



MEMORANDUM

Department of Natural Resources

STATE OF ALASKA
Division of Agriculture

TO: Board of Agriculture
& Conservation

DATE: January 20, 2011

FROM: Franci Havemeister
Director

SUBJECT: Director's Report
Oct., Nov., Dec. 2010

Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund (ARLF)

Staff has been processing 4 loan disbursements, 2 defaults, 3 AGO Assignments, 1 loan closing, 1 loan paid off to be closed out, 1 loan servicing, ARLF Reports financial services and ARLF Interest & GBC Rate Review.

Inspection

- Staff completed 60 FFV 301 inspections representing 32,174 packages & 955,220 pounds of product and 18 FFV 300 inspections representing 28 separate products.
- Staff issued 18 Phytosanitary certificates.
- Staff performed 3 Shell egg inspections.
- Staff completed 3 Elk Fence Inspections
- Staff completed 1 USDA *Good Agricultural Practices* Audit at a local farm
- Staff conducted seven farm visits to discuss potato issues and check grade on local potatoes.
- Staff conducted eight grocery store visits to check grade on potatoes and discuss quality issues.
- Staff completed 10 Online CEU Courses which is required for recertification of GAP/GHP Auditor credentials.
- Staff received Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) Refresher Training.

Regulatory

- Staff met with design staff for proposed Mat Su Borough Ag Processing Center & Test Kitchens to discuss facility food safety requirements.
- Staff is completing the State of Alaska, Quality Manual which is a USDA Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) requirement for state signatories of the State National Harmonization Program (SNHP) for Seed Potatoes. The SNHP Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) requires that states provide USDA APHIS a Quality Manual in Article 5, Cooperator Responsibilities. Article 5 sec. 6 reads that the cooperator state will "provide to APHIS a quality manual describing seed certification procedures, pest tolerances and testing methodologies, together with mechanisms for ensuring compliance. The quality manual shall consist of the most current certified seed potato standards for each certifying entity and a brief handbook outlining the various standards and protocols for disease testing."
- Staff discussed potato labeling requirements with local wholesaler and inspected final label to ensure it met the State's requirements.
- Staff participated in annual National Association of State Organic Programs (NASOP) Organic Cost Share Program policy teleconference
- Staff attended the Alaska Pest Risk Committee. The Committee completed a 2011 Work plan which outlines the objectives and goals for the coming year.

- Staff completed the required tolerance testing of produce sizing rings per the USDA/FFV/Fresh Products Branch (FPB) Directive 98-1.
- Staff reviewed and approved 3 USDA permits for interstate movement of plant products into Alaska.
- Staff is continuing to work with Alaska Seed Potato producers on the export of seed potatoes to China. Staff has provided consultation and phytosanitary, seed certification and marketing information to a broad group involved in making this export to China happen.
- Staff has been conducting hiring and recruitment activities for a plant health position.

Marketing & Development

- Marketing staff prepared and emailed out four Division Newsletters in the months of September through December.
- Staff presented information about Alaska Grown and Alaska agriculture to a variety of University students including an in-class discussion, a web-conference class, as well as a farm tour.
- Staff facilitated multiple grant projects including the Alaska Teacher Scholarship Grant program, the Cooperative Marketing Program grant, the Alaska Agriculture Innovation Grant as well as the Specialty Crop Competitive Grant.
- Staff participated in the Fall Festival at Pyrah's U-Pick to promote Alaska with approximately 6000 in attendance.
- Staff participated in the Native Plants Conference "Grown in Alaska."
- Staff continues to collaborate with the Alaska Community Agriculture Association (ACAA) including participating in teleconferences as well as assisting with the development of their web site.
- Staff arranged and conducted a meeting with rhubarb growers to discuss the direction of the industry and establish an agenda for an upcoming conference. Additionally staff attended a Kenai Garden Club meeting to discuss the project. A third component of this project involves marketing staff members coordinating a research project to identify potential rhubarb markets.
- Marketing staff collaborate with University Cooperative Extension Service (CES) staff continuously; we have been working on conference planning for the upcoming Produce Growers Conference as well as the Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE) conference. Staff also assisted CES with the Forage Growers Day held in December.
- Marketing staff continues to participate with the Alaska Farmers Market Association (AFMA) including coordinating the upcoming AFMA Day; facilitating a new pilot project involving use of Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) machines at Farmers Markets; as well as writing a Farmers Market manual which will serve as a guideline for both developing markets as well as enhancing vendor marketing.
- Staff continues to be actively involved in the Food Policy Council and its development.
- Staff worked to develop the new Farm to School program including recruitment of staff, meetings with Department of Education and other program development.
- Staff has been busy wrapping up the Eat Local Challenge 2010 as well as planning for the Eat Local Challenge in 2011.
- Marketing staff have continued to assist in information exchange involving the procurement of Alaska Grown farm products by State institutions.
- Staff participated in an Alaska Women in the Environment Network (AWEN) luncheon to educate AWEN members about the Alaska Grown program.
- Staff continues to manage the various USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBG) programs, accounting for over \$150,000 a year.
- Staff participated in a Cooperative Development Workshop to discuss the potential for more Cooperatives in the farm industries of Alaska.
- Marketing staff continue to manage the USDA Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) program and participated in refresher training in October.
- Staff attended and spoke at the Alaska Farm Bureau Annual meeting in November giving an overview of grant programs available to members.
- Staff attended meetings hosted by the Mat Su Borough where the future of the proposed Agriculture Processing facility was discussed.

- Staff is working with representatives from the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the UAF CES to develop a guidance document for poultry and egg producers in Alaska.
- Ten new farms were added to the Alaska Grown program between September and December.

Northern Region

- Conducted meeting with farmers from Delta Junction concerning crop damage by Bison
- Completed estimate of agricultural crop damage by bison, developed maps of bison locations and migration patterns on agricultural fields, and presented bison information to the Delta Bison Working Group
- Currently inspecting and issuing Phytosanitary certificates for seed potatoes being shipped from Delta Junction to China (expect a total of five vans of 21 tons each)
- Attended Annual Meeting of Alaska Farm Bureau in Fairbanks
- Attended Annual Meeting of CAPS (Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey) in Kansas City, MO and gave a presentation covering Alaskan pest surveys
- Entered Alaskan CAPS pest survey results (all negative) into federal databases and wrote final reports for those projects ending in December
- Submitted CAPS pest information to Alaska's annual Forest Health Protection report
- Reviewed several agricultural land subdivision plats
- Attending meeting with DNR Survey unit to establish procedures for reviewing preliminary subdivision plats of agriculture parcels.
- Gave presentation at Soil and Water Conservation Meeting regarding Nenana-Totchaket Agriculture project
- Attended training on new DNR Business Reporting System

Plant Material Center (PMC)

Seed Cleaning & Conditioning

- Seed cleaning activities are well underway for the 2010-2011 seasons. We have received over 190 bulk bags of seed from Alaska Seed Growers, Inc. for cleaning in the large lot conditioning facility this winter. Those lots include Nortran Hairgrass, Wheatgrass, Nugget Kentucky Bluegrass, Alpine Bluegrass, Sloughgrass, and Tundra Glaucous Bluegrass.
- Our small lot facility has over 40 lots of 2010 harvested crops to be cleaned over the coming months.
- We also received cleaning requests for multiple spruce cone shipments this fall. We are processing cones from the Kenai Peninsula, the Delta area, and Haines.
- Since the cleaning season began in September 2010, we have processed approximately 20 lots resulting in over 350 lbs of clean seed.

Invasive Weeds and Agricultural Pests

- Interviewed and hired staff to work with horticulture industry to prevent invasions.
- Attended meeting on newly discovered infestation of the invasive water weed *Elodea canadensis* in Fairbanks.
- Attended Alaska Invasive Species Working Group Meetings.
- Reviewed and edited invasiveness rankings for newly ranked invasive plants.

Rural Village Seed Production Project (RVSP)

- October 25th-29th, 2010: RVSP staff attended the CNIPM conference on integrated pest management and weed suppression and how the issue is being dealt with in Alaska.
- November 1st, 2010: RVSP staff took part in a teleconference with Metlakatla Forest and Land Resources Director Milo Booth to discuss the process of providing the community funding. The final stages are being set and the Forest and Land Resources office will be fully funded following the turn of the year. Project set up in Metlakatla is going according to plan.
- November 3rd, 2010: RVSP staff informed the City of Hooper Bay, Alaska they will officially be signing on to work with the seed production project. RVSP staff visited Hooper Bay on

December 7th-8th, 2010 to make a site assessment and discuss details with leaders in the community. Staff also met with the SeaLion Corporation in Bethel on December 8th. SeaLion Corp. is the governing body for the City of Hooper Bay.

- The list of potential candidates for the RVSP has been narrowed down to 7 communities. Community Coordinator, Zander Ault, has written a year end report that will allow staff to determine the final list of villages.
- The RVSP website will be updated in January 2011 with community profile pages.
- RVSP staff will be traveling to Aniak, Alaska for a site visit on January 3rd-4th, 2011.

Alaska State Seed Lab

- Between October and December the Alaska State Seed Lab performed 70 Germination tests, 14 Purity tests, 7 Noxious tests, and 1 TZ test.

Soils Laboratory and Erosion Control

- The newly established soils laboratory at the PMC is completed and testing! The soils lab is able to conduct basic chemical and physical testing and has currently completed over 100 initial tests and collected over 30 soil samples across Alaska.
- In September several soil sample collections were conducted around the Butte area, using various methods such as bore hole, auger, and open pit digging. The samples were then tested for basic nutrient levels and physical properties.
- In October, twelve soil samples were collected on the island of Metlakatla in coordination with the Rural Village Seed Production Project. These samples were then brought back to the PMC soils lab and tested for various chemical properties such as, nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, and Iron. In addition, some physical tests such as texture analysis and bulk density were also conducted.
- Also in late October, soils and RVSP staff visited the village of Manley Hot Springs northwest of Fairbanks Alaska. The soils staff collected field data and photos within the proposed project area; however samples were not collected due to winter freezing. Samples will be collected in the spring once field conditions allow access and easier sampling.
- Lastly, the soils laboratory is currently in the process of adding additional chemical testing procedures such as, calcium, magnesium, carbon, sodium, and cation exchange capacity (CEC).

Foundation Seed Program

- The Native Plant Source Directory is undergoing its 7th revision. If you are interested in advertising your business, please go to <http://www.plants.alaska.gov/native/> and sign up.
- Ongoing reporting and testing of our seed inventory and viability are done as time permits. The good seed will be sold in April at our bi-annual seed sale or put on reserve for future plantings.
- The Pesticide Permit Application was completed and turned in to Department of Environmental Conservation. This application is for 5 years, thus for the present and the future, research was done to identify which pesticides may enable the best management of weeds at the PMC.
- This past summer's overcast, wet weather caused both of our fields of barley to be heavily infected by two types of smut (fungi). The 'Thual' barley had covered smut which releases its spores during harvest. This black dust covered machinery and people exposed to it. After making several collections to send to researchers, the harvested barley seed was buried and the field was burned. The 'Weal' barley field was infected with loose smut. Again, this crop was destroyed by burning. The PMC cannot sell infected seed. Both seed lots were sent to a seed lab in North Dakota before planting. The smut was not on or in the seed before the planting. Thus, we believe the weather was to blame.
- Past records are being assembled to show patterns and changes in planting and harvest dates, weed control, and crop rotation.

Revegetation Program

Interior Revegetation Guide

- Work has begun on the Interior Revegetation & Erosion Control Guide. This guide is a supplement to the Coastal Revegetation Guide.
- Compiling information for section write-ups on geography, case studies, impacts, and climate/vegetation is proceeding.

The Coastal Revegetation Guide was published.

- 500 copies were printed in December.
- A number of guidebooks have been distributed and the feedback is very positive.

Publishing Updates

- Annual Report – Draft 2009 – 2010 Annual report has been prepared; currently undergoing revision. Expected release in January, 2011.
- PlantAlaska.net was launched. This is a community driven website focused on invasive species management and discussion. Site modifications and improvements are ongoing.
- The Native Plant Directory website update is under construction. Growers can now submit their details electronically on-line for inclusion into the forthcoming 7th edition.
- PMC took delivery of two SMART board interactive whiteboards, and staff received usage training. Server software was installed, configured, and tested. The PMC can facilitate conferences of up to 5 whiteboards, allowing lab based camera and microscope images to be transmitted to the PMC conference room, and annotated in real time.

Other Plant Materials Center Projects

- Lady fern and Wood fern spores were sown for the Mat-Su Riparian Project. Spore germination occurred; ferns are still in the gametophyte stage.
- Over 200 lots of small seed lots for BLM's "Seeds of Success Program" were cleaned.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service requested the PMC to try propagating the only endangered plant in Alaska, the Aleutian Shield Fern. The final goal is to maintain 1,000 mature *Polystichum aleuticum* ferns as germplasm for reintroduction and research. Once equipment was calibrated and verified, two experiments were started in early December with spores collected from Adak, Alaska. By the end of December one substrate showed a definite green coverage, but it's too early to say that these are prothalli.
- Staff participated in the annual "Fall Harvest Dinner".
- Staff participated interviews by two UAF students about Ethnobotany and the Ethnobotany Teaching Garden.
- Questions on revegetation practices, seed sources, potato seed availability, and future presentations were responded to by PMC Staff.
- Staff donated seeds and time to the efforts of the Mat-Su Carbon Crew for revegetation of trash cleanup areas throughout Alaska on 10/10/10.
- Staff assisted the Division of Forestry with their workshop on planting landscape trees.