to the Level One Training, I also coordinate continuing education for current MGV's, allowing them to have opportunities to expand their knowledge base and their assistance to others.

### **Recent Professional Development**

The emphasis of my professional development is to maintain my knowledge base in agronomic and horticulture topics. Thus, I attempt to annually attend UW/UWEX sponsored regional events such as Agronomy Update, Pest Management Update, Soil/Water Meetings, and program team sponsored events, as well as the WI Crop Management Conference usually every other year. The WI Fruit & Vegetable Growers' Conference has also become an annual event for myself to get exposure to advanced information in these topics, and make industry connections with both producers and professionals. Other programs regularly attended include the two Eastern District Farm Management Updates, Department Head district and state meetings, and watching for other opportunities across all topics.

### **Contributions to Profession and/or University Community**

I consider my primary contribution to other Cooperative Extension personnel to be my ability and willingness to assist. It is normal for me to conduct workshops or give presentations in as many as seven different WI counties and two-three MI counties each year. I also serve as a consistent plant science resource person for personnel in many of those counties. I annually take part in Farm Technology Days, assisting in the Weed Dr. Booth and other booths as appropriate and assisting in coordination when located closer to Marinette County.

I am a member of many different program teams and workgroups. I serve as a smaller county representative to the WI Master Gardener Advisory Committee; and make an effort to be involved in Horticulture Team meetings and activities to represent the small county, non full-time horticulture perspective. I am the only representative on the Small Farms Team in the Northeastern area of Wisconsin, and also participate (to varying degrees) in Team Forage, Team Grains, FARM Team, and the Fruits Team.

In addition to department head responsibilities and activities at the district level, I have served on the Faculty Tenure Advisory Committee as an Ag/AgBusiness rep and then began a term on the DALs SRP Committee, of which I will be entering my third year. I adapt other UW-Extension publications or materials to local conditions to utilize in local programs, or write new materials for those situations, and serve as an editor to a number of Horticultural X-File publications, but have not served as author of new state-wide materials in recent years. My programmatic delivery emphasis has decreased the time that I have for research activities too much, as I have done very little in this realm in the past five years. Moving forward, this is one area which I need to get back in to my programmatic repertoire.

### **Looking toward the future**

As with all UW-Extension personnel, looking toward the future does not provide a crystal clear picture. I see a need for myself to become more focused as UW-Extension transitions, and producer needs become more focused. I believe that UW-Extension will always have a role, as long as UWEX personnel provide high-quality, high-impact programming. However, I feel that the types of work shown throughout this document which get people to experience UW-Extension are also critical to our survival. Finding the right balance will be critical to continuing to meet the needs of constituents and maintaining/expanding the role of UW-Extension.



## **Professional Development Plan**

As I look toward the next five years, I see uncertainty, as do most UW-Extension personnel. Not uncertainty in what UW-Extension will be doing, per se., but in what any one individual will be doing. The following list of professional development goals or opportunities are what I see as some general areas, and some specific ones, under the assumption that I maintain a relatively similar role to what I now am doing. I will continue to analyze the needs of our clientele and add specific topics to this list when new areas of need arise.

- Self-training and UW sponsored on-line courses to achieve improved literacy regarding use of electronic technologies that improve efficiency of program delivery, and offer more modes of information transfer. Further, significant need of increasing understanding of Smart-phone and similar Apps, what they can do, how they work, etc..
- Attendance at pertinent UW/UW-Extension sponsored professional development opportunities regarding agronomic expertise, to include Agronomy Update, Pest Management Update, Soil & Water Management meetings, and other similar programs.
- Improve my understanding of new agronomic equipment and technology and how they may fit into agriculture in the three counties.
- Improve farm management training techniques and ability. Topics of emphasis will be dependent on how such programming emphases are split between myself and partner agents, but will likely include direct marketing and commodity marketing.
- Self-training and attendance at industry and university sponsored events to build on fruit and vegetable production knowledge so that I can remain a primary source of information for home growers and become more accepted as a source of research-based information and research/demonstration opportunity for commercial growers.
- Improve knowledge base within other areas of horticulture, particularly plant selection and identification.
- Improve volunteer management skills and abilities and better utilize Master Gardener Volunteers in programming. In particular, complete the recognized goals of the just-completed (March, 2017) Achieving the Extension Mission Through Volunteers course.