



**MEMORANDUM**  
Department of Natural Resources

**STATE OF ALASKA**  
Division of Agriculture

**TO:** Board of Agriculture  
& Conservation

**DATE:** October 3, 2011

**FROM:** Franci Havemeister  
Director

**SUBJECT:** Director's Report

**Marketing & Development**

- During the months of July and August, eleven new farms were approved for use of the Alaska Grown logo.
- Staff attended and presented information at a wide variety of events including:
  - Alaska Agriculture in the Classroom Teacher Institute;
  - Palmer Kiwanis Luncheon;
  - National School Lunch Program training;
  - Alaska Growers School training; and
  - A Middle school wellness class;
- Staff conducted five Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) audits on the Kenai Peninsula and in Cordova to verify compliance with the Federal labeling law.
- Staff completed the contracts for 17 Farm to School grants throughout the state. Staff was able to conduct site visits with two of the projects in July & August.
- Staff launched a project with UAF test kitchen to prepare recipes appropriate for the school lunch program which utilize Alaska Grown barley and wheat flour.
- Staff attend the Garden & Art Faire in Palmer presenting the hosting of the Children's Farmers Market to all those in attendance. First the book "Who Grew My Soup" was read to children; they were then given "Alaska Grown Bucks" to purchase Alaska Grown produce in a Farmers Market setting.
- Staff coordinated efforts with the Alaska State Fair to seek nominations and select a family for the 2011 Farm Family of the Year award.
- Staff conducted a Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) self-audit with a farmer in Delta Junction to gauge both his understanding of the program and his ability to meet the requirements such that he could eventually supply food to the surrounding school districts.
- Staff continues active involvement with the Alaska Food Policy Council, attending a two day strategic planning session in August. A result of this meeting was the selection of the top five strategies for the group which include seeking enforcement of the "Local Agricultural and Fisheries Products Preference Statute" and to expand the school-based programs that educate and provide healthy, local foods to schools.
- Staff have completed two Farm to School documents to be released to the public; one a School Garden Safety Guide and the second a "What is Farm to School?" brochure. The Safety Guide will be distributed to all current and future school garden projects; the brochure will be distributed to the public to raise awareness about the program.
- In July and August staff made many site visits including attending farmers markets; visiting farm stands and school gardens; attending Fairs in Kenai, Fairbanks, Haines and Palmer; grocery store visits throughout the State and a number of different school districts.

- Marketing staff assisted the Mat Su Farm Bureau in the third annual Farm Bureau Farm Tour; over 90 people enjoyed the opportunity to visit four valley farms and learn more about Alaska agriculture.
- Staff met with the Alaska FFA State Officer team; providing an overview of the Alaska Grown program and agriculture as a whole.
- Staff visited the Alaska Gateway School District in Tok to explore opportunities for utilization of interior grown products.
- Staff assisted the UAF Matanuska Experiment Farm at the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Ag Appreciation Day event. Staff hosted a variety of games for children as well as presenting the Children's Farmers Market.
- Staff organized a tour of a Bethel farm with the school nutrition Director, head school Chef, local Diabetes Outreach Coordinator and local Cooperative Extension Service agent in attendance. Discussions focused on production and storage capabilities.
- Staff met with members of the Mat Su School District to brainstorm efforts to get more Alaska Grown products into the school lunch program while also involving students in the Career & Tech Education Culinary Apprenticeship program.
- Staff attended training with the Western United States Agriculture Trade Association (WUSATA) to better understand the opportunities for Alaska producers.
- Staff worked with Representative Bill Stoltze to organize and host the annual Legislative Farm Tour on opening day of the Alaska State Fair. More than 20 people visited four valley farms.

### **Northern Region**

- Staff conducted one certified seed field inspection in Eielson Ag area.
- Staff responded to numerous questions about covenants and subdivision rights on agricultural lands.
- Staff submitted grant proposals for 2012 Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS) survey and infrastructure funding.
- Staff attended and gave presentations at the Alaska Peony Growers conference in Homer.
- Staff surveyed for Tobacco Rattle Virus vectors in peony fields in the Matsu area and Homer.
- Staff is currently collecting insect traps for CAPS surveys near Juneau, Ketchikan & Sitka.
- Staff assisted farmers with updates to their farm conservation plans
- Staff has been visiting Delta farms and documenting Bison damage in agricultural fields.
- Staff conducted berm inspection relating to a Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) conservation project near Delta Junction.
- Staff conducted several farmland clearing requirement inspections.

### **Plant Materials Center** **Invasive Weeds and Pests**

- Continued efforts to manage Canada thistle in the Anchorage area working with the Department of Transportation and others.
- Distributed mailings and visited homes to encourage voluntary replacement of purple loosestrife with non-invasive alternative ornamental plants.
- Inventoried and managed giant hogweed in Kake, and other communities in Southeast Alaska.
- Inventoried and managed spotted knapweed near Kake and in Haines.
- Participated in working group to address common waterweed infestations found in two Anchorage area lakes.

### **Foundation and Natural Selection Seed**

- Summer and fall, 2011, the staff was busy harvesting, cultivating, rouging, and planting on the production fields at the PMC.
  - Staff harvested 43 different crops of grasses, forbs, and grains using the Wintersteiger, Prairie Seed Clipper, Gleaner, Dry Vacuum, Small Seed Stripper, and by hand.
  - Staff planted perennial fields of 'Caiggluk' Tilesii's Wormwood, 'Norcoast' Bering's tufted hairgrass, 'Alyeska' Wideleaf Polargrass, 'Arctared' Red Fescue, 'Gruening' Alpine Bluegrass, and Lowell Point Germplasm meadow barley.
  - The new fields of Ninilchik, Council, Wainwright, Andrew Bay, and 'Nugget' planted in 2011 produced seed this year.
  - Staff planted a new field of 'Bebral' Rye for harvest next fall.
  - Kobuk Germplasm dwarf fireweed, Norton Sound Germplasm alpine milkvetch, Franklin Bluffs Germplasm nodding locoweed, and Black Rapids Germplasm field locoweed were planted into increase boxes.
  - *Plantago canescens*, Paxson Germplasm alpine sweetvetch, and Butte Germplasm Jacob's ladder were started by seed for overwintering and planting next spring.
  - Staff created a new equipment yard, planted with fescue, this summer to enable better care of and access to the equipment. This equipment includes harrows, discs, tillers, plows, multi-row cultivators, land planer, packer, single row cultivators, swather, mowers, balers, rakes, irrigation equipment, tractors, grain dryer wagons, etc. It looks much better, is well-drained, and much easier to weed. The more complex equipment is still kept under shed roofs or inside the barn.
- The PMC now has two complete pesticide permits for the use of 4 herbicides and 4 adjuvants. The third pesticide's public notice period ends as of September 23. It requests the use of nineteen more pesticides and one more adjuvant.
  - Posting the PMC as "No Trespassing" because of the use of pesticides from April through September only brought a few complaints from the public. There were a few that wanted to bird watch or run their dogs. There also were a few that wanted to hunt. These people were turned away. It is unknown how many people wanted to traverse the PMC during the weekends.
- The PMC landscape has been very attractive this year with lots of colors, grooming, and native plant displays. It shows quality care.
- The fall seed sale is ongoing, ending September 30, 2011. For sale are thirty-nine lots of forbs, sixty lots of grasses, and nine lots of grain. The order form is now on-line at [www.plants.alaska.gov](http://www.plants.alaska.gov). Orders are coming in via the web-site.

#### **Rural Village Seed Production Project - RVSP**

- Project staff traveled to two additional communities, bringing the total to five so far this season to survey the native vegetation, identify potential crops, collect soil samples and consult with local project staff.
  - Aniak
  - Chignik Lake
- Community Progress
  - Metlakatla planted its field and is conducting wild harvests
  - Pedro Bay has a cleared field ready for a spring 2012 planting and has constructed a storage/seed cleaning building
  - Aniak, Chignik Lake, and Hooper Bay will conduct wild harvests this fall
- Each community is unique and faces its own challenges for the project

- Native vegetation useful for crop production
  - Growing season and environmental conditions
  - Equipment needs
  - Site/soil quality
  - Agriculture knowledge
  - Logistics for shipping of needed equipment
- The community site visits have produced interesting findings of nature, such as giant beach wildrye, larvae inside seed heads and 'zombie' flies. These curiosities of nature certainly aren't unheard of, but with the RVSP project, can be looked at closer to help determine if these incidents are detrimental or helpful to seed crop production and if so, what needs to be done to encourage or discourage the development.

### **Publications Update**

- The Field Guide to Alaska Grasses is in the final stages of editing. The present plan is to have the book back from the printers by November 2011.

### **Trans Alaska Pipeline Project**

- The field portion of the Trans Alaska Pipeline Vegetation survey is complete. The entire right of way, all the pump stations and the fuel gas line were to be surveyed for vegetation cover, species composition, and to determine if invasive plant species have become established on the property. The PMC conducted a similar survey on the Trans Alaska Pipeline Right-of-Way in 1992. A few small segments were blocked by high water and these will be revisited next spring. Additional time will be spent on the projects report this fall and winter.

### **Miscellaneous PMC Activities**

- The Aleutian Fern seedlings (about 10) are continuing to survive in the Conviron in the headhouse. They will continue to be maintained throughout the winter in this controlled environment.
- Staff provided approximately 2,000 pounds of low germination oats and barley, as a donation, to Pyrah's Fall Festival. Educational handouts and germinated seeds of barley, oats, and wheat were also provided.