The Division of Agriculture Activities

January 05, 2011

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http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag

Director of Agriculture

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In This Issue

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Director's Note

It is hard to believe another year has come and gone. Each New Year brings change, and this one is no exception. On December 28th, the Division of Agriculture welcomed Johanna Herron on board as our New Farm to School Coordinator. On December 31st we said goodbye to Asset Manager Ray Nix, and we will be saying goodbye to Patricia O'Neil towards the end of the month; I want to thank them both for their hard work, dedication to agriculture and wish them the best in their new endeavors.

Speaking of change, we also have a new Board of Agriculture and Conservation member. Deidre Berberich has filled the General Business seat and has a background in accounting and private business ownership. Board members Stu Davies, of North Pole; and Al Poindexter, of Anchor Point have been reconfirmed and will be serving an additional term each. There is still one vacant seat representing State Wide Agricultural Promotion and if interested please visit this website.

Many have been following the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act, otherwise known as S.510. This bill was included in H.R.2751 and was passed at year's end by both the House and the Senate. It was presented to the President on 12/29/2010. You can read more here.

Please take a few minutes to read the newsletter and stay up to date on agriculture events in the state of Alaska.

Wishing you a prosperous New Year! Franci

Marketing Section

Marketing Section Welcomes Farm to School Coordinator

This month the Division of Agriculture Marketing Section will be welcoming a new staff member, Johanna Herron, as the Farm to School Coordinator. Johanna has a unique set of skills and experiences that will allow her to "hit the ground running" with a new Farm to School program in Alaska. She recently wrapped up a Master's thesis project entitled "More Eating of Alaskan-based Lunches in Schools (MEALS), in which she designed and administered a state wide survey to assess the interest in, challenges and barriers to, and future needs of incorporating Alaskan foods into the school food environment. We are excited to have Johanna on staff and look forward to achieving greater use of Alaska Grown foods in Alaska schools.

If you are interested in learning more about the new Farm to School program in Alaska, mark your calendar for Wednesday, January 12th from 1-4pm. A "Farm to School Summit" will be hosted by the Division at the Plant Materials Center in Palmer. Teleconference and webinar capabilities will be made available if you cannot attend the meeting in person. Contact Amy Pettit for more information.

Agriculture Calendar

In an effort to better serve the agriculture community, staff developed the Agriculture Calendar on our web page. As we learn about new events relevant to agriculture producers throughout the State, we will add the important information to the calendar. If you have an event that you would like to add, please contact Lora Haralson. We hope this calendar will become a one-stop shop for planning your participation in upcoming meetings, workshops, and conferences.

Speaking of upcoming events, January plays host to the Alaska Greenhouse & Nursery Conference, as well as the Alaska Peony Growers Conference which will be held January 26th – 28th in Anchorage at the Hilton. Agenda and registration information for both events will be available through the link on the calendar soon!

Inspection Staff

http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_is.htm

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Other News/Information

Did you follow the blog about Chris Voigt, the man who ate 20 potatoes a day for 60 days? See the results of his potato diet.

Maybe you have been considering attending an "outside" conference. Don Berberich, berry farmer/teacher/Farm Bureau President/jam producer from Palmer recently attended the Great Lakes Ag Expo in Michigan. Read Don's blog for a better understanding of what the Expo has to offer.

Will your winter travels take you to Oregon in late February? If so, we highly recommend checking out Oregon State University's Small Farms Conference. This is an informative and impressive event. Check out the full registration information. This would be a great compliment to attending our Alaska workshops over the next three months.

Inspection Section

USDA Grade Standards for Broccoli

"U.S. No. 1" consists of Italian Sprouting Broccoli of the same type. The broccoli shall be free from decay, and from damage caused by over maturity, discoloration of bud clusters or leaves, freezing, wilting, dirt or other foreign material, disease, insects, mechanical or other means. The bud clusters shall be generally fairly compact. The bunched broccoli shall be neatly and fairly evenly cut off at the base, and well trimmed, unless otherwise specified as "closely trimmed," "fairly well trimmed," or "leafy."

Common Defects:

Damage by:

(a) Blighted buds when the affected area exceeds a circle 1 inch in diameter.

(b) Flowering buds clusters when more than three buds are obviously open.

(c) Water soaked areas when the affected area exceeds a circle 1/2 inch in diameter.

Serious damage by:

(a) Blighted buds when the affected area exceeds a circle 1-1/2 inch in diameter.

(b) Flowering buds clusters when seriously affecting the appearance.

(c) Water soaked areas when the affected area exceeds a circle 1 inch in diameter.

Tolerances:

For Bunched Broccoli, Broccoli Crowns, and Broccoli Florets, the maximum allowable defects to meet U.S. No. 1 Grade are as follows:

Total Defects	10%
(Including Decay)	2% maximum
Total Off size	10%

Plant Materials Center

Soil Sampling, Testing, and Erosion in Alaska

There are many variables to consider when planning a field, garden, or revegetation project. Temperature, moisture, aspect, region and the chosen crop, all play large roles in the outcome of a successful project. An important variable to consider when choosing a growing site is the soil type. Soils play a large role along with many other environmental factors to the success of a grower. Soil temperature, nutrient capacity, water holding capacity, and physical makeup affect what is being grown in the field. The newly formed soil laboratory at the Plant Materials Center (PMC) has given us the ability to collect and test soils throughout Alaska. The public can now acquire vital chemical and physical soil data. Knowing the type of growing media and its potential limitations will provide field crop and revegetation projects a greater success rate.

Sampling Capabilities

The PMC can collect soil samples across Alaska, utilizing several different methods. Samples can be gathered using clear PVC bore-hole probes, in either 6 or 24 inch depth increments. This type of collection extracts a small vertical horizon

Plant Materials Center

http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_pmc.htm

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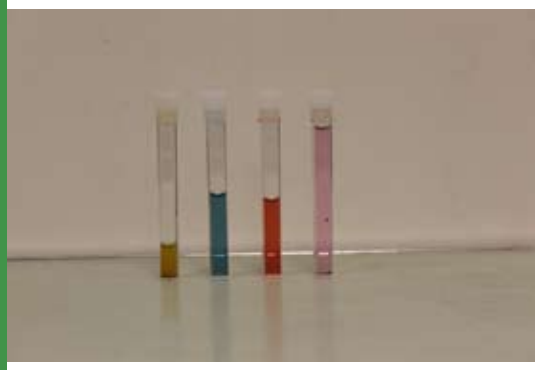
profile with little to no compaction. The bore-hole analysis also allows collection at many sites in a short amount of time. In addition, samples can be collected using a hand powered auger. The auger method allows large quantities of soil to be collected, at depths up to 16 feet. The auger can also be used in sand, silt, clay, mud, or rock less than 2mm in diameter. The auger method is labor intensive and demands more time for sample collection. Both the bore hole and auger method can be used in conjunction with open pit digging. Each sampling method is adaptable to various types of soil structure and field variability.

Testing Capabilities

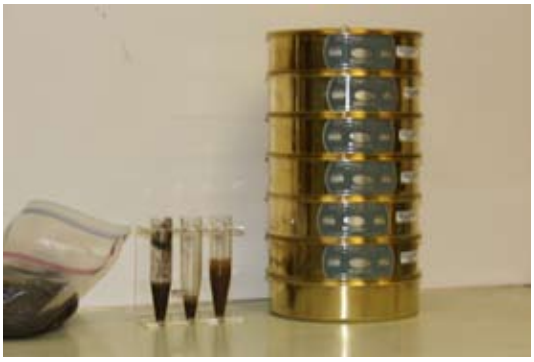
In addition to sample collection, the PMC can conduct chemical and physical constituent soil testing. Utilizing colorimetric, titrimetric, and electronic methods, the PMC can test for macronutrients such as Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Potassium, Calcium, and Magnesium. Micronutrients, such as Iron and Boron can also be tested, and steps are being taken to initialize testing for Copper and Zinc. Also pH and electro-conductivity (EC) can be calculated from collected samples and within the field. Once chemical data is obtained, nutrient deficiencies and toxicities can be identified and fertilizer ratios recommended for the soil. Physical characteristics such as texture and bulk density can be obtained as well. Texture and bulk density characteristics can limit plant growth and increase erosion. Being aware of the chemical and physical conditions of a soil will allow the final project outcome to be more successful.



Erosion Control

Erosion is a problem that growers, contractors, engineers, and other industry professionals have been dealing with for decades. The PMC offers technical advice and project assistance on common erosion problems. Increased erosion causes soil and nutrient loss as well as sediment loading of stream channels, which can have major impacts on fisheries and plant ecosystems.

Regulatory authority of the Alaska Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit (APDES) is conducted by the state. Under this permit, construction contractors that discharge storm water into a municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) or into surface waters of the United States must have this authorization. A Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) must be developed to document erosion and sediment control measures. It is here that Best Management Practices (BMPs) are implemented to slow or prevent erosion. Being aware of potential erosion areas and federal/state regulations can greatly reduce any future problems and allow for more successful final projects.



For more information on soil sampling, testing and erosion issues, please contact Casey Dinkel with the PMC at 745-8108. Also, for more information on the (APDES) please refer to the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) website.