



MEMORANDUM
Department of Natural Resources

STATE OF ALASKA
Division of Agriculture

TO: Board of Agriculture
& Conservation

DATE: March 31, 2016

FROM: Arthur J. Keyes IV
Director

SUBJECT: Director's Report
February 2016

Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund

- Loan Officer attended the 2016 Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) conference in Anchorage, Alaska on February 24th and 25th. Loan officer had an exhibitor table with information and brochures about ARLF and other services offered by the Division of Agriculture and Plant Materials Center. Loan Officer answered questions about the Division, Division Programs, and provided information about ARLF to potential new borrowers. Loan officer also spoke with current borrowers regarding new 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 has received and is processing an incoming loan application.
- Loan officer is in process of closing the sale and contract financing of the ARLF property located at 4614 Tanana Loop Extension, Delta Junction.
- Loan officer is in process of preparing Requests for Proposals for realtors to list 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 Alaska Food Policy Council board meetings and helped coordinate and organize the Food Festival Conference Feb. 26th & 27th.
- Staff hired a VISTA to work on the USDA Team Nutrition grant award to administer the Farm to Summer Meal Site mini-grant.
- Staff trained to be a supervisor for the new AmeriCorps VISTA position.

- Staff administered the Farm to Summer Meal Site grant and received 16 applications for review.
- Staff attended the Alaska School Nutrition Association board meetings and presented at the annual conference held on Feb. 17th – 18th.
- Staff conducted the On Farm Food Safety Workshop on Feb. 23rd before the SARE conference with 25 attendees.
- Staff presented at the annual SARE conference on February 25th.
- Staff continues to manage the Alaska Grown Facebook page which has over 46,000 likes and more than 150,000 post reach as a weekly average.
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- Staff worked on the Specialty Crop Block Grant Request for Proposal and management of past grant rounds.
- Staff continues to consult the public on institutional markets, retail, and general agricultural inquiries.

Inspection Section:

- Staff conducted 10 seed potato storage inspections, locations throughout Alaska, per the 2015 AK Seed Potato Handbook.
- Staff has conducted 3 phytosanitary inspections in Klawock, Kodiak and Afognak Alaska for logs to be exported to China. Staff is also training other staff in this process.
- Staff is responding to seed potato producer requests for certified seed tags. Last year, approximately 3,000 tags were printed.
- Staff gave a Seed Potato Certification Update at the Potato Industry Meeting held at the Plant Materials Center on February 9, 2016.
- Staff gave a Seed Potato Certification Update at the Alaska Seed Growers Association Meeting held at the Plant Materials Center on January 20, 2016.
- Staff participated in the quarterly Alaska Pest Risk Committee (AKPRAC) Meeting. Staff will be participating in an interagency effort with JoAna Phillips, USDA APHIS, at the Alcan Border on May 8-12, 2016 with the focus being on vehicle traffic crossing that are originated in a European Gypsy Moth Quarantine area.
- Staff participated in the 2016 Forest Health Protection Coordination Meeting, January 26, 27, 2016, held in Juneau, This is an annual meeting which invites partners and cooperators in Forest Health to discuss and share information on program updates, projects and survey work conducted in the last year and opportunities for coordination on future projects. The AK Division Agriculture gave a discussion on Cooperative Agriculture Pest Survey work in the state and other project work for this coming year. Other discussion included a cooperative agency effort on the fire burned timber in Kodiak and possible pest work in this logging area. Also this meeting, assisted with the Forest Health Protection (FHP) Grant titled, "Improve training and partnering for the coordinated early detection of invasives in Alaska."
- Staff participated in a discussion at the Alaska Peony Conference held on January 29, 2016 in Homer, Alaska, and answered inquiries on export and the phytosanitary certification process.
- Staff is coordinating efforts with the Standard Operating Procedures for Invasive Pests for continuity and transparency.
- Staff successfully completed the annual USDA Security Awareness training which is required to maintain access to the USDA Phytosanitary Issuance and Tracking System

(PCIT) as an Accredited Certification Official (ACO) and the USDA EPermit Systems as the State Plant Regulatory Official (SPRO).

- 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.
- The Cooperative Agriculture Pest Survey program will be conducting a Gypsy Moth Survey, a Mollusk Survey, and an Exotic Wood Boring Bark Beetle Survey field season 2016. Staff has been preparing for these surveys.
- Staff attended informal bark beetle identification training.
- Total Brands: 1
- Answer Phytosanitary :
- Continue to answer Shell Egg surveillance Inspection questions, phytosanitary questions and concerns.
- Total Bee registrations: 1
- FV-300 Inspections: 0
- Phytosanitary certificates Issued: 0
- Shell Egg surveillance Inspections: 0

Land Section:

- Staff has prepared and published a Land Sale brochure for the 2016 Northern Region offering.
- Staff is drafting a Land Sale brochure for a 2016 Southcentral Region offering.
- Staff met with dozens of farmers inquiring about moving to Alaska to start farming.
- Staff met with Doyon and their contractor about drilling for gas on agricultural land.
- Staff assisted with a large number of public inquiries mostly concerning future land sales.
- Staff met with Borough appraiser to discuss tax deferment program.
- Staff assisted in the preparation of six State Farm Conservation Plans.
- Staff assisted in the planning of a proposed grazing lease.
- Staff researched, collected, and prepared comments on ADF&G Board of Game proposition 90. Staff prepared a formal letter from that was sent to ADF&G Board of Game regarding proposition 90.
- Staff attended the 2016 SARE conference in Anchorage.
- Staff researched and provided information regarding bio-solid usage on Alaskan agricultural lands.

Plant Materials Center:

Erosion Control

- Staff is working with Copper River Watershed Project in Cordova regarding the removal of Japanese Knotweed and subsequent 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 PMC. 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 Alaska Association of General Contractors, Department of Transportation (DOT) Central Region, and staff from Alaska Mill & Feed, in Anchorage
- 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.
- Staff is working with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to assist in field training and implementation of erosion control practices for stream bank stabilization. This will be a two day course that the revegetation and erosion control programs will assist in class room teaching and erosion control product installation within the field.

Horticulture

- Staff collected data on the Asparagus Specialty Crop (North Pole and Nikiski plots), Apple Rootstock Trial, and Caneberry Demonstration Plot for the 2015 growing season, and is preparing progress reports on the Apple Rootstock Trial, Caneberry Demonstration Plot, and the Cauliflower Trial Specialty Crop Grant.
- The broccoli and cauliflower plots were destroyed by moose and minimal data was obtainable. Future trials for these crops will be conducted in a fenced enclosure for protection.
- The 2012-2014 Garlic Report and 2015 Broccoli Report were published and are available on the website. .
- Staff is working on the final report for the Asparagus Specialty Crop Grant.
- Staff presented at the 2015 Alaska SARE Conference on the Asparagus Specialty Crop Grant.
- Staff ordered broccoli, cauliflower and asparagus seed for the 2016 growing season.
- Staff collected Malus x (open-pollinated) seeds in Southcentral and Interior regions of Alaska to be used in the Apple Rootstock Trial.
- Staff began stratification of the 1,300 Malus x seeds that were collected.
- Staff installed new controllers in the greenhouses.
- Staff assisted the Potato Program to grow 2015 Generation 0 crop and a winter grow-out for additional Generation 0 stock.
- Staff establishing more greenhouse space for production of grass seed transplants and seed potatoes.
- Staff helped local growers fine-tune their greenhouses and outdoor production sites.

Invasive Weeds and Agricultural Pest Program

- Staff in collaboration with the University of Alaska, Anchorage (UAA) Institute for Social and Economic Research, has been contacting Alaska registered pilots to complete a survey on potential economic impacts caused by aquatic invasive plants. The survey includes a mapping portion to help State land managers prioritize survey efforts for Elodea around the State.
- The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) emergency exemption to the Pesticide Use Permit (PUP) in 2015 expired on December 31st. Staff applied for the DEC PUP, and it is open for public comment until March 16th. The permit will include both diquat and fluridone. Fluridone concentrations have been monitored after treatments and

have continued into the winter under ice. Target levels are being maintained since the 2015 treatments.

- The Anchorage Elodea Eradication Project continues to test fluridone concentrations since the 2015 season treatments. Winter sampling of both Elodea presence and concentrations occurred during March 2016.
- The Alexander Elodea Eradication Project submitted the DEC PUP in March, and is in the public commenting period until April 7th. The Environmental Assessment is currently being drafted.
- Staff attended the Interior Alaska Elodea Eradication Project public scoping meetings March 7th and 8th; one in Fairbanks, North Pole, and Nenana. Staff presented information on statewide coordinated efforts and goals and provided specific updates on the local project progress. The DEC PUP public commenting period was open until March 7th. The Environmental Assessment is in draft form. The DNR Land Use Permit's public commenting period is open until March 16th. Acquired permits include the Environmental Protection Agency Alaska Pollution Discharge Elimination System Permit, and the ADF&G Fish Habitat Permit. Pending permits, the first application is scheduled for spring 2016.
- Staff is continuing communications with DOT staff to help finalize their updated Integrated Vegetation Management Plan. The plan will be utilized by staff to continue to treat noxious plant Canada thistle along Anchorage state-owned right-of-ways in 2016.

Pathology

- Staff presented "Potato Viruses and Other Issues" at the annual Potato Meeting held at the PMC on February 9, 2016.
- Presented "Fire Blight in Alaska" at the SARE Conference in Anchorage on February 24, 2016.
- Staff conducted potato leaf sampling with inspection staff and tested PVY latent varieties for PLRV, PVX, and PVY. Random sampling can provide estimates of percent infection, whereas individual sampling provides presence/absence data. Random composite samples (five leaves each) were taken from 13 growers statewide, representing 63 variety/generation/field combinations; 250 samples were taken. PLRV was found in 17 samples (in Mat-Su as well as north of the Alaska Range), PVX was found in five samples (in Mat-Su), and PVY was not found this year. Infection estimates ranged from 0-20% in a given lot. Viruses were found in seven variety/generation/field combinations by random sampling. Individual leaf samples were also taken from 102 symptomatic plants. PLRV was found in 24 samples, PVX was found in five samples, and PVY was not found this year even though it was found previous years. Viruses were found in 23 variety/generation/field combinations by sampling of symptomatic plants. Inspection staff applied for a Specialty Crop Grant to continue sampling in the summer of 2016.
- Potato tissue culture testing continues. One of the growth chambers had a mechanical failure, forcing staff to restart most of the collection. Staff tested 339 samples from 102 varieties; they are tested for PLRV, PVA, PVM, PVS, PVX, PVY, PMTV, TRV, PSTVd, as well as soft rot bacteria and bacterial ring rot.
- Greenhouse Generation 0 potato plants are tested for PLRV, PVX, and PVY. Staff tested 188 random composite samples (five leaves each) from 76 varieties.
- Staff tested numerous potato samples for late blight, soft rots, and Pythium.
- Staff confirmed fire blight infections in six samples from Fairbanks/Delta, Junction areas. There are several more likely cases in Mat-Su.

- Clubroot was found in two growers' fields in the Mat-Su.
- TRV was identified in five out of 10 peony samples.
- Thirty-two samples from other plants (carrots, tomatoes, lettuce, cherries, peony, lilacs, other fruits and vegetables, and insect larvae) were processed.
- Staff edited the 'Disease' chapter of the Alaska Cooperative Extension Service (CES) Master Gardener Manual

Potato Program

- Staff is completing winter grow out of 11 varieties to evaluate winter growth feasibility, new fertilizer formulations, and costs. This material will supplement surplus Generation 0 that is available for purchase.
- 2015 Generation 0 material (except winter grow out) has been weighed, graded, bagged, and is ready for delivery.
- Growers have placed their 2016 Generation 0 orders totaling 1,685 pounds. This order is larger than our current greenhouse can accommodate, so horticulture staff is working to prepare additional space for production.
- Tissue culture scale up is underway to meet 2016 greenhouse production goals. Over 10,000 plantlets will be produced in the laboratory to meet production orders.
- Greenhouse updates and improvements continue. This spring new roof panels will be installed to replace damaged panels and screening will be applied to minimize insect intrusion.
- Staff is collecting data on specific gravity, dry matter, and glucose content of all available varieties of field stock potatoes. Photographs of each variety are being taken concurrently. The data/photos will be used to create a brochure of PMC available stock and to evaluate available varieties for French fry processing.
- New registered varieties are being evaluated, selected, and purchased for 2016 Alaska field trials.
- 2015 field trials and evaluations resulted in retention of 63 new true seed lines. These lines will continue to undergo field trials and selection. Seventeen advanced lines from national breeding programs were selected for further field evaluation as well.
- The potato program strives to support the community. During the last harvest over 900 pounds of potatoes were donated to local food banks. Potatoes were donated to support a 4-H project in Fairbanks that will be sponsored by Fairbanks Farm Bureau. Potatoes were donated for classroom demonstrations.

Publications

- Staff continues to prepare division media releases, monthly newsletters, BAC reports, forms, surveys, fact sheets, power points, and general web maintenance duties.
- Staff continues to provide Division support for computer and program related challenges.
- Staff completed the PMC 2014 Annual Report.
- Staff is maintaining a Facebook group for the Alaska Committee on Noxious and Invasive Plant Management (CNIPM).
- Staff continues to maintain the online Alaska Grown Source Book and is preparing to enter new and updated information for 2016-2017. A printed version will not be created this fiscal year.

- Staff is finalizing the 2016 Spring Agricultural Land Auction booklet.
- Staff edited the Grazing Management Plan documents.
- Staff finalizing Invasive Plants Management Program CNIPM Strategic Plan document.
- Staff provided graphic design and marketing support for Alaska Tilth program in collaboration with Alaska Pacific University, UAA, and Mat-Su Experimental Farm.
- Staff reformatted a power point presentation for the Land Sales Program.
- Staff created Alaska Grown advertisement for Peony Association Conference Program.
- Staff coordinated PMC Annual Open House and created all graphic materials and marketing for the event.
- Staff created media release and advertised on the PMC website the annual seed sale.
- Staff collecting information to update the Native Plant Source Directory.
- Staff continues to update online document library.

Revegetation Program

- Staff is working with Alaska Department of Fish & Game on a Streambank Rehabilitation Workshop that will be provided in select locations throughout the state in May.
- The Cold Regions Native Plant Commercialization Project has collected and cleaned all seed from its 2015 field season. Selected species will be started as plugs in the greenhouse in March and transplanted in the fields later this spring. Evaluations will continue to look for species that have high conservation value in Alaska.
- Cleaning species were collected from Kenai Fjords National Park.

Seed Cleaning and Conditioning

- Staff made repairs to seed cleaning equipment and replaced aging and damaged screens for the 29D and the Eclipse 334. This will allow us to clean seed more efficiently.
- Staff insulated the middle storage area in the seed house and installed a heater.
- Staff is preparing samples of beach wildrye to go to a Plant Materials Center in Louisiana for a trial they are running. Seed cleaning has also donated trial samples to a farmer in Homer.
- Staff is currently cleaning the 26th seed lot of slender wheatgrass in the large seed house. Once finished, there will be one more commercial lot to clean
- Staff finished the largest commercial lot ('Nortran') that totaled 25,042.5 lbs. of clean seed.
- The small seed lot is beginning to clean nearly 40 lbs. of fireweed that was dropped off in early March. After this lot is cleaned there will be three additional lots to clean prior to starting spring plantings.
- Staff is preparing for the annual seed sale that will begin on April 13th.
- Staff is reviewing a draft report from the Noatak Seed project.

Seed Lab

- The seed lab conducted 317 seed tests. This includes 148 Purity, 111 Germination, 47 Noxious weed tests, 10 Seed counts, and one Tetrazolium test.

Seeds of Success

- Staff harvested seed from field increase plots and the box gardens. These species are listed in Table 1 below.
- Staff cleaned 76 new seed lots that were collected during 2015. Total weight of the cleaned seed exceeded 5.8 lbs.
- Staff is in the process of growing plants for the 2016 seed increase trials. Seventeen species were selected for seed increase.

Table 1. Seed Harvested in 2015

Seed Harvested in 2015	Accession #	Clean weight, g
Arctagrostis latifolia	AK930-165	450
Arctagrostis latifolia	AK930-465	208
Arctagrostis latifolia	AK930-527	139
Artemisia tilesii	AK930-75	97
Beckmannia syzigachne	AK930-621	5658
Bromus inermis	AK930-480	270
Calamagrostis canadensis	AK930-457	118
Calamagrostis purpurescens	AK930-463	219
Chamerion latifolium	AK930-391	9.6
Deschampsia cespitosa	AK930-159	450
Deschampsia cespitosa	AK930-452	810
Festuca rubra	AK930-497	5154
Hedysarum alpinum	AK930-95	118
Hedysarum alpinum	AK930-522	130
Leymus mollis	AK930-456	1090
Poa alpina	AK930-162	77
Trisetum spicatum	AK930-389	204
		Total: 15201.6g (or 33.56lbs)