



**MEMORANDUM**  
Department of Natural Resources

**STATE OF ALASKA**  
Division of Agriculture

**TO:** Board of Agriculture  
& Conservation

**DATE:** April 27, 2012

**FROM:** Franci Havemeister  
Director

**SUBJECT:** Director's Report  
March 2012

**Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund (ARLF):**

- Staff has been processing five new loan applications, four are prepared for the BAC meeting, one application plus two previously received applications are still pending further documentation.
- Staff has processed four loan payoffs, Reconveyances of Deeds of Trust, verification of debts for other creditors, ARLF interest rates and contacting delinquent borrowers.
- Staff has closed loans approved at the previous board meeting.

**Marketing & Development**

- During the month of March six new farms joined the Alaska Grown program.
- Marketing staff attended, facilitated and presented at the Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE) conference in Fairbanks with over 200 people in attendance; staff gave presentations on the Farm to School program, the Alaska Grown program and the new Restaurant Rewards program.
- Staff received and reviewed applications for the 2012 Cooperative Marketing Program (CMP) grant.
- Staff continues to work with colleagues at the Dept. of Health & Social Services, Obesity Prevention & Control Program on the Farmers Market EBT project in order to expand access to Alaska Grown foods by low income households.
- Staff created and launched the new 'Local Food Hero Contest' aimed at connecting engaged youth to learn more about local food efforts in their communities. The contest was reviewed by and received feedback from the Alaska Youth for A Healthier Alaska (YAHA) to help increase likelihood of buy-in.
- Staff conducted the Seed Tape demonstration with over 70 kids at an elementary school science fair and with over 100 girls at the Girl Scouts Women in Science event.
- Staff held a webinar for teachers to explain the Alaska Teacher Scholarship Program and the Farm to School Grant.
- Marketing staff continue to participate with the Alaska Food Policy Council.
- Staff met with an advertising & research firm to prepare for a project designed to evaluate the Alaska Grown program and logo.
- Staff participated in the USDA Produce Safety University to gain a better understanding of food safety in relation to the Farm to School and Child Nutrition Programs.
- Staff continues to utilize Facebook as a promotional tool with over 7000 likes on the Alaska Grown page and 271 likes on the Farm to School page.

- Staff is conducting calls to schools throughout the State to gather information on the number of school gardens currently in existence and provide resources for those interested in launching a garden.
- Marketing staff are working on contracts and arrangements for Alaska Grown Day at the 2012 Alaska State Fair in Palmer.
- Staff facilitated the creation of the March Division of Agriculture E-Newsletter which is now received by over 500 people throughout the State.
- Staff gave a presentation to visiting college students.
- Staff hosted a booth display at the Alaska Botanical Garden Spring Conference and also helped sponsor the presentation given by keynote speaker Elliot Coleman.
- Staff conducted more than 10 store visits to discuss signage and receive input on the new twist tie to be produced for the 2012 season.
- Staff conducted more than 10 restaurant visits to increase awareness about the new restaurant rewards program.
- Marketing staff continue working with the Alaska Chip Co. on a new roasted potato wedge with the school lunch program as the target buyer.

### **Northern Region**

- Attended Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education Conference in Fairbanks. Talked to many people involved in small scale agriculture and answered their questions concerning the availability of state agriculture land.
- Had more meetings with DMLW Survey unit and Resource and Development unit concerning Nenana-Totchaket. Questions revolved around how to proceed with the project in light of the wording in Tanana Basin Area Plan (TBAP); whether we should amend TBAP or to include new language in the TBAP update currently being done.
- Submitted comments to DNR Resource and Development unit concerning the new Yukon Tanana Area Plan. Our particular concern was the section discussing the agricultural goals of the state, which we felt needed significant changes.
- Attended Land Sales and Contract Administration unit meeting to discuss status of current and upcoming offerings from the state.
- Worked with Salcha-Big Delta Soil and Water Conservation District concerning the nature of state farm conservations plans, e.g. what needs to be on them and what the district was willing to put in the plan. The discussion centered on housing rights and the narrative requirement because the district generally does not concern itself with such matters when developing a plan for a farmer.
- Had meeting with Mayor of Nenana concerning the status of the Nenana-Totchaket project. Told him that we were sending people in to the field this week to look at the trail use in the area to help in determining how we are going to design parcels in the area. Also mentioned we are going to be working jointly with DNR Land sales team to have a combined sale in the area with some fee simple lots intermixed with agriculture covenant parcels. This should speed up the process as the work would be spread out among several people.
- Worked with many farmers on updating their farm conservation plan. The division has been stressing the necessity for farmers to keep their plan up-to-date, particularly when subdividing or making changes to the farm, and this has lead to a great increase in the number of plans getting reviewed and updated.
- Have been following a court case involving a challenge to the right to farm law. Farmer is spreading sewage on his fields in compliance with his permits and farm plan and a neighbor is trying to get him to stop because of the smells. Northern region staff was served a subpoena and testified, mainly about what farm conservation plans are.
- Held meeting with Division of Mining, Land & Water (DMLW) Northern region and Survey unit concerning the status of the Kobe North survey plat note. The DMLW objected to a note included by the Denali Borough about a non-development buffer. This is likely to delay the parcel from being offered in the next agriculture land sale.

- Fielded many calls concerning subdividing agricultural lands. There seems to be a large upswing in such calls over the last year.

### **Northern Region Inspection:**

- Staff attended the Sustainable Agricultural Research and Education Conference in Fairbanks. A poster and display was presented highlighting the pest detection programs that the Division coordinates statewide, emphasizing cooperators and targeted species.
- Staff assisted one of the Central Region Office Inspectors in Delta Junction to inspect seed potatoes for meeting USDA #1 grade requirements.
- Inspection staff from Palmer visited Fairbanks to conduct shell egg regulation inspections and while present, met with northern region staff to discuss ongoing projects.
- Staff began to coordinate with National Park Service, Customs Border Patrol, Bureau of Land Management, Harbormasters, US Forest Service, US Military, and Cooperative Extension Service in conducting pest detection surveys this summer.
- Staff participated in the Alaska Pest Risk Assessment Committee meeting on Wednesday, April 11.
- Staff began coordinating efforts with Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to have State Plant Health Director representation in Alaska tentatively scheduled for the month of June and the first part of July. Details are currently being discussed.
- Staff received final paperwork to extend two pest detection surveys that were began during the middle to end of last summer, Emerald Ash Borer and Giant Hogweed Survey respectively. The extension from APHIS will allow staff more time to conduct these efforts and finalize data collection.
- Final paperwork for the APHIS CORE Infrastructure Agreement and Pink Nun and Siberian Moth Survey were received from APHIS for funding.
- Staff responded to a request to issue a state inspection certificate for the interstate shipment of native plant material. It is currently under determination by the receiving state authority whether such a certificate will be required. If so, it will be to the burden of the entity shipping the plant material to request and make arrangements for Division inspection staff to visually inspect the shipment before an inspection certificate can be issued.
- Staff assisted Palmer staff Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund by taking asset photographs of property in the northern region area.
- Staff participated in teleconference with Cooperative Extension to update the National Plant Diagnostic Network contact information and sample submission protocol.

### **Central Office Inspection:**

- Staff conducted inspections for log exports to China in Kodiak, Afognak, and Ketchikan.
- Staff conducted 2 store inspections of potatoes for retail sale.
- Staff attended teleconferences on Elodia control and weed free gravel programs.
- Staff visited various grocery outlets and enforced the shell egg regulations for labeling of cartons.
- Staff conducted 2 greenhouse/nursery visits.
- Assisted staff at DiTomaso's for Defense Commissary Agency (DECA) and commercial inspections.
- Staff inspected seed potatoes for 2 growers in Delta Jct., issued state certificates and discussed labeling requirements.
- Staff completed on-line GHP/GAP refresher and mushroom courses.
- Staff conducted 5 on farm inspections.
- Staff responded to Organic farming inquiries.
- Staff responded to questions about seed potatoes in Wal-Mart.
- Staff performed 5 firewood surveys at retail outlets and collected samples for analysis.
- Staff consulted with dog treat shipper from New Jersey going to Wal-Mart.

- Staff compiled other state seed potato rules and regulations.
- Staff attended monthly beekeepers meeting and advised on registrations.
- Staff researched insects/pests of concern to China.
- Consulted local seed packers on labeling regulations.
- Consulted with local high school Ag. Instructor on the intern program.
- Staff issued 14 FV-300 certificates with 3 voids.
- Staff issued 25 FV-301 which includes inspection of 12,941 total packages for a weight of 388,230 lbs. of product.
- Staff reviewed and approved 3 USDA interstate plant and product permits and denied 1.
- Staff conducted 2 shell egg inspections
- Staff provided information on 2 requests for phytosanitary inspection/certification.
- Submitted 2012 Farm Bill project proposal.
- Staff coordinated with Customs and Border patrol for the inspection operation involving firewood trades. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> year for this program.
- Staff provided information on two requests for phytosanitary inspection/ certification.
- Staff continues to coordinate with Farm Bill Firewood survey efforts; visiting retail outlets, collecting samples, entering data, examining chambers and collecting insects if present, communicating with staff and ordering supplies. Drafted and submitted questionnaire to participants the Bark Beetle/ Wood Borer Workshop where the responses were compiled and forwarded to the instructors to aid in the design in the course.
- Inspection Stereomicroscope, which was received through Farm Bill funding, has been setup and calibrated for use.
- Staff submitted the State Agriculture request in order to fulfill a USDA Farm Bill grant by conducting a survey evaluating high risk pests associated with firewood brought into Alaska from the lower 48 states; with our primary focus being recreational vehicles. The survey includes a volunteer exchange, where outside wood is exchanged for a bundle of local firewood. Division of Agriculture inspectors will also be distributing a flier describing the survey.
- Staff received a response from the USDA in regards to Live Plants Transiting Canada; which confirmed that either a phytosanitary certificate or greenhouse grown label will be needed in order to make entry back into the US.
- Staff participated in the Seed Potato Grower Meeting at the Plant Materials Center where a presentation to the group on Bacterial Ring Rot, as well as, changes to the current Alaska Potato Seed Certification Handbook was presented. These proposed changes will have to be then incorporated into the USDA Seed Potato Harmonization Plan.
- Staff participated in meetings with the United States Forestry Service regarding strategy and action plans for early detection grants. The Div. of Agriculture is to be the key cooperater along with the Div. of Forestry.
- Staff is working with a potential elk farm on Akun Island. The applicant will be submitting a request for an alternative design to maintain positive control of the elk.

## **PLANT MATERIALS CENTER**

### **Invasive Weeds and Agricultural Pest Program**

- Staff participated in the US Forest Health Protection Coordination meeting in Anchorage where we discussed program priorities, upcoming seasonal activities and potential funding opportunities within the Forest Health Protection Program.
- Continued coordination with statewide groups on issues such as Elodea distribution and management, hawkweed control (in partnership with BC's Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resources) and the Committee for Noxious and Invasive Plant Management.
- Staff has submitted a pesticide use permit application to Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) as a part of the management plans for Canada Thistle in the Anchorage area for the 2012 season.
  
- Staff presented a program update to the House Resources Committee in Juneau. Information was presented on coordinating multi-agency effort in conjunction with Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) invasive species program.
- Staff presented a program and coordination overview to the Annual Resource Forrester's Meeting in Anchorage.

### **Publications**

- Draft copies of the Interior Alaska Revegetation & Erosion Control Guide were delivered to reviewers in Forestry, the SPCO and DMLW for input.
- In-house review of Forage Manual is ongoing. Text and data portion is complete. Photo credits and usage rights for some photos and illustrations are still being obtained.

### **Foundation Seed Program**

- The Plant Materials Center Seed Sale started April 16 and ends April 27, 2012. Five lots of barley, two lots of wheat, and two lots of oats are for sale. Twenty-three lots of twelve different "foundation" and "natural selection" forbs are for sale. Fifty-nine lots of eleven different "foundation" and "natural selection" grasses are for sale. The Seed Sale is online at <http://plants.alaska.gov/seedsale>.
- PMC staff hosted a group of 20 college students from Chadron, Nebraska the beginning of March. They are studying rangeland management, agronomy, and agriculture. They had the chance to view the PMC facilities and talk to most of the staff members.
- A presentation was given to the people participating in the Rural Village Seed Project on marketing native seed by using the "Native Plant Source Directory", located on line on the PMC's website: [plants.alaska.gov](http://plants.alaska.gov).