



MEMORANDUM

Department of Natural Resources

STATE OF ALASKA
Division of Agriculture

TO: Board of Agriculture
& Conservation

DATE: December 19, 2013

FROM: Franci Havemeister
Director

SUBJECT: Director's Report
Oct/Nov 2013

Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund (ARLF):

- Loan officer has received and processed incoming loan applications and a modification request.
- Loan officer has contacted realtors in Kenai to request a Broker's Estimated Value regarding the sale of ARLF's property located along the Kenai Spur Highway.
- Loan officer has reviewed and prepared a BAC action for the disposal of selected equipment at MMM&S.
- Loan officer prepared and submitted an article for the November newsletter with information on how to submit ARLF applications in an effort to continue outreach to the agriculture community. A link with this information will be available on the ARLF web page.
- Loan officer has updated the asset report.
- Loan officer has processed loan payoffs, associated Deeds of Reconveyances, and UCC filing updates, as well as other duties associated with ARLF management.
- Loan officer has had meetings and conversations both in person and over the phone with potential new borrowers.
- Loan officer has been organizing loan files.
- Loan officer has been in contact with delinquent borrowers. Default borrower contact list has been updated.
- Loan officer has been in process of managing loan insurance requirements and other ARLF loan requirements.
- Loan officer has updated interest rate comparison.

Marketing & Development:

- Seventeen businesses were added to the Alaska Grown program between September and November.
- Marketing staff participated in the Communication Officers of State Departments of Agriculture (COSDA) annual meeting; workshops focused on social media and marketing trends.
- Staff attended the Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA) annual meeting; a special roundtable discussion was held with the Commissioner of the Department of Commerce and three cruise ship representatives to discuss opportunities for more Alaska Grown, Made in Alaska and SilverHand products being sourced. As a result of connections

made, staff designed an Alaska Grown flyer which cruise ship companies will include in packets distributed to cruise ship patrons.

- Staff continues to make daily posts on the Alaska Grown and Alaska Farm to School Facebook pages reaching over 10,000 individuals per week.
- Staff attended Pyrah's Fall Festival with Alaska Grown promotional and information materials.
- Staff facilitated the 2013 Alaska Farm to School challenge starting with a redesign of documents, flyers and brochures to enhance readability and participation. Staff received and scored 11 applications; all 11 applicants will receive participation prizes for each classroom involved in the project. Louise's Farm School won 1st place, 21st Century Community Learning Center won 2nd place, and Paul Banks Elementary School Garden won 3rd place.
- Staff conducted a survey targeting Alaska State Fair Food Vendors asking why they do/don't use Alaska Grown products; indications are a lack of awareness and or availability of value-added products such as shredded cabbage.
- Staff conducted seven Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) audits throughout the State.
- The marketing team sponsored and attended the Sustainable Chef event held in conjunction with Alaska Public Media where six Chefs highlighted Alaska Grown products.
- The VISTA volunteer facilitated the collection of data on the 2013 Farmers Market Quest Program and is preparing a final program report.
- Staff conducted 34 store visits in November to encourage use of Alaska Grown signage on items through the winter months.
- Staff visited the Chugiak High School Culinary Arts program to observe the students prepare an Alaska Grown salad bar as part of a Farm to School grant.
- Staff continues to participate with the Alaska Food Policy Council, serving on the Governing Board, School Programs and Locally Grown subcommittees.
- Staff met with corporate Fred Meyer/Kroger representatives in Oregon to encourage use and promotion of Alaska Grown products.
- Staff continues to partner with the program manager for the Nutritional Foods in Alaska Schools grant to verify purchase of Alaska Grown products.
- Staff visited Louise's Farm School (2013 Farm to School grant recipient) during their annual Fall Festival to observe the program's activities.
- Marketing staff attended a workshop hosted by the Specialty Food Association at the Oregon Food Innovation Center.
- Staff attended and presented at the Annual Farm Bureau Meeting at Chena Hot Springs.
- Staff attended the Alaska School Principal's Conference to promote the Alaska Farm to School Program.
- Staff facilitated the 2013 Cooperative Marketing Program grants; twelve projects were awarded and final reports are being reviewed at this time.
- Staff is creating potato recipes to promote the purchase of Alaska Grown potatoes through the winter. Recipe cards are featured on the Division website, promoted on Facebook and now available through the new Alaska Grown recipe page.
- Staff continues to manage the Restaurant Rewards program; there are currently 17 restaurants participating.

- Staff facilitated the 2013 Chef at the Market (CATM) program; six chefs completed their projects. Five markets are now operating through the winter and will be encouraged to host CATM events.
- Marketing staff attended the Alaska Cabaret, Hotel, Restaurant and Retailer's (CHARR) Association conference to encourage utilization of Alaska Grown products and participation in the Restaurant Rewards program.
- Marketing Staff gave a presentation about what the Alaska Grown Program is during the 2013 ProStart Bootcamp.
- Marketing staff had an informational/promotional table at the Valley Winter Farmer's Market and Food Day Celebration in Palmer.
- Jointly with Alaska Farmland Trust, staff created and distributed a Survey to MatSu/Anchorage area Farmers and Ranchers to find out how we can better assist their operations.
- Staff participated in a 2014 Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE) conference planning teleconference.
- Three marketing staff attended ACCESS database training to enhance knowledge prior to collecting data for the 2014 Source Book.
- Marketing staff had a booth at MatSu Geofest; the focus of the booth was to show students that almost all food items come from ingredients from the ground. The booth was highlighted in an article in the Frontiersman newspaper.
- The VISTA volunteer presented at the Alaska Primary Care Association Conference on how farmers and healthcare professionals can collaborate to get Alaska Grown foods to patients

Northern Region Inspection:

- Staff conducted seven Phytosanitary Export Certification inspections on Alaska timber exports to China during the months of Sept. – Nov.
- Staff issued Phytosanitary Certificates for timber exports.
- Staff worked with the USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) State Plant Health Director (SPHD) in Fairbanks and Delta Junction while visiting Alaska in September. Staff set up meetings with interior cooperators, stakeholders, and local farmers in order to provide an Alaska perspective to the USDA APHIS program.
- Staff removed exotic insect monitoring traps set out earlier this year as part of the 2013 Farm Bill funded Asian Defoliating Moths Survey. All traps were negative for exotic moths in the port communities. Cooperators from Cooperative Extension Service, Customs and Border Protection, US Fish and Wildlife, National Park Service, and US Forest Service began to collect traps they had set out during the field season and compile data to send to the Division staff.
- Staff began to compile data for the APHIS reporting on funded projects.
- Staff participated with Palmer Inspection and Plant Materials Center staff on a Farm Bill discussion for submitting suggestions for the FY2014 funding year. Staff is working with cooperators to help develop ideas and projects for to Farm Bill suggestion.
- Staff received results from the soil samples collected this summer as part of a Cooperative Agriculture Pest Survey (CAPS) focusing on Nematodes. No species of economic and / or regulatory concern were found in the samples.
- Staff submitted semiannual and annual narrative reports to USDA APHIS for cooperative agreements conducted under CAPS and Farm Bill funding.

Central Office Inspection:

- Staff Conducted export inspections and issued 31 certifications, enabling the export of over \$41 million dollars of renewable natural resources this reporting period.
- Conducted 12 FV 300 inspections.
- Conducted 11 Phytosanitary inspections.
- Issued one Brand application.
- Conducted five farm inspections to check quality of potatoes.
- Reviewed and released two USDA permit application for interstate movement of pests and soil.
- Staff assisted Potato Disease Control Specialist with the Alaska Certified Seed Program's mandatory field inspections at the remaining seed potato farms in the Matsu valley.
- Staff collected 28 soil samples in the Kenai and Homer at Peony farms for the Cooperative Pest Survey (CAPS) stubby root nematode project that were then forwarded to a Nematology Lab for testing. Collected 62 leaf samples that expressed virus symptoms that were forwarded to the Plant Materials Center (PMC) to be tested for Tobacco Rattle Virus (TRV).
- Staff participated in a multiple meetings and then drafted up first deliverable of the Forest Health Protection Grant, "Improved training and partnering for the coordinated early detection of invasives by individuals in Alaska". Staff is working under a Reimbursable Services Agreement (RSA) with the Division of Forestry on this Project.
- Staff participated in a meeting with the Palmer Soil and Water Conservation district in efforts to coordinate and apply for a grant under the 2014 Farm Bill Section 10201.
- Staff coordinated with the USFS, Forest Health Protection (FHP) and members of the Alaska Pest Risk Committee (AKPRAC) in Anchorage to introduce the USDA State Plant Health Director, Barbara Chambers.
- Staff participated in the quarterly Alaska Pest Risk Committee (AKPRAC) Meeting, where topics of interest included plans for an interagency inspection effort at a land border location spring 2014 (still not determined).
- Processed, labeled and forwarded insects to the UAF Curator of Entomology, Derek Sikes, for the 2013 Farm Bill Thrips associated with Peony Project.
- Responded to the National Potato Council (NPC) inquiry on the Shipping Point Inspection Protocols that was sent to all states to assist in efforts with the Harmonization Plan.
- Staff is drafting submissions for the 2014 Farm Bill, Section 10201 projects. Open period is November 20- January 3, 2014.
- Staff are drafting and coordinating with Plant Pathologist at the PMC on a presentation for the 2014 Alaska Peony Growers Association (APGA) Winter Conference. This Conference is to be held January 31-February 1 in Anchorage.
- Staff is continuing the process of drafting the Seed Potato Regulations.
- Staff contacted the Peony Growers with their results of the surveys conducted this past summer and fall.
- Staff reviewed and has been providing input to the Alaska Weed and Pest Coordinator on the Draft State Plant Health Regulations.
- Staff reviewed and provided input to the USDA State Survey Coordinator on the CAPS Nursery Survey Project Report conducted this past summer.
- Staff attended the Alaska Invasive Species Conference in Fairbanks, Alaska. This conference is well attended by the Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) individuals in Alaska where the presentations discussed work conducted as well as methods and techniques of reporting and response to pest threats. Also, received and completed needed Pesticide Continuing Education Credits for attending this conference.
- Staff attended three monthly conference calls with Produce Safety Alliance and FDA regarding State and Federal issues with the new Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA).

- Staff attended Quarterly teleconference with the Alaska Food Safety Advisory Committee
- Staff attended Federal/State Country of Origin Labeling teleconference to discuss upcoming FY inspection directives.
- Staff completed annual online Security Awareness training and exam for USDA GAP accreditation.
- Staff conducted quarterly shell egg inspections statewide.

Plant Materials Center

Invasive Weeds and Agricultural Pest Program

- Staff participated in the Mat-Su Salmon & Science Symposium held in Palmer in November to discuss invasive plant impacts to water resources.
- Canada thistle Management: A total of 47 sites in the greater Anchorage area were managed, including 10 new sites. Next season, a contracted company will aid in the herbicide application of priority infestation sites.
- Continued coordination on permitting and planning for management of the Elodea, Alaska's first identified freshwater aquatic invasive plant. Local projects are focused on known locations in Fairbanks, Anchorage, and the Kenai Peninsula.
- Staff participated in on-going discussions regarding Plant Health and Quarantine Regulation (11 AAC 34) amendments.
- Staff assisted in the review of a Cooperative Extension Service publication for best Management Practices for controlling the spread of invasive plants during road maintenance.
- Staff assisted Soil and Water Conservation District Staff in surveying Edmonds, Mirror, Walby, and Nancy Lakes in the Mat-Su for Elodea.

Pathology

- Staff tested potato samples from local growers for Potato leafroll virus, Potato virus S, Potato virus X, and bacterial ringrot.
- Staff tested *Lolium multiflorum* samples from Homer for fungal endophytes.
- Staff met second time with Pioneer Fruit Growers to discuss production issues.
- Staff investigated suspected case of fireblight in apples.
- Staff tested samples from peony growers on Kenai Peninsula for Tobacco rattle virus.
- Staff assisted with planning for potato export pathology testing.

Publications

- Staff completed and printed Terrestrial Weed Identification Field Guide and Revegetation Plant Identification Field Guides.
- Staff published Elodea and Canada thistle invasive plants web pages.
- Staff completed Trans Alaska Pipeline and Gas line report.
- Staff created and printed Canada thistle poster for invasive species conference in Fairbanks
- Staff edited the Alternative Plants poster and brochure.
- Staff attended Access database course to aid in the production of the Alaska Grown Sourcebook and development of a photo database.
- Staff prepared monthly newsletters, BAC reports and general web maintenance duties.

Seed Cleaning

- The PMC has received all seed lots from commercial producers for the 2013-14 cleaning season. There is an estimated 14 species in 16 individual lots on this year's cleaning schedule, equaling roughly 45,000 pounds. The small cleaning operation at the PMC has also begun to collect seed lots from commercial growers, harvesters, and agencies for cleaning this season. Currently there are 68 seed lots scheduled for cleaning. Seed cleaning has begun in both the large and small seed cleaning facilities as of October 15 and will continue through the spring.
- Construction projects within the seed house continue with the installation of new steel cat walks and loading platforms over additional seed cleaning equipment to increase the amount and quantity of seed that can be in the cleaning process at one time. Completion of this project will allow the seed house to have additional screen cleaners in operation shortly after the New Year.

Horticulture

- All field trials for the 2013 season have come to an end. Over the next few months data collected from this growing season will be compiled and published for use by producers and the general public.
- Planning and preparation of the 2014 field season will continue over the coming months.
- Winter plant propagation planning is close to completion and should begin right after the New Year.
- Pesticide registration process is ongoing for chemicals not currently registered in the state that have been requested by producers in various industries throughout the state.

Seed Laboratory

- During this period the Alaska State Seed Lab performed total of 41 seed tests including 9 Germination, 23 Purity tests, 9 Noxious weed tests.

Seeds of Success

- Seed cleaning of seed lots collected in the summer of 2013. 40 seed lots have been cleaned so far.

Soil Lab

- Staff completed data collection and analysis for Forage Growth Curve Project. Staff is currently working on drafting an annual report for comparison between each growing season throughout the life of the project. This project is a 3 year project, which is currently in its 2nd year.
- Staff tested and analyzed soil samples for nutrient and texture analysis, for the Forage Growth Curve project, Dalton Highway project, Mile 165 Parks Highway project, Beatson Mine Site, and Jonesville Mine Site.
- Staff completed the removal of Bohemian knot weed from Natalia Way on Kodiak Island. Staff constructed revegetation BMPs, such as straw waddles, coconut fiber erosion control blankets, flexterra growth medium. Staff currently is continuing to monitor site for erosion and grass establishment.

Ethnobotany Teaching Garden and Educational Programs

PMC Foundation Seed Sales, Ethnobotany Project, and Education

- The 2013 fall PMC foundation seed sale sold 65 lbs. of 'Nugget' Kentucky bluegrass, 5 lbs. of Henderson Ridge Germplasm red fescue, 1 lb. of 'Gruening' alpine bluegrass, 200 lbs. of 'Nip' oats, and 200 lbs. of 'Lidal' barley.

- This year, the PMC is offering educational and ethnobotany classes to the public on in-depth study of individual Alaska native plants. This is in response to several brainstorming sessions individuals from various groups suggested was needed. The conclusions from the above sessions were that the community wanted to “Learn about plants to end up creating a cross-cultural teaching pool of educators.” The public asked that these classes include and enable them to:
 - Learn about the ecology, biology, and taxonomy of Alaskan plants
 - Learn how each plant was and can be used for food, medicine, technology
 - Learn when each plant can be harvested for uses
 - Respect plants
 - Harvest and gathering ethics
 - Sustainability
 - Cultural plant names and language translation
 - Seasonal Plant Wheel
 - Gardening basics for children and home gardens with native plants.
- This plant study group of about 25 individuals meets in person and via e-mail several times monthly. So far staff has worked with rose, yarrow, highbush cranberry, and angelica (and compared them to raspberries, currants, and water hemlock). Plans are to work with two plants per month. In each session staff includes the basic information of common name, ethnic name, botanical name, genus, family, plant facts, plant type, propagation, plant description from root to seed, plant requirements and planting information, pests and diseases, plant uses, recipes, history, legends, activities for learning about each plant, and how to distinguish this plant from others that may look similar or may be poisonous. Each participant studies the designated plant and offers information to the rest of the group for compilation into a plant study notebook.
- Other educational activities include presentations for the fall PMC board meeting, answering questions from the public on chaga, *Hedysarum*, seed revegetation, *Rhodiola*, willows, grants, student science projects, resilience school, devil's club, seed prices, and invasive plants. Staff provided off-site talks for the National Food Day, Alaska Wild Study Group, and “Ya Ne Dey Yah School”. Staff provided PMC tours of the facility to several individuals. Seeds for research and student projects were mailed to six people.