



**MEMORANDUM**  
Department of Natural Resources

**STATE OF ALASKA**  
Division of Agriculture

**TO:** Board of Agriculture  
& Conservation

**DATE:** January 30, 2012

**FROM:** Franci Havemeister  
Director

**SUBJECT:** Director's Report  
November/December 2011

**Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund (ARLF):**

- Staff has been processing one loan application, two extension requests, one loan modification, three loan payoffs, UCC filing services, two Reconveyances of Deeds of Trusts, verification of debts for other creditors, ARLF interest rates, and contacting delinquent borrowers.
- Staff received a request from Weems Geophysical, Inc and Buccaneer Alaska, LLC in December to enter ARLF's Kenai property to conduct geophysical and geotechnical exploration.
- ARLF staff performed an inspection of Valley Dairy, Inc. updated photos have been added to loan portfolio.
- Staff toured the Mt McKinley Meat and Sausage Plant.
- ARLF staff will be attending the Alaska Greenhouse Nursery and Alaska Peony Growers Conference January 25-27, 2012 to promote the ARLF.

**Marketing & Development**

- During the months of November and December the Farm to School (FTS) program met with the Calypso Farm School Garden Coordinator to discuss how we can work together throughout the year. We also discussed the possibility of getting garden produce into the cafeteria.
- Six new farms joined the Alaska Grown program.
- The FTS Coordinator spoke at a Fairbanks Alaska Youth for Environmental Action (FAYEA) meeting. It is a group of around 15 youth that are working on a garden or seed project this upcoming summer. We talked about ways to make their project work.
- Staff continues to promote Alaska Grown products through the bi-weekly Anchorage Daily News advertisements.
- Staff wrapped up the Farm to School Challenge with award distribution and participant follow-up.
- Staff continue to participate with the Alaska Food Policy Council in the finalizing the Strategic Plan.
- Staff presented at the National School Garden / Farm to School consortium about our process evaluation.
- Marketing staff developed new promotional materials for the 2012 year.
- Staff presented at the annual Farm Bureau Meeting in Homer and FTS staff met with local farm to school stakeholders and People's Garden Grant Awardees to discuss future coordination.

- Staff has been focused on database design changes for the 2012 Alaska Grown Source Book.
- Staff finalized the Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) program for 2012.
- Farm to School staff presented program information to a number of audiences, including a group of Social Studies Elementary teachers, the Alaska Association of School Business Officials conference, the Alaska Growers School group, a UAF biology graduate student seminar, the Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District open house and natural resource informational showcase.
- Staff continues to be involved with Cooperative Extension (CES) staff on the grain project, aimed at using Alaska Grown grains in school food recipes. The team is discussing a presentation for an elementary class on barley grain and milling.
- Staff presented to an elementary class 4-6 graders about Alaska grown barley and the new flour mill. Staff did a demonstration with the kids showing them un-cleaned barley, cleaned barley, and then milled it into flour.
- The Alaska Grown program continues to see success and growth with the Face book page; an all Alaska Grown basket giveaway launched right before Christmas increased page "Likes" from 5591 to 5780.
- Staff is preparing the list of 2012 Farmers Markets which is expected to exceed 33 markets.
- Marketing staff continue to manage multiple grant programs including existing Innovation grants, CMP grants, Teacher Scholarship grants and others.
- Staff worked extensively on the research and development of Restaurant Rewards Program including one on one meeting with a number of Chefs.
- Staff conducted seven store visits to ensure proper Alaska Grown produce display.

### **Central Region Inspection**

- Staff completed 7 FV 300 inspections. Issued 9 certificates, 1 supersede, and 2 voids.
- Staff completed 43 FV 301 inspections, with total packages numbering 20,810 and total product weights totaling 644,460 lbs.
- Seven phytosanitary certificates were issued.
- 1 new cattle brand was approved
- 2 shell egg inspections were conducted and various retail outlets were contacted and the Shell egg regulations regarding labeling were enforced.
- Staff reviewed and approved the egg carton labels for 1 new producer of Nest Run Eggs now operating in the valley.
- Staff responded to a complaint regarding termites in wood toys and conducted 5 follow up inspections. Findings and photos were forwarded to United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).
- Staff participated in conference call regarding the new risk management tool for Good Agriculture Practices (GAP)/Good Handling Practices (GHP) online assistance.
- Staff completed, compiled, and submitted to the USDA, all of the Organic program cost share reimbursements and end of year report.
- Staff distributed the GAP/GHP cost share reimbursement applications.
- Staff responded to several contacts involving new organic certifications.
- Staff made 43 visits to retail grocery stores and conducted 15 farm visits to check grade on local produce and to advise employees about common defects and allowances on potatoes. 8 samples of defective potatoes were collected for lab testing at the North Dakota State University. All of the samples were positive for Bacterial Ring Rot and the product was subsequently destroyed. Greening and lack of current rotation of stock in the retail outlets continues to be problematic.
- Staff contacted Washington State Fruit and Vegetable inspection service regarding improper labeling on potato bags from that state.

- Staff reviewed and approved 5 USDA permits for interstate movement of plant pests and products into Alaska.
- Staff submitted information on the Quality Manual for Alaska Seed Potatoes to USDA APHIS.
- Staff is continuing to coordinate with Farm Bill Firewood survey efforts; visiting retail outlets, collecting samples, entering data, examining chambers and collecting insects if present, communicating with staff, ordering supplies and planning training for the spring. In addition to this, reviewing 2011 Farm Bill awarded projects and discussing possible projects with staff for 2012 project proposals.
- Staff collected 2 grain samples to be lab tested for the new flour mill in Delta Junction. Samples were sent to Washington State for analysis.
- Staff responded to numerous individuals regarding vegetable seed and grain seed sales in regards to labeling and testing requirements.
- Staff responded to inquiries about Late Blight and Elk Farming.
- Staff completed onsite training for USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable New Inspector Training on the East Coast.
- Staff continues to attend the Bee Keepers meetings.

### **Northern Region Inspection**

- Staff submitted reports to Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) for exotic pest surveys in Alaska conducted via the Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS).
- Staff began to consider potential Farm bill proposals for the upcoming 2012 suggestion period and conducted a meeting to discuss topics on 11/28/2011.
- Staff participated in teleconferences for Western Region State Survey Coordinators on Dec. 8. Topics including Farm bill updates, CAPS 101 for SSC'S, and topics for the annual National CAPS committee meeting. Teleconference for Pest Survey Specialists and State Survey Coordinators on Dec. 12. Topics covered Western region information updates, trap and lure orders for 2012, citizen pest detection volunteers, and APHIS database ongoing discussions.
- Staff began compiling data received from pest detection trapping surveyors throughout the state for related CAPS surveys.
- Staff attended and presented on Alaska survey activities at the National Gypsy Moth Review in Madison, WI. Nov.1-3.
- Staff successfully completed and passed Phytosanitary ACO accreditation in Yakima, WA. On Nov 14-18.

### **Northern Region**

- Attended Annual Land Sales and Contract Administration Unit training.
- Conducted numerous meetings with farmers regard land clearing requirements.
- Held meeting with DNR Resource and Development unit to discuss designating more state land for agricultural use.
- Identified almost 24,000 acres of potential agriculture land and recommended that this land be designated for agriculture use in the new Yukon-Tanana Area Plan currently being written.
- Staff gave presentation the Denali Planning Commission regarding the Kobe North Agriculture project survey in preparation for this year's agriculture land sale.
- Attended annual Harvest wrap up in Delta Junction to meet with area farmers and learn about various agricultural research projects currently being conducted.
- Meet with consultant working with the Salcha-Big Delta Soil and Water Conservation District concerning the establishment of a wetlands mitigation land bank.

- Gave presentation at the Natural Resource Showcase to talk about the Nenana-Totchaket agriculture project and meet with people developing natural resource project in the Interior
- Provided inspection report for two agriculture parcels eligible to move towards patent.
- Produced the 2011 Delta Bison Crop Damage Assessment.
- Reviewed Preliminary Decision (PD) for the Willer-Kash agriculture project.
- Staff submitted updated work plans and proposals to Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

### **Plant Materials Center** **Foundation and Natural Selection Seed**

- Inventory of harvested, cleaned seed from this summer continues, as well as keeping data bases up-to-date for the spring seed sale.
- Staff continues to answer questions about revegetation projects, keep up-to-date with current research, and plan for spring and summer.
- The Aleutian Fern Endangered Plant Project continues with numerous healthy ferns and new ones popping up. It will be awhile before we will know if any of our ferns become mature individuals with spores. This has not happened in any previous cultural trial in the world.

Staff has been doing a variety of educational projects this reporting period.

- Careers in agriculture/science. 20 middle school students from Grace Academy School were given a tour of the PMC and met with each professional staff member. They were shown in hands-on ways the process of seed cleaning, potato culture, seed testing, revegetation, rural seed production, and plant evaluation. Each staff member told them their academic background and past experience that led up to why they work at the PMC.
- Native plants for metal up-take. This project is a funded research experiment by students and professors at UAA. Native seeds were given them for the project. A tour of the PMC, review of current literature, discussions with staff members, and a preview of the draft Interior Revegetation Manual enabled this team to get an educated review on techniques, research, and past work.
- Red Fescue Plant Guide. Staff collaborated with the Idaho PMC to write a USDA, NRCS Plant Guide. Drawing from AK PMC's experience with 'Arctared' and Henderson Ridge Germplasm red fescue, we wrote rough drafts and reviewed this six page document, which is now ready to be published.
- Polargrass for New Hampshire grass trials. An extension agent in New Hampshire wants to try growing 'Kenai' and 'Alyeska' in his climate. Seeds were selected and sent along with growth information.
- United Kingdom's *Artemisia* Collection. The germ bank curator from England contacted us about Alaskan and Arctic *Artemisia*. We selected seeds from 9 past collections of *Artemisia* saved in the PMC collection to send to him. These collections included one from the Arctic Region Germplasm collection project in Canada, plus six different species from Alaska. An account for the PMC is being set up via the USDA's Phytosanitary Certificate Issuance and Tracking System
- *Rhodiola* programs. Five different groups have contacted the PMC about establishing either *Rhodiola rosea* or *Rhodiola integrifolia* growing and harvesting projects. These groups are from Valdez, Wasilla, Anchorage, Talkeetna, and Palmer. Due to the recent interest in these plant's chemical properties as "adaptogens" and the success of the "Alberta Rhodiola Rosea Grower's Organization (AARGO)", one organization (Alaska Rhodiola Rosea Growers) has formed a cooperative and been in business three years. The other groups are just starting up and inquiring about the "how-to-do" and

the components of Alaska's native *Rhodiola integrifolia* as compared to Russia's *Rhodiola rosea*.

### **Seed Cleaning and Conditioning**

- The seed cleaning and conditioning unit at the PMC had lots of seed sent in from growers state wide for cleaning in the large seed cleaning facility; For fall 2010 and spring 2011 cleaning season, a total pre-clean weight of 94,610lbs resulted in a total cleaned seed weight of 65,571lbs.
- Seed growers sent in several lots of seed for the fall 2011 and spring 2012 cleaning season; currently the large cleaning facility is cleaning these lots - totals are not yet available. The estimate for both should be slightly lower than the previous year.
- In the small lot cleaning facility, work has begun on cleaning seed grown at the PMC. An estimated 1000 lbs of seed has been cleaned, and two to three times that amount still needs to be cleaned.
- 'How-to' guides and historical cleaning records of the small lot cleaning facility have been digitized, printed and bound for easier more efficient setup and cleaning within the small lot facility.
- With the closure of ARS in Alaska, the PMC and come in to possession of the seed and clonal germplasm left behind. Inventory and storage has begun as of late December.
- Throughout the end of 2011 there have been inquires and trials of different type of databases and software to use for tracking inventory and recording the seed cleaning and conditioning activities. Implementation for some inventory management software is a goal in 2012.

### **Alaska State Seed Lab**

- During this period Alaska State Seed Lab performed 86 Germination tests, 81 Purity tests, 38 Noxious tests, and 7 Tetrazolium test.
- Seed of Success (SOS) Project: 2011 SOS collections were cleaned. This includes 124 collections; with total weight of clean seed is over 12 lbs. The 2009 and 2010 seed collections were sent to Pullman, WA.
- Mat-Su Riparian Revegetation Project: Maintenance of field and box garden plantings. Wild collections of fireweed, geranium, and lupine. All the seed of wild collections was cleaned.

### **Soil Erosion Control**

- Staff tested and analyzed soil samples for NRCS Telida erosion control project.
- Collected soils samples from Plant Materials Center (PMC) fields for the purpose of nutrient analysis, in conjunction with seed production and forage manual nutrient study.
- Collected soil samples from several locations across the state for the purpose of lab nutrient analysis as it relates to the Alaska Forage Manual.
- Completed several field nutrient tests for various forage producers across Alaska, for the purpose of the Alaska Forage Manual.

### **Invasive Weed and Agricultural Pest Program**

- Staff is working with DOT staff to coordinate summer 2012 mowing and control efforts of Canada Thistle in the greater Anchorage Area. DOT will schedule periodic mowing of priority infestations to help Div of Ag staff in controlling Canada thistle.
- Reporting on Gravel Certification Program Development to project funders (BLM). Summer 2011 saw the final data collection to complete the gravel pit inventory that included material sites along the Elliot, Steese, Taylor and Top of the World Highways.
- Continued coordination with Cooperative Weed Management Areas on early detection and rapid response (EDRR) programs as well as control efforts on species such as Elodea and Canada thistle.

### **Publications Update**

- The Alaska Forage Manual is nearing completion; placement of photographs and plant species data continues. Species profiles for all grass and legume species have been completed; final results of the forage nutrient study finished; will be included as appendix
- A draft of the Interior Alaska Revegetation & Erosion Control Guide is being proofed. The former deputy commissioner of DNR has agreed to write a forward. Placement of landscape photos review of plant species narrative is all that is outstanding before printing.
- Work on the 2011 Plant Materials Center annual report has begun. Identification of major projects and programs has started, and a document outline has been created.

### **Rural Village Seed Production Project - RVSP**

- November found the RVSP webpage, at <http://plants.alaska.gov/rvspp>, functional and populated with information and forms that the villages can fill out online and submit via email
- Initial Growing Degree Day data in relation to growth stages of selected species has been collected and crunched
- Staff attended ANCSA (Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act) Training
- Staff is writing an "Alaskan native seed production manual; a production guide for commercial growers". The target date for publication, distribution and upload to the webpage is early Spring 2012
- All sites have submitted monthly reports in a timely fashion, though little wintertime activity is occurring on the project sites.
- Staff talked to middle-school students about the education and experience needed to work in the Agriculture field
- Continuing research on agriculture development and marketing in rural Alaska
- January 10-12: RVSP staff traveled to Manley Hot Springs and met with the Village Council. The trip was very successful in that deadlines and goals were set for the upstart of their seed production project.

### **Trans Alaska Pipeline Project**

- Staff has begun sorting collected vegetation data from the Trans-Alaska Pipeline study. Spreadsheets are being prepared in accordance with report protocol set out by client.
- Over 2000 photos have been sorted by milepost and orientation, and the incidence of 140 individual plant species has been charted over the course of the pipeline. Maps of species incidence available at <http://plants.alaska.gov/TAPS/>