



MEMORANDUM

Department of Natural Resources

STATE OF ALASKA
Division of Agriculture

TO: Board of Agriculture
& Conservation

DATE: March 4, 2010

FROM: Franci Havemeister
Director

SUBJECT: Director's Report
January 2010

Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund (ARLF)

Staff has been processing 13 loan applications, 5 loan disbursements, 2 loan delinquencies, 1 loan default/AGO Assignment, 1 bankruptcy plan/AGO Assignment, 6 loans paid off to be closed out, 2 modification requests and 2 loan closings.

Marketing & Development

- Staff completed and submitted the Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP) grant proposal for market research on rhubarb.
- Staff facilitated an Alaska Grown meat shipment from Fairbanks to Haines.
- Staff participated in the School Nutrition Food Show, encouraging the purchasing of Alaska Grown products
- Staff completed the 2008 final report for the FSMIP for research on shelf-stable red meat.
- Staff participated and spoke at the Farmers Union annual conference.
- Staff prepared and emailed out the Division Newsletter.
- Staff prepared the CMP grant for announcement.
- Staff worked closely with Country of Origin Labeling to determine which stores will be audited in the next 5 months.
- Staff reviewed a potential online system for the Food and Farm Products Directory.
- Staff participated in two Food Policy Council meetings as a steering committee member.
- Staff arranged a teleconference on financing for the greenhouse industry and organized for a plant broker to speak on brokering plants.
- Staff continues to wrap up the Cooperative Marketing Program grants.
- Staff closed the Alaska Grown Education grant that the FFA in Kodiak was working on. They completed the project.
- Staff made travel arrangements for training for Country of Origin Labeling
- Staff prepared a support letter for the Mat-Su Borough.
- Staff prepared a media release on slow movement of Alaska Grown potatoes. Staff participated in a radio interview on APRN.
- Staff worked with ASMI on an article they were preparing including Alaska Grown.
- Staff worked with grant recipients to resolve issues they were having.

Inspection

- Reviewed 1 USDA permit application for the movement of plant materials into Alaska
- One farm applied and was accepted into the Alaska Grown Program.
- Staff completed 2 FV 300 inspections representing 172 cartons of product in January. Inspectors also completed 20 FV 301 inspections representing 11,927 packages & 357,810 pounds of inspected product.
- Staff completed 2 GHP/GAP inspections.
- Inspection staff completed four grocery store visits, performing grade inspections on both locally grown and outside products.
- Staff completed 3 farm visits in November and December performing grade inspections on potatoes.

- 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.

Regulatory

- Staff has updated and renewed 99 people for the Brand. The deadline is: 1 Mar 2010.
- Staff issued 1 phytosanitary inspection certificate January.
- Staff responded to numerous calls regarding elk fencing regulations and guidelines.
- 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.
- Staff has responded to several inquiries regarding the labeling and grading of eggs.

Northern Region

- Assisted farmers with maps showing Delta bison range, farmers' fields, bison movement patterns and fencing options for presentation to legislature and public groups.
- Had several meetings with Eielson Road Service Commissioners regarding how they can get permission to spray for noxious weeds along their road right-of-way.
- Met with Fairbanks North Star Borough Planning Commission regarding FEMA's Special Flood Hazard requirements that they are planning to enforce in the Eielson Ag Project.
- Judged Science Fair at ICS School in Fairbanks.
- Attended Produce Conference in Palmer.
- Attended Peony Conference in Anchorage.
- Participated in Invasive Species meeting with the Horticultural Industry in Anchorage.
- Working on writing new brochure for potential June agriculture sale.

Plant Materials Center

- Staff worked steadily on cleaning seed for the Alaska Seed Growers Association.
- Staff tested many seed lots for germination and purity.
- Staff reviewed seed inventory to decide which seeds to put up for sale in April.
- Staff interviewed and hired two new people for the Alaska Rural Seed Program. Both individuals are from outside.
- Staff attended and presented at several workshops.
- Staff prepared many potatoes from tissue culture.
- Received grant funding for Canada thistle management in Anchorage.
- Circulated strategic plan for internal review. Revisions will be made and plan distributed more widely, shortly.
- Began research for an Anchorage, Canada thistle management plan.
- Efforts continue to encourage participation of horticultural industry cooperative program to prevent introduction of invasive weeds and agricultural pests.

Seed Cleaning & Conditioning

- As of February, we have processed over 32,000 pounds of grass, grain, and forb seed through our Small Lot and Seed House processing plants. This seed comes from PMC fields, ASG producers, and other outside sources.

Village Seed Project-ARRA

- Two long-term, non-permanent positions relating to the Village Seed Project were advertised and interviews were held in January. Both the Agronomist I and the Natural Resource Specialist positions have been offered and accepted.
- Initial contacts with Village entities are being organized.