



MEMORANDUM
Department of Natural Resources

STATE OF ALASKA
Division of Agriculture

TO: Board of Agriculture
& Conservation

DATE: August 24, 2011

FROM: Franci Havemeister
Director

SUBJECT: Director's Report

Marketing & Development

- During the months of April, May and June, staff approved nine new farms for the Alaska Grown program.
- Staff created new Alaska Grown banners to be used with Alaska Grown nursery crops at statewide Wal-Mart locations.
- Staff conducted multiple farm, greenhouse and grocery store visits delivering promotional materials.
- Staff coordinated a Garden to Cafeteria discussion with Randy Smith middle school (Fairbanks); Calypso farms, Fairbanks school food service professionals, a graduate student, the Principal and Vice Principal of the school, and other involved staff. We discussed food safety concerns, logistical challenges, brainstormed ideas, and exchanged general information about each other's programs.
- Staff worked hard in preparation of the farmers market season:
 - finalizing and distributing the new Farmers Market Manual;
 - developing a new Farmers Market brochure;
 - working with Dept. of Health & Social Services staff on the Quest Card pilot project;
 - sending promotional supplies to all 33 markets throughout the State;
 - updating the USDA National Farmers Market Directory with accurate Alaska information; and
 - conducting visits to the markets that opened in May and June.
- Staff hosted an informational meeting with a visiting Kentucky Department of Agriculture staff member. She discussed opportunities in mobile slaughter facilities.
- Staff attended and presented information on the Farm to School (FTS) program at the Kenai Agriculture Forum.
- Staff gave presentations to:
 - Anchorage Soil & Water Conservation District staff;
 - Fairbanks Farm Bureau Annual Meeting attendees;
 - A group at Alaska Psychiatric Institute; and a
 - UAA Food Ethics class.
- Staff collaborated with Steve Gallagher of ARRC on an "Alaska Farmland" Map for distribution to the public.
- Staff toured the North Pole middle school with a representative from DEC to discuss possibilities for using a home economics classroom and students to prepare items for the school lunch program.

- Staff participated in Alaska Ag Day events in both Palmer and Fairbanks including reading to multiple classes as well as giving a marketing demonstration to over 100 4th grade students and a seed potato planting workshop to 150 Pre K – 3rd grade students.
- Staff also advertised Alaska Agriculture Day both online and in print in five major newspapers throughout the State including the Anchorage Daily News, the Frontiersman, the Daily News Miner, the Juneau Empire and the Peninsula Clarion.
- Staff toured Charlie's Produce & DiTomaso's with the Child Nutrition Services program coordinator to discuss possibilities for using more Alaska Grown product and potentially processing commodity entitlement product.
- Staff collaborated with Division Inspection, Child Nutrition Services, and DEC staff on the creation of a food safety guidance document for schools to utilize both with school garden programs as well as with procuring food directly from small producers versus from wholesale distributors.
- Staff worked with a professional artist to design the new Farm to School logo and also launched a FTS Facebook page.
- Staff participated in the FFA State Convention in Kodiak.
- Staff toured the Juneau school district central kitchen and met with their contracted dining services, Nana Management Services, to discuss opportunities for incorporating more Alaska Grown products into their menus.
- Staff has been working with the Palmer UAF Experiment Farm on the details behind the Ag Appreciation Day to be held August 11.
- Staff held the third School/Farm tour with the Anchorage School District (ASD). In attendance were representatives from VanderWeele Farms, Palmer Produce, Division of Agriculture, Division of Child Nutrition Services, and ASD Food Service Professionals. We started with a tour of facilities at Palmer Produce, touring the warehouse, coolers, potato grading line and the green houses where all vegetable crops start. We then had a discussion about potential product options and logistical challenges.
- Staff have been working with the Mat Su Farm Bureau on coordination and planning for the Mat Su Farm Tour, to be held Thursday, August 4th.
- Staff hosted the second Farm to School Summit webinar to present the strategic plan for public input. Anupama Joshi, director for the National Farm to School Network, was the guest speaker; approximately 60 people participated.
- Staff continue to be actively involved in the Alaska Food Policy Council.
- Staff is collaborating on a "Grain Project" with Cooperative Extension Services as the recipe developer, the food service professional at the Fairbanks School District, and a barley farmer. We will be working with the school food service recipes to substitute and find a market for Alaska barley and barley flour.
- Staff attended and displayed a booth at the Global Food Collaborative event in Soldotna.
- Staff attended training for continued management of the Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) program as well as conducted five retail audits to verify compliance.
- Staff toured two farms in Delta Junction with Fairbanks school food service staff as well as a DEC staff member. One farm may potentially be supplying cabbage and kohlrabi to the school. The second farm is focused on barley flour.
- Staff conducted multiple advertising efforts in the months of April, May and June including:
 - A :30 second commercial aired on KTUU Channel 2 during the three Triple Crown horse races and during the special segment on loss of farmland which ran during the evening news; the ad was aimed at reminding people that Alaska Grown products were coming into season soon;
 - ½ page advertisement in Alaska Wellness Magazine;
 - Bench advertisements outside five Carrs/Safeway stores in South Central;

- Full page ad in Alaska Travel Guidebook; and
- Continued daily promotion on our Alaska Grown Facebook page which now has over 4800 “likes.” (For comparison purposes, KTVA Channel 11 news has 2200 “likes,” the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute has 4200 and KTUU Channel 2 news has 8136.)
- Staff created the new “Chef at the Market” program with the dual goals of promoting Alaska farmers markets and teaching shoppers how to prepare Alaska Grown products available at the market that day. Five Chefs will attend 16 markets conducting demonstrations and hosting events to promote Alaska Grown.
- Staff toured the Alaska Gateway School District in Tok to discuss challenges, opportunities, and school gardens. Staff also toured their biomass building that heats the school in the winter; it will potentially be connected to a greenhouse in the future.
- Staff chaired the committee for the Alaska State Fair 2011 Farm Family of the Year nominations.
- Staff created the new Farm to School Grant (FTSG) to promote activities in schools that increase the utilization of Alaska Grown products. Staff reviewed 24 applications and awarded 17 projects for a total \$15,000 distributed.

Inspection

- Staff completed 65 FFV 301 inspections representing 36,727 packages & 1,111,660 pounds of product.
- Staff completed 32 FFV 300 commercial inspections representing 3959 containers.
- Staff conducted 18 grocery store visits to check grade and labeling on potatoes and AK leafy greens, cabbage and broccoli.
- Staff conducted 13 farm visits to check grade on local potatoes, leafy greens and to conduct GHP/GAP audits.
- Staff conducted 2 GHP/ GAP audits. USDA/ FFV Program Managers from Idaho observed the two audits.
- Staff issued 32 phytosanitary certificates.
- Staff inspected the first peony export destined to Japan. Shipment are expected to continue thru September.
- Staff conducted 3 shell egg inspections.
- Staff conducted 1 elk farm inspection. Two Elk farms are no longer operational.
- Staff inspected 71 Nursery and Greenhouse locations for compliance with seed potatoes and tomato plants. One greenhouse was unable to produce the phytosanitary requirements for their tomato plants. Most of the tomato plants were sold to local retailer and already sold. The State Department of Agriculture in Colorado was informed to follow up with the nursery involved for future shipments. In addition to this, there continues to be problems with signage of certified seed tags. Staff is educating retailers of regulations and working through Alaska Seed Growers Association to make sure tags are provided to retailers.
- Staff continues to monitor nursery stock for invasive weeds at various retail store locations.
- USDA/ FFV program Managers from Idaho conducted their yearly audit/ review.

Regulatory

- Staff reviewed and approved six and denied one USDA permits for interstate movement of plant pests and products into Alaska.
- Staff continues to manage notifications of nursery stock included in Sudden Oak Death (SOD) program.
- Staff continues discussion with industry, exporters and USDA phytosanitary requirements for Peony export to Japan.
- Staff responded to multiple inquiries due to a new USDA regulation change of live plants transiting thru Canada. Multiple shipments destined to multiple retail and nursery locations were being held at the Alcan land border due to this recent change in regulations. Staff worked with the USDA State Plant Health Director, Ann Ferguson and Customs and Border protection to remedy this issue.
- Staff responded to multiple inquiries regarding Organic certification and Aster Yellows Disease in Peony.
- Staff responded to inquiry of kiln dried lumber to Beirut exporting from Delta Junction.
- Staff fielded questions on soil licensing requirements.
- Staff answered inquires about the weed free forage program.
- Staff discussed and addressed several inquiries from outside companies interested in selling seed, plants and insects in Alaska.
- Staff coordinated with Marketing section on producing and editing AK School Garden and Farm To School Food Safety guidelines.
- Staff participated in a joint cooperative inspection operation at the Alcan. This operation was planned in response to the AKPRAC 2011 goals and objectives which states that the committee will “continue efforts to evaluate pathways and/ or movement of pests of concern and to provide increased opportunities for interagency group participation.” Participants included State of Alaska, Division of Agriculture, Division of Forestry, USDA Forest Service and Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and Customs and Border Protection. This involved interviewing and inspecting passengers/ vehicles, confiscating prohibited items, examining material and collecting pests and pathogens.
- The Division of Agriculture was notified that they were awarded a \$30,000 farm bill grant which will evaluate high risk pathways of non native insects through importation of firewood. This survey will involve sampling at retail locations and the Alcan land border port of entry. Sampling at the Land Border site and preparation for the retail portion began in June. Sampling for this retail survey has been less than expected due to few samples from outside Alaska were found. Sampling at the border has been less than expected due to a change in the regulations prohibiting all firewood from Canada unless they meet strict heat treatment requirements. As a result of this recent change, only US firewood crossing the border is being sampled for this survey.

Training

- Staff attended a one week GAP/GHP training in Boise, Idaho. The inspection section currently has one GHP/GAP auditor and one ‘in training’ until 3 audits have been successfully completed.
- Staff completed USDA/FFV refresher training. This annual training is necessary in maintaining the USDA/ FFV collaborator license.
- Staff attended a day training at the Plant Materials Center for ‘train the trainer’ in the Weed Free Forage certification. Most of the 15-17 participants were from multiple

agencies in Alaska with interns from Wyoming. Since this training, staff has fielded multiple questions to Gino Graziano, Invasive Species Coordinator.

- Staff participates in GHP/GAP continuing education credits through FDA "ORAU"
- Staff participated in and attended Webinar training for new EXCERPT change over in PCIT export certification program.
- Staff completed coursework and study to renew the Regulatory Applicator requirement of Alaska Pesticide Recertification.
- New staff continues to be trained on the USDA/ FFV inspection program at the local wholesaler responsible for supplying product to the military. New staff is expected to go to the 7 week training at the end of September.
- New staff continues to be trained on the protocol for log exports which involves travel to multiple Southeast locations.

Outreach and Education

- Staff participates in the monthly South Central Bee Keepers (SABA) meeting and gave a brief presentation on the Bee Registration Requirements which was well received by the group. Registration cards were highly encouraged to be completed.
- Staff attended Farm Days at Pt Mackenzie Correctional Facility. Correctional facility staff were delighted and supportive that that State Agriculture attended.
- New staff continues to monitor seven local farmers markets for quarantine seed potatoes and tomatoes. The presence of inspection staff has been well received by the farmers market participants.

Invasive Weeds and Pests

- The Invasive Weed Program launched a 'Replace your Loosestrife Today' marketing effort, in collaboration with USFWS. Banner ads are currently running on People Mover busses in Anchorage, directing people to the plant materials center website. A page with information about the loosestrife replacement program was put up at: <http://plants.alaska.gov/invasives/replace-loosestrife.php>
- Staff is participating in monitoring for invasive species along the Trans-Alaska Pipeline right of way during August.

Soils Lab

- Staff has been conducting soil analysis for villages participating in the Rural Village Seed Production Project.

Seed Lab

- During this period Alaska State Seed Lab performed 48 Germination tests, 28 Purity tests, 14 Noxious tests, and 2 Tetrazolium test.

Seed Potato Program

- Late Blight article prepared for Aug. division newsletter prepared.
- Potato Late Blight monitoring added to PMC website, at plants.alaska.gov/potato-program/

Rural Village Seed Production Project (RVSP)

- New staff started in June
 - Sue Lincoln – Agronomist
 - Daniel Coleman – Natural Resource Specialist
- Contracts confirmed with 6 communities – A wide geographic range
 - Aniak

- Chignik Lake
- Hooper Bay
- Manley Hot Springs
- Metlakatla
- Pedro Bay
- RVSP staff held a project orientation/training in July hosting 9 representatives from 5 of the participating villages. Topics included equipment demonstration, introduction to integrated pest management, and project goals.
- Project staff traveled to four Communities or Cooperator sites this summer to survey the native vegetation, identify potential crops, collect soil samples and consult with local project staff.
 - Pedro Bay
 - Metlakatla
 - Hooper Bay
 - Aniak
 - Trip scheduled for 8/15 – 8/16
- Progress from community visits:
 - Each village is unique and faces its own challenges for the project
 - Native vegetation
 - Growing season
 - Equipment needs
 - Site/soil quality
 - Agriculture knowledge

Publications Update

- *The Field Guide to Alaska Grasses* is in final edit. The ecological information and habitat requirements are being added to the pages. Final delivery of the publication will likely be November 2011.
- Forage Manual for Alaska; Forage types and Alaska agricultural land sections added.
- Forage manual species profile work continues – Field pictures of species are being taken. Collection of plant species at different growth stages for nutrient testing is continuing.
- Interior Revegetation Manual- Wetland section added as well as pictures to complement other sections of the manual
- Coastal Revegetation and Erosion Control Guide- Second edition of manual is being reviewed. An additional 200 manual will be printed.
- Interior Revegetation Guide draft manuscript prepared. Needed photos have been identified. Expected publication date: October 2011
- Forage Manual: manuscript / straw man has been created; 17 species profiles completed.

Revegetation Program

- Staff assisted Alaska Department of Transportation to address erosion issues at the Barrow Airport. A site visit to Barrow was made to identify vegetation present and provide technical assistance in project design.
- Staff visited Kenai Fjords National Park Exit Glacier area to provide assistance with revegetation projects that arise from use and development in the park

- Staff answered numerous revegetation calls

Foundation Seed

- The spring, 2011 seed sale was a success. A total of 2,826 lbs. of grains, 284.10 lbs. of grasses, and 3,836.1 grams of forbs were sold to 13 different farmers for a total of \$5,890.12.
- The summer season started with cultivation of land and planting three different grasses (Norcoast, Arctared, and Alyeska) in twenty-four 100 ft. long rows each.
- Weed control occurred by way of mechanical cultivation, mowing, and roguing.
- The first pesticide permit, for two pesticides, became effective on 6/14/11. This enabled us to spray 2,4 D, Amine 4 to help control broadleaf weeds in our grass fields.
- The second pesticide permit was issued 8/4/11 for another two sprays. This one becomes effective 9/13/11. We may still have some sunny, dry days in September to spray for weed control next summer.
- A third pesticide permit has been submitted to DEC, requesting the use of 20 pesticides and adjuvants. The first two applications listed only two pesticides each to facilitate the permitting process. This last one is much more involved, and is similar to the original application submitted in December, 2010 (the 2010 application was tabled, due to controversy involving DEC concerns, likely objections from citizen groups, and lack of support by the legislature). It is difficult to manage a working farm without the ability to utilize standard Integrated Pest Management procedures.
- The 2011 summer crops are continuing to produce well. Harvested so far are

Ninilchik Germplasm nootka alkaligrass	Cantwell Germplasm downy wildrye	Columbine
Solomon Germplasm thickspike wheatgrass	Nelchina Germplasm spike trisetum	<i>Festuca rubra nee altaica</i>
Kotzebue Germplasm arctic wild chamomile	'Arctared' Red Fescue	Plantain
Henderson Ridge Germplasm red fescue	'Sourdough' Bluejoint Reedgrass	Oxytrope

Most of the other crops will be harvested by the end of August.

- The increase box gardens have proved to be a good way to manage smaller accessions. This summer Norton Sound Germplasm alpine milkvetch and Kobuk Germplasm dwarf fireweed each have their own box out of the current 61 boxes. Some of the other boxes have accessions from the Cold Regions Project, Chugach National Forest Project, Native Plant Nursery, and Ethnobotany.
- Plugs of Lowell Point Germplasm meadow barley and 'Gruening' Alpine Bluegrass are just about big enough to be planted in the fields. 'Caiggluk' Tilesius' Wormwood was planted as seeds during the first week of August. The past few years 'Caiggluk' has been so infested with thrips that no viable seed was produced. We are hoping that by planting the species late and in a different field may control this situation. Plugs of Paxson Germplasm alpine sweetvetch, Plantain, and Butte Germplasm beautiful Jacob's ladder are growing in the greenhouse, to be overwintered and planted in the fields next spring.
- Staff continues to provide assistance to farmers and growers with concerns about their crops. Other questions come from agencies and individuals who are searching for Alaskan native plant seed for revegetation or landscape purposes. Many people either bring in or send pictures of plants they want identified. The questions seem to be divided into information queries, education and presentation requests, revegetation inquiries, and seed requirements.

- Inventory of seed continues, with accurate amounts being entered into two separate spreadsheets – one which details all the seed the PMC has from past and present accessions (POMS) and one which focuses just on seed for sale. The POMS database is maintained in conjunction with all the other PMC's in the United States. Our accessions which are old or are from past projects are kept in the database for historical records, but are noted as not having any available seed. The spreadsheet for seed for sale allows us to track seed that must to be tested within the 18 month requirement set forth in the Alaska Seed Regulations.
- The fall seed sale will be held September 9 – 23. In the past the fall seed sale has not attracted much interest. The PMC will promote the seed sale in the September Division of Agriculture newsletter, and offer an improved on-line ordering system. Much of our native seed grows best by being planted in the fall for the freeze/thaw cycle.

Education and Conference Room

- Due to lack of funding for education at the PMC, there have been significantly fewer presentations this summer than in previous years. The largest educational presentation this summer was for the Ag in the Classroom Institute. Twenty-two teachers, presenters, and Future Farmers of America utilized the PMC on August 2, 2011. Participants toured the PMC and took part in activities demonstrating depth of agriculture in Alaska. Curriculum focused on the process a seed takes from harvesting to cleaning to planting, as well as hands-on agriculture activities for teachers to use in their classrooms.
- The conference room continues to attract groups to use it for workshops and retreats, including a retreat by the state commissioners and directors this summer. The Division of Forestry, Farm to School Program, NRCS, Seed Growers Association, and others use the facility for various types of workshops. The "Smartboard" has been a welcome addition.

Landscape Gardens at the Plant Materials Center

- The Ethnobotany Teaching Garden is no longer a separate program and has been incorporated into the general landscape at the PMC. Landscape plants continue to be identified with small signs noting the name and use.
- Maintenance of the landscape gardens requires mowing, trimming, and constant weeding. These gardens and surrounding lawns have been maintained excellently during the summer period, and entice visitors to wander and explore during the PMC open hours.

Other PMC Activities

Seeds of Success (SOS) Project

- Field and box garden plantings maintenance. BLM summer intern prepared 2009 and 2010 seed collections to be sent to Pullman, WA

Mat-Su Riparian Revegetation Project

- By the end of June all the species started earlier in the greenhouse were planted. Bluejoint and Hairgrass were planted in Field 4. Columbine, Fireweed, Geranium, Lupine, Mertens' sedge were planted in the box garden.

Seed Cleaning and Conditioning

- The PMC seed cleaning facilities maintained operations, on a limited basis, through the summer months to keep up with seed cleaning demands.

- We closed the seed cleaning season (September 2010-June 2011) having put out over 66,000lbs of clean seed material from our own fields, the Associated Seed Growers (ASG), and other private clients. This is up 23% from last year's output.
- The large seed house facility received an upgrade to several man doors and overhead doors this summer.
- In the coming months, we will be organizing and coordinating for the fall/winter cleaning schedule through the ASG and our foundation seed program.

Seed House	Small Lot
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nortran• Gruening• Nugget• Egan• Wheatgrass• Tundra	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spruce Cones (315 lbs clean seed)• Polargrass• Festuca rubra• Polar Brome• Calamagrostis Nutkaensis• Various Forbs

Northern Region

- Staff conducted two certified seed field inspections.
- Staff attended the Delta experiment farm field day in Delta Junction.
- Staff conducted field inspections for seed certification of three grass seed fields in the Eielson Farm area in July.
- Staff responded to numerous questions about agricultural covenants and subdivision rights on agricultural lands.
- Staff wrote agreement work plans for the 2012 CAPS survey and infrastructure funding.
- Staff finalized funding for FY2011 survey agreements so that RSA's could be completed to contract with UAF Cooperative Extension Service to conduct annual forest moth trapping activities for the CAPS program.
- Staff will attend and present at the August Peony Growers conference in Homer.
- Staff will conduct a survey for Tobacco Rattle Virus vectors in peony fields in the Matsu area and Homer in August.
- Staff responded to numerous questions about agricultural covenants and subdivision rights on agricultural lands.
- Staff assisted farmers with updates to their farm conservation plans
- Staff wrote a Final finding for the sale of 4,100 acres in the Kobe North area. The decision is currently awaiting signature by the Division of Mining, Land and Water.
- Staff began preparation for land sales brochure for Kobe North Sale.
- Reviewed draft procedures manual for contract and land administration developed by Division of Mining, Land and Water.
- Staff wrote a draft white paper dealing with the Bison/Agriculture conflict in Delta.
- Staff conducted berm inspection relating to a NRCS conservation project in Delta.
- Did several farm clearing requirement inspections