



MEMORANDUM

Department of Natural Resources

STATE OF ALASKA
Division of Agriculture

TO: Board of Agriculture
& Conservation

DATE: March 21, 2012

FROM: Franci Havemeister
Director

SUBJECT: Director's Report
January & February 2012

Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund (ARLF):

- Staff has been processing four loan applications, two more applications have been received after cutoff, one more application incomplete for a total of seven received loan applications, one loan payoff, one Reconveyance of Deed of Trust, verification of debts for other creditors, ARLF interest rates, and contacting delinquent borrowers.
- Staff has closed loan, extension agreements, and dairy lease extension approved at previous board meeting.
- Staff has prepared a request for proposals to send to realtors to possibly hire a realtor or agency to sell the ARLF Palmer property.
- Staff has reviewed assets assigned to ARLF from Mat- Maid dissolution. It was determined that the items available for disposal amount to over \$1,000.00 which require a public notice.
- Asset report has been completed and updated.
- Delinquent borrower contact list has been updated.
- Staff visited Valley Dairy, Inc on February 23rd, 2012 to take photos of cheese stored in outside truck to verify condition is still sellable.
- Staff visited Havemeister's Dairy Farm March 9, 2012 to take photos of progress on construction of new processing/ bottling plant.
- Staff attended the Delta Farm Forum to represent ARLF on February 25th, 2012 and will be attending the SARE Conference in Fairbanks March 14th- 15th.

Marketing & Development:

- During the months of January and February eleven new farms were added to the Alaska Grown certification program.
- Staff visited 10 restaurants to promote the new Restaurant Rewards program which will provide financial reimbursement to restaurants that utilize and promote the use of Alaska Grown products.
- Staff conducted 20 stores visits to ensure proper Alaska Grown signage display.
- Marketing staff prepared for and announced the availability of five different grant programs: the Cooperative Marketing Program (CMP) grant, the Alaska Teacher Scholarship Program, the Farm to School Grant, the Alaska Agriculture Innovation Grant and the Specialty Crop Competitive Grant (SCCG). Staff conducted an informational webinar for the SCCG, which is the largest and most complicated of the five. Two of the grants are targeted towards teachers; staff will conduct a webinar to explain the differences in the two grants in March.
- Staff attending training on a variety of software programs to enhance capabilities with development of both the Alaska Grown source book as well as advertising efforts.
- Staff participated in the interviews for the Kenai Peninsula Cooperative Extension Service (CES) agent position, providing feedback to the hiring committee.
- Staff met with representatives of ProStart, a culinary youth organization, to brainstorm ideas for collaboration. This led to ProStart members participating in the Alaska School Nutrition Association Vendor Show highlighting Alaska Grown products that could be incorporated into

the school lunch program. Staff was also invited to speak to teachers who lead ProStart groups throughout the State.

- Staff attended a State Marketers Conference hosted by the Montana Department of Agriculture. Staff presented information about the Restaurant Rewards program and learned about similar marketing efforts in other Western States.
- Farm to School staff presented at a 4-H Cyber Summit and to a class of Natural Resource Management students about opportunities in Alaska agriculture.
- Staff attended and presented at the Nursery Greenhouse and Alaska Peony Growers winter meetings.
- Marketing staff are collaborating with the Department of Health & Social Services to offer grants to Farmers Market to implement EBT acceptance programs at a minimum of 6 markets in 2012.
- Staff was involved with the development and implementation of the Farm Business Planning workshop hosted by the Alaska Farmland Trust in February.
- Staff continues to be actively involved with the Alaska Food Policy Council.
- Farm to School staff are working with the Child Nutrition Program to develop resources to be handed out to schools including a map of Alaska illustrating food groups available throughout the State as well as a "My Alaska Lunch Tray" poster patterned after the USDA My Plate effort.
- Staff continues to explore the opportunity to work with volunteers and graduate level students interested in assisting the Farm to School program.
- Staff has been working with a local potato grower and a local food manufacturer to explore options for a fresh, roasted potato wedge for use in the school lunch program.
- Staff participated in a Girl Scouts Women of Science & Technology Day at the UAA campus in Anchorage exposing over 90 students to both the Alaska Grown and Farm to School programs.
- Marketing staff are making preparations for the 2012 Alaska State Fair which will once again host Alaska Grown Day with unique agriculture-related activities, games and learning opportunities.
- Staff met with colleagues within the Department of Commerce to brainstorm opportunities for collaboration.
- Staff participated on the planning committee and also presented at the Produce Growers conference.
- Staff continues to develop new marketing and advertising tools in an effort to inform more consumers about the availability of Alaska Grown products.
- Staff participated on a panel hosted by the Mat Su Convention and Visitors Bureau to explore the opportunities for agritourism in Alaska.
- Farm to School staff was invited to present information to the Alaska Public Health Summit regarding policy changes and the Alaska food system.
- Staff attended the Delta Farm Forum to outreach to farmers about both the Alaska Grown and Farm to School programs.

Northern Region:

- Attended Disposal Review Board and gave presentation concerning the Nenana-Totchaket Agriculture Project.
- Had meetings with DMLW Survey unit and Resource and Development unit concerning Nenana-Totchaket.
- Held meeting with DNR Resource and Development unit to discuss the new Yukon Tanana Area Plan. Discussed the rewrite of the chapter two section concerning agricultural issues on state land.
- Identified almost 29,000 acres of potential agriculture land and got it incorporated into the draft version of the Yukon-Tanana Area Plan currently being written.
- Attended annual Farm Forum in Delta Junction to meet with area farmers and learn about work being done by the local soil and water district as well as other local agriculture projects.
- Gave presentation to the Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District regarding Farm conservation plan. They wanted to know what their responsibilities were and what the state handled.
- Provided inspection report for two agriculture parcels eligible to move towards patent.

- Attended Alaska Surveying and Mapping conference to learn more about mobile GIS technology.
- Held meeting with DMLW Northern region Land Sales team about doing a joint land sale in Nenana-Totchaket project.
- Helped several farmers work on updating their farm conservation plans.
- Worked with several farmers on subdividing their farms.

Northern Region Inspection:

- Staff attended a DNR provided ESRI ArcGIS 10 training course. The training was to introduce the new version of ESRI's software package being utilized for GIS mapping and analysis, and benefited those migrating from previous versions of the software. GIS is used in a variety of ways by Division staff, such as pest risk mapping, mapping survey locations, mapping Elk fences, and answering land use and other land related questions that can be represented or analyzed geographically.
- Staff opportunistically attended a macrophotography workshop coordinated by the UAF Museum Entomologist and taught by a Harvard Entomologist who shared his techniques and methods on photographing insects. The 2 hr workshop was limited to 10 participants, was fairly focused, and was free of charge with price of admission to the museum.
- 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 coordinated efforts with the Central Region Office to submit two Farm Bill proposals for the upcoming 2012 funding year. Proposals submitted for consideration included a proposal to survey for Thrips species associated with cut flowers, and a proposal to continue statewide efforts to monitor for exotic Asian defoliating moths.
- Staff participated in teleconferences for Western Region State Survey Coordinators on Feb. 15, and Mar 7. The focus of the conference calls centered on Farm Bill updates, National Caps Committee meeting updates, and data management issues for APHIS agreements, Trap and Lure supplies, along with other national program priorities.
- Northern Region Staff attended the Delta Farm Forum on Feb 25. Staff from the Palmer Office along with Director Havemeister attended as well. Staff members were given the opportunity to briefly present information regarding their respective programs.
- Staff travelled to Palmer to transport collected firewood samples to the primary storage location at the Palmer PMC. While in Palmer, Feb 28, staff met with several of the Central Region Office inspectors to discuss Farm Bill and CAPS projects. A full staff meeting was held the following morning with Director attendance.
- Staff assisted one of the Central Region Office Inspectors in Delta Junction to inspect seed potatoes for meeting USDA #1 grade requirements.

Central Office Inspection:

- Staff conducted 2 inspections for log exports to China in Kodiak and Ketchikan.
- Staff conducted 20 store inspections of potatoes for retail sale.
- Staff attended teleconferences on Elodia control and weed free gravel programs.
- Staff visited various grocery outlets and enforced the shell egg regulations for labeling of cartons.
- Staff contacted Denali seed in reference to mislabeling of seed packets.
- Assisted staff at DiTomaso's for Defense Commissary Agency (DECA) and commercial inspections.
- Attended the greenhouse/nursery conference in Girdwood.
- Worked with Bacterial Ring Rot issues and training.
- Staff conducted 9 on farm inspections.
- Staff attended Produce Growers conference in Palmer and consulted at the Rhodeola meeting.
- Responded to Organic farming inquiries.
- Contacted the USDA in reference to Wal-Mart Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) policies.
- Staff performed 7 firewood surveys at retail outlets.
- Staff consulted with new peony growers.

- Advised Colorado tomato growers and Dept. of Ag. on quarantine issues.
- Staff conducted research on seed potato regulations from other states.
- Staff researched insects of concern to China.
- Consulted local seed packers on labeling regulations.
- Staff updated the Late Blight quarantine letter for producers.
- Consulted with local high school Ag. instructor on grant issues.
- Staff issued 3phyto sanitary certificates for exported product.
- Staff issued 11 FV-300 certificates with 2 supersedes and 3 voids.
- Staff inspected FV-301 information which includes inspection of 19952 total packages for a weight of 597,517 lbs. of product.
- Staff reviewed and approved 4 USDA interstate plant and product permits.
- Reviewed certifications for seed potatoes from out of state sources.
- Submitted 2012 Farm Bill project proposal.
- Staff coordinated with Customs and Border patrol for the inspection operation involving firewood trades. This is the 2nd year for this program.
- Staff participated in meetings with the United States Forestry Service regarding strategy and action plans for early detection grants. The Div. of Agriculture is to be the key cooperater along with the Div. of Forestry.

PLANT MATERIALS CENTER

Rural Village Seed Production Project (RVSP)

- Staff attended an Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) training.
- All sites have submitted monthly reports in a timely fashion. Little activity is occurring during winter, but activity will begin to increase in the coming months.
- Staff talked with students from Chadron College (Nebraska) about the RVSP and education and experiences necessary to work in the agriculture field.
- Continuing research on small scale agriculture development and marketing in Rural Alaska.
- Staff is planning summer season visits to the six cooperater sites.
- The Pebble Project has shown interest in purchasing seed from sites in close proximity to the proposed mine (Pedro Bay, Chignik Lake, and Aniak).
- Staff is planning a spring training seminar for village project managers and staff. Topics include a detailed project overview, seed production planning, and product marketing.

Educational Activities

- Staff participated in the Alaska Produce Conference and presented at the Rhodiola Growers Workshop which was held as part of the conference.
- Staff gave presentations and a tour of the Plant Materials Center to students from Mat-Su College and Chadron State College (Nebraska).
- A presentation was given to the Alaskan Botanical Garden's Spring Conference on "Growing Alaska's Native Pantry and Medicine Cabinet" with over 60 people came to the presentation. Several people asked for group tours of the Ethnobotanical Teaching Garden for this summer. The annual spring seed sale from the Plant Materials Center is scheduled for April 16 – 27. Inventory of seeds, testing, price gathering, and freight costs from the lower 48 are being compiled for the sale.
- An increasing number of individual growers are requesting a few pounds of barley, wheat, and oats to grow in their home gardens. The PMC is working on filling these requests.

Publications

- Final drafts of the Interior Alaska Revegetation & Erosion Control Guide have been prepared, and released for third party review.
- Forage manual draft review / editing are ongoing. Nutrient Study appendix has been completed; charts showing nutrient levels over time for each species are included

Soil Testing and Analysis

- Completed nutrient testing and analysis for several hay producers throughout south central, Kenai Peninsula, and interior.
- Tested soil samples for nutrient availability for several peony fields throughout the state.

Potato Program

- A potato producers meeting has been scheduled for 22nd March at 9:00 am. The meeting will be held at the Plant Materials Center, and broadcast as a webinar on the internet. Participants outside the Palmer area can call in to 1-800-315-6338, using pass code 122#.

Seed Cleaning

- The large seed cleaning facility has completed cleaning all of the Alaska Seed Growers (ASG) seed for the 2011-12 season. Larger lots of seed grown and harvested here on the PMC property are now being cleaned. Roughly 11,000 pounds of that seed are expected to be cleaned by May.
- In the small seed cleaning facility, PMC seed is being cleaned and prepared for the spring seed sale. There have been multiple small lots of local growers seed cleaned and returned to growers.
- Two new Clipper Eclipse seed cleaners are being purchased and should arrive by early June. These machines will be used by the participants of the Rural Village Seed Production Project in cleaning the seed they produce.