



MEMORANDUM

Department of Natural Resources

STATE OF ALASKA
Division of Agriculture

TO: Board of Agriculture
& Conservation

DATE: January 21, 2010

FROM: Franci Havemeister
Director

SUBJECT: Director's Report
Nov., Dec., 2009

Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund (ARLF)

Staff has been processing 8 loan applications, 5 loan disbursements, 3 loan delinquencies, 1 loan default, 1 bankruptcy case, 4 loan payoff file closures and the ARLF BAC Annual Interest Rate Review.

Marketing & Development

- Staff met with producers to define goals and objectives for a potential 2010 Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP) application. Staff then began work on drafting a proposal to meet the needs of the rhubarb growers.
- Staff continued progress on their 2008 FSMIP project by coordinating a shipment of Alaska Grown meat from Delta Junction to Haines. Staff is also developing the final report for this project.
- Staff met with the Native Plant group to discuss future conferences and then contacted a speaker for a teleconference for the group.
- Staff participated in the organizing committee meetings for the 2010 Produce Growers Conference to be held February 16-17th in Palmer as well as for the 2010 Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Conference to be held March 17 in Fairbanks.
- Staff attended the Alaska Farm Bureau (AFB) annual meeting held in Anchorage as well as the Food Independence Project meeting held in conjunction.
- Staff released the new directors' policy to guide the Alaska Grown program.
- Staff reviewed Cooperative Marketing Program (CMP) grant final reports from the 2009 funding cycle.
- Staff performed maintenance and oversight of the 2009 Teachers' Scholarship grant, resolving issues and ensuring all contracts were received.
- Staff attended a GPS & GIS meeting held at Palmer High School regarding the implementation, utilization and future training opportunities involved with GPS & GIS technologies. Application of these technologies will have beneficial impacts on the agriculture community.
- At the request of a City of Palmer Board of Economic Development team member, staff participated in the formation of an agriculture promotion committee. Ideas for collaboration and cross promotion between the City of Palmer and the State Division of Agriculture were discussed.
- Since 2007 the Division has received over \$580,000 through the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant program. Funds have been utilized to launch various new programs including: the Alaska Agriculture Innovation Grant, the Farmers Market Match Grant, the Grower Education Grant, the Alaska Farmers Market Association, the Teacher Education Scholarship program and various other activities. Receipt of these funds requires extensive reporting and financial tracking of which marketing staff are responsible for and performing.

Inspection

- Staff completed 10 FV 300 inspections representing 2405 cartons of product in November and December. Inspectors also completed 39 FV 301 inspections representing 25,156 packages & 754,680 pounds of inspected product.
- Two farms applied to and were accepted in to the Alaska Grown program.
- Staff completed two shell egg inspections.
- Inspection staff completed four grocery store visits, performing grade inspections on both locally grown and outside products.
- Staff completed 14 farm visits in November and December performing grade inspections on potatoes and onions.
- Inspection staff continues to participate with the Alaska Pest Risk Assessment Committee (AKPRAC). United States Customs and Border Protection is now sharing information of "agriculture interest" to State entities; this weekly information updates State and Federal agencies of recent, high risk agriculture seizures across the nation.
- Staff is preparing to participate in the annual USDA Fresh Fruit & Vegetable (FFV) refresher training in March; training is required for staff to maintain their USDA FFV inspection license.
- Staff is completing required "Continuing Education Units" to maintain USDA Good Agricultural Practices & Good Handling Practices certifications.
- Inspection staff has been responding to inquiries regarding authority to promulgate a State Organic inspection program within Alaska.

Regulatory

- Staff issued 20 phytosanitary inspection certificates in November and December.
- Staff worked with a local wholesaler on the potato labeling requirements as defined in 11 AAC 32.050.
- Staff conducted Export Certification work on over \$12 million dollars of timber exports in November and December.
- Staff responded to numerous calls regarding elk fencing regulations and guidelines.
- Staff participated in and coordinated several conference calls regarding proposed changes to important timber export protocol. Staff also sent correspondence to USDA, APHIS responding to the proposed changes in export protocol.
- Staff is working with USDA, APHIS to develop improvements in the way we respond to electronic permit applications for the movement of plant materials and plant pests.

Plant Materials Center

Foundation Seed & Conditioning Program

- To date, we have cleaned over 10,000lbs of seed from the PMC fields, the Alaska Seed Growers, and private revegetation groups. Grasses, grains, and native forbs are all processed and put into storage.
- We continue to use the POMS database to enter inventory and germination test information for our crops.

Invasive Plants and Agricultural Pest Management

- Submitted draft strategic plan for invasive weeds and agricultural pest management to Division of Ag staff for internal review.
- Secured additional funding from USDA to work with the Horticultural industry to address invasive species issues.

- Met with the University Cooperative Extension Service to coordinate and plan the Greenhouse and Nursery Conference, and advertise for the effort to work with the Horticultural industry to address invasive species issues.
- Spoke on the "Garden Party" radio show about invasive species in Christmas trees.
- Worked with the Anchorage CWMA to begin drafting their invasive weeds list to guide management objectives in their area.
- Submitted proposal to the USFWS to initiate a purple loosestrife replacement pilot project in the Anchorage area. Landowners with purple loosestrife plantings will be asked to replace their loosestrife with an alternative provided to them free of charge.

Seed Laboratory Activities

- 87 lab tests conducted on 46 seed lot submissions.
- Training for seed analyst certification continued through November, with incumbent testing for national certification December 2-3 in Pennsylvania. The seed lab now has another fully certified analyst.
- Seed Laboratory staff attended botany conference at UAA.
- Overhead compressed air lines were installed in the seed laboratory.

Miscellaneous Plant Materials Center Activities

- Updating Web pages.
- Replying to requests for seed, information, photos, and presentation needs.
- Providing technical responses for revegetation queries.
- Presented seminar on Non-Timber Forest Products Harvest Manual and Ethnobotany Teaching Garden to UAF students.
- Updating and posting to the Web "Alaska Plant Profiles, Conks/Shelf Fungi" and four papers on advanced evaluations of plant experimental plots in four different regions of Alaska.
- Finished final report for the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service USDA Grant on Ethnobotany Research Project.

Northern Region

- Met several times with Interior Conservative Coalition regarding Fairbanks North Star Borough's proposed Ordinance No. 2009-26 as it pertains to removing agricultural exemptions from Grandfathered Rights following rezoning, and the Planning Commission's proposal to prohibit agricultural animals within five to ten miles of the city limits.
- Attended several meetings with farmers in the Eielson Agricultural Area regarding FEMA's proposed change of the Eielson area from Flood Zone A to Flood Zone AE and the Fairbanks North Star Borough's proposed Ordinance No. 2009-55 which would require building permits including certified topographic surveys, hydrology reports, etc. for any new construction, substantial improvements, or other development (including fill) in that area.
- Completed and presented a report of Estimated Bison Damage to Delta Agricultural Fields – 2009 for the Delta Bison Working Group.
- Attended a Post-Harvest Wrap-up in Delta Junction to discuss crops, pests, fertility, and other concerns as they related to the past growing season.
- Submitted report for Forest Health Protection Annual report on Gypsy Moth and EAB survey.
- Took photos of Tanana Valley Meats facility for ARLF.
- Developing a systematic approach to assess extent of Delta Bison damage to agricultural crops in the future.
- Submitted preliminary plat of agriculture parcels that needed to be replatted to remove interior lot lines prior to disposal according to new DNR policy.
- Working on writing new brochure for potential June agriculture sale.
- Presented agriculture disposal project to Disposal Review Board at DMLW
- Had several meeting with borough and DNR surveyors
- Reviewed Invasive strategic plan draft and proposed area plans