



MEMORANDUM
Department of Natural Resources

STATE OF ALASKA
Division of Agriculture

TO: Board of Agriculture
& Conservation

DATE: April 23, 2015

FROM: Franci Havemeister
Director

SUBJECT: Director's Report
Jan/Feb/March 2015

Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund (ARLF):

- Loan officer has received and is processing incoming loan applications and loan modification requests.
- Loan officer attend the Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education conference in Fairbanks March 4th and 5th and provided people interested in the ARLF loan program with information, brochures, and application packets.
- Loan officer has had conversations over the phone and in person with several potential new borrowers and provided them with application and loan program information.
- Loan officer is in process of managing and disposing of recently acquired property in Delta Junction, including contacting and receiving updates from the listing realtor.
- Loan officer is in process of contacting commercial realtors to obtain a Broker's Opinion of Value on the ARLF owned Palmer property.
- Loan officer has processed warrant requests, 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 & Development:

- Sixteen farms were added to the Alaska Grown Program in February and March 2015.
- Staff attended and presented at the Alaska School Nutrition Association Conference engaging over 80 attendees in discussions about utilizing Alaska Grown foods in meals and educating students about Farm to School concepts.
- Staff are facilitating the Restaurant Rewards for 2015. Currently, 29 restaurants are signed up and 8 restaurants are pending. Unfortunately the Restaurant Rewards program has been denied funding for Fiscal Year 2016. The Program will continue until the remaining funds are gone.

- Staff attended a budgeting/planning meeting with the Mat Su Chapter of the Alaska Farm Bureau to brainstorm opportunities for partnership throughout the next year.
- Staff wrote an article about local growers for the Alaska School Nutrition Association Newsletter.
- Staff continues to participate on the Governing Board of the Alaska Food Policy Council and acted as the guest speaker at a Palmer Town Hall meeting to gain input from the community on Food Policy topics.
- Staff conducted site visits/inspections at eight retail stores and two local farms.
- Staff participated in Farmers Market Workshops in both Kenai and Petersburg as a guest speaker.
- Staff attended the annual UAF Cooperative Extension Pesticide Applicators' Recertification Conference.
- Staff continues to have an active presence on our social media outlets, making daily posts on the Alaska Grown Facebook, Twitter, and pinterest pages. Staff also continues to manage the Alaska Grown Youtube page.
- Staff completed 10 USDA Commodity Inspections at a local warehouse distributor.
- Staff attended an Alaska Peony Growers Association (APGA) board meeting to discuss the future of APGA.
- Multiple staff members presented at and attended the Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education conference in Fairbanks.
- Staff met with the Alaska State Fair to discuss the potential for expanding the Alaska Grown pavilion in 2015.
- Staff traveled to Fairbanks to meet with multiple stakeholders to communicate projects and find overlapping opportunity: UAF Researchers, UAF Cooperative Extension Services, UAF Graduate Student, Department of Environmental Conservation Food Safety and Sanitation Program, Student Nutrition Services, and a group of interior growers. Highlights included finding product matches between the farmers and school food service, opportunity for partnering with a Food Service Incentive Program, and leveraging student projects with state collected data.
- Chef at the Market Applications were due on March 31, 2015. Six Chefs turned in complete applications; the application period was extended into April to allow for more applications to be received.
- Staff attended a Mat-Su Healthy Living meeting to discuss needs and activities that are impacting young children in Mat-Su.
- Staff attended a one-day On-Farm Food Safety Workshop offered by Family Farmed.org at the Annual Organicology Conference in Portland OR.
- Staff prepared and released the announcement for the 2015 Specialty Crop Competitive Grant program; two webinars were conducted.
- Staff created a Carrot Brochure, which is focused on informing the public about Alaska Grown carrots. Similar brochures are being developed for Alaska Grown Asparagus, Cauliflower, and Garlic. Vegetables to be featured were chosen based on planned vegetable trials for the 2015 season.

- Staff attended the National Farm to School Network monthly call and served as an expert for the Farm to Native Communities session.
- Staff continues to participate in monthly FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Educators' Group webinars hosted by Cornell's Produce Safety Alliance.
- National Farm to School Network released the 2002-2014 State Farm to School Legislative Survey which featured Alaska as a case study.
- Staff conducted restaurant and stores visits in the Fairbanks area in March.
- Staff fielded a number of calls regarding aquaponics and began working with staff at the Department of Fish & Game to clarify regulations on fish used in those operations; staff drafted a Factsheet for growers interested in aquaponics.
- Staff received a legislative sample from Texas citing Alaska Farm to School as a model program that shaped their legislation.
- The 2014-2015 Source Book online version is being maintained and updated. The print version is still being distributed upon consumer request.
- Staff consulted two graduate student projects about using Farm to School as a health promotion strategy.
- Staff did a presentation for the Princess Hotel staff regarding Alaska Grown in February.
- Staff created a guidance document for school food service directors to incorporate garden produce into their meal plan.

Land Section:

- Staff assisted in the preparation of five State Farm Conservation Plans.
- Held meeting with Division of Mining Land & Water (DMLW) concerning the Nenana Bridge developments.
- Worked with Resource Assessment and Development Section on the development of the East Tanana Basin Area Plan.
- Assisted with a large number of public inquiries mostly concerning future land sales.
- Worked with DMLW on a particularly contentious access issue concerning a farmer on Chena Hot Springs.
- Staff participated in Matanuska Susitna Borough Ad Hoc Committee meeting concerning borough agricultural lands.
- Staff attended Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District meeting.
- Staff attended the Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education conference in Fairbanks.
- Staff answered questions regarding state grazing leases.
- Staff attended DMLW Geographic Information System training in Anchorage.
- Staff attended the Alaska Survey and Mapping Conference in Anchorage.

Central Office Inspection:

- Alaska Inspection program manager was asked to represent the National Plant Board on a USDA forestry treatment expert panel. The panel was asked to look at opportunities and developments in international emerging forestry markets. The panel looked at and provided recommendations on issues and challenges facing the forest product industry.

- Staff is reviewing time and resource requirements for conducting CAPS (Cooperative Agricultural Pest Surveys) this year and finalizing reporting and budgeting for projects ending in June 2015.
- Staff corresponded with and participated in a USDA, APHIS meeting to look at, and address the opening of new ports of entry into China.
- Staff provided updated information to peony growers on the requirements for two new countries of interest to export peonies.
- Staff conducted 10 certified seed potato storage inspections; one shipping point inspection for certified seed potatoes and three potato shed visits to check grade of table stock potatoes.
- Staff conducted three grocery store visits to check grade on potatoes.
- Staff visited two hardware stores to provide information on certified seed potato regulations and provided the 2014 list of certified seed producers and varieties available.
- Staff has responded to grower requests and has printed approximately 2400 blue tags for certified seed potatoes.
- Staff is updating the Seed Potato Certification Handbook and the 2015 Seed Potato Certification Application.
- Staff responded to multiple inquiries on where to source local certified seed potatoes and labeling requirements for the sale of certified seed potatoes.
- Staff has responded to multiple inquiries on labeling requirements for vegetable, flower and agricultural seed to be sold in Alaska.
- Staff has responded to the import requirements for the “potato/ tomato” or “ketchup and fries” which is a tomato plant grafted onto a seed potato plant.
- Staff participated in the quarterly Alaska Pest Risk Committee (AKPRAC) Meeting, where topics of interest discussed were interceptions of boats infested with zebra mussels heading to Alaska. Interagency effort and participation may not occur until spring of 2016 at the Alaska Canada Border (Alcan).
- Staff attended a portion of the Pesticide Applicator Conference to assist with the Forest Health Protection Grant titled “Improve training and partnering for the coordinated early detection of invasives in Alaska”. The participants at this conference consisted of tree arborists, pest control personnel and government entities. Topics included; Urban Tree Pests; Pest Management of Turf, Creeping Thistle and Right of Ways, etc. In the future, this workshop may be a good opportunity to provide a display, educational materials or a presentation on early detection of invasive species. In addition to this, Staff was able to gain four Continuing Education Credits (CEUs) for Pesticide Recertification.
- Staff participated and gave a 2014 Seed Potato Certification Presentation at the Annual Producer Conference held at the Matsu Experimental Farm on February 21, 2015.
- Staff participated and gave a 2014 Seed Potato Certification Update at the annual Alaska Seed Growers, Inc Meeting held at the Plant Materials Center on March 17, 2015.
- Staff continued working with peony growers on export issues and research protocols for exporting to several target countries.
- Staff continued work with timber exporters to conduct field inspections and do core sampling in several harvest locations around Alaska.
- Staff is working on re-accreditation for ACO (Accredited Certification Official) export licenses.

- 2015 is the renewal year for Alaska Brand holders. Staff has been working with recorded brand holders to renew and record brands per Alaska statute.
 - Staff responded to multiple inquiries, provided information and verified compliance on potato labeling and certification requirements for seed potatoes to be sold in greenhouses and garden centers as well a table stock labeling to local producer.
 - Staff responded and forwarded to the USDA inquiries on fruit trees being imported from Canada and Citrus from California.
 - Staff continues to work on the USDA Harmonization Plan and the requirements for Alaska to participate in this national agreement.
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- Total Brands renewed and Issued: 143
 - Phytosanitary certificates Issued: 7
 - Shell Egg surveillance Inspections: 1
 - FV-300 Inspections: 11 certificates issue

Northern Region Office: Feb/Mar

- Staff attended and presented at the Alaska Forum on the Environment in Anchorage. Presenters from Division of Forestry, Division of Agriculture, UAF Cooperative Extension, and Chugachmiut each presented on various topics related to forest health monitoring activities their organizations conduct or coordinate in Alaska.
- Staff conducted bin inspections in Delta Junction and in Fairbanks for potato seed certification requirements.
- Staff conducted timber inspections in Afognak Alaska to meet phytosanitary export certification requirements.
- Staff worked on phytosanitary certificates for timber exports and issued one certificate.
- Staff worked on cooperative agreements for the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey and Farm Bill programs. APHIS announced the Farm Bill spending plan for 2015. Two projects were approved for Alaska; one of the project proposals was submitted by the Division of Agriculture. Approved funding is for the Asian Defoliating Moth Survey. The Division will be contracting with the University Extension IPM program to conduct work related the survey. Total funding for this project was awarded at \$45,000.
- Staff fielded agricultural lands questions and other Division related questions to the public in the Fairbanks office.

Plant Materials Center:

Erosion Control

- Staff conducted a power point presentation about revegetation and erosion control to the Department of Transportation (DOT) Central Region – Anchorage, Design Engineers for their quarterly meeting.
- Staff conducted a power point presentation about revegetation and erosion control to the Department of Transportation (DOT) Northern Region – Fairbanks, Construction Phase Engineers.

- Staff monitored and evaluated the Kodiak Bohemian Knotweed eradication project in conjunction with the Kodiak Soil and Water Conservation District that was revegetated July 2013.
- Staff is currently working with Central Region – Anchorage DOT office on Hooper Bay airport project. Recommending site specific seed recommendations and erosion control measures.
- Staff is working with Copper River Watershed Project in Cordova regarding the removal of Japanese Knotweed and subsequent revegetation efforts.
- Staff currently preparing for establishment and field sampling of the Soil Health project at the Plant Materials Center facility. This project is a 5 year intensive study of soil health and erosion control efforts.

Forage & Soils Lab

- Staff is currently working on narrative and data analysis sections of the Growth Curve publication. This project was completed in late 2014. Final publication is expected to be complete by late 2015.
- Staff completed rangeland and forage analysis of Chirikof Island, AK. This document will be utilized by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to determine a management strategy for the cattle inhabiting Chirikof Island.
- Staff completed proposal for Denali Alfalfa seed production project. This project would allow funding for the seed propagation of Alfalfa (cultivar – Denali), and testing for winter hardiness, herbicide resistance, and nutrient evaluation.
- Staff is currently preparing for initial establishment and field sampling of the annual Growth Curve Project. The growth curve project is a 5 year study of nutrient and yield production of grass forage species and is currently in its 4th year of data collection.

Horticulture

- Staff is monitoring winter environmental data collection at trial locations around the state. This data is used in monitoring plant health due to varying winter conditions.
- Staff is completing reports for the second year asparagus variety trial, the second year *Malus* rootstock trial, and the garlic variety trial for publication.
- Staff published the broccoli evaluation trial report.
- Staff presented on the *Malus* rootstock trial for the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Conference in Fairbanks on March 4.
- Staff is conducting outreach to growers and producers throughout the state.
- Staff is reviewing information from a public survey about the horticulture program evaluations and seeking collaborators for future projects.
- Staff is putting together materials to send to trial locations for the new grant funded cauliflower variety observation trial to begin in spring of 2015.
- Germination of *Malus* spp. seeds has been started for the ongoing rootstock trial.
- Staff is planning for the 2015 growing season, current ongoing evaluations and potential new projects.

Invasive Weeds and Agricultural Pest Program

- Staff attended a public meeting in Cordova in early March to discuss the future management of the aquatic invasive plant, Elodea in the Copper River Watershed. An additional workshop with stakeholders included discussions of a state-wide strategic plan's goal of eradication and steps on how to get to eradication in federally managed areas like the Chugach National Forest.

- Staff concluded the greenhouse pilot study for testing effectiveness of natural and organic herbicides on common and invasive agricultural weeds. Results were presented at the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Conference in March.
- Staff presented fieldwork with herbicide applications to Canada thistle in state-owned right-of-ways in Anchorage at the Pesticide Applicators Workshop in collaboration with Cooperative Extension at UAA in mid-March.
- As part of the Polar Lecture Series, staff spoke at the Anchorage Museum's Rasmuson Center for Dialogues: Scientific Perspectives on the Alaska Environment and Industry. The talk was open to the public and content included information about the state's perspective of invasive plant management with examples of projects around the state.
- Staff collaborated with ADF&G on giving a half-day long workshop on Aquatic Invasive Species; identification, where to find them, how to survey for them, distribution in Alaska, and best management practices for prevention. The audience included ADF&G, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the US Forest Service.
- Staff presented to the Matanuska-Susitna Borough engineers and project managers and developers about the Weed Free Gravel Products program and best management practices to prevent new infestations of invasive weeds in the valley. Borough staff asked questions about the PMC's role in projects, such as providing resources for regulatory restrictions of invasive plants and maintaining seed mixes with the proper standards.
- Staff presented to the Palmer Soil and Water Conservation District Board information about relevant modifications in the Weed Free Forage and Gravel Products program so that state-wide consistency and credibility are promoted throughout Alaska.

Pathology

- Staff presented "Bacterial Ring Rot (BRR)" to the Alaska Produce Growers Conference in Palmer, AK on February 21.
- Staff presented "Division of Agriculture Pathology Program" to the Alaska Sustainable Agriculture Conference (SARE) in Fairbanks, AK on March 5.
- Staff attended the 8th International Integrated Pest Management Symposium in Salt Lake City, UT on March 24-26.
- Staff finished virus and bacteria testing for re-establishment of the potato tissue culture bank. Over 460 plantlets were individually tested for 6 viruses, bacteria, and Potato spindle tuber viroid (PSTVd).
- Staff met with grower and diagnosed problems in carrots and potatoes. Offered management recommendations.
- Staff tested 3 grower potato lots for bacterial ring rot.

Potato Program

- Staff continues re-establishment of the germplasm inventory in tissue culture along with appropriate disease testing.
- Staff continues propagation of tissue culture plants. Working toward targets based on Certified Seed Grower requests. Requests are up approximately 30% from previous year.
- Staff sorted Generation 0 seed by grower and prepared for spring distribution.
- Staff reported that the potato planter and row closing unit are on order.
- Staff evaluated the Generation 0 production greenhouse. Numerous roof panels are damaged and quotes are being sought for replacement. Currently investigating an upgrade to ventilation system.
- Staff seeking new potato varieties and breeding lines from outside breeding programs for maintenance and propagation for future evaluation.

- Staff attended the SARE conference in Fairbanks and participated in the Alaska Certified Seed Growers meeting in March.
- Staff received numerous calls regarding interest in purchasing Certified Seed potatoes. Callers were directed to the list of Alaska growers.
- Several contacts were made to distribute small amounts of PMC seed to various parties wanting to learn about different variety options.

Publications

- Staff continues to prepare division media releases, monthly newsletters, BAC reports, forms, surveys, fact sheets, and general web maintenance duties.
- Staff continues to provide team support for computer and program related challenges.
- Staff attending weekly Web Content Management meetings for new web program called Percussion.
- Staff is preparing the PMC 2014 Annual Report.
- Staff is maintaining a facebook group for the Alaska Committee on Noxious and Invasive Plant Management (CNIPM.)
- Staff is preparing the CNIPM quarterly newsletter and providing additional graphic support when requested.
- Staff created a brochure and web page for the invasive European bird cherry.
- Staff created an informative brochure about Alaska Grown cauliflower, garlic, and asparagus.
- Staff continues to maintain the online SourceBook.
- Staff building 2015 Brand Book and New PMC Employee Manual.

Revegetation Program

- Staff is working with Teck Alaska, Inc. and NANA Regional Corporation (NRC) to study the feasibility of a local seed harvest business in Noatak. Staff will provide community outreach to educate Noatak residents about the native seed industry and resources available to them.
- Staff will conduct multiple workshops in Noatak to train local residents on sustainable practices and how to identify plants to collect, clean, and store native seed for sale to revegetation projects. The first workshop was on January 17, 2015. Teck and PMC staff presented information on the upcoming pilot study and the opportunity for local community members to receive training and participate in the pilot study. Nine individuals expressed interest in the program. Another workshop is scheduled for April 29, 2015. This will consist of one day of training to identify, collect, clean, and store the seed.
- Staff organized plant species collected from evaluation fields over the summer and put them into seed storage bags. The PMC now has a backup source of original seed stock in case of future disease or loss of certain species.
- Staff worked with publications to develop a Plant Identification field guide booklet for Noatak. Final printed copies were sent to Darren Jones at Teck to reinforce the awareness of this pilot study to Noatak
- Staff answered questions about revegetation practices and recommended seed mixes.
- Staff sent the Mat-Su River Proposal to the Mat-Su Borough office. This project would involve establishing plots along the river bars and testing grass species for their ability to aid in dust abatement. This project could potentially take place over three years.
- Staff is working with Northern Region DOT on obtaining an RSA so PMC staff can assist on future projects.

- Staff is working with Kenai Fjords National Park on seed collecting and cleaning. Seed will be used on future vegetative disturbances in the park.

Seed Cleaning and Conditioning

- Staff completed cleaning small commercial seed lots (lots under 200 lbs.), and the lot crew has begun preparing the greenhouses and assisting with larger seed lots that are still being cleaned. A very large highly sought after 'Nortran' lot is currently being cleaned.
- Staff is answering inquiries regarding the anticipated seed sale beginning on April 15th and running until approximately September 15th. on seeding rates, planting times, and general "how to" information.
- Staff has wired and installed a hopper on the Eclipse 334 seed cleaner thus allowing the cleaning of two different lots at one time.
- Staff met with the Seed Growers Association to discuss upcoming field season.
- Staff finalized the seed list for the annual seed sale and awaiting the final germination results on a few of the forbs that are listed while simultaneously determining the amount of seed the PMC needs to keep to prepare for its own planting season.
- Staff created a new lesson plan for visiting schools. This lesson plan enables us to explain the importance of agriculture and land stewardship in a fun and engaging way that incorporates games and group activities to keep students' attention.
- Staff is preparing a 100g sample of Breeder quality 'Nortran' to send to the Bridger Plant Materials Center in Bridger, Montana, as requested for their seed trials.

Seed Lab

- Seed lab conducted 80 seed tests. This includes 30 Purity, 30 Germination, 9 Noxious weed tests, and 11 TZ tests.
- Staff prepared and sent invoices to customers.
- Staff is continuing testing seed lots for upcoming 2015 spring seed sale.

Seeds of Success

- Staff started over 2,500 plugs of native plants for field seed increases and on site revegetation efforts.