



MEMORANDUM

Department of Natural Resources

STATE OF ALASKA
Division of Agriculture

TO: Board of Agriculture
& Conservation

DATE: March 31, 2011

FROM: Franci Havemeister
Director

SUBJECT: Director's Report

Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund (ARLF)

Staff has been processing 4 loan applications, 4 loan disbursements, 1 loan default, 3 AGO assignments, 1 loan closing, UCC filings servicing, 1 closed file, ARLF financial services reports, ARLF interest rates and ARLF Procedure Manual.

Marketing & Development

- Staff approved eight new farms for the Alaska Grown program.
- Staff hosted a planning and discussion meeting for the 2011 Eat Local Challenge.
- Staff gave presentations at both the Produce Growers Conference and the Forage Growers School in February. Marketing staff also attended the annual Mat-Su Farm Bureau banquet, and the Delta Farm Forum.
- Staff continues to develop a strategic plan for the Farm to School (FTS) program with input from expert mentors in FTS efforts in other States as well as input from interested stakeholders in Alaska. Over 100 people have expressed an interest in receiving more information about the Alaska FTS program.
- Staff hosted and facilitated the first in-person meeting of the Alaska Farmers Market Association (AFMA) with market managers and vendors in attendance from Sitka, Gustavus, Wasilla, Anchorage, Palmer and Fairbanks. Guest speakers from Oregon were very well received and provided valuable insight on how to 'market your market.' The presentation was videotaped and with assistance from Cooperative Extension Service (CES) staff will be made available to those unable to attend in person.
- Staff met with the Alaska Railroad to discuss potential partnering opportunities including hosting an Eat Local Train, serving Alaska Grown products on the Fair trains, and other ideas.
- Staff hosted a ½ day rhubarb meeting to further the discussion of the development of a rhubarb association in Alaska.
- Staff have been busy introducing the FTS program to a wide variety of audiences, giving presentations for the following:
 1. The Alaska School Nutrition Association conference.
 2. Professor Craig Gerlach's 'Food and Farming' class at University of Alaska Fairbanks.
 3. The Alaska Nutrition Education Program monthly teleconference, and
 4. Thirty-five Anchorage Elementary Health Teacher Specialists.
- Staff met with and toured Risse Greenhouse and then contributed an article to the Master Gardeners newsletter featuring Risse Greenhouse.
- Staff participated in the regional USDA Farm to School Special Initiatives call and updated the group about the Alaska FTS program. Staff presented an idea for linking up FTS with the

Healthier US School Challenge (HUSSC) a national voluntary initiative aimed at promoting nutrition and physical activity in schools.

- Staff has attended webinars and teleconferences hosted by the National Good Food Network (NGFN), Alaska Community Agriculture (ACAA), and a Virtual Farm Bill listening webinar.
- Staff announced the availability of the annual Cooperative Marketing Program (CMP) grant.
- Marketing staff developed and released the monthly Division e-newsletter which is now received by over 300 people.

Inspection

- Staff completed 20 FFV 301 inspections representing 11019 packages & 330,570 pounds of product .
- Staff completed 5 FFV 300 commercial inspections representing 788 containers.
- Staff discussed and addressed several calls from the public regarding Phytosanitary certificates.
- Staff conducted 4 grocery store visits to check grade on potatoes and discuss quality issues.
- Staff participated in USDA, FFV New Inspector Training School.
- Inspection staff has been busy covering inspections during the absence of staff at training.
- Staff conducted farm visits to discuss potato issues and check grade on local potatoes.

Regulatory

- Staff issued 3 phytosanitary certificates.
- Staff worked with USDA to address a new Import Requirement for seed potatoes going to China
- Staff fielded several calls related to Organic Certification in Alaska.
- Staff reviewed and approved USDA permits for interstate movement of plant products into Alaska.
- Staff is continuing to work with Alaska Seed Potato producers on the export of seed potatoes to China. Staff has provided consultation and phytosanitary, seed certification and marketing information to a broad group involved in making this export to China happen.
- Staff has been working with other states to address projects proposed under the Farm bill. It is still unclear if congress and USDA will be able to get acceptable funding language in the continuing resolution bill.
- Staff completed final draft of the State of Alaska, Quality Manual which is a USDA APHIS requirement for state signatories of the State National Harmonization Program (SNHP) for Seed Potatoes. Staff distributed this final draft to the Alaska Seed Growers Association for review.
- Staff drafted a memo to the Potato Seed growers association reminding them of the labeling requirements. Last year, a few retail locations did not have their certification tags displayed and claimed to not have received them from the grower. Also, a few local greenhouses/ nurseries bagged potato seed for sale, which they received in bulk that did not meet potato seed labeling laws.
- Staff reviewed and approved two USDA permits for interstate movement of plant products into Alaska.
- Staff discussed and addressed several inquiries from outside companies interested in selling seed in Alaska.
- Staff attended the Alaska Producer Conference.
- Staff is reviewing the USDA APHIS PPQ draft policy for the "Federal Recognition of State Managed Phytosanitary Programs, "Free Stamp Program", which provides Federal recognition to certain protected States that would be environmentally or economically endangered by a particular pest.

Northern Region

- Staff attended the Delta Farm Forum in Delta Junction
- Staff attended training in Seattle to enter data into the IPHIS (Integrated Plant Health Information System) database where regulatory plant pest information will be stored in the future for the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
- Staff participated in meetings to help develop protocols for entering tissue cultured potato plantlets into the Alaska Seed Certification program
- Staff assisted farmers with updates to their farm conservation plans
- Staff wrote a Preliminary Decision for the sale of 4,100 acres in the Kobe North area. The decision is currently under review by the Division of Mining, Land and Water

Plant Materials Center

Invasive Weeds and Pests

- Reviewed and edited invasiveness rankings for newly ranked plants.
- Presented Spartina Early Detection and Response plan at the Alaska Forum on the Environment.
- Submitted Section 309 grant proposal to the Alaska Coastal Management Program to research if stipulations to prevent invasive species introductions and spread are needed in this the coastal project review process.
- Finished collecting comments on the Draft Strategic Plan for Invasive Weeds and Agricultural Pest Management.
- Held meetings with participating Interior and Southcentral horticultural businesses to work towards coordinating information presented to the public on invasive species.

Seed Lab

- During this period the Alaska State Seed Lab performed 28 Germination tests, 24 Purity tests, 3 Noxious tests, and 5 tests to determine the amount of seed per gram.
- Seed samples were obtained and germination tests started for 2011 Spring Seed Sale.
- Seed Laboratory staff attended two day course on Seed Biology, Production, and Quality. Course helped to expand employees' knowledge and familiarized them with some of the latest research in the seed industry.

Rural Village Seed Production Project (RVSP)

- February 1-2, 2011: RVSP staff traveled to Chignik Lake, Alaska. Staff met with the Village Council, as well as interested community members. Topics of discussion included: project site locations, available resources, ownership of particular land parcels, and which village office might be interested in being a leading member of the RVSP in Chignik Lake. RVSP staff left feeling the project could do well in Chignik Lake.
- RVSP staff has chosen an official list of 5 villages where the project will be working this spring/summer. Those villages are: Aniak, Chignik Lake, Manley Hot Springs, Hooper Bay, and Metlakatla.
- 2 villages remain on the potential candidate list. RVSP staff is discussing the potential for funding with these locations. More information on these communities will be provided at a later date.
- RVSP staff has been working with Metlakatla, Alaska for some time now. The project is going well, however minor changes have been made to the original contract. The project has been scaled back in this location. The Forest and Land Resources office is excited about the RVSP and feels more comfortable managing a slightly smaller initiative.
- Casey Dinkel, PMC soil scientist, will be traveling with RVSP staff in the coming months to conduct soil surveys. Casey will be a key member of the project team in determining which plant species will perform best at each location.
- RVSP staff is in the process of planning a training session early this spring. This session will take place at the PMC. The topic has been brought up with Village Councils, and RVSP staff hopes this can happen over the course of a few weeks in the end of April and early May.

Publications Update

- Rural Village Seed Production Project: Training Manual has been completed.
- PMC Website upgrade ongoing... <http://plants.alaska.gov> .

- Native Plant Source Directory 7th edition is on line. Growers can now advertise in the directory for free, at any time, by sending their information to peggy.hunt@alaska.gov.
- PMC Seed testing / analysis web pages are completed.
- Interior Revegetation Manual- Case studies completed
- Farm-to-School logo developed in conjunction with input from Division Marketing Staff.

Foundation Seed

- Staff evaluating which seed lots can be sold for PMC spring sale.
- Testing of needed lots is in progress.
- Seed Sale is planned for April 7 – 22.
- Many businesses were contacted to see if they wanted to be listed on our Native Plant Source Directory.
- Grain seed prices obtained from the lower 48.
- Freight costs from Tacoma, Washington were acquired.
- Staff attended parts of the Vegetable and Potato Conference.
- Evaluation of time and effort was delineated for legislature to determine the feasibility of moving the PMC from the DEC regulations pertaining to pesticide application regulations as State land.
- Staff determined that the PMC was not going to continue to produce ARRA, ERRO, Finnaska, Otra, PAAVO, and POKKO barley; Ceal and Golden Rain oats; and Vigal wheat. These are being offered back to UAF. If UAF does not want them, the PMC will use the remainders as cover crops.

Other PMC Activities

- Staff answered questions about revegetation, rain garden plants, grain suggestions for Alaskan fields, foundation seed sale, amounts of fertilizer and soil for summer, etc.

Seeds of Success (SOS) Project

- Staff met with BLM representative to discuss possibilities about sending 2009 and 2010 SOS seed collections to long term seed storage facility.

Mat-Su Riparian Revegetation Project

- Germination tests of some species collected in summer of 2010 in progress. Results will provide valuable information about seeding rates for 2011 seed increase.

Willow Collection

- One group with Palmer Soil and Water Conservation District came out to the PMC to collect willows for a spring/summer revegetation project at Valley Pathways School.
- Three other groups are scheduled to come to the PMC in late March.

Seed Cleaning and Conditioning

- Staff has cleaned approximately 25,000 lbs of clean seed since October 2010. Our large lot (Seed House) facility has processed 'Nortran' Tufted Hairgrass (*Deschampsia caespitosa*), 'Gruening' Alpine Bluegrass (*Poa alpina*), and 'Nugget' Kentucky Bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*) for commercial growers in the state.
- Our small lot facility continues to clean small lots of grasses and forbs from the PMC grounds and for clients that contact us with specific needs.
- A new brush machine has been installed in the seed house which is being worked into the cleaning schedule. With variable speed settings and a higher capacity, the new equipment will cover crops that are too small to send through the large equipment in the seed house and too large to be efficiently cleaned with our equipment in the small lot facility.