

Lake Erie Regional Grape Program

A cooperative program between Cornell and Penn State Universities, Cornell Cooperative Extension Associations in Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, Erie and Niagara Counties, Penn State Extension – Erie County, NYS IPM Program, National Grape Cooperative, Constellation Brands, Walker's Fruit Basket and growers of the Lake Erie Grape Industry



Cornell University
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First Quarter Report 2019

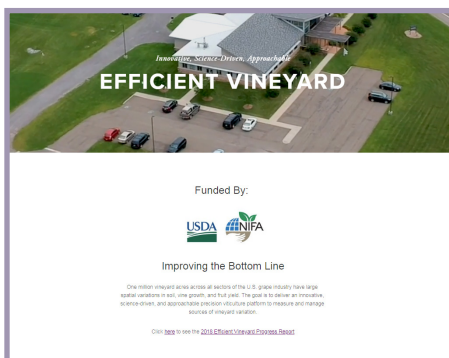
LERGP hires new Viticulturalist!

The Lake Erie Regional Grape Program is very pleased to announce that Jennifer Russo has joined their team as the new viticulture extension specialist! The viticulture extension specialist at LERGP plays a key role providing growers in the Lake Erie Grape Belt with the latest research-based information to assist them in producing grapes in an environmentally and economically sustainable manner. The Lake Erie Grape Belt extends from Erie county Pennsylvania through Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, Erie and Niagara counties of New York. She is excited to meet growers and looks forward to helping them get the best out of their vines.

Jennifer joined the Cornell Lake Erie Research and Extension in 2018 as a research technician with the Efficient Vineyard project where she was focused on improving crop estimation procedures and practices from vineyard through industry. This improvement would have a ripple effect from helping a grower to better understand the amount of grapes in his/her vineyard(s) and the management decisions that flow from there, to trucking, processing, tank space, projections of revenues, and even crop insurance claims. In order to help solve this problem, the development of an accurate automated berry counting machine was deemed necessary. Jennifer was integral in designing the Cornell Grape Counter (CGC) machine designed specifically to count grapes at the various stages in their development with a 99.5% accuracy. By using this CGC machine a grower would be able to decrease labor costs, increase accuracy and provide digitized data for crop estimates required by local grape processors. She is also working closely with National Cooperative Industry stakeholders to train their staff on the CGC crop estimation machine, arranging for a second CGC machine to cover their Washington/Michigan areas, putting together an informative educational summer program for the Erie County Fair, and future ride-along days to meet more stakeholders.

Jennifer was the moderator at LERGP's Winter Grower's Conference putting her in front of many of the stakeholders of our region. She has made 3 grower visits in Cattaraugus and Chautauqua counties and is developing her projected work plan. She has growers interested in working on crop cover trials in development. Jennifer is working to purchase the Tenney 2 freezer with grant monies to work with Tim Martinson on bud hardiness trials.





Heather Barrett was hired as the Program/Extension Aide 3 for **The Efficient Vineyard USDA/NIFA Project**. She has worked with Nick and Caitlin Gunner of Orbitist to update the web site to include a section called 'The Manual'. This portion of the website explains each part of the measure, model, and manage approach with summaries of each component and corresponding technology assists growers in determining whether precision viticulture could be implemented in their vineyards. The end result has been a more user friendly, informative web-site with a variety of tools for growers interested in implementing a variable rate management plan.

Other updates to the website include: a tab on the Loaner Sensor Program, an updated publications list (from 6 to 21), and the monthly webinars have resumed with a new layout resembling an interview or talk show. The new website

was presented to growers at the Winter Grower's Conference in a brief presentation highlighting the loaner sensor program and the Manual in an effort to increase participation. There have also been several articles in the LERGP newsletter discussing the updates to the website.

Vineyard Improvement Program

Promotion about the Vineyard Improvement Program has generated some interest in removing unwanted Concord vineyards and replanting an agricultural commodity. During this quarter a number of growers have stopped in or called about how the program works and are considering submitting applications. Four applications have been received and four site visits have been conducted this quarter. Our total applications to date are five, three in Chautauqua county, one in Steuben, and one in Schuyler county. The total acreage that represents is 63.65 acres.

In order to more accurately pin point the acreage submitted for the program we are using updated parcel information for the counties involved.

A table was available at the 2019 Winter Growers' Conference held on Wednesday, March 13th at the SUNY Fredonia Williams Center in Fredonia, NY. Many growers stopped to ask about the program and take information about how to put the budget together.

In the middle of March a clarification on how the grant is to be applied came through. The limit of \$1,500 per acre for both removal and replant, has been increased to \$3,000 per acre. The clarification is that there is a \$1,500 per acre reimbursement limit for removing the Concord vineyard and a \$1,500 per acre reimbursement limit for replanting that acreage. Once the clarification was made, an announcement was made through the weekly Crop Update to LERGP growers, a press release was sent, and a podcast was created so the growers/land owners in the area covered by the program will know the most up to date information. The applications that had already been submitted were then adjusted and the growers notified of the changes.



NEWA

NEWA continues its expansion as the region is now up to 23 weather stations. Ensuring the accuracy of weather data has been the main focus during this time before growing season with the launch of a new NEWA data quality control application. This application gives NEWA technicians the ability to track and compare weather data against other stations and flag any outliers. Maintenance continues to be done on all stations with new parts being installed on five stations. Yearly check-ups are being done on all weather stations as the growing season approaches us. The installation of additional stations was made possible through a grant received from the Lake Erie Regional Grape Research and Extension Program, Inc. (National Grape Cooperative, Constellation Brand and Walker's Fruit Basket) and the New York Wine and Grape Foundation.

Winter Grower Conference

The Winter Grower Conference was well received by all in attendance. A successful trade show, new guest speakers and a well-received line-up of the usual suspects led to positive reviews from growers. Just about 100 growers took advantage of an unusually nice spring day to attend the educational sessions that covered soil science, weed science, invasive species, succession planning and other topics. Under the leadership of Kate Robinson, planning and logistics of the conference continue to improve and enhance the quality of the conference for growers.

The succession planning talks have resulted in two office visits and another two scheduled visits. The visits range from just exploring the idea to the nuts and bolts of what makes a plan realistic. One grower has implemented changes to his management strategy to better facilitate a succession plan to a key employee. A follow-up appointment will be his 4th appointment in two years and builds on talks and one on one meetings throughout this period.

In the upcoming year we will expand on the bud cold hardiness project. The expansion was awarded additional industry funding from LERGP funders to purchase equipment, allowing LERGP staff to measure cold hardiness of buds across the Lake Erie region. This will supplement CLEREL research efforts and allow further analysis of production practices targeted and sustainable vine health. The grant caught the interest of industry as a result of low winter temperatures this year. Those temperatures may create some minor production issues locally but we anticipate significant impacts outside of this region that may help our surplus of hybrid juice and acreage. Over a dozen calls and office visits regarding management and price have come as a result of this new and troubling trend that began to impact growers in early fall of 2018.



To date in 2019:

Publications - Lake Erie Vineyard Notes Newsletter (2) and LERGP Crop Update (5)

Podcasts - 12 weekly podcasts (112 total) available on <http://lergp.com/podcasts/>

Web resources - <http://lergp.cce.cornell.edu>, <http://lergp.com> and <https://www.efficientvineyard.com>

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LERGP Home Pages: <http://lergp.cce.cornell.edu>; <http://lergp.com> Phone: 716.792.2800