



MEMORANDUM

Department of Natural Resources

STATE OF ALASKA
Division of Agriculture

TO: Board of Agriculture
& Conservation

DATE: April 28, 2016

FROM: Arthur J. Keyes IV
Director

SUBJECT: Director's Report
March 2016

Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund

- Loan officer is working on the disposal of MMM&S including obtaining an updated inventory list, valuing equipment, working on the draft RFPs for lease or sale, and other duties associated with disposal of an ARLF asset.
- Loan officer has had conversations over the phone and in person with several potential new borrowers and current borrowers and provided them with application and loan program information.
- Loan officer has received and is processing an incoming loan application. Loan officer has also received a couple partial loan applications.
- Loan officer has processed warrant requests, loan payoffs, associated Deeds of Reconveyance, and UCC filing updates, as well as other duties associated with ARLF management.
- Loan officer has been in contact with delinquent borrowers. Default borrower contact list has been updated.
- Loan officer has been managing loan insurance requirements and other ARLF loan requirements.
- Loan officer has updated the interest rate comparison for review.
- Loan officer has updated the asset report.

Marketing and Development

- Staff continues to represent the division on the Alaska Food Policy Council board meetings.
- Staff got USDA approval for hiring an intern to help with summer market marketing.
- Staff met with numerous advertising outlets to develop summer market efforts.
- Staff awarded 12 Farm to Summer Meal Site grants and re-opened the grant opportunity to recruit more projects.
- Staff continues to consult the public on institutional markets, retail, and general agricultural inquiries.
- Staff attended annual Rural Small Business Conference along with the Division of Community and Economic Development.
- Staff continues to be involved in discussions regarding upcoming FDA's Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) rules.
- Staff continues to make daily posts on the Alaska Grown Facebook.

- The 2015-2016 Source Book online version is being maintained and updated. The print version for 2016-2017 may not be printed this year. We are working to change the online platform and make it available for mobile devices.
- Staff is working with DNR's programmers to create a mobile friendly version of source book.
- Staff continues to assist with the venue "who let the girls out" supporting an Alaska Grown theme.
- Staff attended Rhodiola workshop and outreach.

Inspection Section:

- Staff is finishing up certified seed potato storage inspections per the 2015 AK Seed Potato Handbook.
- Staff conducted phytosanitary inspections Alaska for logs to be exported to China. Staff is also training other staff in this process.
- Staff is responding to seed potato producer requests for certified seed tags. Last year, approximately 3,000 tags were printed.
- Staff drafted and distributed the annual Potato Late Blight Quarantine Reminder to Garden Centers, Nurseries and Greenhouses.
- Staff reviewed and released two permits for the interstate movement of plant pests, noxious weeds and soil.
- Staff participated in the quarterly Alaska Pest Risk Committee (AKPRAC) Meeting. Staff will be participating in an interagency effort with USDA Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), at the Alcan Border on May 8-12, 2016 with the focus being on vehicle traffic crossing that are originated in a European Gypsy Moth Quarantine area.
- Staff continues to work with Division of Forestry on the Forest Health Protection (FHP) Grant titled, "Improve training and partnering for the coordinated early detection of invasives in Alaska."
- Staff continues to work on the Standard Operating Procedures for Invasive Pests for continuity and transparency.
- Staff responded to multiple inquiries on sources of certified seed potatoes and inquiries on import, registration and labeling requirements for agriculture products to be sold in Alaska.
- Staff has responded to inquiries of Alaska agricultural products to be exported.

Land Section:

- Staff has prepared and published a second Land Sale brochure for a 2016 Northern Region offering.
- Staff is drafting a Land Sale brochure for a 2016 Southcentral Region offering.
- Staff met with dozens of farmers inquiring about moving to Alaska to start farming.
- Staff met with Lands sale team concerning a join subdivision/agricultural land sale in Fairbanks
- Staff assisted with a large number of public inquiries mostly concerning future land sales.
- Staff met with Borough appraiser to discuss tax deferral program.
- Staff attended Fairbanks Farm Bureau meeting
- Staff attended and gave a presentation at the Copper River Ag Forum
- Staff attended a wild/domestic sheep/goat working group meeting

- Staff researched and provided information regarding bio-solid usage on Alaskan agricultural lands.
- Staff assisted in the preparation of 1 SFCP

Plant Materials Center:

Erosion Control

- Staff is working with the Copper River Watershed Project in Cordova regarding the removal of Japanese Knotweed and revegetation efforts. Monitoring and site evaluation will be conducted until the end of the third growing season.
- Staff is currently preparing for establishment and field sampling of the Soil Health project at the Plant Materialc Center (PMC). This project is a five year intensive study of soil health and erosion control efforts.
- Staff conducted a power point presentation about revegetation and erosion control to the Alaska Association of General Contractors, Department of Transportation (DOT) Central Region, and staff from Alaska Mill & Feed, in Anchorage
- Staff is currently working on the final publication of the growth curve project. This project was a five year study on hay production and soil nutrient analysis across eight regions of Alaska.
- Staff is working with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) to host a two day course that assists in field training and implementation of erosion control practices for stream bank stabilization.

Horticulture

- Staff is working on the final report for the Asparagus Specialty Crop Grant.
- Staff is seeding broccoli, cauliflower, and asparagus for 2016 growing season transplants.
- Staff is maintaining the germination of the collected Malus x (open-pollinated) seeds that have been in stratification.
- Staff installed new controllers in the greenhouses.
- Staff is assisting the Potato Program on a winter grow-out for additional Generation 0 stock.
- Staff is assisting the Potato Program in preparing the greenhouses for the 2016 growing season.
- Staff establishing more greenhouse space for production of grass seed transplants and seed potatoes.
- Staff is assisting the foundation seed program in seeding transplants for the 2016 growing season.
- Staff helped local growers fine-tune their greenhouses and outdoor production sites.

Invasive Weeds and Agricultural Pest Program

- Heather Stewart was nominated for, and won, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Regional Director's Award for Outstanding Partner for 2015 for her work related to Elodea Eradication in Anchorage. About 20 nominees were selected for the award, and Heather was one of 4 people in the state awarded the honor.

- Staff gave a presentation to the Lake Hood User's Group meeting to update the public and Department of Transportation (DOT) staff on the current permitting status of the Pesticide Use Permit and the current plan of action for the 2016 field season.
- Staff is collaborating with Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to discuss Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) detection as potentially issuing a category 4c listing of an impaired waterbody. This work is ongoing to weigh the benefits of managing AIS as part of Early Detection, Rapid Response programs.
- Staff worked with the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) Institute for Social and Economic Research faculty to send out ~700 letters to floatplane pilots for completing a survey related to AIS; ultimately to help staff and collaborators prioritize surveys for AIS. Staff is working together with ESRI representatives to update data collection software and field collected attributes to make field work more efficient, replicable, and consistent.

Pathology

- Staff tested 110 of potato tissue culture samples on an additional 35 varieties.
- Staff gave a presentation about plant pathology and microbiology at Mchetanz Elementary Science Fair.

Potato Program

- Staff is completing a winter grow out of 11 varieties to test winter growth feasibility, new fertilizer formulation, and costs. Harvest will occur late April. Material will supplement surplus G0 available for purchase.
- 2015 G0 tubers (except winter grow out) are weighed, graded, and bagged and ready for delivery. Surplus material is already being picked up by growers.
- 2016 grower orders have been received and logged with a total 1,695 pounds of G0 seed ordered. This order is larger than our current greenhouse can accommodate, so staff is working to prepare additional space for G0 production.
- Mapping and scheduling for greenhouse planting has begun. Planting will be staggered in weekly increments to accommodate the high volume.
- Staff is preparing plantlets to sell this spring so growers can perform their own greenhouse production of tubers, due to the limited space at our facility.
- Tissue culture scale up is underway to meet 2016 greenhouse production goals. Approximately 15,000 plantlets will be produced in the laboratory to meet production orders.
- One hundred thirty-two varieties of potato were initiated into the maintenance collection this winter/spring due to a mechanical failure that killed a large portion of the collection. Five more varieties are pending initiation.
- Greenhouse updates and improvements continue. New roof panels will be installed to replace damaged panels and screening will be applied to minimize insect intrusion. Remaining irrigation supplies will be ordered. Netting to support the growing plants will be installed.
- Staff completed collecting data on specific gravity and dry matter of all available varieties of field stock potatoes. Photographs of each variety were taken concurrently. The data/photos will be used to create a brochure of PMC available stock. Additionally the data will be used to evaluate available varieties for French fry processing.
- New registered varieties are being evaluated, selected, and purchased for 2016 Alaska field trials.

- Field trial and evaluation 2015 resulted in retention of 63 new true seed lines. These lines will continue to undergo field trials and selection. Seventeen advanced lines from national breeding programs were selected for further field evaluation as well.

Publications

- Staff continues to prepare division media releases, monthly newsletters, BAC reports, forms, surveys, fact sheets, power points, and general web maintenance duties.
- Staff continues to provide Division support for computer and program related challenges.
- Staff is maintaining a Facebook group for the Alaska Committee on Noxious and Invasive Plant Management (CNIPM).
- Staff continues to maintain the 2015 online Alaska Grown Source Book and is creating multiple web pages for the new 2016/2017 Online Source Book. The Native Plant Source Directory updated information will also be included in the next edition.
- Staff is finalizing the 2016 Spring Agricultural Land Auction booklet.
- Staff finalizing Invasive Plants Management Program CNIPM Strategic Plan document.
- Staff is preparing to build an 'Alaskan Potato Variety and Uses' book.
- Staff continues to update online document library.
- Staff is working with marketing to create Alaska Grown advertisement for web and magazine use.
- Staff is preparing to host Alaska Grown booths for the summer.
- Staff is working on Division t-shirt design.
- Staff coordinating efforts for a potential community garden.
- Staff will be managing the eatlocalalaskagrown.org website after proper training.
- Staff reformatted Alaska Grown application.
- Staff building and printing Division of Agriculture 'Thank You' cards.
- Staff updated and printed the Elodea brochure.
- Staff registered and is preparing for the Alaska Trails Conference.
- Staff assisted the Invasive Species Program implementation of the 700 piece direct mail survey.

Revegetation Program

- Staff is working with the Alaska Gas Line Development Corporation on the Alaska Stand Alone Pipeline Project. The PMC will put together a Stabilization, Rehabilitation & Reclamation Plan (SRR) as an addendum to the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) process. The SRR plan would be applicable to pipeline project area lands directly impacted by the proposed Alaska Stand Alone Pipeline Project (ASAP).
- Staff will be presenting streambank rehabilitation workshops throughout the month of May. Locations will be in Fairbanks, Soldotna, and Palmer. These workshops provide instruction on lake and stream habitat restoration techniques. Workshops are two days and include a classroom day and field day that involves construction of a habitat rehabilitation project.
- Staff working on cold regions native plant commercialization. All seed collected from the 2015 field season has been cleaned. Species were started in the greenhouse in mid-March and will be transplanted into the fields later this spring. Evaluations will continue to look for species that have high conservation value in Alaska.
- Cleaning species collected from Kenai Fjords National Park

Seed Cleaning and Conditioning

- Two varieties of polargrass and one variety of hairgrass were planted in the greenhouse to begin growing grass plugs. More varieties will be planted once greenhouse space is available in the coming weeks.
- Staff has concluded cleaning all small lots.
- Two final small grain lots in the big seed house will conclude the remaining seed cleaning.
- Staff will be presenting to the Aviation Safety Conference regarding Elodea.
- Staff is planning field layouts for summer plantings.
- Staff will hold Annual Seed Sale beginning on April 13th.

Seed Lab

- The seed lab conducted 64 seed tests. This includes 35 Purity, 15 Germination, eight Noxious weed tests, and one Tetrazolium test.

Seeds of Success

- Staff is in the process of growing plants for 2016 seed increase trails. Seventeen species were selected for seed increase.
- Staff upgraded majority of the starts in larger size container.