



# MEMORANDUM

Department of Natural Resources

STATE OF ALASKA  
Division of Agriculture

**TO:** Board of Agriculture  
& Conservation

**DATE:** August 25, 2010

**FROM:** Franci Havemeister  
Director

**SUBJECT:** Director's Report  
July 2010

## **Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund (ARLF)**

Staff has been processing 3 loan applications, 6 loan disbursements, 1 loan default, 3 AGO Assignments, 1 loan closing, 3 loan paid off to be closed out, 2 loan servicing, and ARLF Reports.

## **Northern Region**

- Conducted pest surveys for slugs, snails and alder sawflies in King Salmon, Dillingham and Bethel, Alaska
- Conducted pest surveys for potato cyst nematodes in Palmer, Delta Junction, Nenana and Fairbanks areas
- Prepared CAPS pest survey proposals for APHIS for FY 2012
- Inspected farm land for clearing requirements in Kobe and Salcha areas
- Attended several meetings regarding potential potato seed sales to China
- Met with individual farmers and inspected fields in anticipation of bison damage before harvest
- Provided an on-line survey for farmers in the Delta area to report bison damage
- Attended Delta farm tour

## **Marketing & Development**

- Staff continues to participate in an advisory capacity to the Alaska Food Policy Council, serving as facilitator for the Production Committee. Staff hosted the first two meetings of the Production committee.
- Staff coordinated the nomination, selection and announcement of the 2010 Alaska State Fair Farm Family of the Year award, to be presented to the Ted Pyrah family on 8/26/10.
- Staff continued working on the 2010 Alaska Grown Eat Local Challenge, to be held August 22 – 28 with statewide promotion and marketing to get more people sourcing Alaska Grown products during Eat Local Challenge week.
- Staff met with Julie Fox of the Ohio State University Extension Service and Ohio Proud program. Ideas were exchanged involving Farm to School programs, Food Policy Councils, state marketing programs, etc.
- Staff prepared for and then hired the 2010 Summer Marketing Intern to assist with market outreach during the busy summer months.
- Staff attended the Palmer Pride event held in downtown Palmer, celebrating the Alaska Grown vegetable harvest.
- Staff prepared for and submitted the 2010 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant proposal.
- Staff prepared and emailed out the June and July Division Newsletter as well as the weekly Fresher By Far wholesale newsletter. At the request of industry, a change was made to the Fresher By Far weekly wholesale newsletter to include a farmer interview or 'profile' in each distribution. Five farmer interviews were conducted and written up by staff.
- Staff completed 38 grocery store visits to visit with produce managers, check on the quality of Alaska Grown products and deliver Point of Sale (POS) marketing supplies
- Staff visited 10 farmers markets throughout the State to supply POS materials, answer questions and outreach to new farmers and encourage them to join the Alaska Grown program.
- Staff helped organize, completed registration for and attended the second annual Mat Su Farm Bureau farm tour; the tour was double the size of last year and well received by all who attended.

- Staff conducted six COOL Audits.
- Staff worked to create new advertising on benches outside of Carr's grocery stores.
- Staff participated in a native plants meeting, assisting with conference organization.
- Staff prepared two Farmers Market surveys, to evaluate marketing and management techniques, in an effort to assist markets statewide.
- Staff arranged for a Farmers Market evaluator to come to Alaska to assist vendors in increasing their bottom line.
- Staff arranged for a Farm Tour in Talkeetna, to take place in late August.
- Staff worked with fair organizers to increase crowd participation at the Giant Cabbage Weigh-off
- Twelve new farms were added to the Alaska Grown program in June and July.

### **Inspection**

- Inspectors completed 20 FFV 301 inspections representing 10,979 packages & 266,731 pounds of product.
- One local farm was audited for food safety under the USDA GHP/GAP Program.
- One Inspector received training on sample collection methods and processes for timber export in the Kodiak Island area.
- Four Phytosanitary Certificates were issued.
- FFV Federal Program Managers from the Regional USDA office in Nampa ID visited to conduct a program audit.
- Staff accompanied the WSDA Organic Inspector on local certification inspections of organic farms.
- Staff applied for a \$45,000 Farm Bill grant to evaluate high risk pests associated with firewood throughout the State.
- Staff attended a meeting at the Office of Community and Development in Anchorage where Larsen Farms, UAF lab representative and China group discussed seed potato export from Alaska to China.
- Staff attended an open house hosted by The Mat-Su Farm Bureau at the Palmer Depot. Information was provided regarding food safety at the Mat Su Borough's proposed Agricultural Processing and Product Development Center in Palmer.

### **Regulatory**

- Two state, prohibited noxious weeds, Perennial sowthistle, *Sonchus arvensis*, and Canadian thistle, *Cirsium arvense*, were identified in potted trees at Big Box Garden Center Retailers, resulting in over 100 trees/ soil throughout the state being 'stop-saled', quarantined and disposed of by an approved, supervised method.
- Eleven new Alaska Grown applications were granted.
- Staff conducted a phytosanitary export treatment and certifications of timber valued at over \$5 million dollars.
- Staff met with Senior Officials from USDA to discuss export issues related to potatoes and timber products at the National Plant Board Meeting.
- Staff met with USDA, PIM (phytosanitary Issues management) staff to discuss training opportunities and credentials required for a potential new staff position at the Division of Agriculture for phytosanitary issues.
- Staff reviewed and provided comments on proposed changes to the plant health and seed regulations.

### **Plant Materials Center**

#### **Alaska State Seed Laboratory- Testing:**

- For the month of July Alaska State Seed Laboratory performed total of 49 seed tests, this includes 8 Purity tests, 10 Germination tests, 8 noxious weed tests and 23 Tetrazolium tests.

### **Invasive Species**

- Inventory work for gravel pits in the interior/northern region of Alaska is underway.

- Several Canada thistle infestations throughout Anchorage were controlled to prevent the plants from spreading to nearby communities
- Flyers were mailed to Anchorage area residents to alert them about C. thistle, direct them to groups that can provide them control recommendations, and how to report infestations found on public lands.
- Information was sent to Anchorage area residents about purple loosestrife including an offer to replace loosestrife plants used as ornamental plantings free of charge.
- Several infestations of spotted knapweed were inventoried and controlled in Southeast and Southcentral Alaska.

### **Rural Village Seed Production Project(RVSPP)-ARRA**

- The RVSPP team has been busy networking with rural communities regarding the benefits of the project and how the RVSPP will diversify their current employment opportunities and help aid some economic instability in years to come.
- On July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010, the team issued a state wide newspaper article that encouraged rural communities who might be interested to contact our team as soon as possible. It was published in numerous regional tribal newspapers and we have received decent feedback.
- Bartz Englishhoe, hired consultant, helped with this process greatly, contacting the newspapers directly and making sure it was published in a timely manner.
- RVSPP staff have been compiling a list of communities they are in contact with for some time now. A call out for a statement of interest to that list of contacts was sent out. They have received feedback from almost every name on the list.
- Initially the date to have Statement of Interests in to the RVSPP team was July 30<sup>th</sup>. However, realizing this was somewhat un-realistic with the subsistence schedule of life in rural Alaska, we have been periodically receiving statements since the second week of July. We believe this feedback will continue until the end of August and into the first of September. It is the RVSPP team's goal to have 4 or 5 communities locked in by the end of September.
- On Monday August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2010, RVSPP had the opportunity to verbally inform The Metlakatla Indian Community(MIC) of their official participation in the RVSPP project. We are very excited to have them on board and look forward to the challenges ahead. The MIC is busy piecing together the beginning framework for field preparation and supply lists for the project ahead. Milo Booth, Environmental and Forestry director for MIC has already given the RVSPP team details on prices and man power for field preparation next spring.
- On August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2010, staff will be traveling to Galena, Alaska for their communities Agricultural Fair. It will be a three day event where staff will provide interested parties the opportunity to attend a workshop on Friday the 20<sup>th</sup> and a booth at the fair on Saturday the 21<sup>st</sup>.
- During September and October the team will be busy inviting members of different villages to the Plant Materials Center for 4-5 day long training sessions. The team is very excited to have this opportunity.

### **Publications**

- Invasives:
  - Created a community driven website for Alaskan Invasive Species task force, allowing regional groups to share documents, engage in debate and discussion in regional and statewide forums, organize events, and post photos of invasive plants. Site will launch in September – currently in beta @ <http://plantalaska.net>
- Village Seed Project:
  - Additional enhancements to the Village Seed Production Project website, allowing interested communities to submit their statement of interest online, easily browse through frequently asked questions.
- Coastal Revegetation Guide:
  - Two additional appendices (Beach Wildrye planting guide, SOA seed regulations) and the inclusion of a 'conservation and protection' chapter bring the page total to approx. 216. (Foreword, digitization of some slides still pending before publication can occur).
  - Preparation of printing requirements document for RFP is ongoing.

- Website development is ongoing - RSA for advanced web hosting through DGGs is progressing (2 out of 3 signatures, plus money has been set aside)

### **Foundation Seed**

- Staff planted 6 new stands of perennial, foundation, native grasses for increase. Two fields of barley were planted. One field of Bebral Rye was planted.
- Weeding, mulching, cultivating, spraying pesticides, irrigating, and mowing continued throughout approximately 144 acres in production.
- Harvest of 13 different grasses and 7 different forb foundation seed fields occurred during this report period.
- Facility and machinery maintenance is on-going.
- The August seed sale is scheduled to start August 17 and continue through September 23<sup>rd</sup>.

### **Potato Program**

- Potato fields throughout South-central and Interior were inspected for diseases and rate of growth.
- Seed potatoes in the greenhouse were maintained in a disease-free atmosphere.
- Comparison potatoes were managed in the PMC fields.

### **Other PMC Projects:**

- Seed increase of small seed lots for BLM. 11 lots of different species were moved to the lathe house for hardening and ongoing maintenance.
- Wild seed collection sites were assessed and collections conducted for Mat-Su Riparian Revegetation Project in Hatcher Pass, Knik River Road and Lazy Mountain area.
- Vegetation survey of different tundra habitats (low-wet, high-dry, calcareous) of Kotzebue and Nome areas. The purpose of the survey was assisting Dr. Quentin Skinner in his efforts to put together a field manual of the Alaska grasses.
- Educational Programs
  - Six staff members presented activities and programs to the Alaska Agriculture Institute Teachers Center. These teachers participated in activities to allow them to better see the outside world, presentations on the Seed Lab, the Seed Cleaning Small Lot Room, and the Ethnobotany Garden. Biofuel, sustainable agriculture, barley, how seed ripens, mathematical exercises with agriculture, and invasive species were taught.
  - Several small groups came for a tour around the Ethnobotany Garden.
  - An Eagle Boy Scout was assisted in a revegetation project along McHugh Creek.
  - Tour of the PMC potato operation was given to potato representatives from China and Idaho's Larsen Farms was given.
  - Tour of the PMC operations was given to several staff members from the Alaska Association of Conservation Districts.
  - Many e-mails, phone calls, and walk-in visitors were helped with their quest for information.
- Bridges, plants, and signs were installed and planted in the Ethnobotany Garden. Several tours were given. Many weeds were removed. The algae problem in the Yukon was taken care of by putting rotten barley in a burlap bag and placing that in the water.