



MEMORANDUM

Department of Natural Resources

STATE OF ALASKA
Division of Agriculture

TO: Board of Agriculture
& Conservation

DATE: May 3, 2010

FROM: Franci Havemeister
Director

SUBJECT: Director's Report
April 2010

Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund (ARLF)

Staff has been processing 6 loan applications, 11 loan disbursements, 1 loan default/AGO Assignment, 1 loan bankruptcy plan/AGO Assignment, 10 loans paid off to be closed out, 4 modification requests and ARLF loan interest rates review.

Marketing & Development

- Staff presented two presentations at the SARE conference, covering grants and activities, organics and egg shell information.
- Staff conducted a Grant Writing Workshop at the SARE Conference.
- Staff reviewed and awarded CMP grants.
- Staff prepared and mailed CMP contracts out to awarded applicants.
- Staff received the Innovation Grant applications
- Staff prepared and emailed out the April Newsletter.
- Staff announced the Competitive Grant that is open until May 14th.
- Staff prepared and announced the FFPD is open for "applications" to be in the new Directory in 2010.
- Staff participated in a Specialty Crop Block Grant webinar, for better management of grants.
- Staff completed 7 grocery store visits to visit with produce managers and check on the quality of Alaska Grown products.
- Staff has worked closely with grant applicants, by answering questions and helping them understand the scope of the grants.
- Staff has answered countless questions regarding grants and applications.

Inspection

- 2 Farm visits for the purpose of checking grade on potatoes
- 3 Greenhouse and Nursery Store Visits. Fred Meyer was selling potato seed that was not in compliance with state regulations. As a result Fred Meyer Stores removed the potato seed from their shelves and they are no longer for sale.
- Performed 2 USDA Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) Audits in the Mat-Su Valley area.
- Inspection staff continues to participate with the Alaska Pest Risk Assessment Committee (AKPRAC). As a result of this meeting, a letter was drafted to Customs and Border Protection (CBP) personnel in regards to the Late Blight Quarantine. It was forwarded by CBP Director to all land border stations.
- Staff responded to 6 Phytosanitary certificate requests, none of which required inspection or certification.
- Staff participated in a Potato Late Blight Webinar. Useful information provided in the webinar about the 2009 outbreak.
- Staff is responding to numerous inquiries regarding the State's requirements on importing seeds and plants from outside Alaska.
- Staff successfully completed the annual USDA Fresh Fruit & Vegetable (FFV) refresher training in March; training is required for staff to maintain their USDA FFV inspection license.
- SDA FV 300 Issued: 5 Issued (1274 cartons – total charges \$1,364.60 earned)
- USDA FV 301: 25 Issued (16,478 packages inspected – total weight 494,310)

Regulatory

- Brand book has been compiled and is in the review process.
- Two applications were reviewed and approved for the Alaska Grown program.
- Staff completed 2 egg shell inspections.

Plant Materials Center

Invasive Weeds and Pests

- Presented the Spartina Early Detection and Response Plan to members of the Marine Invasive Species Committee.
- Held a meeting in Fairbanks to discuss invasive species management, prevention and coordination with members of the horticulture industry.
- Presented at the Alaska Pesticide Recertification conference.

Seed Lab

- The seed lab conducted 44 seed tests (16 Purity, 17 Germination, 10 Noxious Weed and 1 TZ tests).
- 2 days tour of the seed lab facility- Tealand Middle School;

Mat-Su Riparian Project

- Cuttings preparation and transplanting.
- Data entry and reports preparation.

Coastal Revegetation Guide

- Federally funded project to develop a coastal revegetation guide intended to provide more detailed information specific to Alaska coastal areas than the 2008 "A Revegetation Manual for Alaska".
- Guide will focus on revegetation primarily, but some aspects of erosion control will be included; as long as vegetation is the primary means of erosion control.
- Information contained in the guide will be based primarily on existing PMC publications and projects. Other projects will be included if provided by other agencies.
- Brennan Low was hired in March as the publication specialist for this project and is well versed in electronic format information distribution.

Seed Cleaning & Conditioning

- Our seed conditioning is starting to slow down as we gear up for spring. Our small lot facility will continue to process on a limited basis throughout the growing season to accommodate our inventory.
- We have processed over 40,000 pounds of grass, grain, and forb seed through our Small Lot and Seed House processing facilities. This seed comes from PMC fields, ASG producers, and other outside sources.

Village Seed Project-ARRA

- We have developed and posted a request for proposals to contract a consultant to work with us throughout the first two phases of the project. This person would act as a liaison between the PMC staff and the village communities to facilitate meetings and any on-site assessments of resources. The RFP closes this week.
- The technical staff will be traveling to Emmonak the last week in April to present the Village Seed Project concept to a workshop being held by the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council. There will be six different village communities represented, which will allow us to get the word out about the Village Seed Project and to start identifying potential project locations.

Foundation Seed

- Germination reports were evaluated to decide which grasses, grains, and forbs to offer to commercial growers and the public for upcoming annual PMC Seed Sale in April.
- Prices were calculated for grains from U.S. Market Analysis; shipping costs from Tacoma, Washington; according to seed class; and from germination and purity tests.

- POMS database was updated to reflect new germination reports on older seed, as well as adding purity and germination information for new seed lots.
- Preliminary plans were discussed for summer seed planting requirements.
- Alternative pesticide control methods were researched since it looks like the PMC will not receive a pesticide permit from DEC for the fields this summer.
- Due to the amount of smut present on the sunshine barley, this grain was returned to UAF for their disposal and use. The PMC could not sell such infected seed.

Potato Project

- Many varieties of seed potatoes were tissue-cultured for test-tube growth for 2010.
- Potato seed sale information went out to Alaskan growers.
- Presentations were made about varieties of Alaskan potatoes, disease prevention, and growing techniques.
- Potato export to other countries was researched.
- Potato information was provided to legislators, UAF, and other authorities responsible for making decisions on the PMC potato program.

Ethnobotany Garden

- Requested specialty plants were received from Washington Association of Conservation Districts. Plants were evaluated and potted up for future summer 2010 planting.
- Pedestrian bridge building specifications were developed by the State's Division of Parks and Recreation and evaluated by the PMC for cost, structure, and practicality.
- Proposed list of Alaskan native traditional-use plants was developed and revised for planting – summer 2010.

Other PMC Projects

- 200 Tealand school children and staff came out on two days to harvest willow stakes for summer 2010 revegetation efforts by Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District.
- Many e-mail and phone call requests for information about Alaska seeds, revegetation techniques, Alaska native plant eco-regions, and general information were responded to by all of the PMC staff.
- Eight staff members attended a two day Pesticide Applicator Certification class.
- PMC staff assisted UAF researchers with willow identification and harvest on PMC land for 2010 research on "willows for biofuel".

Northern Region

- Presented a 1-day soils workshop for peony growers in Homer, AK.
- Participated in Fruit Tree Grafting Workshop in Anchorage by the Alaska Pioneer Fruit Growers Association.
- Facilitated paperwork distribution and documentation for an ARLF loan.
- Completed draft form of Interior Agricultural Land Sale Auction #457.
- Participated in several meetings with farmers and the Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly Members concerning proposed Title 15 revision to comply with National Floodplain Insurance Program.
- Conducted bin inspections for seed potato producers in Nenana and Delta Junction.
- Assisted potato seed producers collect representative samples for virus testing.
- Responded to many growers' questions regarding the certification requirements for seed potato export to China.
- Assisted Delta farmers with maps and database regarding historical crop damage from bison.