



**MEMORANDUM**  
Department of Natural Resources

**STATE OF ALASKA**  
Division of Agriculture

**TO:** Board of Agriculture  
& Conservation

**DATE:** February 23, 2017

**FROM:** Arthur Keyes  
Director

**SUBJECT:** Director's Report

**ARLF**

- Loan officer has processed two new loan applications which are being submitted to the board for review.
- Loan officer coordinated with the buyer, title company, and AAG on the closing of the Palmer Feed Mill property sale. Loan officer assisted the Director and title officer with signing the closing documents and received the proceeds of the sale from the title officer for processing.
- Loan officer is working on the disposal of Mt. McKinley Meat & Sausage (MMM&S), coordinating with the buyer, the Director, Supervisor, and AAG. A purchase agreement has been signed. The sale is now in the due diligence period, the loan officer is working with AlaskChem to complete a Phase 1 Environmental Assessment.
- Loan officer has had conversations over the phone and in person with several potential new borrowers and current borrowers and provided them with application and loan program information.
- Loan officer has processed warrant requests, loan closings, loan payoffs, associated Deeds of Reconveyance, and UCC filing updates, as well as other duties associated with ARLF management.
- Loan officer has been in contact with delinquent borrowers. Default borrower contact list has been updated.
- Loan officer has been managing loan insurance requirements and other ARLF loan requirements.
- Loan officer has updated the interest rate comparison for review.
- Loan officer has updated the asset report.

**Marketing and Development**

- Recruited for and hired a Publication Specialist.
- Finalized the Alaska Grown member listserv.
- Submitted and got USDA approval for three Specialty Crop Block Grant Reports.

**Farm to School Updates**

- Recruited, interviewed, and successfully hired new Farm to School Coordinator in Oct/Nov.

- Applied for \$135,108.00 USDA Farm to School Grant to partially fund this position for 2017-2019.
- Applied for the National Farm to School Network Core Partner Grant to partially fund this position for 2017-2019.
- Attended, presented, and displayed at the vendor show at the Alaska School Nutrition Association Conference as a Board Member in Anchorage in January.
- Organize, write, and publish a weekly listserv that goes directly out to nearly 600 individual stakeholders including producers, teachers, administrators, school nutrition specialists, agencies, non-profit organizations, government officials, and advocates.
- Developing a partnership with Anchorage School District and their Executive Director to develop a plan to begin using the ASD Central Kitchen facilities as a summertime potato processing facility as well as a model for gardening and food waste composting demonstrations.

### **Interns:**

- Called all Alaska Grown members to update their member information and ask if they'd like to be added to the listserv.
- Posted daily on social media (better numbers than normal).
- Began work on Alaska Grown food video for social media.
- Created flyer to announce event at peony conference.
- Called and email producers across the state to get more photos for social media.
- Verified information for seven Alaska Grown applications.
- Answered questions on phone or email for 10+ people, both about Alaska Grown and the SCBGP

### **Farm to Summer Meal Program**

- The 2017 Farm to Summer Meal AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer David Robinson was recruited in late November 2017, and started his year-long service on January 30, 2017.

### **Agriculture Inspector Updates**

- Have met with several local, state and federal agriculture agencies to introduce myself. Still have several farmers to meet.
- Have visited approximately 18 grocers to introduce myself and to see what, if any, complaints they may have concerning Alaskan Grown products.
- Attending monthly NASDA conference calls to stay abreast of FSMA updates.
- Working on a comprehensive GAP/GHP power point presentation that will cover a few different presentations, based on the audience needs; History of FSMA, information to consider when forming your Food Safety Plan, differences between GAP audit requirements, Group GAP audit requirements and Harmonized GAP audit requirements, etc....
- Anticipating GAP/GHP training in the near future.

## **Inspections**

- Staff completed the 2016 organic cost share reimbursements, resulting in 14 federal reimbursements to 13 different Alaskan producers/ processors, totaling \$10,262.54
- Staff inspected and certified 6 tons of Certified Seed Potatoes exported to China, per the “Phytosanitary Protocol for US Alaska Seed Potato Exports to China”.
- Staff conducted two phytosanitary export inspections for timber exports in January. Two phytosanitary certificates were issued.
- Staff currently working to develop the phytosanitary export programs for the Division. Noteworthy 2016 summary report includes the following activities: 86 phytosanitary certificates issued, 83 of which were issued for timber exports; facilitated the export of 116,544.18 Thousand Board Feet (MBF) of timber-a total value of approximately \$93,000,000.
- Northern Region staff fielded questions and represented Division programs to interior growers.
- Staff began and conducted four certified seed potato storage inspections as per the AK Certified Seed Potato Handbook, which is required in order to for producers to sell their seed to be sold.
- Staff presented at the annual Alaska Seed Growers meeting providing a Seed Potato Certification Update on the 2016 Field Season.
- Staff completed the Directory of Certified Seed Potato Growers and Varieties available. Staff has responded to multiple inquiries on where producers, greenhouses and home gardeners can obtain Alaska Certified seed potatoes.
- Staff is planning for the 98<sup>th</sup> Western Plant Board meeting to be held in Anchorage, Alaska on May 8-11<sup>th</sup>. The AK Division of Agriculture will host this meeting for approximately 60 participants; including State Plant Regulatory Officials (SPRO), USDA State Plant Health Directors (SPHD) And Customs and Border Protection (CBP) representing 14 Western States, Regions and National Headquarters.
- Staff successfully completed the annual USDA Security Awareness Training which is required to maintain a license to be a USDA Authorized Certification Official (ACO), which is needed to do export certification.
- Staff continues to train one inspection employee to become a licensed, USDA Authorized Certification Official (ACO).
- Staff is merging to a new USDA Electronic Grant System, EzFedgrants, which will be needed for applying, creating work plans, submitting reports for future USDA APHIS Farm Bill and CAPS Cooperative Agreements.
- Staff has responded to export inquiries; rhodiola, mushrooms, seed potatoes, timber, peonies and researched importing country requirements to be exported.
- Staff responded to a variety of inquiries on the regulations for importing agriculture plant and agriculture products as well as registration and labeling requirements for agriculture products to be sold in Alaska.
- Staff responded to media and industry inquiries on the regulations for Shell Eggs to be sold in Restaurants and Grocery Stores.

- Staff reviewed and released permits for the interstate movement of plant pests, noxious weeds and soil.
- Staff prepared for upcoming CAPS and Farm Bill Surveys

### **Lands**

- Staff completed research on 3 patent requests out of the Northern Region Office.
- Staff reviewed 2 subdivision plats and assisting 2 others get ready for subdivision.
- Staff worked with increased walk in traffic to the office.
- Staff continued working with Fairbanks North Star Borough regarding procedures for agricultural subdivisions.
- Staff is putting finishing touches on brochure for Kobe North sale, scheduled for June 2017.
- Staff provided data from legislative inquires and FOIA requests.
- Staff worked with Oil and Gas team to investigate the legality of a staging area near Nenana.
- Staff assisted in the writing of 1 approved SFCP
- Staff is assisting in the updates of 6 SFCPs
- Staff is assisting DMLW contracts with Title conversions and the purchases of Housing Rights
- Staff has attended SWCD meetings in Wasilla and Upper-Susitna
- Assisting the NRCS in updating the Soil Survey – Land Capability Class system for Alaska
- Staff is finalizing a Preliminary Decision to sell 640 acres of agricultural land in 2018
- Staff has requested appraisal updates for 663 acres of ag land to be sold in 2017
- Staff is working with DEC and ADF&G on Wild/Domestic Sheep and Goat issues
- Staff reviewed materials regarding potential ag leases of Kenai Peninsula Borough land
- Staff analyzed Matanuska Susitna Borough lands for agricultural development suitability

### **Plant Materials Center:**

#### **Erosion Control**

- Analyzed field data and generated climate graphs for Soil Health project. Analyzed soil depth temperatures in comparison with texture, soil biological data, and plant survivability.
- Completed necessary import paper work for 'Denali' alfalfa seed project. Seed will be cleaned and shipped to PMC by April of this 2017. Roughly 500lbs of seed was grown and cleaned during the 2016 growing season.
- Assisted Alaska Storm Water Steering Committee (AKSWSC) with the production of training videos for the Certified Erosion & Sediment Control Lead courses (CESCL)

#### **Horticulture**

- Assisting the potato program in a winter grow out of seed potatoes utilizing LED lighting.
- Researching and developing a protocol for in vitro tissue culture propagation for the Apple Rootstock Trial.
- Compiling data from the 2016 growing season for the broccoli and cauliflower trials.
- Writing the final report for the Asparagus Variety Trial.
- Researching and planning for the 2017 growing season trials; broccoli, cauliflower and apple rootstock.
- Developing a research trial for the 2017 growing season: Potatoes with conventional vs. organic fertilizer.
- Outreach with growers for growing questions and variety recommendations.
- Participating in the steering committee for the Biomass Heated Greenhouse Handbook for the Alaska Energy Authority.

Compiling orders for the greenhouse renovation project, to complete the final greenhouse for production capability

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

- Staff received a DEC Emergency Exemption to treat 500 acres of the Mat-Su's Alexander Lake Elodea infestation in October of 2016. The infestation had spread outside of the predicted treatment area from 10 acres in 2014 to 500 acres in 2016.
- Staff helped coordinate the annual Committee for Noxious and Invasive Plant Management (CNIPM) conference in Fairbanks. There, staff presented on statewide management on *Cirsium arvense* and Elodea.
- A newly discovered Elodea infestation in Potter Marsh and Little Survival Creek prompted staff to survey and formulate a plan for eradication of the ~1-acre infestation. This plan will be executed in 2017.
- Staff presented the plan of action and draft DEC Pesticide Use Permit at the Rabbit Creek Community Council Meeting for Elodea eradication in Potter Marsh and Little Survival Creek. The Friends of the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge, ADF&G (who manages the Marsh), and residents in attendance of the meeting were in support of the project.
- Staff presented Statewide noxious and invasive plant management goals of early detection, rapid response at the Alaska Forum of the Environment.
- Staff presented at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Supervisory Biologist's annual meeting about statewide invasive and noxious plant management goals, to facilitate collaboration across jurisdictional boundaries.
- Staff completed the Environmental Assessment for the Interior Alaska Elodea eradication project, and completed the public commenting period. Federal approval to use herbicides is pending, but expected to be secured before the anticipated 2017 treatments.
- Staff met with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Environmental Protection Agency to pursue funding for Interior Alaska Elodea eradication utilizing their suggested credit-system for mitigation projects.

- Staff taught on Category 6: Aquatic Applications during the UAF-hosted Pesticide Applicator's Course.
- Staff completed all reporting to DEC, and federal cooperators on project and the use of herbicides.

### **Pathology**

- Co-authored factsheet (with CES and WSU) on *Tobacco rattle virus* in peonies. In review, should be released in next few months.
- Fungus in bird cherry trees (*Prunus padus*) causing fruit distortion, identified as *Taphrina* sp. DNA will be sequenced to identify species; this will be a new record for the state.
- Mycotoxin testing for grains has expanded to include aflatoxin, DON (vomitoxin), fumonisins, and zearalenone. Six lots have been tested.
- Potatoes with blackleg symptoms have been tested for *Dickeya* spp. bacteria, which have recently been found in the lower 48. Twelve samples, none positive for *Dickeya* spp.
- The potato production greenhouse was sampled for viruses, 98 samples for 3 viruses.
- Potato tissue culture testing performed on 5 varieties, 22 samples for 8 viruses, PSTVd, and bacteria.
- With Alaska CES, applied for a grant through the USDA Farmbill. The project will provide education and outreach to nurseries for diseases of concern at the national and state level. The grant begins in July, 2017.

### **Potato Program**

- Staff is collecting data points for storage evaluation of all field grown stock. Data collected includes visual inspections of tuber health, measurements of specific gravity, dry matter, %Brix and photographs of each variety.
- The due date for G-0 orders was January 31, 2017. A tissue culture schedule to meet the orders submitted has been compiled. Scale-up to meet the orders has begun.
- Staff is conducting the second year of a two-year winter grow-out feasibility study. The purpose of the study is to determine the cost and effectiveness of on-site winter potato growth for testing as per the requirements of the State National Harmonization Plan (SNHP) and then continuing on to tuber production.
- Staff is collaborating with the pathology department to design a new study to determine the effectiveness of direct tuber testing to meet the requirements of SNHP.
- Twenty-one varieties of field stock that are not in the tissue culture maintenance collection have been identified and tubers have been sub-sampled for sprout initiation.
- Staff is collaborating with the Horticulture department to initiate apple rootstock into Tissue Culture. Seven field plantings of interest have been identified, dormant shoots have been collected, cleaned and initiated into media developed to promote shoot growth. If successful, the shoots will be transferred to media promoting root development.
- Staff is collaborating with the Horticulture department to design a field experiment to determine the effectiveness of a newly developed organic fertilizer on potato production.
- Staff is collecting and compiling a list of surplus requests for spring 2017 on last year's G-0 potato production.
- Staff continues to propagate the tissue culture maintenance collection consisting of 202 potato varieties. Annual testing of the maintenance collection is upcoming.
- Staff is cleaning open field pollinated potato seed. A selection of maternal varieties will be planted this spring.

### **Revegetation**

- Staff is in the process of developing a proposal for an Erosion & Sediment Control Testing and Research/Training Facility that would be located at the PMC. Funding would be provided in part through a Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) awarded by the Natural Resources Conservation Service.
- Kenai Fjords National Park staff sent seed collected during the 2016 season to the PMC for cleaning. This seed has been cleaned and returned to the park for their revegetation projects.
- Staff is working collaboratively with state agencies and the Bureau of Land Management to develop revegetation and wildlife habitat criteria for upland and floodplain mine reclamation on BLM managed lands. Meetings have taken place at the PMC and at the BLM Alaska State office in Anchorage. Discussions are ongoing.

### **Seed Cleaning and Conditioning**

- Currently running a 64 bulk bag lot of Wainwright Slender wheatgrass in the large seed cleaning facility.
- Cleaned small collections from local harvesters in the small seed cleaning facility. Including Alder, Birch and fireweed.
- Received the last shipment of commercial seed to be cleaned.
- Met with a new contact at the DOT to discuss ways to make the current integrated vegetative management plan more effective.
- Currently working to get approval to test a plant growth regulator on a crop produced in the State of Alaska that has not had much research done on it on previously.

### **Seed Laboratory**

- Seed lab conducted 32 seed tests. This includes 12 Purity, 17 Germination, and 3 Noxious weed tests.

### **Seeds of Success**

- Staff met with BLM representatives to discuss target species for seed increase in 2017. Nine species were selected. Staff is conducting germination tests to determine viability. Species with long stratification period are being appropriately treated.
- Staff finished assembling 1000 seed packets of native seed mix for BLM. Seed packets will be given away on Earth Day.