



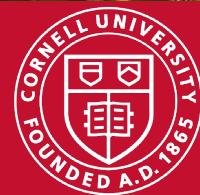
LERGP 2025 Second Quarter Impacts

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Lake Erie Regional Grape Program



PennState Extension

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Cornell Cooperative Extension

Lake Erie Regional Grape Program

Second Quarter Report 2025

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



Coffee Pot Meetings

Jennifer Phillips Russo- LERGP Viticulture Specialist, Team Lead

Coffee Pot meetings were started years ago in an effort to connect with local growers to address their needs during the growing season. These meetings are typically hosted by grape growers in the region that are willing to invite the group into their barn/garage. LERGP brings coffee, donuts, the latest research information, and recertification credits.

In addition, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) both approved offering pesticide recertification credits at these meetings to aid our growers. For each meeting one credit is available to both New York and Pennsylvania licensed pesticide applicators. This quarter, there were 8 Coffee Pot Meetings and 283 total participants reached for May and June 2025.



The Coffee Pot Meetings are discussions on timely viticulture, business management, and integrated pest management. We are pleased to announce that our successful programming has been adopted in other commodities and states! The LERGP team is excited to be able to continue to offer educational outreach and pesticide recertification credits to our industry stakeholders.

2025 NYSDEC How to Get Certified Course

The Lake Erie Regional Grape Program offered our annual How to Get Certified Course on Wednesday, April 2, 2025, from 10 AM – 12 Noon at Cornell Lake Erie Research & Extension Laboratory in Portland, NY. This was a 2-hour course instructed by the NYSDEC in preparation for the pesticide applicator test that was given at the same location the following week on Wednesday, April 9, 2025, at 10:00am. Attendees of this class were able to register for the test at this course. This event was well attended.

JCC AG on Earth Day

The Lake Erie Regional Program collaborated with CCE Chautauqua and Jamestown Community College to man a booth at on April 23, 2025. This was an educational opportunity to connect with community members to relay information about our program and talk about Spotted Lanternfly, an invasive plant hopper species.

Webinar: Demonstration of the Grape Cold Hardiness Risk Assessment Tool

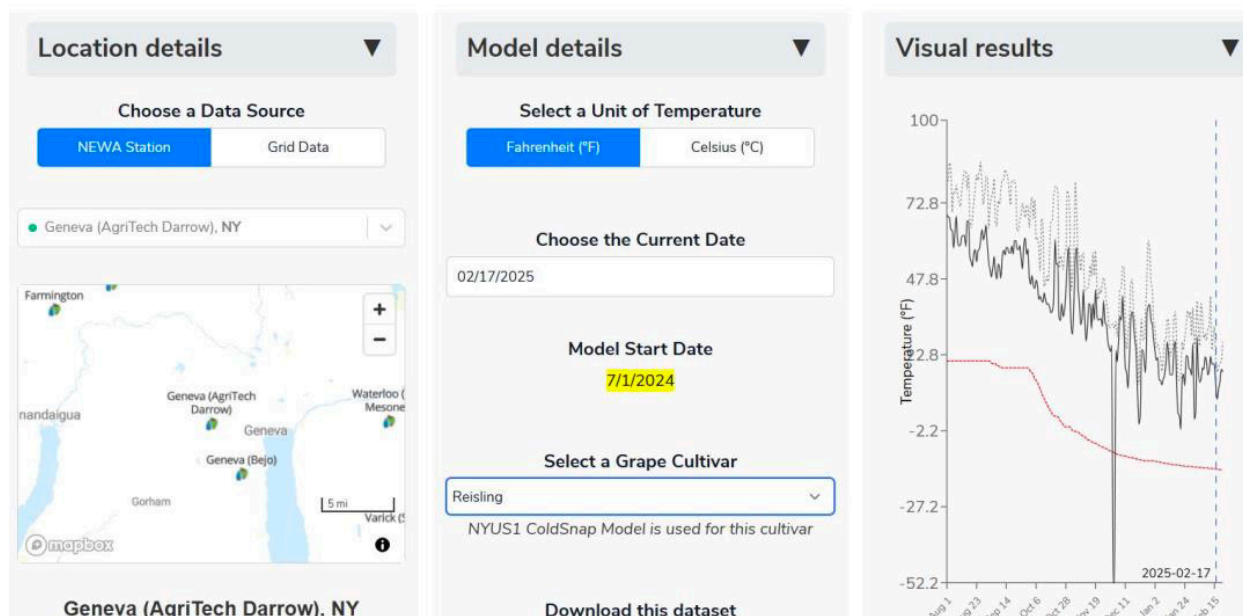
The Lake Erie Regional Grape Program collaborated on a webinar to demonstrate the Grape Cold Hardiness Risk Assessment Tool. Dr. Amaya Atucha (University of Wisconsin) provided a demonstration of this new tool that is now available to growers via the NEWA website (<https://newa.cornell>).

[edu/grape-cold-hardiness/](https://www.cornell.edu/grape-cold-hardiness/)). The tool, developed in collaboration with Cornell University, helps identify potential bud mortality due to cold weather events using data from any weather station in the NEWA network.

Grape Cold Hardiness Risk Assessment

Based on research at [Cornell University](#) and [University of Wisconsin-Madison](#), with funding from [USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture Grant #2023-68008-39274](#). Web app developed by [NYSIPM](#) and [NRCC](#).

Use with caution. This model is for demonstration and testing purposes. Check with your local extension or university specialist before making management decisions. Updated 1/9/2025.



Microclimate Sensor Grant

Dr. Jason Londo and Jennifer Phillips Russo collaborate on tracking grapevine cold hardiness and phenology across the region with microclimate sensors deployed in 15 grower collaborator vineyards. We are collecting data from five locations on Lake Erie, five locations located on the bench, and five locations on the escarpment. The team collects data weekly to help achieve the objectives of this study to conduct phenological assays for Concord grapes in multiple locations, to determine the variability between vineyards, and to provide updated field cold hardiness/phenology and hopefully begin to build phenology predictions for the New York grapevine industry.



LERGP Introduced Kyle Bekelja, NYS Grape IPM Coordinator, to Growers

According to the [New York Wine and Grape Foundation's 2024 New York Vineyard Report](#), New York is the nation's third-largest wine producer and a key contributor of table grapes, with more than 134 varieties grown on nearly 16,000 acres across the state. But, as interest in and demand for Empire State grapes has grown, so have threats from insects and diseases, according to [New York State Integrated Pest Management Program](#) (NYSIPM) Director [Alejandro Calixto](#).



"Grape growers are facing unprecedented threats from invasive species like spotted lanternfly and powdery mildew, making resources, research and extension programs more essential than ever," Calixto said, citing a recent study by [NYSIPM Agricultural Economist Allan Pinto](#), which suggests that [spotted lanternfly could cost producers millions](#).

To ensure growers have the tools to combat emerging threats to yield and quality, NYSIPM has appointed entomologist and educator [Kyle Bekelja](#) as the Program's statewide grape IPM coordinator.

"We are thrilled to welcome Kyle to the New York State Integrated Pest Management team," Calixto said. "His extension experience, research background and knowledge of fruit IPM, and his ability to connect with people will prove invaluable to New York grape growers."

Bekelja, who will join the program in February, holds a Ph.D. in entomology from Virginia Tech, where he has served as a postdoctoral researcher since 2022. He shared his vision for working with growers, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and NYSIPM and Cornell AgriTech colleagues to develop and communicate strategies for integrated pest management. He said he looks forward to meeting growers and learning about their unique challenges.

"I'm excited to meet producers in each grape-growing region, learn how they've adapted their businesses for success, and decipher how integrated pest management can help them achieve their goals. I'm also extremely excited to deepen my understanding of the cropping system and to work with all the members of the grape team at Cornell to meet the challenges facing the New York grape industry," Bekelja said.

In addition to invasive species and plant diseases, Bekelja said he sees climate and regulatory changes as key threats to grape producers.

"Some of the biggest challenges I see impacting New York grape growers include less predictable growing conditions, changing pesticide regulations, and invasive pests. Weather conditions that divert from the norm can complicate pest management in various ways while also making vines more vulnerable," Bekelja said, noting a late-spring frost that resulted in significant losses for growers in 2024. "Additionally, for better or worse, changes in the availability of certain pesticides will have ramifications for our grape growers across the state."

Despite the myriad pressures facing growers, Bekelja says he is optimistic about the future and excited to help producers meet challenges and reach their goals.

Bekelja will be based at NYSIPM's Geneva office on the campus of Cornell AgriTech. He can be reached at kmb399@cornell.edu.

Podcasts

After preparation, meetings and discussions with both universities, podcasts continued this quarter with one a week. This content is also distributed through our youtube channel as a video blog. The video blog has been around for a few years and views are typically just a little bit higher than the podcast. Overall, we've increased total viewership by more than 50% due to the increase in distribution methods. In the second quarter, we delivered 6 Podcasts, 162 views on YouTube for those podcasts

with 437 downloads on Buzzsprout.

Text Message Blasts

LERGP has developed a number of different contact lists for purposes of meeting reminders, phenology updates and other promotional materials. Text Blasts allow us to distribute this material and information via text message. Growers are able to respond to these alerts and we have been able to quickly answer questions and expand contacts with this technology. A large majority of growers attending virtual meetings prefer to get these reminders via text and report actually receiving them as well. Growers would often get an e-mail reminder prior to a meeting but actually read it after the meeting was over. We continually collect grower interest in receiving text alerts and have sent out 3 text messages this quarter delivering important and timely information to 600 connections.

Pesticide Sprayer Calibration

*Megan Luke-LERGP Penn State Extension
Viticulture & Tree Fruit Educator*

Calibration services and coverage demonstrations to growers in both NY and PA have continued. In May, I traveled to the Finger Lakes area with my equipment and gave a presentation on behalf of Gallo's Canandaigua, NY processing group to contract growers on sprayer calibration and coverage optimization. I also discussed water quality and best practices for tank mixing. Three on-site calibrations were performed the following day.

Fourteen clients have signed up to receive onsite calibration of spray equipment this season. Services will continue as requested throughout the season.

NERME Award: Creating Active-Learning, Grab n' Go Pesticide Safety Education Modules and Toolkits

This grant was awarded to a group of Cornell Extension Specialists, including the LERGP. We are working collaboratively to develop short, hands-on, active-learning lesson plans and toolkits to teach pesticide safety and risk reduction practices to undertrained applicators in the Finger Lakes, western NY, and northwest PA for growers of multiple commodities. These Grab n' Go lesson plans will be taught as stand-alone topics at 10 long-established annual grower meetings. The lesson plans will be designed to be stacked together to create workshop-length modules around four themes: Personal Protective Equipment, Non-applicator & Environmental Safety, Math and Mixing, and Calibration & Sprayer Troubleshooting. We will teach each themed workshop twice. We anticipate reaching 235 people. 200 growers will increase understanding of pesticide safety practices, and at least 100 applicators will adopt new practices that reduce their health, legal, environmental, regulatory, or production risks. So far, we have developed target audiences and lesson plans across each deliverable category and identified opportunities to assess the efficacy of the plans during regularly scheduled grower meetings.

Lake Erie Regional Grape Program (LERGP)

Cornell Cooperative Extension's Lake Erie Regional Grape Program (LERGP) is a NY and PA growers membership program. Crop Updates were weekly, beginning in April. I contributed six articles re-





garding new Environmental Protection Agency guidelines, label changes, and pesticide best practices in quarter two. I presented on these topics at our Coffee Pot Meetings, also weekly, beginning in May.

I presented alongside a panel of experts from across the region on sprayer technology best practices at an Eastern Viticulture and Enology Forum webinar hosted by Penn State to an audience of 135 participants. In June, I presented on water quality and sprayer best practices in central PA at a workshop organized by the Penn State Grape and Enology team. Attendance was approximately 40.

Business Management- *Andrew Holden, Business Management Educator*

Coffee Pot Meetings

Coffee Pot meeting were held each Wednesday, from May 7th to July 23rd, across the grape belt. As a team we presented on timely, research based information and offered pesticide credits. I specifically talked about grants, FSA Programs, crop insurance, profitability, and custom rates. We receive a lot of programmatic input from growers at this meeting and use them to stay up to date during the growing season.

FSA's Marketing Assistance for Specialty Crops (MASC) Program Second Payment Administered

The Second round of Marketing Assistance for Specialty Crops (MASC) program was made in June 2025. Through crop updates and text alerts, I was able to alert growers of this program and encouraged them to sign up when it opened in December. The program provided payments for established specialty crop growers who certified crop sales in 2023 or 2024. In the first round, growers in Erie County PA likely received over \$1 million dollars in payments, and Chautauqua County NY likely saw the same number. The second round of payments was higher and I will have more information after the FOYA is released.

Resilient Food Systems - Equipment Grant

Growers in Pennsylvania were assisted in applying last year for a fully reimbursable equipment grants that provided up to \$100,000 for the purchase of bulk harvesting & aggregating equipment.

Two growers received funds for bulk equipment, one winery received funds for bottling equipment, and one processor received funds for refrigeration.

The NY State version is open now for growers to apply.

Post-Bloom Vineyard Management

I attended and spoke at the PSU Grape and Wine Team post-bloom meeting held at Fero Vineyards and Winery in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania on June 26th. I spoke on profitability and ratios to use. I was able to connect with wineries from around the state that I don't typically reach.

New York Farm Viability Institute Grant Reviewer

I served as a grant reviewer for both the New and Beginning Farmer Grant, and the Grown & Certified Grant, administered by NYFVI. This was a useful experience in seeing how grants are reviewed and will be helpful in advising growers on applications. I appreciate NYFVI for the opportunity.

Wine and Grape Classifieds

I continue to manage the classifieds for New York and Erie, PA. Listings are updated on a regular basis.

The NY Grapes & Wine Classifieds is a website for grape growers, winery owners, and other industry professionals to post and view ads for industry specific items and jobs. The site is run like a classified as page in a paper, but at no cost to run an ad. Item often posted include Bulk Juice/Wine, Equipment, Grapes, Help Wanted, Services, Vines, and Vineyards. Both ads selling and ads looking for items are allowed.

The New York Grape & Wine Classifieds website can be found [Here](#).

Learn how to create an account and/or post an ad [Here](#).

Meetings/Webinars:

- Field Rep Meeting – 4/3, 5/1, 6/5
- PSU Grape and Wine Team Meeting – 4/8
- PSU Farm Transition Team – 6/3
- Cornell Farm Management Meeting – 6/17
- PSU Annual Conference – 4/3

NEWA

Kim Knappenberger- Viticulture and IPM Extension Support Specialist

Two weather stations were each moved slightly at their respective sites to improve functionality. Operations were not impeded during the process. The Ripley (State Line) station was also having trouble with precipitation but was recently fixed with a slight modification. The Westfield (South) station got a new motherboard, firmware update and new battery. The East Westfield station had another infestation of ants but thankfully was not shorted out and able to get back online once the ants were removed.

We were able to order 5 new stations to help strengthen and enlarge the NEWA presence for 3 regions in New York state. 2 will be going to Long Island, 2 to the Hudson Valley and 1 will be here in the Lake Erie Region.

In addition to maintaining the LERGP stations, Kim continues her work on the NEWA help desk.

CAPS

The Grape Commodity Survey (CAPS) is in full swing for 2025. Traps were set out in 2 grape nurseries and 10 vineyards on June 5th and 6th. We have a total of 120 traps, 40 for each target. This year the target moths include *Cryptoblabes gnideiella* (Christmas Berry Webworm), *Lobesia botrana* (European Grapevine Moth), and *Eupoecilia ambiguella* (European Grape Berry Moth).

These traps are intended to remain in the vineyards and nurseries for 14 weeks and will be serviced (surveyed for the presence of moths) every two weeks for a total of 7 times.



The first service was performed on June 17th to reveal no target moths. A record of negative samples was recorded.

In addition we are scouting for Spotted Lanternfly at the traps sites and monitoring 9 traps across the region from Ripley to Silver Creek. These traps are checked for the presence of what the current life



cycle stage would be for spotted lanternfly in this area (at the end of the quarter it is second and third instar). None have been observed in the traps. We also scouted for vine mealybug and found some. Samples were submitted to determine if it is the target subject.



Lake Erie Regional Grape Program Specialists



Jennifer Phillips Russo-
LERGP Viticulture Specialist,
Team Lead



Andrew Holden-
LERGP Penn State Extension Business
Management Educator



Megan Luke-
LERGP Penn State Extension
Viticulture & Tree Fruit Educator



Kim Knappenberger- Viticulture and
IPM Extension Support Specialist

Second Quarter 2025 totals:

Publications - LERGP Crop Updates (10) Newsletters(3)

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

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