



# MEMORANDUM

Department of Natural Resources

STATE OF ALASKA  
Division of Agriculture

**TO:** Board of Agriculture  
& Conservation

**DATE:** May 5, 2011

**FROM:** Franci Havemeister  
Director

**SUBJECT:** Director's Report

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

Staff has been processing 5 loan applications, 5 loan disbursements, 3 AGO assignments, 2 loan closings, UCC filings servicing, 1 closed file, 1 loan delinquency, ARLF financial services reports, ARLF interest rates and ARLF Procedure Manual.

### **Marketing & Development**

- Marketing staff have been busy compiling information for the 2011 list of statewide farmers markets which will total at least 30.
- Staff gave a wide variety of presentations in the month of March including a Farm to School presentation at the Biology Graduate Symposium at UAF, a marketing program overview presentation at the Sustainable Agriculture & Research Education (SARE) conference in Fairbanks, and a consumer focused marketing presentation at the TEDx event in Anchorage.
- Marketing staff prepare and sent the Division newsletter which now reaches over 375 people in Alaska.
- Staff provided Alaska Grown promotional supplies including banners, aprons and buttons for the grand opening of the Palmer Carrs store.
- Staff has been busy reviewing applications for the 2011 Cooperative Marketing Program (CMP) grant.
- With assistance from a professional planner, staff prepared a draft strategic plan for the Farm to School (FTS) program. Over 150 people have signed up as 'interested' in the FTS program. Thirteen people provided input of the draft strategic plan which will be presented at the next Farm to School summit.
- The FTS program hosted two school nutrition farm tours in March. One was held in Palmer with Mat Su School nutrition staff and farmers. The second was held in Fairbanks with Fairbanks school food service staff, a Delta farmer and a local distributor.
- FTS staff continue to network with a wide variety of industry professionals, participating in webinars, teleconferences and meetings held by:
  - School Nutrition Edge, a network for school food service professionals;
  - Eat Smart Alaska, a group of volunteers working towards a healthier Alaska;
  - Healthier US School Challenge, voluntary initiative to identify schools that have created healthier school environments through nutrition and physical activity; and the
  - National Farm to School Network
- Five new farms were approved for use of the Alaska Grown logo in March.
- Marketing staff continue to work with Department of Corrections on the price tracking of Alaska Grown products versus outside products.
- Staff received new guidance on conducting Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) audits in Alaska.

- Staff has been coordinating with the Palmer Soil & Water Conservation District, Alaska Farmland Trust and the Mat Su Farm Bureau on a joint effort for Alaska Grown day at the Palmer State fair.

## **Plant Materials Center**

### **Invasive Weeds and Pests**

- Staff is finalizing the strategic plan for invasive weeds and agricultural pest management for distribution via the internet.
- Staff is working with several cooperative weed management areas to coordinate invasive weed control activities.
- Staff participated in a coordination meeting with Forest Health Protection.
- Staff drafted a fact sheet describing weed free gravel certification.
- Staff developed material for the invasive species section of the PMC website.
- Staff reviewed newly ranked invasive species in partnership with the Alaska Natural Heritage Program.
- Staff began surveys of horticulturalists about ornamental species to determine invasiveness and importance to their business and customers.

### **Soils Lab**

- Staff met with Palmer SWCD; will conduct soil tests for Reed canarygrass during the summer.
- Soils lab addition of several micro and trace nutrient testing completed.
- Soils staff met with Division of Ag land sales section, made plans to collect samples from several sites near Talkeetna for the purpose of Agricultural designation of land.

### **Seed Lab**

- During this period Alaska State Seed Lab performed 78 Germination tests, 38 Purity tests, 15 Noxious tests, and 1 Tetrazolium test.
- Seed samples were obtained and germination tests started for 2011 Seed Sale.

### **Seed Potato Program**

- Potato storage inspections complete
- Greenhouse seed graded and packaged for sale
- Tissue culture propagation sufficient for orders
- Virus testing complete all tested negative

### **Rural Village Seed Production Project (RVSP)**

- The RVSP team has submitted paperwork to the State procurement office to award funding to the following communities: Hooper Bay, Alaska, Chignik Lake, Alaska and Aniak, Alaska.
- The RVSP team is very excited about working with each of these locations.
- RVSP training dates will be finalized when funding has been officially awarded to each community. It is a goal of the team's to have each participating community present at the same time for training, however, the team realizes this will be a challenge.
- May 2011 will be spent finalizing planting plans for location sites and putting the finishing touches on equipment orders.

### **Publications Update**

- Staff assisted in formatting the Invasive Plants Strategic Plan for publication, online distribution.
- Publications section of the PMC website (<http://plants.alaska.gov/publications>) has been updated to the new state look and feel standards.
- Content from <http://invasives.plantalaska.net> archived, for conversion to publications at a later date.
- Interior Revegetation Manual- Draft manuscript prepared; Permafrost & Mining sections added.
- Staff visited practitioners in Fairbanks area for Interior Revegetation interviews. Material for two to three new case studies has been collected.
- Forage manual species profile work continues – research completed for approx 15 species profiles.
- FFPD / Sourcebook online table viewer work started (Division / Marketing).

### **Foundation Seed**

- Thirty lots of 11 different forbs (Selected Class Release "Natural") were for sale during April 7 – 22.
- Twenty-two lots of 13 different grains were also for sale.
- Fifty-five lots of 19 different foundation and Natural Selected Class Release Grasses were also for sale.
- Some seed was sold, but it is too early to report the amount.
- The sale generated several additions to the Native Plant Source Directory.
- Many questions were received about how best to revegetate banks, rural airport landing sites, mine sites, and wetland sites.
- The public comment for the PMC's pesticide application permit is up as of April 26. DEC will then spend up to 45 days evaluating and replying to public responses.
- The PMC was posted with "No Trespassing Signs" for the date period of April 15 – September 15. No hunting or recreation on PMC's lands is permitted during this time due to DEC pesticide requirements. This has been approved by the State's attorney via statute 38.04.200.
- Staff is preparing to become certified as Category Three Pesticide Applicators to enable us to train our workers and to use "restricted use" pesticides.
- Inventory of seed in storage is on-going.
- Five different groups of teenagers and preteens came to the PMC to harvest willows for revegetation projects. Harvest occurred while the willows were still dormant. Willows are stored at the PMC in our walk-in cooler. When the weather is right (before summer solstice) the willows will be brought out of storage for planting at different sites in the Valley.

### **Other PMC Activities**

#### **Seeds of Success (SOS) Project**

- Seed Lab staff prepared Alaska wild flower 60 seed mix packages of to be used for Earth Day.

#### **Mat-Su Riparian Revegetation Project**

- Seedlings from six species are growing in greenhouse; they will be planted in the PMC field in the summer and used for seed increase.

### **Seed Cleaning and Conditioning**

- Over 38,000 lbs of clean seed has been processed so far this season with an additional 23,000 expected before we shut down for the field season. The main crops we have cleaned this year are as follows:

Seed House	Small Lot
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nortran</li><li>• Gruening</li><li>• Nugget</li><li>• Egan</li><li>• Wheatgrass</li><li>• Tundra</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Spruce Cones (315 lbs clean seed)</li><li>• Polargrass</li><li>• Festuca rubra</li><li>• Polar Brome</li><li>• Calamagrostis Nutkaensis</li><li>• Various Forbs</li></ul>

## **Inspection**

- Staff completed 25 FFV 301 inspections representing 13,862 packages & 415,860 pounds of product.
- Staff completed 8 FFV 300 commercial inspections representing 1097 containers.
- Staff conducted 10 grocery store visits to check grade on potatoes and discuss quality issues.
- Staff participated in USDA, FFV New Inspector Training School.
- Staff conducted farm visits to discuss potato issues and check grade on local potatoes.
- Staff discussed problems w/ insect damage and internal browning in local potatoes.
- Staff provided updated GHP/GAP requirements information to interested parties.
- Staff rejected and requested removal from sale one lot of Yukon Gold potatoes due to quality. Product was removed from retail sale. The warehouse manager in Anchorage was advised of the problem.
- Staff responded to several calls re: organic requirements & organic certification process.
- Staff conducted and completed an increased number of inspections for grade and condition inspections on lettuce due to field freezing that occurred in the southern part of the United States.

## **Regulatory**

- Staff continued working / discussions with USDA to address a new Import Permit Requirement for seed potatoes going to China
- Staff discussed and addressed several calls from the public regarding Phytosanitary certificates and the certification process.
- Staff fielded several calls related to Organic Certification in 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 inspected 5 Nursery/Greenhouses for regulatory compliance with seed potatoes and tomato plants. Most are not going to have potato seed until early May. Lowes has Tomato plants from Washington. Phyto was supplied to inspection staff.
- Staff developed an electronic and hard copy file for trace back purposes of Phytophthora ramorum host plants being received by retail stores from out of state sellers. Updates are daily or as needed.
- Staff traveled to Afognak Island to conduct timber export inspections for products destined for China.
- Staff responded to several calls re: potato/tomato import quarantine requirements as well as calls re: restrictions on other plant materials.
- Bee keepers are trying to acquire a Section 18 permit for chemical control of Veroa Mites. Staff discussed the issue and directed them to Dept. of Environmental Conservation.
- Staff worked with Marketing Section on recommendations to school districts for food safety requirements for Farm to School program and participated in a meeting for new Farm to School program specific to GHP/GAP audits.
- Staff participated in and attended Webinar training for new EXCERPT change over in PCIT export certification program.
- Staff is working with a log home builder who is exporting a log home kit to Lebanon. Staff researched requirements for exporting this package into Lebanon. This will be a complicated procedure as there are several wood related components to the package.
- Staff participated in a teleconference for the Weed Free Hay program.
- Staff reviewed and approved two USDA permits for interstate movement of plant products into Alaska.
- Staff discussed and addressed inspection and phytosanitary requirements for possible Peony export to Japan.
- Staff discussed and addressed several inquiries from outside companies interested in selling seed and plants in Alaska.
- Staff forwarded information on elk fencing/ licensing requirements per the request of the Department of Fish & Game.
- Staff discussed noncompliance on potato labeling with local wholesaler.

- Staff is preparing to participate in an agency cooperative inspection operation at the land border. This operation is defined in the Alaska Pest Risk Committee 2011 goals and objectives with the purpose being to measure, evaluate and analyze pests and diseases on intercepted agriculture products. Agencies planning to participate are Customs and Border Protection (CBP), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Plant Protection Quarantine (PPQ), US Forest Service, State of Alaska, Division of Forestry.
- The Late Blight Quarantine reminder was distributed to retail garden centers and nurseries which discuss the certification and labeling requirements for seed potatoes and tomato plants entering and for sale in Alaska. This letter also identifies the Alaska Certified Seed Potato Growers and varieties available.
- The Inspection and Regulatory section is welcoming Leo Kazeck to the Division and is working to familiarize and introduce Leo to the industry and agricultural customers we deal with. Leo comes to us from Washington State Dept of Agriculture most recently and was with the Colorado Dept. of Agriculture for several years prior to Washington. Leo was involved with the Plant Health Inspection program in Washington State and also in Colorado. We welcome the experience and expertise that Leo brings to the Division. Welcome Leo!