



MEMORANDUM

Department of Natural Resources

STATE OF ALASKA
Division of Agriculture

TO: Board of Agriculture
& Conservation

DATE: October 13, 2010

FROM: Franci Havemeister
Director

SUBJECT: Director's Report
Aug. & Sept. 2010

Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund (ARLF)

Staff has been processing 7 loan disbursements, 3 loan defaults, 3 AGO Assignments, 2 loan closings, 2 loans paid off to be closed out, 1 loan servicing, 2 delinquencies and ARLF Reports.

Northern Region

- Conducted Initial Over the Counter lottery for Auction 457 – selling 202 acres for \$87,900
For the year Northern region sold 684 acres of agricultural land for \$238,000
- Renewed certification for Phytosanitary inspections with USDA Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).
- Collected soil samples from potato fields near Nenana, Fairbanks, and Delta Junction for Potato Cyst Nematode survey
- Conducted pest surveys for nematode vectors of peony virus in interior, south central, and Kenai Peninsula
- Made several trips to Delta Junction inspecting fields for bison damage
- Inspected four fields in North Pole area for grass seed certification
- Accompanied USDA APHIS personnel on farm visits to Delta Junction potato seed growers who are signed up to export potato seed to China
- Retrieved pest traps from Juneau, Wrangell, Ketchikan, and Sitka for Gypsy Moth, Siberian Silk Moth, and Emerald Ash Borer surveys
- Made a presentation at an information summit in Anchorage to share results of pest detection surveys in Alaska with Cooperative Extension Service IPM Technicians and State and Federal funding partners
- Made trips to area of proposed agricultural land sale in Kobe Ag North to locate and research the use of an RS2477 trail through the area
- Held meetings with the Division of Mining, Land and Water, Land disposal Unit in Anchorage to discuss auction procedures
- Attending meeting with Department of Natural Resources Survey unit to establish procedures for reviewing preliminary subdivision plats of agriculture parcels.
- Attended Department of Law training for the drafting of regulations by state agencies
- Reviewed several agricultural land subdivision plats
- Arranged for appraisals to be conducted for next potential agricultural land sale

Marketing & Development

- Staff prepared and emailed out the August Division e-newsletter as well as the weekly Fresher by Far e-newsletter.
- Staff completed 15 grocery store visits to visit with produce managers and check on the quality of Alaska Grown products.
- Staff visited farmers markets in Fairbanks, Ester, Homer, Trapper Creek, Wasilla, Palmer, and Anchorage providing signage and promotional materials to Alaska Grown members as well as signing up new members to the program.
- Staff attended the Tanana Valley Fair, the Kenny Lake Fair and the Kenai Peninsula Fair performing outreach and education to both members of the public and farmers.
- Staff organized and attended a farm tour in Talkeetna to allow producers to showcase their Alaska Agriculture Innovation Grant, a specialized high tunnel. Ten people attended the tour.

- Marketing staff organized a visit to Anchorage-area farmers markets by a professional Farmers Market evaluator; he will report on his findings during a return visit in February 2011, likely in conjunction with an Alaska Farmers Market Association meeting, following the Producer Growers conference.
- Staff delivered a presentation about the Alaska Grown program during the Agriculture in the Classroom teacher institute in Palmer. Staff also attended the luncheon to further share information about the Teachers' Scholarship that was open for applications.
- Staff facilitated the 2010 Teacher Scholarship Program, receiving many inquiries and requests for assistance with the application process.
- Staff continues to work on the 2010 Food and Farm Products Directory implementing significant design improvements.
- Staff organized, facilitated and participated in the Legislative Farm Tour.
- Marketing staff acted as the chairperson for the 2010 Farm Family of the Year committee, requesting nominations, facilitating voting by committee members and announcing the selected family to the media. Staff attended the Fair Board of Directors reception on opening day of the fair where the Pyrah family was honored.
- Staff met with an advertising firm regarding a marketing campaign.
- Staff participated in the planning, facilitation and funding of the UAF Ag Day open house held at the Experiment Farm in Palmer.
- Staff launched a new advertising campaign through Anchorage, Valley & Fairbanks movie theatres in an attempt to reach additional customers and remind them to always look and ask for Alaska GROWN.
- Staff gave a presentation at the Renewable Energy Alaska Project (REAP) Fair held in Anchorage. The presentation was well-attended and focused on the opportunities for supporting local, Alaska Grown products in Alaska.
- Marketing staff attended a special event at the Elmendorf Commissary to promote Alaska Grown products.
- Ten new farms were approved for use of the Alaska Grown logo.
- Staff arranged for and led a farm tour for staff of an Anchorage restaurant to see different Palmer farms.
- Staff facilitated the 2010 Alaska GROWN Eat Local Challenge. Many 'special events' were coordinated throughout the State including:
 - An Eat Local Photo contest held at the Spenard Farmers Market,
 - An Eat Local Salad Bar held at the Delta Junction Farmers Market,
 - A "Meet Your Farmer" event at the Palmer Friday Fling,
 - Earned media stories on KTUU Channel 11 and in the Anchorage Daily News,
 - The web site www.eatlocalalaskagrown.org was launched giving visitors to the site ideas on how to participate, restaurants to visit, a survey on their eating/purchasing habits, Full results of the challenge are still being compiled.
- Staff finalized paperwork for the 2010 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant application with projects totaling over \$197,000.
- Marketing staff continue to participate with the Alaska Food Policy Council, serving on the Administration committee as well as in a facilitation role on the Production subcommittee.

Inspection

- Inspectors completed 20 FFV 301 inspections representing 11,946 packages & 358,380 pounds of product and 7 FFV 300 inspections representing 12 separate products.
- Staff issued 25 Phytosanitary certificates.
- Staff performed 3 Shell egg inspections.
- Staffs worked with USDA to license / register an Alaskan egg grading facility.
- Staff successfully completed / participated in a federal review of Alaska's shell egg inspection program and underwent testing to renew licensure.
- Staff completed 1 Elk Fence Inspection. One inspector received training on the certification and inspection of elk farms at a Pt Mackenzie Farm.
- Farm visits were conducted to discuss potato issues.
- Local store visits were conducted to inspect and audit local produce.

- The Alaska SPRO (State Plant Regulatory Official) and the State Plant Health Director conducted a review of the 2011 CAPS proposals which were submitted to USDA for pest survey work in Alaska.
- Elk farm license discussion on Akutan. A native corporation on Akutan would like to obtain an elk farming license. They are discussing proposing an alternative confinement system that would incorporate water bodies (ocean as a barrier) in their confinement plan. This alternative must pass approval from other stakeholders with interest in the area.

Regulatory

- Staff attended the Alaska Pest Risk Committee. An item of discussion was live plants transiting Canada. Currently the USDA regulations require phytosanitary certification for live plants (not moving in bond) crossing the border. This change greatly impacts Alaska due to the amount of people who live in Alaska seasonally. These individuals like to bring their houseplants or early veggie starts with them in the beginning of the summer. When leaving in the fall, these plants would require phytosanitary certification as well.
- Staff assisted USDA/ARS with multiple phytosanitary applications and registration. USDA/ARS have intentions on exporting a variety of plant material to many countries in the future.
- Staff updated Regulation Violation Notice (Form 10-396). This notice is used if items are 'stop sale'.
- Staff continues to participate in the 11 AAC 34 Regulation Revisions.
- The 2010 Organic Cost Share Reimbursements applications were remitted.
- Staff worked with a new timber exporter to familiarize them with the phytosanitary process to export products to foreign countries. This exporter has now begun exporting to China and anticipates more shipments this year. Sales from this new exporter have amounted to approximately \$5 million dollars this year to date.

Plant Materials Center

Foundation Seed

- Field harvests include Butte Germplasm Beautiful Jacob's Ladder, 'Egan' American Sloughgrass, 'Nortran' Tufted Hairgrass, Cantwell Germplasm Downy Wildrye, Siberian Wildrye, 'Reeve' Beach Wildrye, 'Sourdough' Bluejoint Reedgrass, Pioneer Peak Germplasm Nootka Reedgrass, 'Norcoast' Bering Hairgrass, Delphinium, Columbine, Geranium, Mentasta Germplasm Staghorn Cinquefoil, 'Arctared' Red Fescue, Henderson Ridge Germplasm Red Fescue, Polar Brome, Black Rapids Germplasm Field Oxytrope, Lowell Point Germplasm Meadow Barley, 'Gruening' Alpine Bluegrass, Teller Germplasm Alpine Bluegrass, Council Germplasm Arctic Bluegrass, 'Service' Big Bluegrass, Nome Germplasm Glaucous Bluegrass, Kobuk Germplasm Dwarf Fireweed, Clam Lagoon Germplasm Beach Fleabane, Franklin Bluffs Germplasm Noddin Locoweed, Knik Germplasm Wild Iris, 'Alyeska' Polargrass, 'Kenai' Polargrass, Port Clarence Germplasm Largeflower Speargrass, Paxson Germplasm Alpine Sweetvetch, Nelchina Germplasm Slender Wheatgrass, Solomon Germplasm Thickspike Wheatgrass, Wainwright Germplasm Slender Wainwright, Twenty Mile Germplasm Boreal Yarrow, and Goldenrod (*decumbens* and *multiradiata*).
- New plantings include Andrew Bay Germplasm Large-glume Bluegrass, 'Nugget' Kentucky Bluegrass, Wainwright Germplasm Slender Wheatgrass, Council Germplasm Arctic Bluegrass, and Ninilchik Germplasm Nootka alkaligrass.
- Seed sale went from August 18 – September 23. No seed was sold.
- Grown in Alaska Workshop was held at the Plant Materials Center on the afternoon of September 21. Native seed available from the PMC was available for sale through this workshop. There was interest and enthusiasm from many growers.
- Pesticides were applied on both forb and grass fields. Due to our inability to spray early in the season and also for a couple of weeks in the middle of the season, harvest amounts were smaller than previous years. The overcast summer season accounted for this also.
- Two growers obtained samples of our viviparous grasses and Setchell willow.
- Forbs, grasses, and winter rye received fall fertilization.

Educational Programs and Ethnobotany Garden

- The Ethnobotany Garden has generated many requests for private and school presentations. During the months of August and September approximately 20 presentations were given to over 327 people. Many people visit the Ethnobotany Garden over the weekend. The number of people is unknown, but 12 comments have been received from various individuals about their visit. School presentations are themed according to the curricula teachers are using in their classroom. The "Secret Garden" program presented to Academy Charter School in Palmer was written up with photographs and disseminated to parents and teachers throughout the Mat-Su Borough.
- New this year to the Ethno garden were 2 bridges, permafrost gardens, pond and grounds plantings, broadcast mixes, signs, and cleaner rock work. Weeding is a significant portion of the upkeep (figure we are weeding all of Alaska!)

Seed Cleaning & Conditioning

- The seed conditioning program slows down significantly with the busy field season. As things are winding down in the fields, the PMC crew is organizing the 2010 harvests and a conditioning schedule will be put in place for both small and large facilities.
- The small lot seed cleaning facility was in operation throughout the summer this year as we had over 50 small lot collections of native plant species to clean from Denali National Park's revegetation program.
- Over the next month, we will coordinate with the Alaska Seed Growers to have seed shipped to the PMC and scheduled into this season's line-up.

Rural Village Seed Production Project (RVSP)-ARRA

- RVSP staff visited the community of Galena, Alaska on August 20th. It was a very beneficial trip, allowing staff to discuss the potential for agriculture in the region. Galena is very rooted in agriculture and would like to support the growth of new natural resource projects. Louden Tribal council administrator, March Runner, will be visiting the Anchorage/Palmer area in October and is interested in visiting the Plant Materials Center.
- On September 14th-15th, The Metlakatla Indian Community (MIC) sent their Office of Forestry Director, Milo Booth and contractor, Harold McGilton Sr. north to the Plant Materials Center for a two day training session on seed conditioning and seed production in rural Alaska. RVSP were very excited to have them in town and feel the training session went very well. Both members of the MIC Forestry office left feeling more educated on seed production and the capacity at which MIC could be involved. RVSP staff is planning on making a visit to MIC in late October to over-see the site preparation for next spring's field production.
- September 30th marks the end of the month and RVSP staff has decided to re-sign private consultant, Bartz Englishoe. His knowledge and expertise on rural Alaska and its communities has been very essential to the early stages of growth for the project. The funding that remains will allow Bartz to continue working with us through the month of November, 2010.
- RVSP staff is pleased to finally have a handle on about 6 potential locations for the project. Each location is unique in its own right and they are moderately spread out across the entire state. RVSP staff is working to finalize their list and have a formal account for who will be the final 4 (possibly 5) villages the team will end up working with.
- RVSP staff will be attending the Alaska Tribal Conference on Environmental Management in Anchorage, AK on October 13th, 2010. Staff will be discussing the benefits of revegetation using native plant materials in rural communities. Project staff is very excited to have this opportunity.

Invasive Plants

- Staff completed inventory of gravel pits along the Dalton Highway and organized data.
- Staff managed spotted knapweed along Turnagain Arm and in Southeast Alaska.
- Staff managed giant hogweed infestation in Kake, Alaska.
- Staff continues final preparations of the strategic plan for invasive weeds and agricultural pest management.
- Staff continues work to revise regulations pertaining to invasive weeds and agricultural pests.
- Staff participated in organizing the annual invasive species conference.

- Staff replaced garden planted purple loosestrife with alternatives identified by UAF CES horticulturalists in Anchorage at one business.
- Outreach to more businesses and households continue.
- Staff spoke at the Eagle River Nature Center about how invasive weeds impact wildlife habitat.
- Staff attended the Grown in Alaska Conference.

Other PMC Projects

- A September site visit was made to Kanuti Pit located at Milepost 105 of the Dalton Highway. The purpose of the trip was to monitor the revegetation effort completed in 2003. Overall, establishment of all the planted species is evident. Natural re-invasion of native non-seeded species is also occurring. All species appear to be performing fairly well.
- Coastal Revegetation Guide: The Coastal Revegetation and Erosion Control guidebook has been completed and is ready for publishing. This guidebook can be viewed online by visiting <http://plants.alaska.gov/>.
- New Employee- Casey Dinkel started work at the PMC on August 9th. He came from Wyoming and will be in charge of soil erosion control as well as soil analysis and testing.

Alaska State Seed Lab

- Plugs for seed increase with BLM were planted, 3 lots in the field and 8 lots in the box garden.
- Seed cleaning of small seed lots for Seeds of Success Program, over 40 lots were cleaned.
- Wild seed collections were conducted for Mat-Su Riparian Revegetation Project in Hatcher Pass, Knik River Road, and Lazy Mountain area.
- Kanuti Pit annual vegetation survey.
- Staff attended 2010 Intertribal Nursery Conference in Arlington, WA

Publications

- Coastal Revegetation Guide:
 - Purchase Request submitted – printing 500 copies of 232 page manual.
 - Final photos have been placed into document, proof ready for estimates.
 - Migration of web content over to Alaska.gov server initiated.
- Website:
 - Prepared 'flip-book' document browser for Coastal Revegetation Guide, Alaska Revegetation Manual.
 - Upgrade to Native Plant Directory 'look and feel' in progress.
 - Creation of Seed Lab information page is in process.

Potato Project

- Completed inspections of seed potato fields
- Completed harvest of field. Retained 5 to 10 pounds of 167 varieties and greenhouse.
- Completed virus testing
- Preparing certified seed list for publication
- Continuing establishing mother plants for 2011 production
- Identified Late blight in a few plants at the PMC and two other potato fields in the Matanuska Valley. As this was late in the season, most fields were killed down or harvested so the spread was limited.
- Identified Botrytis in several potato fields. This disease produces symptoms similar to Late Blight and was responsible for several calls from growers concerned that they might have Late Blight.