



MEMORANDUM
Department of Natural Resources

STATE OF ALASKA
Division of Agriculture

TO: Board of Agriculture
& Conservation

DATE: July 14, 2016

FROM: Arthur J. Keyes IV
Director

SUBJECT: Director's Report
April, May, June 2016

Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund

- Loan officer is working on the disposal of Mt. McKinley Meat & Sausage. The Requests for Proposals for Lease with Option to Purchase went out for bid. Loan officer has provided one tour of the meat plant with assistance from Mr. Crigger, Production Manager. Loan officer has also been answering questions and providing requested information to interested persons.
- Loan officer has assisted with the disposal of the Palmer Property previously known as the Palmer Blow Mold Manufacturing Facility. Public notice was posted regarding the sale of the property to Matanuska Brewing Company. Loan officer has answered questions from the public and media regarding the disposal of the property. Loan Officer has also assisted with ordering locates for the property and assisting the buyer with information they need. A neighboring business also had vehicles that were on the property which loan officer assisted in having removed.
- Loan officer has received and processed two loan applications. Loan officer has also recently received an additional loan application which is being processed.
- 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 processed warrant requests, loan closings, 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 updated the eatlocalalaskagrown.org webpage and continues to manage the Alaska Grown Facebook page.

- Staff completed and published the 2016-2017 Online Alaska Grown Source Book.
- Staff created an updated Alaska farmer's market brochure, interactive map, web banners, advertisements, promotional items and created an Alaska Grown 30 Year Anniversary logo.
- Staff is soliciting nominations for the 2016 Farm Family of the Year.
- Staff hosted an outreach booth at the Who Let the Girls Out event and has scheduled space at the Mid-Summer Garden & Arts Faire and Alaska Agriculture Appreciation day.
- Staff launched the 'Meet Me at the Market' campaign in cooperation with Alaska Public Media to encourage patronage at farmer's markets. The campaign was promoted via a multitude of media outlets. Thirteen markets are participating throughout July. Participants are distributing Alaska Grown giveaway items and conducting surveys.
- The Alaska Farm to School program secured an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer in February. The volunteer is coordinating the federally funded 2016 Farm to Summer Meal Mini-Grant program. The program also received funding for three associates to provide direct service and capacity building to organizations in Hope, Anchorage, and Dillingham for two months this summer.
- Staff developed a supplemental guidance document to assist with navigating the Farm to Summer Meal mini-grant program evaluation booklet and distributed it to all 17 grant recipients. This evaluation is part of an on-going effort to provide effective nutrition and agricultural education opportunities to Alaskan children.
- Staff conducted four site visits and provided two in-person program evaluation training sessions to Farm to Summer Meal mini-grant recipients to date. Five to seven more site visits are planned along with at least three more training sessions this summer.
- Staff performed nine store visits throughout the state to inspect the quality of Alaska Grown products and deliver Alaska Grown display materials.
- Staff is contacting greenhouses throughout the state and inviting them to join the Alaska Grown program. An interactive map is in development with their contact information.
- Staff started the 2016 School Garden Census and called 209 of the 492 schools in the state to collect information from schools that implement gardens, greenhouses or similar agriculture-based education programs. Additional telephone calls will be made when school resumes in the fall of 2016.
- Staff conducted rural farm visits in Bethel, Kodiak, and Kenai.
- Staff was trained on the Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) program and has conducted three store audits.
- Staff secured, hired, and trained two college interns for the marketing team using Specialty Crop Block Grant money.
- Staff presented at five state conferences and one national conference about marketing, farm to school, and food safety.
- Staff attended a Coalfield Communications workshop.
- Staff continues to serve on multiple food system boards: National Farm to School Network, Alaska Food Policy Council, and Alaska School Nutrition Association.
- Staff launched the 2016 Specialty Crop Block Grant request for proposals and awarded \$100,000 in grants to the specialty crop industry.
- Staff is managing over \$1,000,000 in federal grants.

Inspection Section:

- Staff inspected, certified and issued 40 phytosanitary certificates for agriculture products for export.
- Staff completed certified seed potato storage inspections. Staff responded to seed potato producer requests for certified seed tags. Last year, approximately 3,000 tags were printed.
- Staff conducted one elk farm inspection.
- Staff drafted and distributed the letter to Farmer's Markets reminding them of the regulations for selling seed potatoes.
- Staff reviewed and released two permits for the interstate movement of plant pests, noxious weeds and soil.
- Staff worked with wholesale company and USDA on Alaska Grown farmed vegetables and Food Safety Audits. Staff continues to field calls and provide information on Food Safety Audits.
- Staff attended the 97th Annual Western Plant Board Meeting, with State Plant Regulatory Officials (SPROs) from the 13 western states, USDA APHIS Regional and State Plant Health Directors and Customs and Border Protection Agriculture Staff. Agenda items included discussions on exFedGrants which is new grant/ cooperative agreement management system that will be implemented in October 2016, Cooperative Agriculture Pest Survey Updates and Program Highlights, Farm Bill Updates, Customs and Border Protection Update and Initiatives, Hemp Regulations, Pollinator Protection Programs, State Updates, etc.
- 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.
- Staff hired a student intern to assist with Early Detection Rapid Response, Cooperative Agriculture Pest Survey and the Certified Seed Potato Programs.
- Inspection and Regulatory staff have inspected and facilitated the export of over \$35,000 (million) dollars of timber exports for April, May and June 2016.
- Staff attended and presented at the UAF-CES annual trapper training. The Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS) Program presentation focused on training the trappers in new traps and a refresher in traps they have done before.
- Staff attended the UAF-CES Pesticide Applicator Training and passed the exam.
- Staff attended Operation Clean Machine at the Alcan Border. This was a joint operation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the State of Alaska Invasive Species program that lasted from May 6th – May 16th. Division of Agriculture Staff joined the operation from May 9th – May 11th and focused on outreach and education to incoming traffic regarding Invasive Asian and European Gypsy moths and State regulations on seed potatoes entering the state.
- Staff set traps and conducted surveys for the CAPS program. Traps were set for the Exotic Wood Boring Bark Beetle Survey and the Asian Gypsy Moth Survey. Surveys were

conducted for the Mollusk Survey. Staff set traps and conducted surveys in the Mat-Su, Cordova, Juneau, Sitka, and Ketchikan.

- Staff attended an Introduction to Field Entomology course in Fairbanks through the University of Alaska Fairbanks.
- Staff conducted phytosanitary inspections in Alaska for logs to be exported to China. Staff is also training other staff in this process.

Land Section:

- Staff identified unused Interagency Lands Management Agreements for reconsideration of use consistent with public interest.
- Staff noticed land sales brochure # 479
- DMLW Director rejected Browns Court Northern region lands sale, apparent high bidders appealed his decision.
- Staff are working on Standard Operating Procedures for land sales to help provide continuity and transparency within the program
- Staff assisted with a large number of public inquiries mostly concerning future land sales.
- Staff interviewed for article about Nenana-Totchaket agricultural project.
- Staff participated in a planning meeting for the Copper Basin Area Plan.
- Staff conducted Willer-Kash site inspection and subsequently issued an Errata to the auction brochure regarding active Bear Baiting stations within the project area.
- Staff conducted Sunshine 40 site cleanup removing large metal debris.
- Staff assisted with FFA State Convention events.
- Staff assisted in the preparation of five State Farm Conversation Plans.
- Did research to move four parcels toward acquiring patent
- Development stages for a user friendly online source book platform to help reduce cost to the division, improve outreach and information flow.
- Facilitated questions from/on:
 - Representative Tammy Wilson's office in Fairbanks/sprouts
 - Apiary as a new business
 - Egg surveillance
 - Land sales and contractual advice
 - Plan amendments
 - Ditamaso GAP/GHP
 - Bio-solids

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 Material Center (PMC). This is a five-year intensive study of soil health and erosion control efforts.

- 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.

Horticulture

- Staff is working on the final report for the Asparagus Specialty Crop Grant, the Caneberry Demonstration report and the Apple Rootstock report.
- Staff planted broccoli and cauliflower transplants for the 2016 trials.
- Staff is maintaining the new *Malus* seedlings for the 2016 planting.
- Staff ordered new controllers and equipment to setup another greenhouse for production.
- Staff is assisting the Potato Program on greenhouse setup and planting of seed potato production.
- Staff is establishing more greenhouse space for production of seed potatoes.
- Staff is assisting the foundation seed program in seeding transplants for the 2016 growing season.
- Staff is helping local growers fine-tune their greenhouses and outdoor production sites.
- Staff is maintaining the apple, caneberry and cole crop plots.

Invasive Weeds and Agricultural Pest Program

- Staff gave a presentation to the Alaskan Aviation Safety Foundation in collaboration with the University of Alaska Anchorage's Aviation Technology Center at Merrill Field Airport.
- An Environmental Assessment was put out to public commenting for the use of fluridone in Alexander Lake to eradicate Elodea. Fluridone applications are expected to occur in July.
- An Environmental Assessment is being drafted for the use of fluridone in Chena Slough, Chena Lake and Totchaket Slough in the Fairbanks area. The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Pesticide Use Permit application for the project is currently being evaluated by DEC staff for approval.
- Staff attended and presented at the Kenai Cooperative Weed Management Area's annual workshop on the identification of aquatic invasive species in Alaska and those are not yet here, but that are high priority for the state.
- Staff gave an Alaska Certified Weed Free Forage and Gravel Products inspector training on the Kenai Peninsula. Twelve participants attended a morning session of certification standards and species identification, and an afternoon gravel inspection.
- Staff completed three store inspections for Canada thistle that was found in other plants for sale. Two stores were given a Regulatory Violation Notice after Canada thistle plants were found and fourteen stock plants were given a stop of sale and destroyed on site.

Pathology

- Staff gave a presentation at annual Cooperative Extension Invasive Pest Management (IPM) Technician Training, on general plant pathology and diagnostic characteristics.
- Staff diagnosed diseases in commercial strawberry and broccoli operations.
- Staff diagnosed diseases for a garlic researcher with emergence problems.
- Staff diagnosed diseases in a market garden strawberry operation.

- Staff designed and established fungicide trial for clubroot management in broccoli and cabbage.
- Staff tested 63 samples from 28 varieties of potato tissue culture plantlets for viruses and bacteria.

Potato Program

- Staff completed a winter grow out of 11 varieties to test winter growth feasibility, new fertilizer formulation, and costs. Harvest occurred early May. Material was used to supplement surplus G0 available for purchase.
- All certified potato seed has been picked up by the growers. A limited amount of surplus seed remains.
- Greenhouse planting for 2016 seed is currently underway. A total of 1,695 pounds of generation zero (G0) seed was ordered across 35 varieties. This is a 50% increase from orders last year and over 80% increase from two years ago. This volume will fill two greenhouses. Any varieties found to be in tissue culture without any tubers for the field are also being produced in the greenhouse.
- Plantlets to sell this spring are ready as soon as the growers want them. They were requested by three growers so that they can perform their own greenhouse production of tubers, due to the limited space at our facility. Approximately 775 additional plantlets were prepared.
- A mechanical failure this winter killed a large portion of the maintenance collection. Initiation of varieties into tissue culture and maintenance continues. New varieties purchased for evaluation are also being initiated into tissue culture.
- Greenhouse updates and improvements continue. New roof panels will be installed to replace damaged panels and screening will be applied to minimize insect intrusion. 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 flyers of individual PMC available stock. Additionally, the data will be used to evaluate available varieties for french fry processing.
- Staff completed field planting. One hundred forty varieties of the maintenance collection were planted as well as 11 new varieties for the specialty crop experiment, 13 advances line trial (2nd year), 14 advanced line varieties (1st year), 53 true seed varieties retained from field season 2015 and additional Magic Molly to support the soil health evaluation project.
- Staff is collecting data weekly on emergence. Bud and flowering data will also be collected as the plants enter those stages.

Publications

- Staff is transitioning to the Division of Agriculture marketing team and has been providing web, graphic design, outreach, advertising and social media support.
- Staff continues to prepare division media releases, quarterly newsletters, BAC reports, forms, surveys, fact sheets, and general web maintenance duties.
- Staff continues to provide Division wide 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 made final edits to the 2016 Spring Agricultural Land Auction booklet.

- Staff is preparing to build an 'Alaskan Potato Variety and Uses' book.

Revegetation

- Staff is working with the Alaska Gasline Development Corporation on the Alaska Stand Alone Pipeline Project. Staff will develop a Stabilization, Rehabilitation and 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 Along Pipeline project (ASAP).
- Staff is reviewing and commenting on the second round of draft resource reports for the Alaska LNG project. These resource reports will form the basis for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The PMC will include 4 resource reports. Resource Report 1 (General Project Description), Resource Report 3 (Fish, Wildlife, and Vegetation), Resource Report 7, (Soils), and Resource Report 10 (Alternatives).
- Staff is participating in the Alaska State Revegetation Working Group. This group is tasked with providing information and assistance to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) as they continue to develop new revegetation standards for mine reclamation.
- All seed collected from the 2015 Cold Regions Native Plant Commercialization season's efforts were cleaned. Species were started in the greenhouse in mid-March and will be transplanted into the fields later this summer. Evaluations will continue to look for species that have high conservation value in Alaska.
- Staff is cleaning species collected from Kenai Fjords National Park.

Seed Cleaning and Conditioning

- Two new polargrass fields were planted, one new 'service' bluegrass field, one new 'nortran'. This year's grain fields are; Otal barley, 2 Toral oats, Ingal wheat, Lidal barley, and Wooding barely. Staff also planted field peas to fix nitrogen in the soil and produce peas for harvest. 'Sourdough' bluejoint reed grass plugs were planted in the green house to be planted in the fall.
- The seed sale has demonstrated a high demand for polargrass and multiple forb varieties. This may indicate that we need to reestablish some of our forb fields to bring our storage quantities up in the years to come.
- Staff is conducting field certifications in Fairbanks on June 22. Staff will visit Usibelli coal mine to check on vegetative plots established in May. These plots are to determine the best seed mix for their revegetation needs.
- Staff will visit Noatak on June 27 to continue an ongoing seed collection project. This project inspires residents to collect native seed, send it to the PMC for cleaning, then sell the seed to local mines and other agencies for revegetation purposes.
- Staff is assisting the Invasives Program with water quality testing in the Anchorage lakes that were treated for elodea last summer.