



MEMORANDUM
Department of Natural Resources

STATE OF ALASKA
Division of Agriculture

TO: Board of Agriculture
& Conservation

DATE: June 10, 2015

FROM: Franci Havemeister
Director

SUBJECT: Director's Report
April and June 2015

Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund

- Loan officer has received and is processing incoming loan applications.
- 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 is in process of managing and disposing of recently acquired property in Delta Junction, including contacting and receiving updates from the listing realtor.
- Loan officer is in process of contacting commercial realtors to obtain a Broker's Opinion of Value on the ARLF owned Palmer 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 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 attended annual USDA Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) Audit refresher training and received this year's COOL Audit assignments.
- Staff continues to be involved in discussions regarding upcoming FDA's Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) rules. Staff compiled information on existing state authorities for various proposed food and feed regulations and sent information to NASDA.
- Staff Attended 2-day FDA teleconference presentation on FSMA rules implementation.
- Staff continues to receive many inquiries from the public with regard to proposed hydroponic and aquaponic commercial greenhouse projects. Staff worked with Alaska Department of Fish & Game to create a new Aquaponics Factsheet.
- Staff has scheduled one USDA Harmonized GAP/GHP audit for July, and advised other interested growers of audit availability

- Staff continues to make daily posts on the Alaska Grown Facebook, Twitter, and pinterest pages.
- Staff continues to manage the Alaska Grown You Tube page.
- The Restaurant Rewards program for 2014-2015 is active. Currently, 30 restaurants are signed up and 8 restaurants are pending.
- Restaurant Rewards did not receive additional funding for Fiscal Year 2016. The Program will continue until the remaining funds are gone.
- Chef at the Market application process is complete. 6 Chefs were awarded contracts for a total of 45 demonstrations throughout Alaska.
- Staff has added 12 farms to the Alaska Grown Program in February and March 2015.
- Staff created brochures featuring Alaska Grown Asparagus, Cauliflower, and Garlic. Vegetables to be featured were chosen based on planned vegetable trials for the 2015 season.
- The 2014-2015 Source Book online version is being maintained and updated. The print version is still being distributed upon consumer request.
- Staff promoted events across the state on the Alaska Grown social media sites and also hosted a survey to learn about what people did on Alaska Agriculture Day.
- Staff performed store visits on May 6th and 7th in the Mat-Su and Anchorage areas.

Inspection Section:

- Doug Warner Retired after 30 years of service on May 29, 2015.
- Staff finished certified seed potato storage inspections and grower requests for certified seed tags. Certified seed tags printed for this year totaled 2,823 tags.
- Staff drafted a reminder letter to Farm Market managers on the regulations regarding the sale and labeling of seed potatoes. Staff conducted two farm market visits to verify compliance. No stop sales issued.
- Staff conducted 12 greenhouse/ garden center visits to verify compliance with seed potato and potato labeling, Late Blight Quarantine, Plant Health and Weed Regulations. Staff issued three stop sale notices for 29 Lilac trees (Anchorage, Matsu and Fairbanks) displaying symptoms of viral infection, were pulled off sale and voluntarily destroyed. Staff sent sample to Oregon State University (OSU) Plant Clinic for diagnosis. Unknown timeline for diagnosis.
- Staff visited three pet stores with Invasive Weed/ Pest Coordinator, Heather Stewart, suspected of selling the aquatic weed, Elodea, which is currently quarantined in AK. Issued two stop sale notices, for Egeria densa, Brazilian waterweed, which was removed and destroyed at time of visit. Follow up needed at the other store selling Elodea. Heather Stewart will verify identification and risks associated with it. Store voluntarily provided sample.
- Staff set up three Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) traps at one site in the Matsu for the Division of Forestry. Staff has been cooperating on this project for five years and maintains these traps throughout the summer.
- Staff participated in the quarterly Alaska Pest Risk Committee (AKPRAC) Meeting. Staff forwarded Late Blight Quarantine reminder to Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Port Director for dissemination to the land Border locations in Alaska.
- Staff participated in a Cooperative Extension training on April 29, 2015 which reviewed Gypsy Moth trapping protocols, insect and disease identification. Staff gained Continuing Educational credits (CEUs) for Pesticide Recertification.

- Staff continues to maintain relationship with major supplier of tomato plants, Smith Gardens and receives shipping notifications and certification paperwork for tomato plants entering Alaska and verifies compliance with the Late Blight Quarantine.
- Staff finalized the Seed Potato Certification Handbook and the 2015 Seed Potato Certification Application and has developed protocols for the 2015 Leaf sampling program to test latent varieties for virus.
- Staff responded to multiple inquiries on certified seed potato sources.
- Staff has responded to multiple inquiries on labeling requirements for vegetable, flower and agricultural seed to be sold in Alaska and import requirements for live bait, rhubarb roots, insects, etc.
- Staff has reviewed certification paperwork for the "potato/ tomato" or "ketchup and fries" which is a tomato plant grafted onto a seed potato plant to be imported into AK.
- Staff responded to rhodiola export inquiry involving multiple countries import requirements.
- Staff responded to peony export inquiry and provided information on requirements for export.
- Staff successfully completed the annual USDA Security Awareness training which is required to maintain access to the USDA Phytosanitary Issuance and Tracking System (PCIT) and USDA EPermit Systems.
- Total Brands: = 146 people registered their brands for the book. New brand book will be published 1st week of June
- Phytosanitary certificates Issued: 2
- Shell Egg surveillance Inspections: 1
- FV-300 Inspections: 2 certificates issued – 4 products inspected
- Bee registrations: 19

Land Section:

- Staff assisted in the preparation of six State Farm Conservation Plans.
- Staff assisted in the preparation of one Grazing Management Plan.
- Held meeting with Division of Mining Land & Water (DMLW) regarding the progress of the Nenana Bridge.
- Continued to work with Resource Assessment and Development Section on the development of the East Tanana Basin Area Plan.
- Assisted with a large number of public inquiries mostly concerning future land sales.
- Finished and sent out for signature a Preliminary Decision for the sale of 345 acres of agricultural land in Brown's Court.
- Worked with Division of Mining, Land and Water on getting the Kobe-McGrath trial easement rerouted to the section lines surrounding the southern half of the Kobe North agricultural Project in preparation for future sale.
- Reviewed information regarding removal of agricultural covenants, through eminent domain, along Pt. MacK Railroad Expansion across Pt. MacK ag tracts.
- Completed an Agency Review for a potential ag project area near Trapper Creek (Ninemile Creek ag project)
- Worked with DMLW staff to update grazing lease regulations
- Staff attended Upper-Susitna Soil and Water Conservation District meeting.
- Staff attended Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District meeting.
- Staff attended Kodiak Soil and Water Conservation District meeting.
- Joint grazing lease inspections with DMLW on Kodiak.

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.
- Staff is working with Copper River Watershed Project in Cordova regarding the removal of Japanese Knotweed and subsequent revegetation efforts.
- Staff is currently preparing for establishment and field sampling of the Soil Health project at the Plant Materials Center facility. This project is a five year intensive study of soil health and erosion control efforts.
- Staff conducted a power point presentation about revegetation and erosion control to the Department of Transportation (DOT) Southeast Regional Office – Fairbanks, Construction Phase Engineers.
- Staff installed field plots for Growth Curve Project at Point McKenzie and Palmer locations. All other field plots across the state were established by NRCS and staff assisted with the project.
- Staff delineated field location and plot size for 'Denali' Alfalfa variety trial testing site.
- Staff completed seed propagation contract with seed producer for 'Denali' Alfalfa.
- Staff completed stream bank restoration project on middle willow creek in collaboration with the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G).

Foundation Seed Production

- Staff is in the process of preparation of new foundation fields included spring tilling and field work.
- Four varieties of barley, one variety of oats and one variety of rye were selected to be planted to increase the availability of grain seed. These varieties were chosen for production to protect the germplasm and increase stock. Fields were fertilized and are sprouting successfully.
- A new method of seed treatment is being implemented with expectations to reduce the occurrence of fungal infections in barley fields and increase yields.
- Foundation grass regeneration is anticipated to be started in the greenhouse and planted as seedlings in the 2015-2016 seasons.

Horticulture

- Staff is collecting data from the asparagus variety trial, the *Malus* rootstock trial, and the caneberry variety trial.
- 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 sent out cauliflower seed to participants in the specialty crop grant funded trial. Participants are located throughout the state.
- Staffs are transplanting starts for the cauliflower and broccoli trials and were planted in the greenhouse for field planting.
- Germinated *Malus* spp. seeds are growing in the greenhouse for field planting
- Staff is installing new irrigation system in the potato production house.

Invasive Weeds and Agricultural Pest Program

- The Invasive Plant and Agricultural Pest Coordinator were invited to give a training session at the Kenai Cooperative Weed Management Area Annual Conference about the identification of aquatic invasive plant species. The training included ~15 attendees with diverse backgrounds and levels of knowledge on the subject.
- Staff attended the Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District's Board and public meeting about management ideas for Elodea in the Chena Lake, Chena Slough and Chena Rivers. A presentation was conducted by staff regarding the history of Elodea in the state, the Statewide Elodea Management Plan, and the State's perspective on management.
- Anchorage Elodea Eradication Project: This project was funded by U. S. Fish and Wildlife Services for Citizens Against Noxious Weeds Invading the North (CANWIN) to collaborate with Department of Natural Resources (DNR) on using the herbicide fluridone to eradicate Elodea in DeLong, Little Campbell, and Sand Lakes. The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Pesticide Use Permit public commenting period was completed on May 22. Public comment review is underway. The Environmental Assessment public commenting period is currently open until June 15, 2015. A public meeting is scheduled for June 17, 2015.
- Staff is conducting permitting for field work managing noxious plant Canada thistle, and other high priority invasive plants within State and Anchorage Municipality right-of-ways is complete. On-the-ground management will be underway within the next few weeks.
- In collaboration with the Alaska Cooperative Extension, staff participated in a half-day workshop about Integrated Pest Management. The goal of the workshop was to give newly designated "pest scouts" situated around the state training on how to identify, collect, and report a potential pest, and information on high priority pests that are both present and absent within Alaska.

Pathology

- BRR testing ongoing, six additional lots from two growers.
- Staff is conducting potato tissue culture testing on an additional 19 varieties of 94 individual plantlets
- Staff is working with a potato grower on cold-damaged tubers.
- Staff is testing lilacs brought up from Lower 48 with ringspot symptoms.

Potato Program

- Staff will continue to meet production goals for G0 sales as well as planting and evaluating experimental material as planned.
- A new two-row potato planter arrived and it was fitted with in-row spray equipment to expedite field applications.

- Generation Zero greenhouse upgrades are in progress; including the purchase of replacement greenhouse roof panels, higher capacity exhaust fans, modernized irrigation controls, and improved insect-screening.
- Field planting is planned for the last week in May and will include 155 varieties from the maintenance collection, 30 varieties of new material from outside states, and over 100 breeding line families (approx. 10,000 individual tubers) for evaluation.
- Generation Zero greenhouse planting is planned for mid-June and will include 34 varieties to meet grower orders and 16 experimental lines to be grown up for field planting and evaluation in subsequent years.
- Surplus Generation Zero seed continues to be available and requests are still coming in.

Publications

- Staff continues to prepare Division wide media releases, monthly newsletters, BAC reports, forms, surveys, fact sheets, and general web maintenance duties.
- Staff continues to provide Division support for computer and program related challenges.
- Staff is finalizing the PMC 2014 Annual Report.
- Staff is maintaining a Facebook group for the Alaska Committee on Noxious and Invasive Plant Management (CNIPM).
- Staff rebuilt the Division's 2015 Brand Book.
- Staff continues to maintain the online Source Book.
- Staff is preparing to build a new Seed Lab database.
- Staff is preparing to work with main office staff on Land Auction brochure.
- Staff created an aquatic invasive plants identification flyer.
- Staff created informative graphic for the Farm to School Program.

Revegetation Program

- Staff travelled to Noatak on April 29 for a seed collection training workshop. Teck and PMC staff presented information on the upcoming pilot study for those attendees who were not present for the January 17 workshop. Staff brought seed material and hand screens to demonstrate the seed cleaning process and familiarize trainees with the equipment. Staff introduced 11th -12th graders about the project and its purpose. Topics included native plant identification, seed cleaning, and soil testing.
- Staff visited Juneau on May 13-14 to give a presentation to the SE Region DOT (Department of Transportation). Staff has now given this presentation to the three main DOT regions; Interior, Southcentral, and Southeast.
- Staff will visit Kenai Fjords later this summer to help with seed collection around the park.
- Staff answered questions about revegetation practices and recommended seed mixes.
- Staff attended a two day training workshop on stream bank restoration. The first day consisted of a classroom component and the second day staff learned field techniques which were implemented to assist a landowner with his cabin near a river. Some of the restoration techniques used was brush layering, spruce tree revetment, transplanting, and live staking.

Seed Cleaning and Conditioning

- Staff is nearing completion of a 79 bag lot of 'Nortran' Tufted Hair Grass order. There is currently over 17,800 lbs. of clean 'Nortran' seed available to be released into the market. A small seed such as this requires constant quality control, adaption, and changes to cleaning equipment to maintain the purity and removal of contaminants.

- Future cleanings will include 'Nugget' and a lot of common wheatgrass, which should conclude the seed cleaning season.
- Staff is in the process of cleaning Merten's sedge in an attempt to increase it enough to raise the quality to production levels. Merten's sedge would be a new seed cleaned at the PMC with the prospect of integrating it into large scale production for Alaskan seed producers. The sedge could become a common seed used for revegetation in wetland areas.
- The 2015 Foundation Seed sale is in progress. Orders are being processed daily and many questions from the general public have resulted in the promotion of seed sold by Alaskan producers.
- Staff is providing seed to University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) to institute a phytoremediation project. UAF will be testing the possibility of using 'Alyeska' Polargrass to remove contaminants from the soil following an industrial mishap or post mineral extraction. This data may be useful to the PMC to demonstrate alternative remediation uses for native grasses within the state.

Seed Lab

- The seed lab conducted 48 seed tests. That included 31 Purity, 13 Germination, and 4 Noxious weed tests.

Seeds of Success

- Staff gave a tour to Bureau of Land Management (BLM) representatives and met with their summer interns. Staff discussed past challenges with seed increases and potential solutions.
- Staff is continuing to care for native plant plugs for field seed increases and on site revegetation efforts.