



# The Division of Agriculture Activities

June 10, 2015

Find us on the web at:  
<http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag>

## Director's Office

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To add or remove your name from our newsletter list [click here](#).

Questions or Comments?  
E-Mail or call 907-761-3864.



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## Director's Note

Up until recently, we Alaskans have had to keep reminding ourselves that it was only May because of our early spring and warm weather, by all outward appearance the month of May looked more like June. Of course, this past week brought us back to reality with the much cooler temperatures and new snow on the mountains. The rain brought at least some relief to much of the state as USDA Crop Weather Summary reported most of the state short on moisture, with the exception of the Kenai Peninsula.

This past month, Doug Warner retired from the Division of Agriculture. I would like to thank Doug for his 30+ years of service and wish him well. I would also like to thank Curtis Knight, from the Northern Region office for his hard work and dedication to the agriculture industry. Although he resigned from his permanent position he has agreed to come back for a short time to assist with inspections during this transition time.

It is hard to believe that it is already June, but here in Alaska, June 21-27, 2015 is Alaska Invasive Weeds Awareness Week. Alaska remains in a unique position to avoid the enormous costs of widespread invasive plants that are now impacting the other 49 states. In recognition of Alaska's unique position, state, federal, local, private, non-profits, and the public are working together to increase public awareness of invasive weeds, management tools available, and the benefits of keeping our communities and environment free of invasive weeds and agricultural pests for generations to come.

As most of you know, these are interesting times for the State of Alaska. With no budget passed to date, 10,000 +/- layoff notices were sent out on June 1, 2015. If a budget is not passed by July 1, the layoffs will become effective July 2. This will impact the following programs and services provided by the Division of Agriculture:

- Forage and soils program
- Horticulture program
- Revegetation and Native seed program
- Invasive Weeds Program
- Marketing
- On Farm Technical Assistance
- Seed & Pathology labs
- Seed sales

The following programs are not dependent on the general fund:

- Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund
- Mt. McKinley Meat & Sausage Plant
- Agriculture Land Sales and Assistance

Minimal staffing will remain at the Plant Materials Center to maintain production crops.

## ARLF Services

[http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag\\_arlf.htm](http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_arlf.htm)

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## Marketing Staff

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As always, please take the time to read through the newsletter and mark your calendar of upcoming events and meetings. If you have any concerns or questions, please give me a call at 761-3867 or send me an email at [Franci.havemeister@alaska.gov](mailto:Franci.havemeister@alaska.gov).

~ Franci

“Every thought is a seed. If you plant crab apples, don’t count on harvesting Golden Delicious.”

~ Bill Meyer



## Agriculture Calendar

- Wed., June 10 **Board of Agriculture and Conservation Meeting**  
Division of Agriculture, 1800 Glenn Highway, Suite 12. Palmer. 1 pm. *Details:* [here](#)
- Wed., June 17 **Natural Resource Conservation & Development Board (NRCDB) Meeting** Teleconference. 9 am. *Details:* [here](#)

If you have an event that you would like to add to the calendar, please contact [Lora Haralson](#).

## Marketing Section

### Farm Family of the Year nominations sought

The Alaska Division of Agriculture invites the public to submit nominations for the 16th Annual Farm Family of the Year award. The award is sponsored by Matanuska Valley Federal Credit Union and will be presented during the Director’s Reception at the Alaska State Fair’s opening day on August 27.

The Alaska State Fair established the award in 2000 to honor an Alaska farm family that epitomizes the spirit of the industry and to show appreciation for hardworking Alaskans committed to agriculture and aquaculture in the state.

The Farm Family of the Year selection committee is comprised of representatives from the USDA Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, University of Alaska Fairbanks School of Natural Resources and Extension, Alaska State Fair, and the Division of Agriculture.

Nominations should include details about the family and how they fulfill the following criteria:

- Production of quality **Alaska Grown** products (not based on quantity)
- Community involvement (civic organizations, school, sports, church)
- Involvement in agricultural industry organizations (local, state, and federal)
- Overall farm family image, farming history, and unique or special production

Nominations are due by **June 26** and can be submitted by mail, email, or fax to:

**Jacquelyn Schade – Farm Family**  
**Alaska Division of Agriculture,**  
**1800 Glenn Hwy, Ste. 12, Palmer, AK 99645**

[Jacquelyn.Schade@alaska.gov](mailto:Jacquelyn.Schade@alaska.gov)

Fax: (907) 745-7242



## Land Sales & Grazing Leases

[http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag\\_sales.htm](http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_sales.htm)

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**Erik Johnson** 907-761-3863

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## Fairbanks Office

907-328-1950

### 2015 Alaska farmers market list complete

The Division of Agriculture has comprised a list of farmers markets within the state. This list includes, location, hours, dates, times and payment types accepted. To be added to the list or to make changes to your market's listing please contact [Jacquelyn.Schade@alaska.gov](mailto:Jacquelyn.Schade@alaska.gov).

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/Marketing/FarmersMarkets.pdf>

## Port Mackenzie Rail Extension Agricultural Covenants Condemnation Lawsuit

On May 22, 2015, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough filed a lawsuit seeking to condemn agricultural covenants on ten parcels of land located in the Point MacKenzie Agricultural District so that the parcels may be used for the Point MacKenzie Rail Extension Project. The Borough has already acquired the property rights it needs from the farmers who owned the parcels. But the parcels remain subject to covenants created pursuant to Alaska Statute 38.05.321, restricting use of the land to agricultural purposes "for the benefit of all Alaska residents."

The Borough's condemnation lawsuit seeks to remove that use restriction and names the State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources, as a defendant, as well as "all persons or parties unknown" claiming an interest in the agricultural covenants on the ten parcels in question.

To obtain a copy of the Borough's complaint, including specific information about the ten parcels involved, as well as the decisional document explaining why the covenants are being condemned, go to <http://www.portmacrail.com/library.html>. The lawsuit was filed in the Alaska Superior Court in Palmer and is captioned:

**Matanuska-Susitna Borough vs. State of Alaska,  
Department of Natural Resources, et al.,  
Case No. 3-PA-15-1623 CI.**



**June 21-27 is  
Alaska Invasive Weeds Awareness Week**

**Learn more about invasive weeds at:**

[plants.alaska.gov/invasives/index.htm](http://plants.alaska.gov/invasives/index.htm)

**or contact Heather Stewart at 907-745-8721**

[Heather.Stewart@alaska.gov](mailto:Heather.Stewart@alaska.gov)

## Inspection Staff

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## Mt. McKinley Meat & Sausage

[http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag\\_mmms.htm](http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_mmms.htm)

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## Pest Detection / Inspection Section

### Food safety in the home garden

It's gardening season again in Alaska, and time for a reminder about food safety practices that can help you grow food that is healthy AND food safe.

#### Garden Site:

When determining the best site for your garden, avoid areas where soil may have been previously contaminated, or where your crop may be subject to hazards from roads, manure piles, septic systems, etc. Also, be sure to dispose of brush, leaves, and decaying plant materials far away from the garden to eliminate rodents and other animals, which can carry disease to your garden. Keep domestic pets, poultry, and roosting birds away from the garden as well

– animal waste is a common cause of food borne pathogens.



#### Soil Amendments:

Fertilizers, pesticides, and compost must be safe for (and labeled for use in) vegetable gardens. Untreated manure and improperly treated compost, compost tea, and worm juice all pose a risk of contaminating food with pathogenic bacteria, virus, and parasites. In order to be safe, compost piles containing food wastes must maintain a temperature of between 131 and 170 degrees F for at least three days. Small compost piles often do not reach these high temperatures – in which case it is best to consider the compost untreated, and apply it only in the fall, or as a side-dressing to crops that will not come in direct contact with it. Do not apply compost teas directly to the edible portion of fruits and vegetables close to harvest time.



**Water:** Public drinking water or ground water (from a well) are both much safer for sprinkler irrigation than surface waters from a pond or stream. Even rain water can be contaminated if it is collected from a roof where birds have roosted – many birds carry campylobacter, a common foodborne pathogen. If you must use surface water or rainwater for irrigation, be sure that it does not come in contact with produce that will be harvested within a week or so; indirect irrigation is always best when using non-potable water. When washing harvested produce, potable (drinking) water should always be used.

**Garden Sanitation:** Prevent cross-contamination by cleaning and then disinfecting gardening equipment, clothing, and surfaces. Shoes, gloves, and equipment can spread pathogens to crops and food containers. Diluted bleach (a teaspoon per quart of water) or pure white vinegar will safely sanitize surfaces.

Happy Gardening!

## Plant Materials Center

<http://plants.alaska.gov/>

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## Plant Materials Center (PMC)

### Planting resumes at the PMC

As summer approaches, staff at the PMC have been busy preparing their fields for planting. This included connecting the irrigation system, tilling the fields, and planning the location of the year's crops.

The PMC recently received new equipment that is pulled behind a tractor to expedite planting. This two-row planter by U.S. Farms in Wyoming is a modern take on an old 'iron age' planter and will save many labor hours. Now, instead of planting single rows of seed potatoes by hand, two staff members can accomplish the task more efficiently by dropping seed potatoes into a 'turntable' that quickly plants two rows at a time. This two-row planter was also fitted with in-row sprayer equipment.

Staff planted 155 varieties from their maintenance collection, 30 varieties from outside the state for evaluation trials, and over 100 breeding line families for evaluation, selection, and future release.

In addition to field planting, Generation Zero greenhouse planting will commence mid-June and will include 34 varieties to meet orders from commercial growers as well as 16 experimental varieties for evaluation and growth in subsequent years. Surplus Generation Zero seed is still available to the general public. If you would like to place an order please contact the Plant Materials Center.

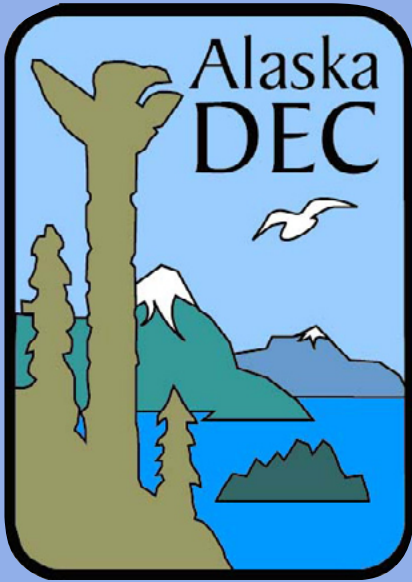
The horticulture program is continuing its asparagus, broccoli, apple, and caneberry trials. The program received a Specialty Crop Grant to begin a cauliflower trial. Starts for the cauliflower and broccoli trials are currently growing in the greenhouse and will be transplanted to the field when ready. Varieties being evaluated can be viewed at <http://plants.alaska.gov/Horticulture.html>.

So far this growing season the PMC has planted the majority of its foundation barley seed for regeneration. Six varieties of barley have been planted on approximately 10 acres. To date, all barley planted has germinated and is much further along than in previous seasons due to this spring's warm weather. In addition two varieties of oats have been planted to regenerate all of the oat variety germplasm the PMC maintains. In August 2014 a foundation level winter rye was planted for increasing seed for future sale and has overwintered with minimal losses and is expected to have a successful harvest. A trial plot is also being conducted for nutrient and pesticide evaluation on 'Denali' alfalfa.

If you would like more information on PMC activities please call 745-4469.



U.S. Farms custom two-row planter being used to plant potatoes.



## Environmental Health

Alaska Department of  
Environmental Conservation

[Dec.Alaska.gov/eh/](http://Dec.Alaska.gov/eh/)  
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# Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation: Division of Environmental Health

## **Keep our farm animals and our fairs safe**

The recent outbreak of avian influenza (AI) among poultry operations in the lower 48 is the largest outbreak that has ever occurred in the U.S. and has had a devastating impact on the birds and the farmers who raise and care for them. Current estimates show almost 50 million domestic birds have been affected by the AI outbreak. Three strains of virus that are causing problems are, H5N8, H5N2 and H5N1 none are considered human health threats and are inactivated, or killed, by cooking poultry to 165 degrees F.

The full economic impact on poultry products in the retail markets is uncertain but the price for eggs is increasing all over the country. Listening to the news updates you soon realize, that even with the best disease surveillance, there is great uncertainty of how the virus is spreading amongst farms. Wild birds may spread the virus across the environment but how is avian influenza entering the individual farms? Alaskan poultry owners need to be preparing and reviewing their flock health plans and biosecurity since wild waterfowl are currently on their way north to the summer nesting areas.

Due to the uncertainty of how the virus is spreading some states have banned live poultry exhibits, sales and shows, or just prohibited water fowl (ducks and geese) from participating. The news is documenting how commercial operations and some backyard flocks are being depopulated for the sake of protecting other poultry farms and the food supply, but what is happening in the lower 48 could occur in Alaska. All agricultural farms are vulnerable to disease outbreaks in crops (like potato pathogens) or livestock. The risk is elevated if we get complacent or lazy about adhering to herd or flock health plans and biosecurity measures. The resulting disease can have an affect on livestock health, the economy of the farm, wildlife health, and potentially on food production and safety.

Remember that biosecurity is everyone's business, whether or not you live on a farm, just visiting, or making deliveries. As a farmer, make sure you have a farm health plan and that everyone knows and follows the rules. The daily workload on the farm is hectic and during the planting and harvest season it is easy to get overwhelmed and let some safety precautions slide a little. This is when your farm may be at risk. You should have standard operating procedures that all employees understand and enforce to ensure visitors and deliveries to the farm are not carrying a disease pathogen.

## **New informative website for equine veterinarians and horse owners**

The Equine Disease Communication Center (EDCC) ([www.equinediseasecc.org](http://www.equinediseasecc.org)) is a new resource for veterinarians and horse owners. The site is still under construction, but offers access to sources of information about diseases, biosecurity, recent outbreaks, as well as treatments and vaccinations.