



MEMORANDUM
Department of Natural Resources

STATE OF ALASKA
Division of Agriculture

TO: Board of Agriculture
& Conservation

DATE: December 18, 2014

FROM: Franci Havemeister
Director

SUBJECT: Director's Report
Aug./Sept./Oct. 2014

Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund (ARLF):

- Loan officer has received and is processing a loan application.
- Loan officer has provided appraiser with additional information on the Delta Junction property.
- 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 is in process of updating ARLF collateral inspections.
- Loan officer has had conversations over the phone and in person with several potential new borrowers and provided them with application and loan program 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:

- Marketing staff continue to develop and enhance a strong social media presence; the Alaska Grown Facebook page now has over 30,000 likes and recently had a weekly reach of over two million people. Staff also continues to manage the Alaska Grown YouTube, Twitter and Pinterest pages.
- Staff solicited and submitted applications to USDA for annual Organic Cost Share Assistance for 12 organic growers/processors.
- Staff completed the second state-wide school garden census. School gardens have increased 11% in two years with 146 schools (75% of school districts) reporting some type of engagement of their students with a greenhouse, garden, or indoor growing operation.
- Staff participated in the Mat Su Borough School District Calendar Planning Committee meetings to represent the agriculture industry and the desire for a post-Labor Day school start date.
- Staff is facilitating the 2014-15 Restaurant Rewards program; currently 25 restaurants are signed up and eight restaurants are pending.

- Staff participated in the planning committee for the 2015 SARE conference to be held in Fairbanks March 3-5th.
- On behalf of Director Havemeister, marketing staff attended a Sons of Norway Festival Dinner and presented Sig Restad and the Sons of Norway with the "Directors Appreciation Award" for their contribution to the agriculture industry. Over the past 14 years they have sourced over 80,000 pounds of Alaska Grown carrots, cabbage, and potatoes for their events.
- Marketing staff successfully completed the application for the 2014 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant program; the funds received will contribute to seven different projects focused on peony disease and pest management, mushroom and cauliflower variety trials, enhancement of the Chef at the Market program, and expansion of the use of specialty crops in Summer Meal programs.
- Seventeen farms were added to the Alaska Grown program between August and November 2014.
- Staff participated in monthly webinars with Cornell's Produce Safety Alliance. Recent topics included the recently released supplementary proposals for the FDA's Food Safety Modernization Act.
- Staff worked with the Palmer Pioneer Home to help brainstorm incorporating more Alaska Grown into their meals. This led to a wonderful local dinner celebration featuring many Alaska Grown menu items.
- Staff facilitated farm tours between Fred Meyer Corporate representatives and the producers whose products they sell.
- Marketing staff launched the "Farm to Restaurant" factsheet to help farms know the rules and regulations necessary in order to get their product into local restaurants. This factsheet has been featured on our social media page and was the topic of a presentation at the Farm Bureau's Friday Forum in November.
- Staff conducted six USDA Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) audits across the State and eight Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Commodity Inspections between August and November.
- Staff served as a judge for the Airport Heights Elementary Debate Competition; the primary topic was Farm to School activities.
- Marketing staff continue to seek out and participate in Professional Development training including: InDesign software training, participating in the COMDEX communication training event, FDA/ADEC training on "Managing Retail Food Safety" and "Risk-Based Inspection Methods at Retail", training conducted by Serv-Safe to obtain a Food Safety Manager Certification, USDA CoolFacts data entry training, National School Meal planning training, participating in the National Association of Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs (NAFMNP) annual conference and the annual Invasive Species Workshop.
- The 2014-2015 Source Book was released; the print version is being distributed across the state and the online version is being maintained and updated.
- Thirty seven Chef at the Market events occurred this summer. Chefs completed their Final Reports in October which included recipes which are being featured on www.eatlocalalaskagrown.org
- Staff presented about the Farm to School program at many events between August and November including at the North Pole Rotary Club, the School Health and Wellness Institute, the Alaska Principals Conference, the Northland Pioneer Grange Meeting and at a 'One Course Discourse' event at the Bear Tooth Theatre.
- Staff recruited, awarded, and completed the mini-grants to introduce Alaska Grown specialty crops to Summer Meal Programs. Seven out of 14 project applications were awarded and 15 new Alaska Specialty Crop producers developed relationships with the various summer meal sites.

- Staff had a presence at a large number of events between August and November including: at the UAF Mat Su Alaska Agriculture Day; at the Sustainable Chef event; at the Kenai Peninsula, Tanana Valley and Alaska State Fairs; at Fairbanks Restaurant Week; at a WUSATA workshop in Homer; at the “Seafood Throwdown” hosted by the Downtown Soup kitchen in Anchorage; at the Farm Bureau annual meeting, and at the inaugural Food Festival hosted by the Alaska Food Policy Council.
- Staff closed out the 23 Farm to School Mini-Grants for 2014.
- Staff facilitated the annual Legislative Farm Tour.
- Marketing staff facilitated the announcement of the 2014 Farm Family of the Year; the Williams Family of EagleSong Peony Farm were honored at the Alaska State Fair.
- Staff promoted “National Farm to School Month” by visiting six schools and leading activities in 14 classes which engaged over 400 students.
- Staff conducted an On-Farm Food Safety Workshop for small growers in Ketchikan; nine local growers participated.
- The Farm to School program applied for and received a USDA Farm to School Conference grant to host the first state-wide Farm to School Conference in January 2015. Staff are preparing for the event securing which already has 70 registered participants.
- Staff conducted site visits/inspections at six farms, seven grocery stores, and one pet store to determine compliance with produce and invasive species regulations.
- Staff visited many different farmers markets throughout the season to promote the Farmers Market Quest program including the Tanana Valley Farmers Market, the Fairbanks Downtown Market, Calypso School Garden Farm Stands, the Spenard Farmers Market, the Anchorage Farmers Market, the South Anchorage Farmers Market, the Bethel Farmers Market and the Homer Farmers Market. Staff also promoted the program at a St Francis House event that included UAF-CES cooking demonstrations.
- Marketing staff met with the Southeast Hunger group, Child Nutrition Programs, and Southeast Sustainability Partnership in Juneau to further enhance their understanding of the Farm to School program.
- Marketing staff represent the Division of Agriculture on a number of statewide, national and international groups. Staff participated in monthly calls, annual meetings and Executive Board activities with the: Alaska School Nutrition Association, Alaska Food Policy Council, Communication Officers of State Departments of Agriculture, Western Region of the National Farm to School Network, North American Agricultural Marketing Officials, and the Western United States Agricultural Trade Association.

Central Office Inspection:

- Inspection and Regulatory staff have inspected and facilitated the export of over \$100,000,000 (million) dollars of timber exports so far in 2014.
- Staff continues to work with peony growers on export issues and research protocols for exporting to several target countries.
- Staff continues to work 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 completed work with an Alaska Company that is exporting Yurts to Germany. The company uses Alaska timber that must meet entry requirements for Germany.

- Staff participated in several grower-producer meetings to answer questions and provide guidance on inspection and regulatory concerns and issues.
- Staff conducted and completed all seed potato field inspections in Fairbanks, Matsu Borough, Homer, Kodiak and Haines for AK for certification and home use potatoes.
- Seed potato certification resulted in 13 certified seed growers with a total of 32 acres, 116 varieties and 315 lots that passed field certification.
- Staff responded to and conducted 18 Fresh Fruit and Vegetable (FFV) 300 inspections.
- Staff conducted 5 farm visits to check quality of potatoes and distribute a potato disease identification booklet to the growers.
- Staff collected 21 soil samples from Peony farms in the Homer areas for the Cooperative Agriculture Pest (CAPS), Tobacco Rattle Virus on Peony Farms. Staff submitted these samples to approved soil lab for screening of nematodes.
- Staff reviewed and released 3 USDA permits to move insects and one permit to move soil into Alaska.
- Staff successfully completed the USDA Authorized Certification Official Recertification Training which is required by the USDA to be authorized to perform phytosanitary export certification and issue certificates.
- Staff participated in a teleconference to develop IPM guidelines for Lygus bug management in peony crops in Alaska whose participants included growers, University of Fairbanks, Cooperative Extension and the Division of Agriculture. This group was formed in response to a Lygus sp. pest problem in the Fairbanks area this last summer which had an impact on the cut flower industry.
- Staff participated in the quarterly Alaska Pest Risk Committee (AKPRAC) Meeting, where topics of interest discussed were the Asian Gypsy Moth detection this past summer in Southeast Alaska and how this information was disseminated to the group.
- Staff collected a 400 tuber sample at a certified seed potato farm and then forwarded it to Colorado Seed Potato Certification in efforts to participate in the 2014 winter grow out/testing of seed potatoes with a goal of establishing future protocols for the Alaska seed potato growers who would like to enter into export markets.
- Staff responded to and completed Alaska Seed potato Acreage report and forwarded to the National Potato Certification.
- Staff provided the 2014 Alaska Certified Seed Potato Growers to Potato Country Magazine, for future publication in magazine.
- Staff verified compliance with the certification of seed potatoes listed in the Alaska Grown Source Book and Directory.
- Staff responded to multiple inquiries and provided information on potato labeling and grading requirements for seed potatoes to be sold in greenhouses and grocery stores.
- Staff managed three DNR Division of Forestry's Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) traps at one site in the Matsu. This is the third year cooperating on this project with the Division of Forestry which targets exotic beetles. Staff forwarded collections of insects to the program coordinator at the end of the summer season for identification.
- Staff attended the 2014 Alaska Invasive Species Workshop (AISW) which assists with identifying the Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) individuals throughout the state as well as methods and techniques of reporting and response to pest threats. Staff was able to gain Continuing Education Credits (CEUs) for Pesticide Recertification.
- Staff participated in monthly teleconferences/webinars with Cornell's Produce Safety Alliance. Recent topics included the recently released supplementary proposals for FDA's Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA).

- Staff conducted site visits/inspections at six farms, seven grocery stores, and one pet store to determine compliance with produce and invasive species regulations
- Staff conducted six USDA Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) audits; two in Palmer, two in Juneau, and one each in Ketchikan and Wrangell.
- Staff attended joint FDA/ADEC training “Managing Retail Food Safety” and “Risk-Based Inspection Methods at Retail”
- Staff attended training conducted by Serv-Safe and obtained Food Safety Manager Certification.
- Staff conducted an On-Farm Food Safety Workshop for small growers while in Ketchikan. Nine local growers were in attendance.
- Staff solicited and submitted applications to USDA for annual Organic Cost Share Assistance for 12 organic growers/processors.
- Staff attended USDA COOL Program’s Cool Facts data entry training
- Staff provided outreach to several growers regarding food safety, organic certification and regulations.
- New Brands Issued: 3
- Phytosanitary certificates Issued: 14
- Shell Egg surveillance Inspections: 1
- FV-300 Inspections: 18 cert issued

Northern Region Office:

- Staff travelled to Korea to supervise timber treatments and work with local companies to complete acceptable treatments required for entry into foreign countries (China).
- Staff conducted phytosanitary inspections of Alaska timber for export in Kodiak, Afognak, and Ketchikan.
- Staff conducted surveys in SE Alaska for Asian Defoliating moth project funded by USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service. Staff surveyed in the communities of Juneau, Sitka, and Ketchikan.
- Staff conducted land inspections in Kobe and Browns Court agricultural projects.
- Staff worked on USDA cooperative agreements (Cooperative Agriculture Pest Survey, CAPS, and Farm Bill) and provided support for agreements as the State Survey Coordinator.
- Staff submitted project proposals for FY2015 USDA funding consideration via CAPS and Farm Bill. Projects include continuation of the Asian Defoliating Moth Survey, Exotic Wood Boring Bark Beetle Survey, and an Exotic Mollusk Survey. FY2014 surveys that will continue into the summer of 2015 include a survey for Vectors of Tobacco Rattle Virus (TRV) in Peony, with emphasis on collecting samples for soil nematodes and funding for Plant Materials staff to test leaf samples for TRV, and a Small Grains Survey to sample for insects. Earlier this year, staff requested a funding extension for a Farm Bill project submitted during FY2013 to survey for Insects Associated with Peony in Alaska. Part of the funding includes a Reimbursable Services Agreement for the University of Alaska Fairbanks Museum to curate, identify, and database the collected specimens. This project will continue during the winter and conclude June 30, 2015.
- Staff submitted information to Forest Service Entomologists regarding the Asian Defoliating Moth survey for inclusion in the upcoming Forest Health Conditions Report for Alaska, published online and in hard copy.

- Staff worked with interior potato growers and answered questions regarding the current Alaska potato regulations.
- Staff conducted grain inspections in Delta Junction and collected samples for full grade and protein analysis.
- Staff fielded agricultural lands questions and other Division related questions to the public in the Fairbanks office. Staff also fielded phytosanitary export questions to interior growers interested in export opportunities.

Land Section:

- Staff updated area farm maps and plans to distribute them to appropriate agencies and organizations.
- Staff helped several farmers begin the subdivision process for their farms.
- Staff held Auction #473 selling 100 acres for \$45,678 in Salcha near Harding Lake.
- Staff began working on Brown's Court Preliminary Decision which is located between Nenana and Healy for the purpose of including two parcels (300 acres) in the next sale. Inspected several parcels in Brown's court for possible HazMat.
- Stated participated in Division of Mining Land & Water Resource Assessment & Development Section meeting concerning newly classified agricultural land in the Eastern Tanana Basin Area Plan.
- Staff assisted several farmers complete the patent process to acquire title to their farms. This included site inspections and help updating farm conservation plans.
- Staff continues to work with Division of Mining Land & Water on rerouting a RS 2477 trail to help facilitate the sale of nearly 2000 acres of agriculture land in Kobe North.
- Staff participated in Matanuska Susitna Borough meeting concerning borough agricultural lands.
- Staff assisted several landowners with soil suitability questions.
- Staff assisted in the preparation of 14 State Farm Conservation Plans for the subdivision of tract 24 in the Point MacKenzie agricultural project area.
- Staff assisted Division of Mining Land & Water Leasing with inspection of an agricultural lease in Talkeetna.
- Staff attended Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District meetings.
- Staff attended Matanuska Susitna Borough meeting regarding the sale of agricultural development rights to a gravel producer.
- Staff attended the Natural Resource Conservation Service fall State Technical Committee Meeting
- Staff met with Division of Forestry regarding possible timber harvest on remote lands designated for agricultural development/sale. Parcels will be included in Division of Forestry "5 year plan" of timber disposals. Additional future meeting will discuss parcel layouts and harvest area layouts. Division of Forestry will possibly require construction of pioneer roads suitable for future farm access.

Plant Materials Center:

Erosion Control

- Staff conducted Soil testing, site evaluation, and erosion control assistance on the Parks Highway project, Dalton highway project, and Milepost 160-171 project for the Alaska Department of transportation.
- Staff monitored and evaluated the Kodiak Bohemian Knotweed eradication project, with Kodiak Soil and Water Conservation District. This project was revegetated July of 2013.
- Staff presented a power point for Revegetation & Erosion Control at the Alaska Invasive Species Conference and for the American Society of Civil Engineers at the Mt-Su College.

Forage & Soils Lab

- Staff Completed the 3rd and final field season of the Growth Curve Project. This project was set to be a minimum 3 year project and is currently in eight regions of Alaska, such as Fairbanks, Delta Junction, Kenny Lake, Palmer, Point McKenzie, Soldotna, Homer, and Kodiak. This project consists of nutrient and yield production of hay fields across Alaska and will be a publication to compliment the Alaska Forage Manual.
- Staff managed and established forage trial plots. Staff is currently conducting evaluations on 30 acres of hay fields at the PMC. This project is to compare five native grass species to traditionally grown Brome and Timothy. A comparison, data collection, and evaluation will be done for yield production, nutrient composition, harvest resistance, and forage palatability.
- Staff visited the Chirikof & Wosnesenski islands located near the Alaska Peninsula. The purpose of this trip was to assess grazing utilization of free ranging feral cattle herds on each island. A secondary goal was to evaluate any and all erosion on each island.

Horticulture

- Staff has completed all winterization of current evaluation plots.
- Winter environmental data collection will continue throughout the winter at trial locations around the state. This data is used in monitoring plant health due to varying winter conditions.
- Raspberries and blackberries variety observations data has been collected for review and evaluation.
- Data and harvest records of the broccoli evaluation plot are being compiled for creation of the first year report to be published.
- Staff is conducting outreach to growers and producers throughout the state.
- Staff is monitoring and collecting data of surviving Malus sp. rootstock specimens and newly planted rootstock seedlings.
- Staff is reviewing information gathered from published survey open to the public for input about the horticulture program evaluations and looking for collaborators for future projects.
- Staff is planning trial locations that are being established for the new grant funded cauliflower variety observation trial to begin in spring of 2015.

Invasive Weeds and Agricultural Pest Program

- Staff coordinated with the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) to conduct a comprehensive vegetation survey in the Mat-Su's remote Alexander Lake after Elodea had been discovered near a cabin. Results indicated 20 different native submersed and emergent species and that elodea only covers about 10 acres of the ~750 acre lake.
- Results of Alexander Lake surveys as well as statewide status for elodea were presented at the 2014 Mat-Su Salmon Science and Conservation Symposium in Palmer within the "Potential impacts to Salmon" session. Funding for the eradication of elodea in Alexander Lake is currently being sought.
- Anchorage Lakes: Sand, Little Campbell, and DeLong had a systematic survey of vegetation completed this past field season for baseline data. This data will be used to detect changes in vegetation biodiversity and effectiveness of management of elodea.
- Staff participated in the application of aquatic herbicides on the Kenai Peninsula in support for the National Wildlife Refuge, and Homer Soil and Water Conservation District in the eradication of elodea.
- Coordination with US Forest Service and program staff are underway for a public meeting in Cordova about elodea eradication. The meeting is tentatively planned for March.
- Staff attended an Anchorage Community Council meeting to support local efforts to limit the sale and planting of invasive European Bird Cherry trees in newly created projects and programs within the community's jurisdiction.
- Staff completed a final report of Canada thistle which summarized completed work for the last two field seasons. A total of 42 sites were managed; 15 sites utilized herbicide treatments in state-owned right of ways.
- Staff attended and presented Canada thistle management results at the 2014 Alaska Community of Noxious and Invasive Plant Management (CNIPM) annual conference.
- Heather Stewart became the new Invasive Plant and Agricultural Pest Coordinator at the Plant Materials Center this fall. She has been on staff for the past 18 months as a Natural Resource Specialist in the field and writing reports on Canada thistle, doing surveys for elodea and making maps for the PMC.

Potato Program

- Bryan Bowen began duties on November 17 as the new Potato Agronomist, replacing Bill Campbell.
- Staff is rearranging the tissue culture laminar flow hood to allow for better work-place ventilation.
- The clone bank was planted to the field in 2014 and requires re-introduction back to tissue culture. This is an extended process and will be accomplished over the course of the winter.
- The order form for 2015 Generation 0 seed production will be distributed to potato growers during the month of December.

Publications

- Staff continues to prepare monthly newsletters, support other staff with computer related duties, BAC reports, forms, surveys, and general web maintenance duties.
- Staff completed and submitted the 2013 PMC Annual Report and has begun the 2014 Annual Report

- Staff created and is maintaining a facebook page for the Alaska Committee on Noxious and Invasive Plant Management (CNIPM).
- Staff created an assortment of printed materials for CNIPM and the Invasive Species Conference.
- Staff is currently working on the updated CNIPM Strategic Plan.
- Staff is in planning stages of building a new database for the seed lab.
- Staff is creating brochures for European Bird Cherry and Reed Canarygrass.
- Staff is creating brochures, manuals, flyers for the Noatak Seed Harvest Project.

Revegetation Program

- Staff is in the collaboration stages of developing a Reimbursable Service Agreement (RSA) with the Matanuska Susitna Borough. The PMC will oversee establishment and evaluation of native species for revegetation success on sections of alluvial deposit areas along the Matanuska River from the Old Glenn Highway Bridge near Palmer to the Knik arm approximately 9.5 miles southwest of Palmer. The objective of this research is to evaluate the success and potential of plant species for their ability to provide erosion control and dust abatement. Project will commence summer 2015.
- Staff collected Native brome from SE Alaska in 2012 and collections from Greenland, Iceland/Faroe Islands, Norway and Nunavut are in the process of evaluations at the PMC fields. Field evaluations started this summer with records kept on the performance of the accessions and the plants within the accessions. The top 10 plants based on field notes were collected and will be used for at least one additional cycle of establishment and selection. This second cycle will occur in summer 2015. The end goal is to evaluate species that would do well for revegetation and erosion control purposes. Native bromes collected from SE Alaska were very late ripening.
- Staff is collaborating with the Department of Transportation (DOT) to try to develop an RSA to assist with DOT projects. This could involve reviewing plan sets at the design phase for erosion and seeding specifications, species identification and seed collection, conducting baseline soil and vegetation surveys at the project site prior to disturbance, and conducting qualitative and quantitative monitoring at projects end.

Foundation Seed Production

- Foundation seed production for the 2014 season is finished.
- The PMC harvested 31 Foundation seed lots for its current seed fields. Roughly 13,000 pounds of grass, grain and forb seed was harvested.
- Staff are cleaning and conditioning the harvested Foundation seed.
- Staff is planning for the 2015 production season. This planning will help establish new seed fields for further seed increases and Foundation seed Production.
- All small grain planted and harvested this season has been cleaned and final laboratory tests show high purity and germination.

Seed Cleaning

- Both large and small seed cleaning facilities are ramping up for the 2014-15 cleaning season.
- The PMC has 31 Foundation seed lots, 21 large producer's lots and over 50 small seed lots to be cleaned and conditioned this winter.

- Alaska seed growers have shipped in 17 seed lots that equal an estimated 100,000 lbs. for cleaning and conditioning.
- The PMC seed cleaning facilities continue to provide tours and informative discussions to Alaskan seed producers, seed brokers and others interested in becoming native seed producers.

Seed Lab

- Seed lab conducted 158 seed tests. This included 43 Purity, 28 Germination, 16 noxious weed, 70 Seed counts, and 1 Grow out tests.
- Staff is working on testing seed lots harvested and cleaned in 2014.

Seeds of Success

- Staff completed a grant application for extension of the funding on the project. Application was approved and funds were received. Project is extended for five more years.
- Staff cleaned over seventy seed lots collected in 2014.
- Staff conducted seed counts to determine the approximate number of seed in the lots.
- Staff sent portion of the seed to Pullman, WA for long term seed storage.