



MEMORANDUM
Department of Natural Resources

STATE OF ALASKA
Division of Agriculture

TO: Board of Agriculture
& Conservation

DATE: August 26, 2014

FROM: Franci Havemeister
Director

SUBJECT: Director's Report
July 2014

Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund (ARLF):

- Loan officer has received and processed incoming loan applications.
- Loan officer has prepared and closed approved loan applications.
- Loan officer has processed loan payoffs, associated Deeds of Reconveyance, and UCC filing updates, as well as other duties associated with ARLF management.
- Loan officer has begun updating ARLF collateral inspections.
- Loan officer has had conversations over the phone with potential new borrowers and forwarded them application information.
- 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 & Development:

- Eleven farms were added to the Alaska Grown certification program in June and July.
- Staff continues to make daily posts on the Alaska Grown Facebook page and Twitter feed. The Facebook page has achieved over 25,000 likes; the team decided to merge the Farm to School Facebook page as an every Wednesday feature of the Alaska Grown Facebook page; this has been well received.
- Staff provided additional information on the previously submitted USDA Farm to School Events grant application.
- Staff launched the 2014/15 Restaurant Rewards program; thus far 10 restaurants have started the application process. Staff has been working towards the creation of a "Local Forks" program to highlight those restaurants that utilize Alaska Grown products without the benefit of the Restaurant Rewards program.
- Marketing staff toured and met with two food service directors in hospital settings to encourage the use of Alaska Grown products and introduce the Restaurant Rewards program.
- Staff continues to participate with the Alaska Food Policy Council, sitting as a Governing Board member. Staff has been active in the review and editing of the soon to be released

“Building Food Security in Alaska” report, prepared by Food System Economist and expert, Ken Meter.

- Staff created a pilot project to introduce Summer Meal Programs to Alaska Grown specialty crops. The idea was well-received and will likely expand in 2015.
- Two staff members attended the annual meeting of the North American Agricultural Marketing Officials (NAAMO). The Restaurant Rewards program was selected as a top candidate for the 2014 NAAMO Marketing Excellence Award. A staff member was also nominated to serve as the NAAMO First Vice President for next year.
- Marketing staff coordinated the receipt of nominations and selection of the 2014 Alaska State Fair Farm Family of the Year.
- Staff conducted a children's farmers market at the Midsummer Garden and Art Faire in Palmer. The booth was very well received and over 70 kids went home with fresh Alaska Grown produce donated by the Division of Agriculture.
- Marketing staff worked with the Alaska Natural Fiber Business Association and Jan Rowell of UAF to submit an application for a USDA Federal State Marketing Improvement Program grant.
- Staff modified the existing produce availability chart framed around the school year, tailored specifically for school food service directors with input from stakeholders.
- Staff has been conducting routine store visits throughout the State to deliver marketing supplies and verify accurate use of the Alaska Grown logo. Staff also inspected local produce and potato stocks at three retail grocery stores in Palmer and Bethel.
- Staff created and released the new “Farm to Restaurant Fact Sheet” which clearly identifies the steps necessary for producers to sell their products to restaurants.
- Staff conducted the Specialty Crop Competitive Grant cycle, receiving 10 letters of intent that were narrowed down to six full proposals. Four projects were included in the full application submitted by the marketing team.
- Staff met with the Anchorage and Fairbanks school district food service staff to discuss Nutritional Alaskan Foods for Schools (NAFS) status and future projects.
- Staff participated in USDA Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) portal training and conducted an audit in Bethel. While in Bethel, staff also toured Meyers Farm along with the local CES agent to discuss implementation of farm food safety measures
- Marketing staff met with the Alaska Chip Company to receive an update on the potato wedge/waffle cut pilot project. Market demand for the product appears to be strong by not only schools, but other institutions such as hotels.
- Staff attended the State Marketers Conference in Minnesota to learn about techniques and programs utilized by other States' 'buy local' programs.
- Staff conducted an On-Farm Food Safety (OFFS) Workshop and hands-on training in Palmer in June which was very well received by the nine participants; staff has also been requested to conduct an OFFS Workshop in Ketchikan in late August
- The 2014/15 Source Book has been launched online; the print version is in final edits prior to print/release.
- Marketing staff assisted the Director in conducting the surveys for input on the Red Meat industry and the future of the Mt. McKinley Meat & Sausage Plant.
- Staff participated in monthly teleconferences/webinars with Cornell's Produce Safety Alliance. Recent topics included the implementation strategy for FDA's Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA).
- Staff met with Fairbanks UAF affiliated Farm to School stakeholders to catch up on projects and collaborations.

Land Section:

- Updated Delta farm maps and plan to distribute them to appropriate agencies and organizations
- Helped several farmers begin the subdivision process for their farms.
- Wrote brochure for Auction # 473 sale to be held in September.
- Continued working on rough draft of Nenana Totchaket Preliminary Decision
- Assisted several farmers complete the patent process to acquire title to their farms. This included site inspections and help updating farm conservation plans.
- Continued to work with DMLW on rerouting a RS 2477 trail to help facilitate the sale of nearly 2000 acres of agriculture land in Kobe North.
- Inspected several parcels in Brown's court for possible reoffer.
- Assisted Mat-Su SWCD's with analysis of Mat-Su Borough lands for potential agricultural land sales.
- Assisted Division of Mining Land and Water in preparation of new planning documents for State grazing authorizations (Land Use Permits and Leases).

Central Office Inspection:

- Inspection and Regulatory staff have inspected and facilitated the export of over \$56,000,000 (million) dollars of timber exports so far in 2014.
- Staff worked with several peony growers on export issues and researched protocols for exporting to several countries.
- Staff met with peony grower to inspect buds for export and explain the export process and details.
- Staff worked with timber exporters to conduct field inspections and do core sampling in several harvest locations around Alaska.
- Staff traveled to Asia to supervise timber treatments and work with local companies to complete acceptable treatments required for entry into foreign countries (China).
- Staff worked with an Alaska Company that is wanting to Export Yurts to Germany. The company uses Alaska timber that must meet entry requirements for Germany,
- Staff conducted farm visits to check quality of broccoli, leaf lettuce, etc.
- Staff conducted 20 seed potato field inspections in Matsu Borough, Fairbanks Borough, Homer, Kodiak and Haines, AK for certification and home use potatoes.
- Staff processed 2014 Seed Potato certification and home use potato applications.
- Staff trained with the Colorado Seed Potato Certification at the University of Colorado, San Luis Valley, and Agriculture Research Station. This training included participation in visual and diagnostic disease identification in the field, data management, rules and regulations, observation of disease and bacterial ring rot plots and a tour of the breeding program and greenhouse, tissue culture and plant bank.
- Staff collected foliage and insect samples from Peony farms in the Matsu and Homer areas for the Farm Bill cooperative agreement, Thrips and other insects associated with Peony in Alaska and the Cooperative Agriculture Pest (CAPS), Tobacco Rattle Virus on Peony Farms.

- Staff collected multiple soil samples for the Cooperative Agriculture Pest (CAPS) area wide nematode survey. This soil samples collected were taken at potato, peony and other crops in Alaska. Staff submitted these samples to approved soil lab for screening and has been furnishing results to growers.
- Staff continues to draft up the deliverables for 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 (DOF) on this Project which has been extended thru June 2015.
- Staff set and is now managing three traps at one site in the Matsu. This is the second year cooperating on this project with DNR Division of Forestry' s Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) program which targets exotic beetles.
- Staff conducted five farmer's market visits to check compliance with seed potatoes for sale per Alaska regulations. Staff issued one notice of violation to one vendor for selling potatoes "for planting or eating". Staff conducted a follow up visit at another market where that vendor is located and they were in compliance.
- Staff continues to cross train with the Potato Disease Specialist and transition into management of the Alaska Potato Seed Certification program.
- Staff responded to multiple Peony export inquiries.
- Staff conducted 18 site inspections for: retail surveillance, nursery & greenhouse, aquatic quarantined plants, farm visits and Country of Origin Labeling audits.

Northern Region Office:

- Staff conducted Phytosanitary inspections of Alaska timber for export in Kodiak and Afognak.
- Staff conducted surveys in South East Alaska for the Asian Defoliating moth project and the Nursery Survey funded by USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service. Staff surveyed in the communities of Ketchikan and Juneau, and was assisted by the USDA Pest Survey Specialist (PSS) from Washington who participated in these efforts. The PSS also traveled to Fairbanks to assist with these activities in the interior region.
- Staff worked on USDA cooperative agreements for FY2014 and held meetings with Forest Service entomologists and other cooperators to discuss survey plans for FY2015 projects as well as the USDA PSS.
- Staff answered agricultural lands questions and fielded other Division related questions to the public in the Fairbanks office. Staff also fielded phytosanitary export questions to interior growers interested in export opportunities.

Plant Materials Center:

Erosion Control

- Staff assisting the public with revegetation questions in regards to project implementation and choosing seed mixtures.
- Working with the Department of Transportation design engineers to assist with their seeding and erosion control specifications for projects around the state.
- Collecting baseline soil and vegetation data for the Department of Transportation (DOT), for local projects within the Mat-Su and Anchorage area.

- Currently working with Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) on Akun Island dune revegetation project. Project site consist of 260 acres of shifting coastal sand dunes.

Foundation Seed Production

- PMC production fields have undergone major regeneration this season. We have removed 14 production fields for regeneration in spring of 2015. Weed control and cover cropping has been ongoing in these regeneration fields.
- Harvest of cereal rye has been completed; pre-clean estimates show this to be the largest harvest of such in Plant Material Center history.
- All production fields will be completely harvested by September 15th.
- It appears all small grain planted in early spring will reach maturity this season.

Forage & Soils Lab

- Forage Growth Curve project is currently under way, staff members are collecting field data every two weeks in eight regions throughout Alaska. Publication to be compiled during the winter of 2014/2015.
- Establishing and managing seven forage field trials at the Plant Materials Center.
- Staff is currently running nutrient analysis on several hay field soil samples throughout Alaska.
- Staff has tested and analyzed nutrient composition for several soil samples collected from asparagus trial study areas.
- Staff has collected soil samples at Plant Materials Center for production, future production grass, grain, and potato fields.
- Currently harvesting seed from several forage field plots. Managing forage fields during first season of establishment. Yield and nutrient production analysis of forage trial plots will take place during the 2015 growing season once fields are well established and into there second year of growth.
- Advising Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center (AWCC) with revegetation efforts for there new 60 acre pastures and wood bison enclosure.

Horticulture

- Staff is maintaining current evaluation plots.
- Built a trellis system for support and planted 9 varieties of raspberries and 3 varieties of blackberries for variety observations.
- Collected data and harvested full heads from the broccoli evaluation plot.
- Outreach is being conducted to growers and producers throughout the state.
- Transplanted surviving 38 *Malus* sp. rootstock specimens. Planted approximately 1500 new rootstock seedlings.
- Submitting weekly crop weather survey reports to the United States Department of Agriculture.
- Collecting information from the published survey open to the public for input about the horticulture program evaluations.

Invasive Weeds and Agricultural Pest Program

- Staff coordinated a public meeting in Anchorage on August 12th to discuss the invasive aquatic plant Elodea and its impact to Sand Lake and other places in Anchorage and Alaska. Presenters from Department of Natural Resources, Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Kenai Cooperative Weed Management Area presented information on the current distribution of Elodea in Sand Lake and on-going management efforts around the state. The meeting drew approximately 40 landowners and agency representatives in attendance.
- The 2014 Alaska Invasive Species Conference planning is underway with the conference proceedings scheduled for October 28-29th at the Anchorage Marriott Hotel.
- Outreach efforts with Anchorage Daily News and radio Public Service Announcements have produced close to 60 calls to our 1-877-INVASIV hotline! Most of the public reports are for Canada thistle and a few other invasive pests around the Anchorage area such as Splitlip hempnettle and white sweetclover. While most of these Canada thistle reports are on sites on private property in gardens and landscaping, they allow Plant Materials Center staff to better understand the extent of Canada thistle in the area, potential vectors of spread, and give staff an opportunity to educate others about best management practices for successfully getting rid of invasive plants.
- Coordination with contracted Chugach Yard Care staff and the Invasive Weeds field staff have successfully completed herbicide applications in high priority sites for Canada thistle along state-owned Right-of-Ways. With the help of Chugach Yard Care's field equipment, including a custom made Gator with boom sprayer, and certified applicators, field staff reached their goal of completing a spring application. Careful monitoring of sites throughout the remainder of the season and next year will determine effectiveness of management.

Pathology

- Finished testing Plant Materials Center greenhouse and field plants for 6 viruses.
- Tested peony samples from new grower in Homer for Tobacco Rattle Virus.
- Tested apple and other fruit samples from 4 growers.
- Tested potato samples from around the state for Potato Leafroll Virus (PLRV), Potato Virus X (PVX), and Potato Virus Y (PVY).

Potato Program

- Recruitment for the Potato Program Lead has been completed. We are excited to welcome Bryan Bowen to this position who will be joining the Plant Materials Center staff in November from the University of Wisconsin.
- Field and greenhouse production underway. 123 varieties planted in the field for generation 1 and 2 production and quality control. 2014 greenhouse production includes over 3500 plantlets and 40 varieties with an expected yield of around 600-700lbs of Generation Zero (G0) potatoes.
- Virus testing on all greenhouse and field plantings have been completed.
- Completed potato storage modifications and sanitization in anticipation of harvest
- Equipment modernization in potato tissue culture laboratory.

- Planning on field harvest mid-September with greenhouse harvest to follow.

Publications

- Staff created a new outreach display board and utilized it at Alaska Agriculture Appreciation Day.
- Staff is working on final edits for the Alaska Grown Source Book.
- Staff continues to prepare monthly newsletters, support other staff with computer related duties, BAC reports, forms, surveys, and general web maintenance duties.
- Staff printed updated brochure for Plant Materials Center and is now working on individual program flyers to aid in outreach and other public efforts.
- Staff reprinted some Canada thistle outreach pieces.
- Staff assisted in creating mailers and flyers for Elodea Public meeting held in Anchorage.

Revegetation Program

- Staff continued to assist the Department of Transportation with seed mixture applications for projects around the state.
- Staff took calls from the public as well as private companies about revegetation practices and seed mixtures.
- Staff collected seed from grass evaluation plots at the Plant Materials Center. Seed was collected from the ten best plants within each accession for the purpose of initiating a second cycle of selection.
- Completing weekly evaluations of seed production seed fields to compare traits with trialing collection.

Seed Cleaning

- Both large and small seed cleaning facilities are currently in there summer maintenance program to be ready for the fall/winter cleaning period. Replacement and repair will be ongoing until mid September.
- Plant Materials Center staff is moving forward with Alaska Department of Transportation Public Facilities to finish large seed cleaning modifications. Construction should begin within the next few weeks.
- There have been multiple tour groups and visitors guided through the seed cleaning facilities during the month of July and early part of August.
- Staff is currently reconditioning the Plant Materials Center seed pre-treater in preparation for pretreatment of small grains this cleaning season.

Seeds of Success

- Staff completed a grant application for extension of the funding on the project.
- Staff started planting seed lots selected for increase in the field.
- Staff started harvested seed from field seed increases. After drying the seed, some of the seed lots were cleaned. The rest of the seed will be cleaned in the next several months.
- Staff has been performing maintenance of box garden and field plantings.