



MEMORANDUM

Department of Natural Resources

STATE OF ALASKA
Division of Agriculture

TO: Board of Agriculture
& Conservation

DATE: June 13, 2012

FROM: Franci Havemeister
Director

SUBJECT: Director's Report
April - May 2012

Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund (ARLF):

- Staff has received three new loan applications since last board meeting, two have been prepared, and one is pending further documentation and will be submitted at the next board meeting.
- Staff has closed loans approved at previous board meeting, processed Deeds of Reconveyances, Deeds of Trust, UCC filings, and warrant requests.
- Staff has been in contact with delinquent borrowers and updated delinquent borrower contact list.
- Asset report has been completed and updated.
- Interest rate comparison has been updated.
- Staff has focused on asset management, including visiting the Pt. McKenzie area, and has completed updates on three borrowers.
- Staff has drafted a letter for BAC approval to be mailed to current ARLF borrowers regarding the ARLF loan program.

Marketing & Development:

- During the months of April and May, 15 new farms were approved for authorized use of the Alaska Grown logo.
- Marketing staff continue to work with the Alaska Food Policy Council, attending a two-day strategic action planning session in Anchorage and participating in multiple calls. This participation led to an invitation to taste-test event at Colony Middle School where local vendor Taco Loco was sampling a new tamale product. Staff brought along a local farmer to introduce the notion of including Alaska Grown products in future products.
- Staff conducted outreach to the greenhouse and nursery industry, visiting 11 sites in both the northern and south central regions to provide Alaska Grown supplies, answer questions and take pictures for use and promotion on Face book and in other advertising efforts.
- Staff participated in Alaska Agriculture Day activities with over 400 students in Palmer and over 260 students in Fairbanks. Students were taught how to make carrot/radish seed tape; additional lessons about nutrition, observational activities, and Alaska Grown agriculture were covered.
- Staff managed multiple grants during April and May, including the Alaska Teacher Scholarship Program, the Farm to School Grant and the Chef at the Market Grant. Interest in grants continues to rise; the Chef at the Market grant had funding requests totaling more than \$90,000; the program has \$15,000 for 2012.
- Staff attended the Kenai Ag Forum and gave a presentation on Alaska Grown, funding opportunities and programs.
- Marketing staff continue efforts to produce the 2012 Alaska Grown Source Book which will have new online features.
- Staff participated in the 2012 FFA State Convention, judging two different events and being a guest speaker.

- Staff assisted with a “Salad Bar Video” contest, helping to solicit and then judge entries. Staff was able to coordinate involvement of a local farm in an additional Salad Bar Training video which will include information about Alaska Grown products and footage from the local farm.
- Staff continues to promote Alaska Grown products through twice-weekly advertisements in the Anchorage Daily News (print and online); staff is evaluating this promotion for effectiveness.
- Staff continues efforts to outreach to students and groups about Alaska Grown and the Farm to School program by giving presentations, having tabletop demonstrations and attending events. In April and May staff participated in events at Begich Middle School (Anchorage), the Science Olympiad (Wasilla), a Delta Junction Community Garden group and Randy Smith Middle School (Fairbanks).
- Staff coordinated involvement with and attended the Great Alaska Seafood Cook-off at which Alaska Grown products were featured.
- Marketing staff conducted a survey of all schools in Alaska to gauge current access to school gardens. Results show that 103 out of 512 (20%) schools in Alaska currently have a school garden.
- Staff is developing an “On Farm Food Safety” workshop to be conducted in Fairbanks. The workshop will include staff from the inspection section and will focus on post-harvest handling, food safety plans, etc.
- Staff has been promoting the Restaurant Rewards program, conducting more than 10 restaurant visits in April & May and accepting seven restaurants into the program. To increase visibility, staff coordinated a taping with Channel 11 news that covered the program including footage at a valley farm, with a distributor and at a restaurant in Anchorage.
- Staff organized and attended multiple events in Sitka for their ‘Fish to School’ program.
 - Fish lunch at Pacific HS.
 - Fish lunch at Keet Gooshi Keen Elementary, with the director, the Governor’s wife, and the child nutrition program coordinator.
 - Hosted two classroom events with a grain project with the same crowd as above.
 - Attended a fish to school food system lesson and cooking class.
 - Met with and toured multiple school food service professionals and their cafeterias.
 - Awarded the Sitka Conservation Society & Nana Management Services for their contribution to the Fish to School efforts.
- Staff was interviewed on an episode of the public radio show “Kids These Days” which was focused on addressing childhood obesity; staff spoke about the farm to school program and efforts to get more Alaska Grown products in school lunches.
- Staff continues working with the Cooperative Extension Service (CES) Test Kitchen on Alaska Grown barley flour roll recipes that will meet the needs of the school kitchens.

Northern Region Inspection:

- Staff continued coordination efforts with National Park Service, Customs Border Patrol, Bureau of Land Management, Harbormasters, US Forest Service, US Military, and Cooperative Extension Service in conducting pest detection surveys this summer. US Fish and Wildlife in Tok has agreed to assist in the trapping efforts.
- Staff continued work on Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS) agreements.
- Staff participated in the monthly Western Region State Survey Coordinator (SSC) teleconference.
- Staff participated in the Alaska Pest Risk Assessment Committee meeting via teleconference.
- Staff participated in teleconference and efforts to update the Alaska Chain of Command for suspected high risk pests for the Western Region Diagnostic Network (WPDN).
- Staff received and responded to Phytosanitary Certification inquiries.

Central Office Inspection:

- Completed 14 USDA destination-point (FFV 300) commodity inspections for produce wholesalers
- Conducted 20 USDA (FFV-301) commodity inspections on military procurement orders for DECA
- Conducted informational/enforcement site visits at 17 greenhouses, 9 retail outlets, and 1 farm
- Completed 2 phytosanitary certificates for log exports to China
- Performed 4 firewood surveys at retail outlets
- Researched import requirements for Honey berries from Canada
- Completed inspections upon request on 3 lots of potatoes for sprout issues and 10.5 tons of seed potatoes
- Assisted log exporters in regards to the new China protocols for export
- Attended training and exam for pesticide applicator certification
- Assisted with the weed free forage/ gravel program training class and updated inspection reports
- Continues to update Sudden Oak Death notification files
- Completed ACO reaccreditation training modules
- Worked with the Northern Region Farm-to-School Coordinator to plan food safety workshop for local growers in Fairbanks
- Coordinated with visiting Washington State Dept. of Agriculture Organic Certification Officer on upcoming inspections/program issues
- Approved four USDA permits for interstate movement of plant pests and products into Alaska.
- Participated in the Alaska Pest Risk Committee, discussed the upcoming inspection operation at the Customs and Border Protection (CBP)/ Alcan border May 7-10. The new USDA State Plant Health Director, Barbara Chambers was introduced and pending USDA issues were discussed; logs with bark entering through Canada unrestricted where firewood is prohibited. Next meeting July 11.
- Submitted State Regulations on the Late Blight Quarantine and US live plants information transiting Canada to Customs and Border Protection Area Port Director to be forwarded to CBP ports in Alaska.
- Attended part of the annual USDA Forest Health Protection meeting in response to our joint work on the firewood project.
- The two Section 10201 Farm Bill Suggestions, Thrips associated with Peony in Alaska and the Asian Defoliating Moth Survey projects have been accepted into the 2012 USDA spending plan.
- Responded to various inquiries on requirements for phytosanitary certification, soil, live plants traveling through Canada and Alaska seed labeling.
- Drafted response to the USDA to remove an aster yellows phytoplasma, Candidatus Phytoplasma asteris and Alaska potato purple top, Phytoplasma PPT-AK6 from the Plant pathogenic bacteria considered widely prevalent in Alaska.
- Continued 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 and ordering supplies. Preparing for the upcoming Workshop on June 4-7.

Northern Region:

- Finished writing brochure for Auction #468.
- Had brochures printed and distributed in Delta, Fairbanks, Nenana, Anderson, and Healy. Also posted notices of the sale/brochure availability around the Interior. Made arrangements for information about the auction to be posted on DNR Land sales Face book page and several Twitter accounts.
- Made arrangements to make the brochure available online.
- Arranged to have bids for the auction accepted online.
- Answered the numerous calls for information about the auction.
- Had meeting with Mayor of Nenana concerning the status of the Nenana-Totchaket project. Was informed that he had submitted a grant request for funds to build the road and bridge to the project. Ultimately the funding was included in a larger bond package with other capital projects.

- Continued working with many farmers on updating their farm conservation plan. The division has been stressing the necessity for farmers to keep their plan up-to-date, particularly when subdividing or making changes to the farm, and this has led to a great increase in the number of plans getting reviewed and updated.
- Reviewed several draft surveys of agriculture lands and provided comments.
- Continued to handle calls concerning subdividing agricultural lands. There seems to be a large upswing in such calls over past years.
- Drafted a new State Farm Conservation Plan which will help clarify what information needs to be included in the Plan and what responsibilities each party has in relation to the Plan.

PLANT MATERIALS CENTER:

Research

- As of May 24, 2012, PMC staff have tested 12 seed lots of native grasses and grass cultivars and found 9 to be infected with *Neotyphodium sp.* endophytes. Confirmation of these results will follow at a later time.
- BACKGROUND: Fungal endophytes live within plant tissue and help plants survive environmental stresses such as drought, high temperature, nutrient deficiencies, and feeding by insects and larger animals. Some endophytes produce toxins that discourage feeding; this can cause serious problems in livestock grazing, and has implications for wildlife and resource management. It may be desirable to use toxin-producing strains for applications such as erosion control at mining sites or exclusion of wildlife

Foundation Seed - Spring Seed Sale

- The spring, 2012, seed sale sold 20 lbs of grass ('Gruening', Ninilchik, 'Nugget', and 'Sourdough') to 5 growers.
- 'Thual', 'Lidal', and 'Datal' Barley was sold to two growers for a total of 1450 lbs. 'Ingal' and 'Nogal' Wheat was purchased by two growers (900 lbs.) Two hundred pounds of 'Nip' and 'Toral' Oats were sold to one grower.
- Seven Forbs were sold to one grower.

Conference/Training Room

- During the month of April, 2012, five conferences/trainings were hosted at the PMC's conference room. In May, three conferences/trainings were held. Groups included State Parks and Recreation, PMC Advisory Council, The State Grange, UAF Extension, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and PMC. Pesticide training, weed-free forage and gravel certification, retreats, and marketing training were some of the activities held at the conference room.

Ethnobotany Program

- In May staff was invited to present at the "Alaska Plants for Medicine and Food Symposium, A Gathering of Stakeholders" organized by Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. Five presentations were given covering the programs at the PMC, the Ethnobotany Traditional Garden, Native Plant Source Directory, and "Subsistence Adaptations: Container Gardens for Traditional Plants and Medicines for Elders". Many contacts were made amongst the attendees, with future meetings planned.

Publications:

- The Interior Alaska Revegetation and Erosion Control Guide have been sent to the printers. An initial print run of 500 copies was specified.
- A draft manuscript of the Alaska Forage Manual has been prepared, and is being reviewed by University of Alaska's Cooperative Extension researchers.
- A database has been prepared for the Farm / Business Directory, and updated data is being entered for 200+ Agricultural producers. Production of the 2012 Alaska Grown Sourcebook has begun, including maps of all Farmers' Markets in the state.

Invasive Weeds and Agricultural Pest Program:

- Staff is coordinating with Division of Mining Land & Water (DMLW) to address a newly identified spotted knapweed infestation in the Sutton area. A management plan is being drafted and will be implemented during the 2012 growing season.
- The PMC hosted a Weed Free Forage and Gravel Inspector Training on the 16th. Over 20 people attended both in person and via broadcasted webinar. This training provided attendees the opportunity to become qualified to certify fields (forage) and material sites (gravel) as “weed free.” The course, taught by Cooperative Extension Service instructors, covered National and Alaska standards and requirements, weed identification, and field sessions.
- Staff coordinated with Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G), Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and Takshanuk Watershed Council to develop a sampling protocol and work-plan to address water quality and invasive weed issues in Mosquito Lake through the Alaska Clean Water Actions Grant Program.
- Staff participated in the Mat-Su Borough's Lake Monitoring Training for volunteers. Information was presented on the invasive aquatic plant, Elodea, and its potential impact on Alaska's waters.
- Staff continues to work with DEC on a Pesticide Use Permit for the management of Canada thistle in the Anchorage area for the 2012 season.
- The Alaskan's for Palmer Hay Flats Organization held their annual Education Field Day on May 18th. Students from Snowshoe Elementary learned about the flora, fauna, resources and the history of the area through activities and instruction from community members, agencies and non-profit groups. The PMC hosted a table, with the support of the Palmer Soil and Water Conservation District, featuring instructional activities focused on invasive weeds and plant ecology.