January-March 2026 Northern Michigan Search Interest Forecast

Author: Dan Shaffer

==

Below are my search interest forecasts for the combined Northern Lower and combined Upper Pensinsula places for January, February, and March 2026. Note that the possible range for historical search interest is normalized to a maximum of 100 and a minimum of 0, but forecasts outside this range are permissible as these values are forecasted to be outside the historical range.

For December, actuals were significantly higher than forecasted for both peninsulas. Actuals were higher than last year, but lower than 2023. It seems that as we head into the second half of 2025, we exceed the downward trend from the last few years more and more often. My forecast will continue to account for this average trend over the past 12 months and how the downward trend changes and eventually stabilitzes or reverses itself.

The charts below provide the current forecast and last month's forecast compared to actuals. Forecasts are higher than last month.

Also provided are barcharts comparing the average search interest for the forecast months (January, February, March) to the same months in previous years. For both peninsulas, the forecast is lower than last year.
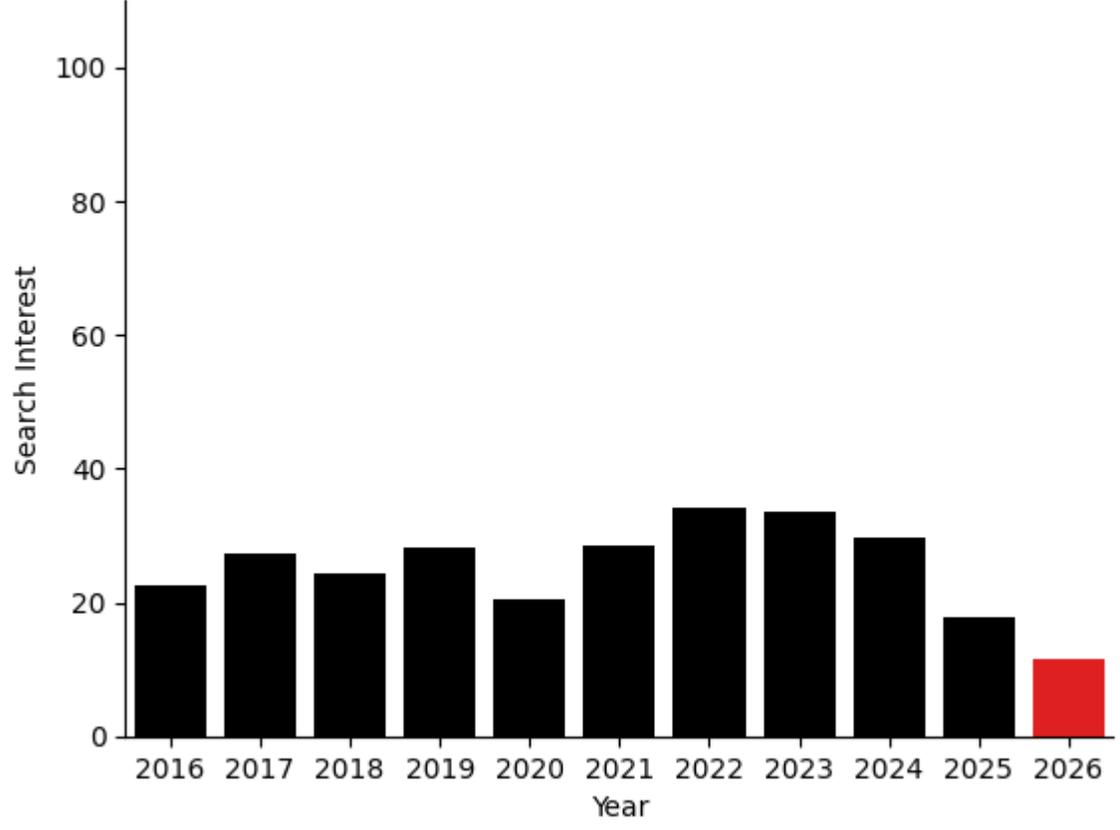
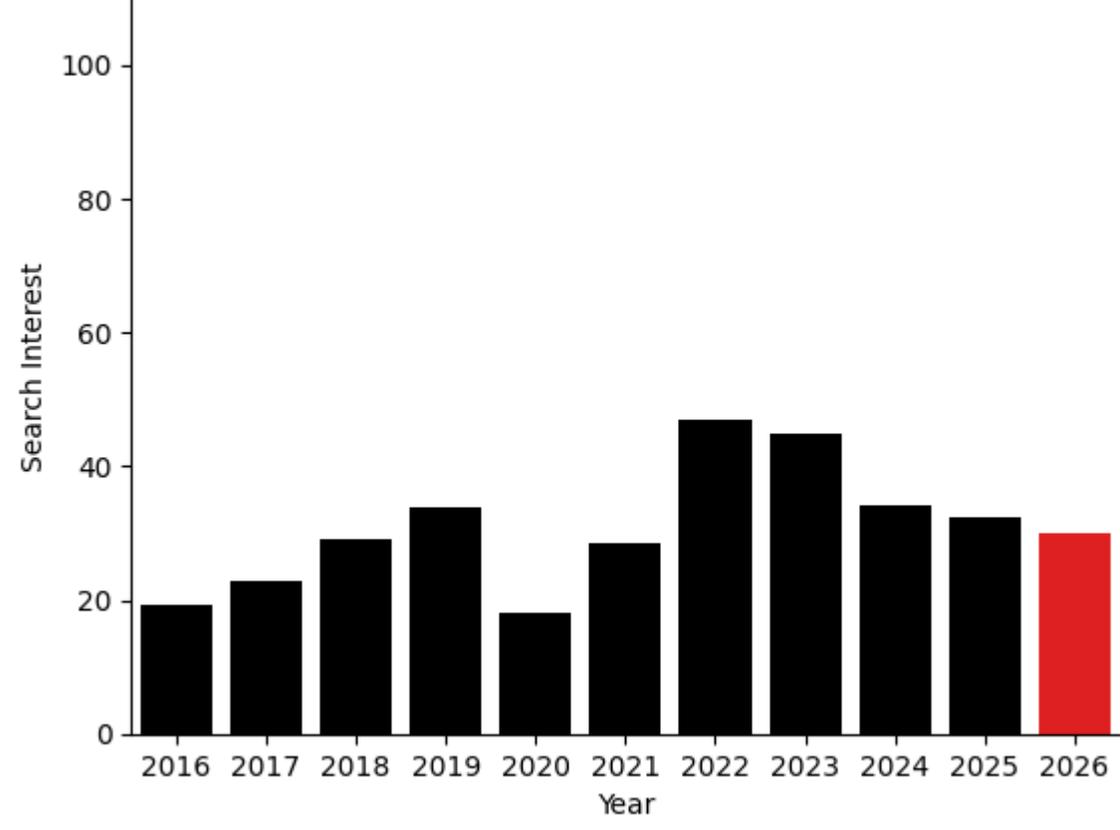Northern Lower Places Google Search Interest Forecast
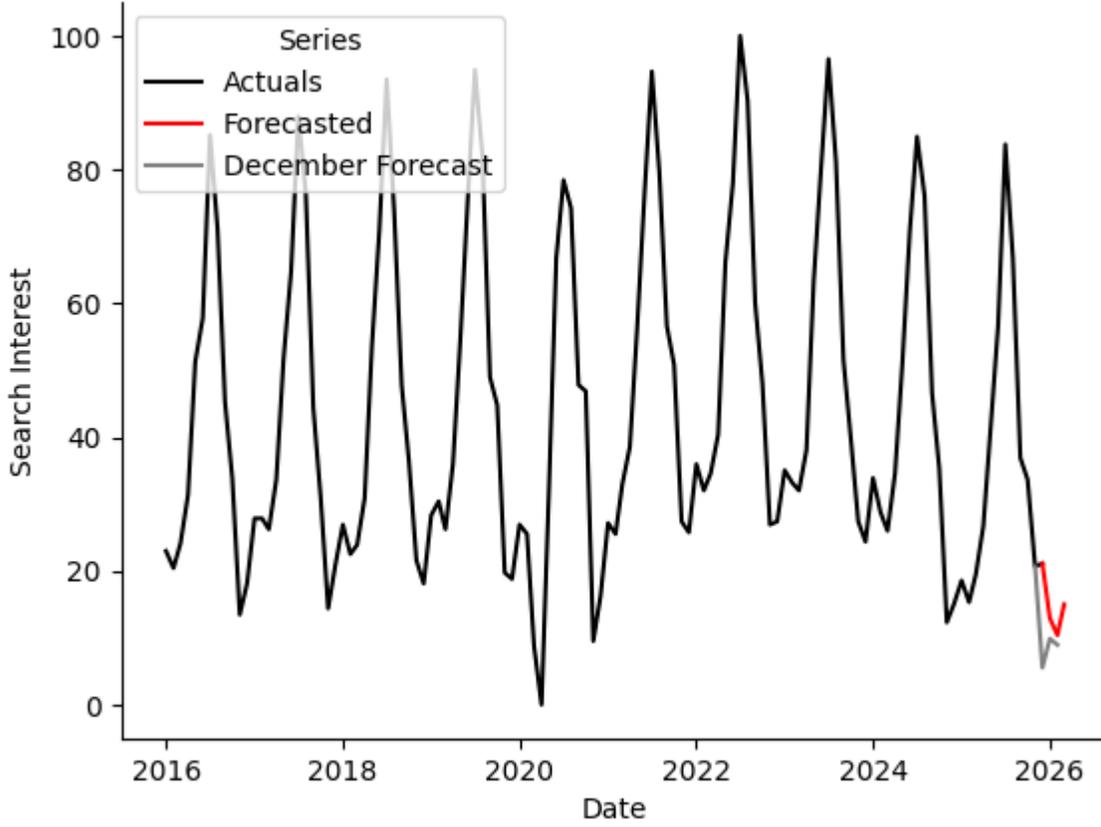
Upper Pensinsula Places Google Search Interest Forecast
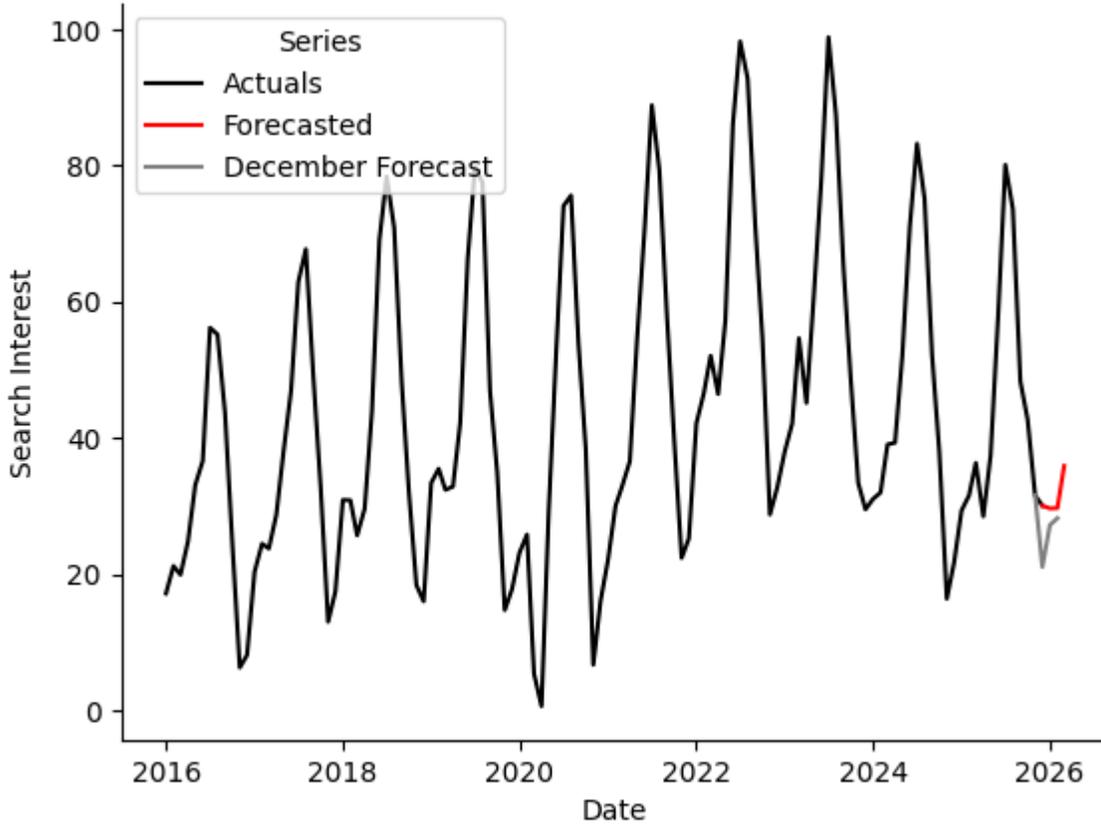
Northern Lower Search Interest Averaged for January, February, and March

Upper Peninsula Search Interest Averaged for January, February, and March

The following table shows the top five places that are forecasted to have the highest search interest compared to the same time period in 2025. It's probable that searches for Greenland have been less related to the place in Michigan but rather recent popular press surrounding the territory of Greenland. Also, Free Soil likely references free soil for gardening or construction purposes. (I'm planning on removing places like Greenland, Free Soil, and Wolverine during my yearly model improvement next year.)

	Place	Peninsula	Difference
0	Free Soil	Lower	17.1
1	Haring	Lower	16.8
2	Greenland	Upper	16.2
3	South Range	Upper	15.2
4	Elberta	Lower	13.8

Three things impact the value of the search interest forecasts for each place.

1. The previous year's monthly value for each individual place.
2. While not directly impacting the model forecast, seasonal (12 mo) differencing accounts for the fact that search interest is higher in some portions of the year than others (so previous year actual is impacted).
3. Model difference: based on forecasted weather and gas price changes, the model will predict 12 mo changes from the previous year for each individual place. These levels are adjusted for the previous 12 month trend. Then these new levels are aggregated via regression to the peninsula level series.

The two KDE plots below plot the distributions of the individual place actual values for the months of January, February, and March for the previous three years. Note that the values for 2025 serve as the last actual values for 2026. For both peninsulas, the last actuals for 2025 are lower than 2023 and 2024. I believe this shows the impact the downward trend in search interest since 2023/2024.

Lower Peninsula Place Level Search Interest Averaged for January, February, and March
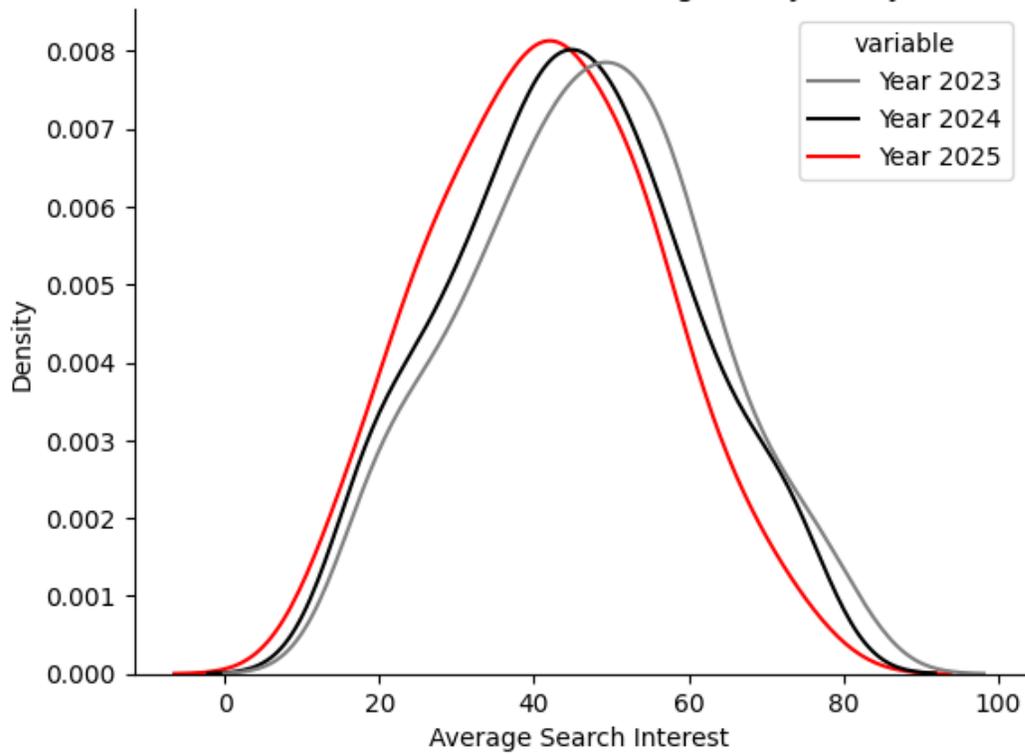

Upper Peninsula Place Level Search Interest Averaged for January, February, and March
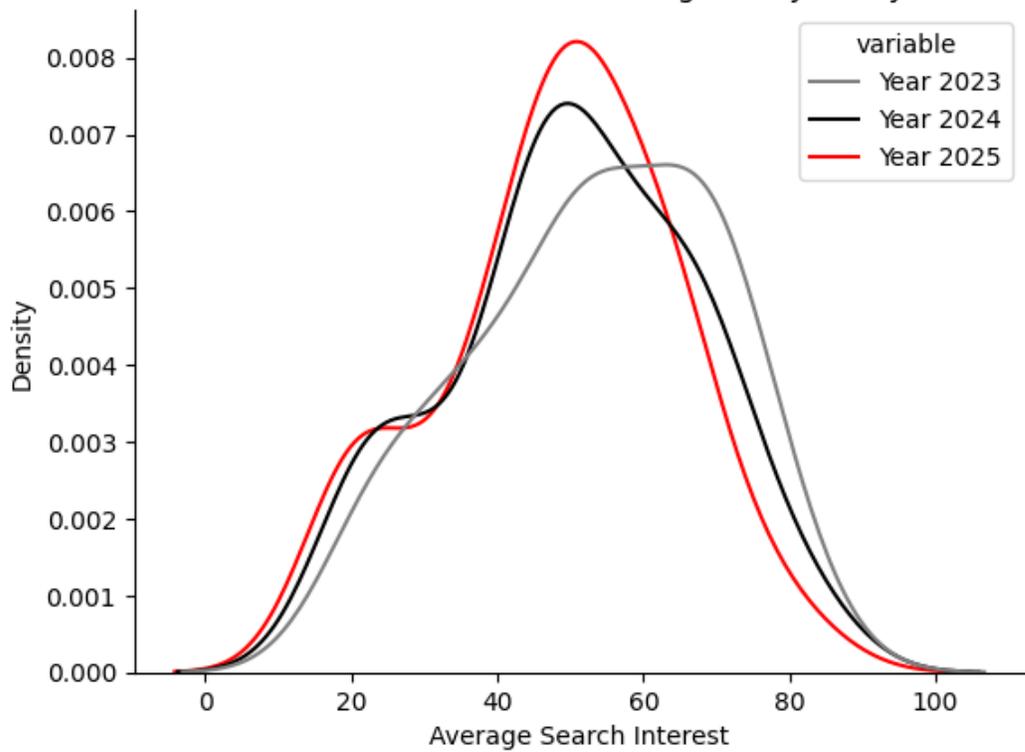

The following figure shows the aggregate average search interest for each calendar month. Both the Upper and Lower Pensinsulas have a seasonal peak in July/August with the Lower Peninsula peak solidly in July.

The Upper Peninsula has higher values for January-March likely due to winter snow sports like snowmobiling. For the January-March forecast period, we should see search interest at near its lowest levels, with respite for snow sports for the Upper Peninsula especially.
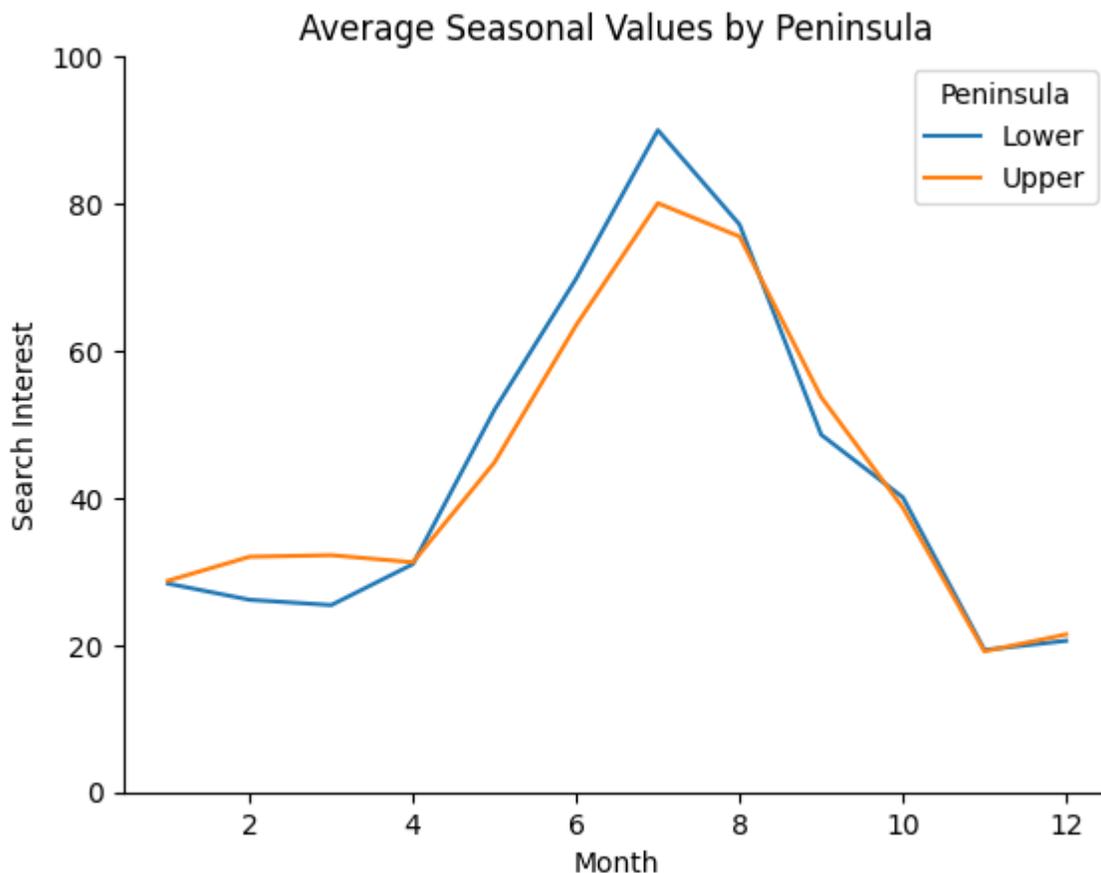
Finally, forecasts are determined by the forecasted place level change from the previous year based on weather and gasoline prices and are adjusted based on the last 12 months of trends for each individual place. For both peninsulas, the most likely forecasted change from the previous year is now negative, because we are now adjusting for the aggregate negative trends during the last 12 months. (Note, however, that the final forecast numbers by peninsula are weighted by the size of the contribution of the place to total search interest.)

Model Forecasted Change by Peninsula
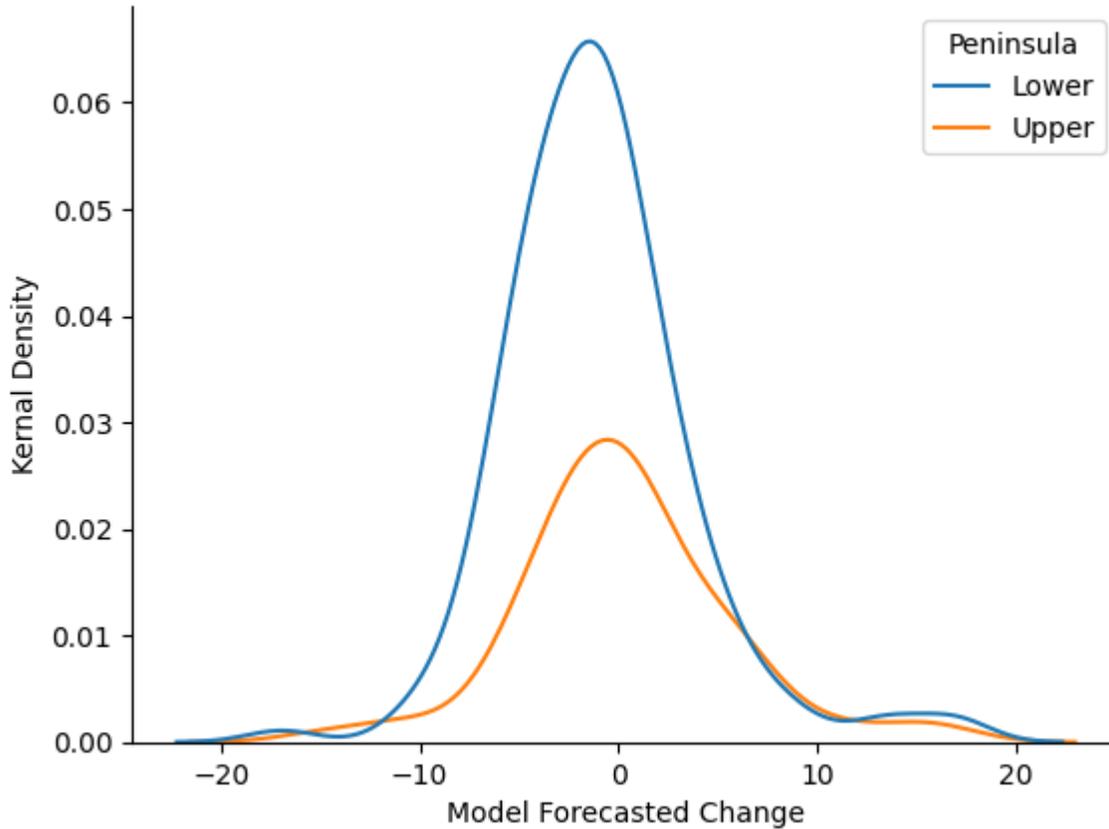
Places Impacted by Weather and Gas Prices

In addition to the above more aggregated analysis, I will now look at places that are impacted by weather and gasoline prices. (Many places are not impacted by these factors in the model and instead have an average increase or decrease year over year.) After identifying the places impacted by weather or gas prices, I then divide these places projected to have higher or lower search interest (on average) during the forecast months from the previous year. This is due to both the impact of weather and gasoline prices and the average trend year over year.

For the Northern Lower Peninsula, 55 of 142 places are impacted by weather or gasoline prices in the model. Of these, 21 are forecasted to have higher search interest during these three months than last year. The remaining are forecasted to have lower search interest than last year. These places are listed and the chart shows their yearly average search interest values for the three forecast months. Here, the verticle line signifies the start of the forecast period.

```
Northern Lower Places with Weather Impact Higher Interest than Last Year
────────────────────────────────────────────
['caberfae', 'glen arbor', 'luther', 'northport', 'suttons bay', 'au sable', 'tawas c
ity', 'bay view', 'rapid city', 'prudenville', 'lakes of the north', 'hillman', 'tust
in', 'kaleva', 'free soil', 'wedgewood', 'pilgrim', 'norwood', 'vanderbilt', 'harin
g', 'chums corner']
```

```
Northern Lower Places with Weather Impact Lower Interest than Last Year
```

['sand lake', 'crystal mountain', 'lake ann', 'onekama', 'grayling', 'custer', 'onawa
y', 'cedar', 'omena', 'cross village', 'alden', 'rogers city', 'wellston', 'millersbu
rg', 'omer', 'west branch', 'harrison', 'maple city', 'ossineke', 'alpena', 'thompson
ville', 'evart', 'clare', 'cadillac', 'skidway lake', 'boyne falls', 'ellsworth', 'he
rsey', 'jennings', 'reed city', 'advance', 'prescott', 'baldwin', 'falmouth']

Northern Lower Weather Impacted Places, Forecast for January, February, and March
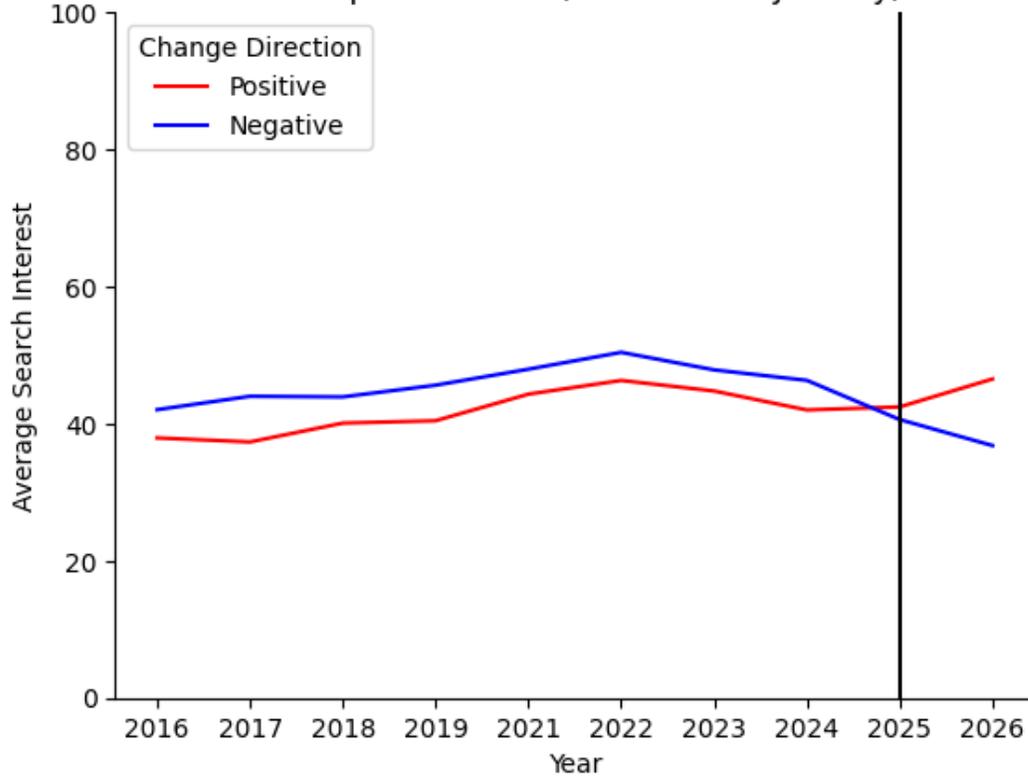
For the Upper Peninsula, 34 of 72 places are impacted by weather or gasoline prices in the model. Of these, 19 are forecasted to have higher search interest during these three months than last year. The remaining are forecasted to have lower search interest than last year. These places are listed and the chart shows their yearly average search interest values for the three forecast months. Here, the verticle line signifies the start of the forecast period.

```
Upper Peninsula Places with Weather Impact Higher Interest than Last Year
```

['gladstone', 'ontonagon', 'white pine', 'gwinn', 'watersmeet', 'rapid river', 'menom
inee', 'bessemer', 'calumet', 'dollar bay', 'laurium', 'ramsay', 'three lakes', 'kinc
heloe', 'greenland', 'stephenson', 'south range', 'ewen', 'carney']

```
Upper Peninsula Places with Weather Impact Lower Interest than Last Year
```

['munising', 'copper harbor', 'sault', 'michigamme', 'manistique', 'lake gogebic', 'f
ulton', 'baraga', 'ironwood', 'ishpeming', 'iron river', 'negaunee', 'republic', 'qui
nnesec', 'mass city']

Upper Peninsula Weather Impacted Places, Forecast for January, February, and March
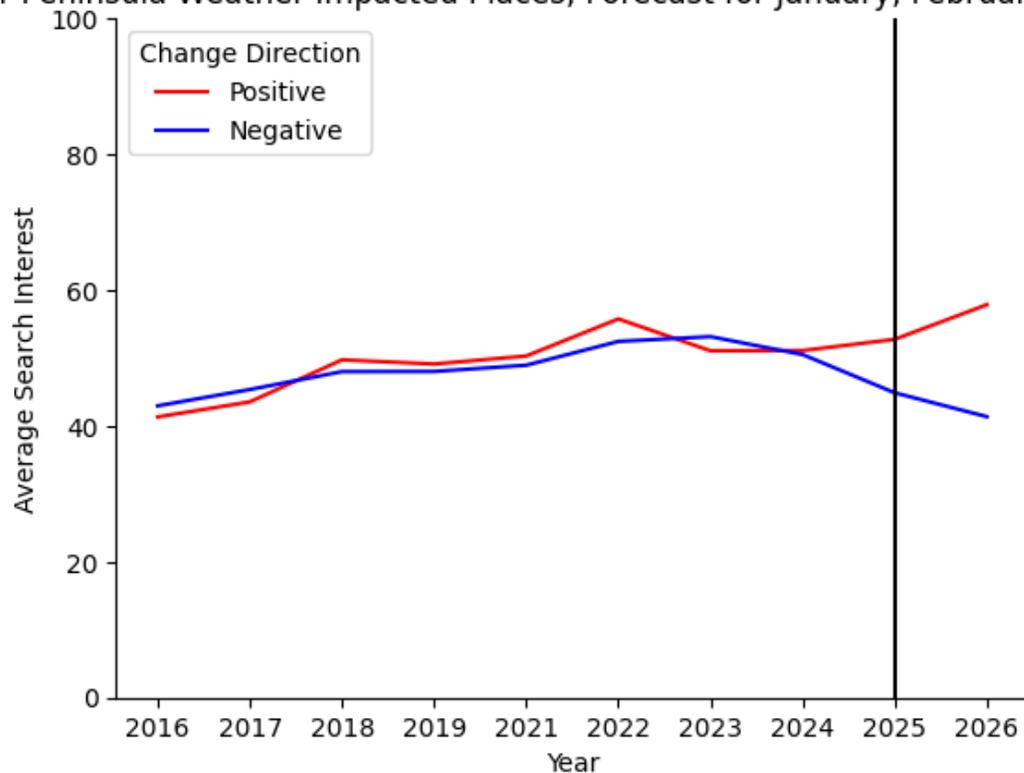
Finally, I'm going to compare the accuweather min and max temperature forecasts to actuals. I also used to compare the average temperature actuals to normals; however, weather.gov is no longer providing these values for Houghton Lake or Sault Saint Marie. Next year, I will likely drop this variable.

Based on the accuweather forecasts, maximums were higher than forecasted last month while minimums were lower than forecasted.

Comparison of Average Maximum Temperatures for Previous Month
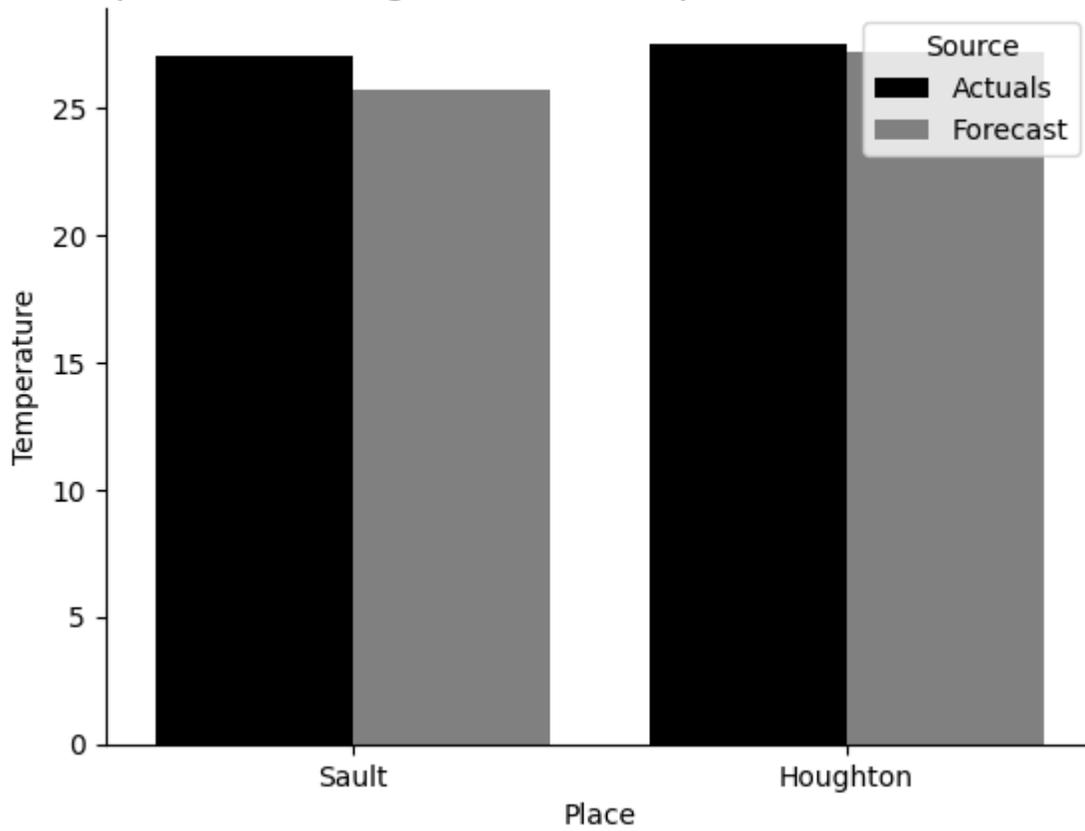
Comparison of Average Minimum Temperatures for Previous Month