



# MEMORANDUM

Department of Natural Resources

STATE OF ALASKA  
Division of Agriculture

**TO:** Board of Agriculture  
& Conservation

**DATE:** November 12, 2009

**FROM:** Franci Havemeister  
Director

**SUBJECT:** Director's Report  
Sept./Oct. 2009

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

Staff has been processing 2 loan applications, 8 loan disbursements, 2, loan closings, 4 loan defaults, 1 bankruptcy case and ARLF FY09 year-end reports.

### **Marketing & Development**

- Staff organized and presented an Alaska Grown and Division of Agriculture display in the Kodiak Fair in Kodiak.
- Staff organized and led the Red Meat conference in Kodiak, AK. Staff gave 5 presentations at the conference.
- Staff presented to the Master Gardener's Club about growing Peonies in Alaska.
- Staff presented to the Wasilla Garden Club about growing peonies in Alaska.
- Staff participated in Alaska Grown Day at the fair, with a large display and staff available to answer questions from the public.
- Staff participated in the Cabbage Weigh-off at the state fair, where the largest recorded cabbage was weighed in!
- Staff participated in Pyrah's Fall Festival at the U-Pick, an activity that approximately 4000 attended! It was a great way to reach a target audience and educate them about Alaska Grown products. Many did not even realize that you could pick your own produce there.
- Staff organized a farm tour for the Mat-Su Visitor's Bureau, to show the tourist industry potential farms to visit with their customers in future years.
- Staff did three presentations at the Grown in Alaska conference, focused on bringing buyers and producers together, to encourage sales growth of native and Alaska Grown plants in revegetation and landscaping areas.
- Staff presented to 300 people at the Food Film Festival at Bears Tooth Theatre, which was well-received, with many questions following the presentation.
- Staff met with TEDSBox to view their product and discuss potential use for it in agriculture.
- Staff worked with a grocery store in Haines to help develop a new Alaska Grown market there, using TEDSBox. This is an on-going project.
- Staff presented twice to UAA classes, teaching students about eating local.
- Staff visited 19 grocery stores in Anchorage, Eagle River and Palmer.
- Staff participated in the State Fair Board meeting
- Staff participated in a teleconference with Alaska Farmers Market Assoc.
- Staff participated in the Alaska Association of Conservation (AACD) and sponsored a guest speaker for the event.
- Staff organized farm tours for the AACD guest speaker.
- Staff met with industry members to discuss potential future marketing research, specifically with rhubarb.
- Staff prepared four Fresher by Far newsletters.
- Staff prepared and distributed two Division Newsletters.
- Staff have been meeting with the major retailers produce buyers at the corporate level to address the marketing and movement of Alaska Grown potatoes for 2009 and 2010.

## **Inspection**

- Staff completed 2 USDA Country of Origin Labeling audits in Valdez and in Wrangell.
- Inspection staff conducted six farm visits to inspect produce in the field and during harvest to provide feedback to growers.
- Staff completed 6 FV 300 and 19 FV 301 inspections in September.
- Two new farms were added to the Alaska Grown program and two new brands were issued.
- Staff conducted 4<sup>th</sup> quarter shell egg surveillance activities in Alaska.
- Staff responded to several requests for directions and regulations on the labeling and grading of eggs for retail sale in Alaska.

## **Regulatory**

- Staff issued four USDA Phytosanitary inspection certificates in September.
- Staff participated and presented information to the North American Plant Protection Organization.
- Staff responded to several requests for clarification on seed labeling requirements for Alaska.
- Staff has been meeting with USDA,APHIS international issues management team to address the increasing need for phytosanitary certification of timber exports to China.
- Staff was requested to provide a briefing to Lieutenant Governor Campbell on the status of timber exports to Asia and the Divisions involvement in this export activity. This briefing was a follow up to a meeting the Lieutenant Governor had with officials from China and in preparation for upcoming trade mission to Asia.

## **Plant Materials Center**

### **The Alaska State Seed Laboratory**

- Laboratory Testing-Approximately 25 seed lots were tested in October. Staff introduced to testing procedures for seed health for barley loose smut.
- Laboratory Cleaning-12 species of wild collected seeds for BLM cleaned.
- Training-Study for seed analyst certification continues.

### **Other PMC Projects**

- Seed drying finished, seed organized for processing schedule.
- Seed processing continues daily in small and large lot cleaning operations.
- Three staff received Class I fire extinguisher inspection certification.
- Staff trained for operation and safety certification on new forklift.
- Equipment and facilities winterized and stored for season.
- Grounds and plants winterized for season.
- Interviewed and hired an Agronomist II for the PMC.
- Winterized the Ethnobotany Garden.
- Working on grant sources for Ethnobotany Teaching Garden.
- Replied to many questions about revegetation, seed sources, and information.

### **Potato Disease Control Program**

- Justin Fernandez was hired as a new assistant to help with the tissue culture and production of the pathogen tested seed potato crop. He was able to help with the greenhouse harvest and with storing the crop and is now performing tissue culture maintenance.
- The tissue cultures in the clone bank were tested for bacterial and fungal contaminants. Those found contaminated were destroyed and will be replaced as available.
- Potato harvest at the PMC was completed. Yields were at or slightly above expectation. Storage temperatures have been lowered to the 39 f holding temperature.
- Site visits in the Matanuska Valley revealed lower yields for non irrigated potatoes as compared to irrigated fields. Over all, healthy crops went into storage with little to no apparent problems. A few tubers have turned up with internal defects believed caused by environmental conditions and not from disease.

- Conversations with Northern growers confirmed losses from the drought and early frost. Potatoes looked good going into storage.

### **Invasive Plants and Agricultural Pest Management**

- Provided comments to ANILCA office regarding the National Park Service Environmental Assessment for invasive plant management.
- Prepared for and attended the Alaska Invasive Species Conference hosted by the Alaska Committee for Noxious and Invasive Plant Management and the Alaska Invasive Species Working Group. Provided three presentations and participated in a Policy Panel Discussion.
- Attended Alaska Coastal Management Plan meetings.
- Continued work towards completions of strategic plan for invasive weeds and agricultural pest management.
- Continued search for grant funding to further the invasive weeds and agricultural pest management program.

### **Foundation Seed and Conditioning Program**

Cleaning is underway in both the Seed House and the Small Seed Lot. The following crops have been cleaned and processed as of October 29th:

<u>Small Seed Lot</u>	<u>Seed House</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mentasta Gemplasm</li><li>• Staghorn Cinquefoil</li><li>• Rocky Mountain Goldenrod</li><li>• 'Reeve' Beach Wildrye</li><li>• Delphinium</li><li>• Sweetgrass</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 'Nip' Oats</li><li>• 'Toral' Oats</li><li>• 'Vigal' Wheat</li><li>• 'Nugget' Kentucky Bluegrass (Alaska Seed Growers crop)</li></ul>

We are still receiving shipments from the Seed Growers from around the state for cleaning this season. We anticipate having a full schedule for the 2009-2010 winter seasons.

### **Northern Region**

- Attended national gypsy moth review in Minneapolis, MN. Gave presentation on pest detection activities in Alaska, presented a poster and provided a handout describing our projects and surveys.
- Compiled survey data and entered it into the ISIS national database for all pest detection surveys we conduct.
- Wrote and submitted midterm reports for our pest detection surveys.
- Revised and submitted proposals for next year's pest detection surveys.
- Attended conference for CNIPM (Committee for Noxious and Invasive Plant Management) and AISWG (Alaska Invasive Species Working Group) in Ketchikan. Gave presentation on Cooperative Pest Survey (CAPS) activities and presented poster on pest surveys.
- Met with Delta farmers in an attempt to assess bison damage to agricultural fields.
- Rewriting sale brochure for upcoming auction in response to new DNR policy
- Conducted farm inspections for contract compliance
- Conducted field inspections of potential sale parcels
- Worked with MLW and FNSB on getting parcels replatted for future sale
- Worked with Division of MLW on conservation easement issues