



**MEMORANDUM**  
Department of Natural Resources

**STATE OF ALASKA**  
Division of Agriculture

**TO:** Board of Agriculture  
& Conservation

**DATE:** February 26, 2015

**FROM:** Franci Havemeister  
Director

**SUBJECT:** Director's Report  
Nov/Dec 2014

**Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund (ARLF):**

- Loan officer has received and processed incoming loan applications as well as loan modification and loan repurpose requests.
- Loan officer is in process of managing and disposing of recently acquired property in Delta Junction, including ordering Broker's Opinion of Values on the property and listing the property with a realtor.
- 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 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:**

- Nine farms were added to the Alaska Grown Program in December & January.
- The final FY 2014 USDA Organic Cost Share reimbursement applications were processed in January. A total of 13 reimbursements were made to 12 organic processors and producers this year.
- Staff was nominated and accepted an advisory board role with the National Farm to School Network and then attended their Advisory Meeting in Washington D.C.
- Marketing staff attended the Winter Meeting of the Western United States Agricultural Trade Association (WUSATA) to discuss opportunities for export of Alaskan products.
- The Restaurant Rewards 2014-2015 program is active; 26 restaurants are signed up and nine restaurants are pending.
- Staff continues researching and applying to new funding opportunities in order to continue the Farmers Market Quest Program grant for 2015 and beyond.

- Marketing staff attended the Child Nutrition Workshops January, engaging attendees in discussions about the Alaska Grown & Farm to School programs.
- Staff conducted a USDA Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) Audit at a retail grocery store in Juneau AK, bringing the total number of 2014 audits conducted to 12.
- Staff presented at The Council of Educational Facility Planners International conference to explain how school design planners can integrate farm to school into their kitchen, classroom, and grounds plans.
- Marketing staff finished the Farmers Market Manual Fact Sheets. The fact sheets and additional resources have been loaded onto the Division of Agriculture website.
- Staff conducted site visits at one sprout growing operation and one aquaponic basil production facility in Juneau and provided them with information on general food safety, USDA GAP/GHP audits, and organic certification.
- The 2014-2015 online Source Book is being maintained and updated regularly.
- Staff attended the annual Alaska School Nutrition Association Board meeting to continue to promote the use of Alaska Grown foods in the school lunch program.
- Staff visited the Kroger (Fred Meyer) Corporate Campus in Portland, Oregon to discuss both existing and new opportunities for movement and promotion of Alaska Grown products in 2015.
- Staff hosted the first ever Alaska Farm to School Conference in January. There were 129 attendees from 36 communities around the state. Evaluation results and direct feedback indicate the conference was successful with many connections being made and program expansion around the state. Staff successfully got Alaska Grown product served in the lunch at the Marriott during the Conference. Additionally, staff was interviewed with Deborah Kane, National Director for USDA Farm to School Team, on Talk of Alaska during the Conference.
- Staff continues to participate with the Alaska Food Policy Council, serving on the Governing Board and providing input for the upcoming Town Hall Meetings.
- Staff met with Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation Environmental Health Director to discuss authorities, implementation and timeline of new FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) regulations. Additionally, staff continues to participate in monthly teleconferences with Cornell Produce Safety Alliance regarding implementation of FSMA.
- Staff provided input and expertise to the Alaska Grown Cookbook being developed in collaboration with Child Nutrition Programs and UAF Cooperative Extension Services.
- Staff attended the winter meeting of the Alaska Peony Growers Association; four Specialty Crop Competitive Grant recipients were on hand to present findings from their research.
- At the request of the Alaska Rhodiola Growers Group, staff attended a growers meeting and presented information on the organic certification process and national organic regulations.
- Staff continues to serve on the executive board of the North American Agricultural Marketing Officials (NAAMO). Planning for the 2015 annual meeting to be held in Boston, MA is underway.

- Staff attended and presented at the Alaska Association of School Business Officials in Anchorage. The presentation was in collaboration with the grants administrator from Department of Commerce, who administers the grant money for the Nutritional Alaskan Foods for Schools.
- Staff conducted two store visits to inspect local produce as well as conducted two shipping point inspections on grading lines at local farms in December & January.
- Staff was interviewed by Vermont Law School about the state legislation that supports Farm to School efforts in Alaska.

**Central Office Inspection:**

- Staff participated in the Alaska Peony Growers Association meeting in Fairbanks, AK and addressed questions regarding international trade, pest survey work in Alaska impacting peonies and marketing peonies to international markets.
- Staff continued working with peony growers on export issues and research protocols for exporting to several target countries.
- Staff continued work with timber exporters to conduct field inspections and do core sampling in several harvest locations around Alaska.
- Staff responded to and conducted 10 Fresh Fruit and Vegetable (FFV) 300 inspection consisting of 13 lots and 38,789 lbs. of product.
- Staff conducted 5 farm visits to check quality of potatoes and distribute a potato disease identification booklet to the growers.
- Staff conducted 3 phytosanitary inspections and issued certificates.
- Staff is working on re-accreditation for ACO (Accredited Certification Official) export licenses.
- 2015 is the renewal year for Alaska Brand holders. Staff has been working with recorded brand holders to renew and record brands per Alaska statute.
- The Alaska inspection program manager has been appointed to a special NAPPO (North American Plant Protection Organization) forestry export panel to work on international forest products phytosanitary standards and methods for international movement of wood. The panel will work to develop and propose an integrated measures approach which may include: inspections (at harvest, during production, prior to and or following export), prescribed production activities; laboratory diagnostics; the application of treatments; the relationship between infested areas and pest free areas and general aspects of surveillance.
- Staff responded to and conducted 3 Fresh Fruit and Vegetable (FFV) 300 inspections.
- Staff conducted 8 farm visits to check quality of tablestock potatoes and distribute a potato disease identification booklet to the growers.
- Staff reviewed and released one USDA permit to move soil into Alaska.
- Staff updated the Late Blight Quarantine Letter, 2015 Certified Seed Potato Grower List and 2015 Seed Potato Variety List.
- Staff updated the Potato Association of America Certification Agency List and the Seed Potato Certification Survey. These lists are shared nationally and identify contacts as well as procedures and protocols of each state's seed potato certification program.

- Staff responded to multiple inquiries, provided information and verified compliance on potato labeling and certification requirements for seed potatoes to be sold in greenhouses and garden centers as well as tablestock labeling to local producer.
  - Staff responded and forwarded to the USDA inquiries on fruit trees being imported from Canada and Citrus from California.
  - Staff screened, labeled and entered data on the insects collected in Summer of 2014 for Farm Bill Grant, Insects associated with Peony in Alaska. These insects will be forwarded to the UAF Entomologist for final identification.
  - Staff continues to work on 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 December 2015.
  - Staff participated in the quarterly Alaska Pest Risk Committee (AKPRAC) Meeting, where topics of interest discussed were interceptions of boats infested with zebra mussels heading to Alaska. This resulted in a discussion of a possible interagency effort at the Alcan this next spring.
  - Staff continues to work on the USDA Harmonization Plan and the requirements for Alaska to participate in this national agreement.
  - Staff participated and gave a 2014 Seed Potato Certification Update at the Potato Industry meeting held on January 22, 2015.
  - Staff participated in the annual 2014 National Potato Council and Potato Association of America, Seed Potato Certification meetings where participants included Seed Potato Certification from Idaho, Maine, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Montana, Oregon, California, Washington, Michigan, Colorado, Idaho, Canada and Washington Seed Potato Commission, Washington, Idaho and Maine Potato Growers and USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). Topics included Potato Virus Y (PVY) Management Plan, Bacterial Ring Rot control, Potato Cyst Nematode Status and testing, Virus Management Plan, Potato Wart Surveillance, Pathogen testing for Phytosanitary Certification, Bacterial Ring Rot early detection, etc.
  - Staff trained with Seed Potato Certification Agencies during their winter seed potato postharvest growouts, in Oahu, Hawaii. Currently, seed potato certification for Colorado, Montana, Idaho, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan requires a winter growout to be done in Hawaii for seed potatoes to be recertified. This winter growout meets the requirements of the USDA Harmonization Plan, which is necessary for the interstate and international marketing of certified seed potatoes and control the spread of disease.
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- New Brands Issued: 91
  - Elk Farms Inspected: 0
  - Phytosanitary certificates Issued: 7
  - Shell Egg surveillance Inspections: 3
  - FV-300 Inspections: 4 cert issued

**Northern Region Office: Nov/Dec/Jan**

- Staff attended and presented at the National Gypsy Moth Review in Louisville, Kentucky. The Review provides Agency Updates, Gypsy Moth Research, Aerial Spray Updates and

Information, Pesticide Updates and Information, and Regulatory Updates. The meeting is held annually and is attended by USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, State Dept. of Agriculture and Natural Resources, to address concerns and provide updates concerning regulated exotic pests. Sessions on non-gypsy moth invasives such as the emerald ash borer, thousand cankers disease, Asian longhorned beetle, spotted wing drosophila and the brown marmorated stink bug were also addressed as well as updates for Asian Gypsy Moth.

- Staff worked with ARLF to help transition the Fellman Farm property in Delta Junction back to the State. Staff travelled to Delta three times in December to secure the property, post signs of no trespassing, and to help ensure the property was winterized. While conducting a final walk through, staff noticed multiple barn cats that were strayed on the property and living in the barn, starving and cannibalizing one another. Staff rented live traps from the Fairbanks Borough Animal Control office in Fairbanks to capture the animals. Staff successfully captured all nine of the cats and brought them to the shelter where the animals received proper medical care and attention. Seven of the cats were saved and adopted to good homes.
- Staff worked with an interior Alaska potato grower regarding Alaska labeling requirements and fielded other potato related inquiries.
- Staff worked on USDA cooperative agreements (CAPS and Farm Bill) data management and ensured all data was up to date in the USDA databases per agreements.
- Staff attended the Alaska Peony Growers Conference in Fairbanks, Alaska. Staff has been coordinating with some of the presenters at the meeting who will be continuing efforts to help understand pest problems related to peony in Alaska next summer, 2015.
- Staff fielded agricultural lands questions and other Division related questions to the public in the Fairbanks office.

### **Land Section:**

- Staff fielded many inquiries regarding the next land auction particularity Kobe North.
- Staff helped several farmers begin the subdivision process for their farms.
- Staff helped winner of Auction #473 complete necessary paperwork to acquire a contract.
- Staff continued 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. Staff inspected several parcels in Brown's court for possible HazMat.
- Staff continued to work with Division of Mining Land & Water (DMLW) Resource Assessment & Development Section concerning newly classified agricultural land in the Eastern Tanana Basin Area Plan.
- Staff had meeting with DMLW land sale team concerning next steps in the Nenana-Totchaket land offering.
- Staff discussed the survey issues related to the Nenana-Totchaket project.
- 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 Ad Hoc Committee meeting concerning borough agricultural lands.
- Staff attended Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District meeting.
- Staff attended Upper-Susitna Soil and Water Conservation District meeting.
- Staff assisted in the preparation of two State Farm Conservation Plans.

- Staff had a meeting/training with DMLW land sale team regarding the use of USDA-NRCS “Web Soil Survey” as a research tool for future land sale project areas.
- Staff continues to work with DMLW on a new form for Grazing Management Plans, utilized in State grazing authorizations.

### **Plant Materials Center:**

#### **Erosion Control**

- Staff conducted a power point presentation about revegetation and erosion control to the Department of Transportation (DOT) Central Region – Anchorage, Design Engineers for their quarterly meeting.
- Staff conducted a power point presentation about revegetation and erosion control to the Department of Transportation (DOT) Northern Region – Fairbanks, Construction Phase Engineers.
- Staff monitored and evaluated the Kodiak Bohemian Knotweed eradication project in conjunction with the Kodiak Soil and Water Conservation District that was revegetated July, 2013.
- Staff is currently working with Central Region – Anchorage DOT office on Hooper Bay airport project. Recommending site specific seed recommendations and erosion control measures.

#### **Forage & Soils Lab**

- Staff is currently working on narrative and data analysis sections of the Growth Curve publication. This project was completed in the fall of 2014, publication expected to be completed by fall of 2015.
- Staff completed rangeland and forage analysis of Chirikof Island, AK. This document will be utilized by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to determine a management strategy for the cattle inhabiting Chirikof Island.
- Staff completed proposal for Denali Alfalfa seed production project. This project would allow funding for the seed propagation of Alfalfa (cultivar – Denali), and testing for winter hardiness, herbicide resistance, and nutrient evaluation.

#### **Horticulture**

- Staff is monitoring winter environmental data collection at trial locations around the state. This data is used in monitoring plant health due to varying winter conditions.
- Staff is completing the reports for the broccoli evaluation plot, the second year asparagus variety trial, the second year Malus rootstock trial, and the garlic variety trial for publication.
- Staff attended the Alaska Peony Growers Conference in Fairbanks.
- Staff is preparing a presentation on the Malus rootstock trial for the Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Conference in Fairbanks, March 3-5.
- Staff is conducting outreach to growers and producers throughout the state.
- Staff is reviewing information from a public survey about the horticulture program evaluations and seeking collaborators for future projects.

- Staff is planning trial locations for the new grant funded cauliflower variety observation trial to begin in spring of 2015.
- Stratification for *Malus* spp. seeds has been started for the ongoing rootstock trial.
- Staff is planning for the 2015 growing season, current ongoing evaluations and potential new projects.

### **Invasive Weeds and Agricultural Pest Program**

- Staff is in the process of drafting a Statewide elodea management plan in collaboration with statewide Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the US Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife Services, Copper River Watershed, and the Parks Foundation. The management plan is a species-specific plan that addresses the statewide need for management of Alaska's first freshwater submersed aquatic invasive plant, and for the prevention of further spread.
- A pilot greenhouse study is underway to test the effectiveness of natural or organic herbicides on common invasive weeds, as well as species that are native but agriculturally undesirable. Results will be presented at the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Conference in March with continued field trials this growing season.
- Staff is helping facilitate the update of the Alaska Community for Noxious and Invasive Plant Management (CNIPM) Strategic Plan. The plan is estimated to be finished in October.
- Staff is working with DNR's GIS department to update and make available to the public new elodea distribution maps. The maps will offer downloadable data for the absence and presence of elodea throughout the state.

### **Pathology**

- Staff tested over 250 grower potato samples for Potato leafroll virus (PLRV), Potato virus X (PVX), and Potato virus Y (PVY).
- Staff strain-typed PVY isolates.
- Staff confirmed diagnosis of *Erwinia amylovora* (fire blight) in 2 apple orchards and made management recommendations.
- Staff harvested and tested potato bacterial ring rot (BRR) variety trial.
- Staff began fall/winter testing for BRR in growers' harvested tubers.
- Staff tested PMC potato tissue culture plantlets for 6 viruses, as well as bacteria, and Potato spindle tuber viroid (PSTVd), to ensure clean material is advanced to production.
- Staff presented to Mat-Su Farm Bureau, October 23, 2014 "Alaska Plant Materials Center Plant Pathology."
- Staff presented at a winter potato meeting at PMC, January 22, 2015 "Bacteria and Virus Testing", including management recommendations.
- Staff began testing grain for deoxynivalenol (DON, vomitoxin), a mycotoxin formed by *Fusarium* spp.

### **Potato Program**

- Staff has made several on-farm visits have been made in the valley to develop acquaintances and to see the nature of potato operations.

- The potato clone bank was planted to the field in 2014 and the entire collection of over 150 varieties and experimental lines requires re-introduction back to tissue culture. This is an extended process and will be accomplished over the course of the winter. It is the major emphasis of winter work. As of February 1, approximately two-thirds of the collection has been submitted for a battery of testing 6 common viruses and bacteria testing.
- Staff attended the National Potato Expo January 6-8 to network with potato industry contacts and learn about major developments at the national and international level.
- Staff received an order request for 2015 Generation 0 seed production was distributed to potato growers during the month of December with a January 31 deadline. Order volume is up to 775lbs, compared to 540lbs in 2014.
- Staff participated in several discussions related to the presence of potato viruses and the status of Bacterial Ring Rot on farms in the Valley. 2014 diagnostic testing was critical to ascertaining the status of these disease cycles and should be promoted with growers in 2015.
- Staff made presentations to the Potato Industry on the evening of January 22. Possible directions for the post-Campbell position were discussed. This included an emphasis on variety trials
- Staff has obtained quotes for acquiring some pieces of potato plot equipment.
- Renovations have been discussed for two PMC greenhouses to create workspace for Generation 0 storage and general potato handling work. Improvements will begin in late winter and spring.
- Several breeding programs in the lower 48 have been contacted about contributing new germplasm to a future screening effort at the PMC. Orders have been placed. Some state labs have been a source of plant material to contribute to the Generation 0 production.

### **Publications**

- Staff continues to prepare monthly newsletters, BAC reports, forms, surveys, and general web maintenance duties.
- Staff assumed responsibility of creating all Fact Sheets and Media Releases for the Division.
- Staff continues to provide team support for computer and program related challenges.
- Staff is preparing the PMC 2014 Annual Report.
- Staff is maintaining a facebook group for the Alaska Committee on Noxious and Invasive Plant Management (CNIPM.)
- Staff created a bios document for the new CNIPM board members.
- Staff prepared the CNIPM quarterly newsletter.
- Staff is in planning stages of building a new database for the seed lab.
- Staff is creating a brochure for the invasive European bird cherry and Reed canarygrass.
- Staff is creating a web page plant profile for European bird cherry.
- Staff created an informative brochure about carrots.
- Staff continues to maintain the online SourceBook.
- Staff created new 'Weed Free' logo for forage and straw.
- Staff created brochures, plant flyers, field identification guide, and posters for Noatak Seed Collection project.
- Staff created a program guide for Farm to School Conference.
- Staff finalized a layout for Chirikoff report.
- Staff is updating forms with the new state letterhead.



### **Revegetation Program**

- Staff collected Native brome from Southeast Alaska, Greenland, Iceland/Faroe Islands, Norway, and Nunavut in 2012. The 2014 season at the PMC fields was the first year of evaluating these collections. Seed collections were made from the top ten plants and are now in the process of being cleaned for a second cycle of establishment and selection for 2015.
- Staff is still in ongoing collaborations 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, seed collection, conducting baseline soil and vegetation surveys at the project site prior to disturbance, and conducting qualitative and quantitative monitoring at projects end.
- Staff created a Revegetation and Erosion Control power point presentation. Staff has received a lot of requests for an informative presentation on revegetation and erosion. The presentation outline consists of an overview of the revegetation approach and processes starting with baseline data collection and progressing to species selection, plant materials, revegetation options, field implementation, weed free forage, gravel products, and monitoring. Discussion of erosion control including its impacts, regulatory requirements, and BMPs for erosion and sediment control will also be included. This presentation has been given to multiple agencies and has received high praise. We are continuing to get requests to present.

### **Seed Cleaning and Conditioning**

- The seed sale program will be switching from a bi-annual spring/fall seed sale to an annual seed sale thus making seed available throughout the production season, April-September.
- Staff is selecting samples of seed for the annual sale, based on availability and previous demand.
- Staff is reorganizing the seed storage house and updating the inventory, and seed lot viability.
- The large seed cleaning facility has finished cleaning all *Elymus trachycaulus* (slender wheatgrass) seed lots. Seed is bagged, stored, and ready for future sales.
- The large seed cleaning facility has begun cleaning *Poa alpina* (alpine bluegrass) seed lots.
- The small seed cleaning facility is continuing to clean and package seed from producers, and agencies, as well as PMC foundation production fields.
- Staff assisted with revegetation species recommendations to the National Park Service for a project at the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park.
- Staff collected and provided examples of grain on the stem (pre-threshing) to educate children about agriculture and farm practices.

### **Seed Lab**

- Seed lab conducted 104 seed tests. This included 27 Purity, 68 Germination, and 9 Noxious Weed tests.
- Staff prepared and sent invoices to customers.
- Staff is currently testing seed lots from the 2015 spring seed sale.

**Seeds of Success**

- Staff is assembling 1,000 seed packets of native seed mix for BLM. Seed packets will be given away on Earth Day.