



MEMORANDUM

Department of Natural Resources

STATE OF ALASKA
Division of Agriculture

TO: Board of Agriculture
& Conservation

DATE: October 10, 2013

FROM: Franci Havemeister
Director

SUBJECT: Director's Report
July/August 2013

Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund (ARLF):

- Loan officer has received and begun processing one incoming loan application. Loan officer has prepared and closed loans approved at July's BAC meeting.
- Loan officer provided support at WASDA meeting held on July 28th and 29th, 2013 in Anchorage, AK at the Captain Cook Hotel.
- Loan officer has processed multiple loan payoffs and 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 and reviewing ARLF lease history.
- 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 and asset report.

Marketing & Development:

- Twenty farms were added to the Alaska Grown program in July and August.
- Marketing staff participated in the North American Agricultural Marketing Officials (NAAMO) annual meeting in Virginia; staff was re-elected as Secretary/Treasurer of the national organization.
- Staff designed advertisements for Make-A-Scene magazine and the Kenai Peninsula Fair.
- Staff has been coordinating with the UAF CES Test Kitchen to conduct a Harvest Festival, highlighting recipes developed through the collaboration with the Farm to School program.
- Staff conducted 34 store visits in July and August, supplying produce managers with promotional materials to last through the growing season.
- Marketing staff facilitated the selection and recognition of the 2013 Alaska State Fair Farm Family of the Year.
- Staff launched the 2013 Restaurant Rewards Program; a new logo was developed and 42 "Welcome Packets" were sent to restaurants throughout the state; 11 new restaurants joined the program.
- Staff participated in Ag Day at the Palmer Center for Sustainable Living, outreaching to community members about the importance of sourcing Alaska Grown products.

- Staff designed new brochures for several Division of Agriculture programs: The Alaska Grown Program, Restaurant Rewards, and an introduction to Alaska Agriculture.
- Staff successfully applied for the 2013 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant program in the amount of \$185,231.00. Projects to be funded include the Restaurant Rewards program, Post-Harvest research on Peony to be conducted by Dr. Holloway, On-Farm Food Safety Workshops, a comprehensive market analysis for interior vegetable producers and asparagus variety trials by the Plant Materials Center.
- Marketing staff conducted customer counts at farmers markets; this information is invaluable to market managers as they seek sponsorships and funding opportunities.
- Staff continues to participate with the Alaska Food Policy Council, serving on the Governing Board, and the School Programs and Locally Grown subcommittees.
- Staff attended the Kenai Peninsula Fair with an informational display booth giving out Alaska Grown promotional materials, outreaching to the public, and distributing sourcebooks.
- Staff coordinated the Alaska Grown Pavilion for the 2013 Alaska State Fair in Palmer. Eleven businesses participated in the special event on Alaska Grown Day at the Fair; initial reports are that sales were not good, but outreach and promotion was seen as successful.
- Marketing staff met with faculty from the UAF School of Natural Resources and Agriculture Sciences as well as agents from the Cooperative Extension Service to discuss priorities surrounding Alaskan consumers' awareness of locally grown food.
- Staff hosted an informational booth at the Palmer Friday Fling when the Governor signed the Administrative Order #265, establishing the Alaska Food Resource Working Group.
- Staff facilitated the 2013 Legislative Farm tour in conjunction with Representative Bill Stoltze.
- Staff continued to partner with the program manager for the Nutritional Foods in Alaska Schools to verify purchase of Alaska Grown products.

Northern Region Inspection:

- Staff traveled to Korea twice during July and August to receive training to conduct Export Certification work on Alaska timber exports to China. To date, staff has been training with Inspection Manager Douglas Warner for a year now in order to conduct this certification work in Korea.
- Staff conducted inspections and issued Phytosanitary Certificates for peony exports from Alaska.
- Staff issued Phytosanitary Certificates for timber exports.
- Staff traveled to Palmer to meet with staff and coordinate projects for CAPS survey work.
- Staff worked with USDA APHIS Pest Survey Specialist while in Alaska on CAPS and Farm Bill survey projects in the Fairbanks area. The APHIS employee worked one week in Palmer and one week in Fairbanks while in Alaska this summer to assist with projects.
- Staff compiled and submitted CAPS proposals for FY2014 on Aug 15. Proposals were submitted to fund the CAPS Infrastructure position and two survey projects to focus on nematode vectors of Tobacco Rattle Virus and a small project to survey and identify pests associated with small grains grown in Alaska. The small grains survey is part of a national survey protocol.

Central Office Inspection:

- Conducted (8) FV 300 inspections with 9 lots inspected.
- Phyto's issued: 12 – Representing approximately \$30 million dollars of exports

July/ August activities

- Inspection Staff conducted Export certification and inspection on 7 Shipments of Alaska Timber Exports. These inspections facilitated approximately \$30 million dollars of timber exports from Alaska.
- Staff prepared and Submitted honeybee comb sample for analysis to the ARS bee Research Laboratory in Beltsville MD. Lab analysis revealed European Foulbrood disease. Staff are working with owner on containment, quarantine and destruction of infected hive.
- Staff are working with Alaska bee keepers Association to educate beekeepers about foulbrood disease issues.
- Conducted 4 elk farm inspections and completed the required paperwork and license renewals.
- Conducted 8 farm inspections to check quality of local produce in the field and quality of newly harvested seed potatoes.
- Conducted inspections/site visits at 17 Retail Stores.
- Assisted Potato Disease Control Specialist with the Alaska Certified Seed Program's mandatory field inspections at seed potato farms in the Matsu valley and Delta Junction/ Fairbanks areas.
- Reviewed and released USDA permit application for interstate movement of pests.
- Responded to an inquiry on importing parasitic nematodes for biocontrol.
- Reviewed and have been providing input to the Alaska Weed and Pest Coordinator on the Draft State Plant Health Regulations.
- Reviewed and provided input to the USDA State Survey Coordinator on the 2012 Farm Bill Project, Thrips associated with Peony in Alaska.
- Conducted soil sampling in the Matsu Valley at Peony farms for the Cooperative Pest Survey (CAPS) stubby root nematode project, collections of foliage for the Thrips, associated with Peony for the USDA Farm Bill project and Nursery Survey work in Anchorage.
- Conducted site visits, inspections and survey work with the USDA,APHIS Pest Survey Specialist for Washington and Alaska.
- Managed Early Detection Rapid Response Exotic Beetle Traps for Division of Forestry (DOF) in the Matsu Valley.
- Participated in the quarterly Alaska Pest Risk Committee (AKPRAC) Meeting, where topics of interest included heat treatment of firewood originating from Canada and plans for an interagency inspection effort at a land border location spring 2014.
- Participated in the State of Alaska, Department of Law, Regulations Training which involved how to interpret the Draft Manual for Administrative Regulations.
- Responded to multiple inquiries on import requirements plant products for Alaska originating outside the US.
- Conducted four On-Farm Food Safety Workshops in the Southeast AK communities of Skagway, Haines, Juneau and Sitka the week of July 21-25th, in cooperation with Farm to School program staff. Forty people attended the workshops, including several who attended the July 21st workshop held in conjunction with the Southeast Alaska Gardeners' Conference.
- Attended an FDA webinar discussing the upcoming Produce Safety Rule portion of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA).
- Attended two USDA-Cornell Produce Safety Alliance webinars discussing various aspects of FSMA rules and implementation.

- Worked with local farms selling to Wal-Mart to determine the corporation's food safety requirements for suppliers.
- Created and distributed a media release regarding availability of On-Farm Food Safety Workshops.
- Worked with local *Rhodiola* growers interested in certifying as organic for their growing and processing operations.
- Coordinated and confirmed disposal of nursery stock at an Anchorage nursery and several box stores statewide in response to invasive Canada Thistle found growing in soil in the pots.

Plant Materials Center

Invasive Weeds and Agricultural Pest Program

- Continued coordination with the Citizens for Noxious and Invasive Plant Management (CNIPM) board; planning for the 2013 Invasive Species Conference slated for November 5-7 in Fairbanks.
- In conjunction with the DNR Commissioner's office, staff hosted the 1st Statewide Elodea Management Strategy Working Group on June 24th.
- Our field crew is out managing Canada Thistle, Spotted Knapweed, and other priority infestations in the Anchorage and Mat-Su Area.

Pathology

- Met with Pioneer Fruit Growers, discussed apple and small fruit diseases.
- Tested peony samples from three growers in the Soldotna and Wasilla areas for *Tobacco rattle virus* (TRV).
- Tested potatoes from several producers in the Delta Junction and Palmer areas for *Potato leaf roll virus* (PLRV) and *Potato virus X* (PVX).
- Examined lettuce samples from Palmer grower with suspected anthracnose.
- Met with Palmer grower to discuss apple diseases, *Sclerotinia* spp. management in vegetables, and raspberry diseases.
- Sampled four locations in Homer for suspected endophyte poisoning of horses.
- Met with apple grower to discuss possible silver leaf infection, other plant health issues.
- Continued monitoring of PMC fields and greenhouses for disease development.

Publications

- Created Canada Thistle bus ads, stickers, and rack cards to be used for invasive species awareness.
- Created Elodea invasive awareness brochures and wallet cards.
- Web pages for both of the above are being edited and are expected to be published by October, 2013.
- Editing of Terrestrial Weed Identification Field Guide and Revegetation Plant Identification Field Guide.
- Finalization of Trans Alaskan and Natural Gas Pipeline Report.
- Editing of Alternative Plants poster and brochure.
- Preparation of monthly newsletters, BAC report and general administrative duties.

Revegetation

- Worked in partnership with Kodiak Soil and Water Conservation District to remove Bohemian Knotweed (an invasive species) from a .25 acre area on Natalia Way in Kodiak, AK. 6 man crew worked 2 labor intensive, 12 hour days to remove the plants by hand.

Followed by contouring and prepping the ground for hydroseeding. Hydroseeding consisted of a mixture of grass seed, fertilizer, mulch and an adhesive. A biodegradable coconut fiber blanket was then placed on top to prevent further erosion. Continued monitoring of the site will be conducted by PMC and Kodiak SWCD and is expected to take several years to eradicate and re-establish native plants.

Seed Laboratory

- During this period Alaska State Seed Lab performed total of 80 seed tests including 34 germination, 23 purity tests, and 23 noxious weed tests.

Seeds of Success

- Seed harvest of field plantings and box garden.
- Maintenance of field plantings and box garden.

Mat-Su Riparian Revegetation Project

- Seed harvest of field plantings and box garden. Wild seed collection from native plants.
- Maintenance of field plantings and box garden.

Other Projects:

Ethnobotany Teaching Garden and Educational Programs

- A demonstration of 50 edible and medicinal plants was provided for an Anchorage audience of over 150 people as part of the Anchorage Museum's "Outdoor Edibles" program.
- Another off-site program to the Palmer Museum and Visitor Center attracted over 100 people to explore which July native plants were ready for harvest. The "Store Outside Your Door" concept includes how to grow and cultivate these plants at your own home for annual use. Nutritional analysis of wild plants was compared to domesticated foods. People were amazed at the comparisons, for instance - Calcium from 1 cup of Spinach is 102 mg/cup and Kale is 206 mg/cup whereas calcium from Nettles is 2900 mg/cup and Chickweed is 1210 mg/cup. Comparing protein, Spinach has 5%, Kale has 10.2%, Nettle has 16.5%, and Chickweed has 20%.
- In August, "Opportunities for Lifelong Education" the Plant Materials Center presented a course on Ethnobotany at Yukon Island in Kachemak Bay. This three day workshop offered participants an exquisite experience along the coast. Over 70 different plant species were identified along with their past and present uses for food, medicine, and functions. The history of the Island and native traditions were included via Kizzi Davis, a volunteer for the PMC, and Dr. Gretchen Bersch, President of OLE!
- Tours of the Ethnobotany Garden were given to groups ranging from the general public, Adult mentally challenged, public health nurses, garden clubs, intertribal groups, and visitors from outside Alaska and conference attendees.
- Offsite programs were given on Alaskan native food and medicine plants, where over 50 plants were showcased as cuttings. Hundreds of people attended these programs in Anchorage and Palmer. These programs have generated many e-mails and telephone calls about how people can either obtain seeds of these plants or cultivate them at home.
- "Knik Shan Qayeh" cultural fish camp was given assistance with identification and signage of the native plants around their site. This camp had 150 children, 25 middle school counselors, and a multitude of individuals and tribal council leaders from Knik and Chickaloon. The very poisonous berry, Baneberry, was bright red and attractive to the children. Since 6 berries can kill an adult, this was marked as "yuck" throughout the Point Mackenzie camp area. Other signage included the Upper Inlet Dena'ina plant name with a picture and its ethnobotany.