



**MEMORANDUM**  
Department of Natural Resources

**STATE OF ALASKA**  
Division of Agriculture

**TO:** Board of Agriculture  
& Conservation

**DATE:** July 2, 2014

**FROM:** Franci Havemeister  
Director

**SUBJECT:** Director's Report  
May and June 2014

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

- Loan officer has received and processed incoming loan applications.
- Loan officer has prepared and closed the application approved at the June BAC meeting.
- Loan officer has processed loan payoffs, associated Deeds of Reconveyance, and UCC filing updates, as well as other duties associated with ARLF management.
- Loan officer has prepared a consolidated list of current ARLF collateral in order to begin updating ARLF collateral inspections.
- Loan officer has had conversations over the phone with potential new borrowers and forwarded them application information.
- Loan officer has been in contact with delinquent borrowers. Default borrower contact list has been updated.
- Loan officer has been in process of 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:**

- Staff continues to make daily posts on the Alaska Grown and Alaska Farm to School Facebook pages; the Alaska Grown page has achieved 22,082 likes; the Farm to School page is at 2082. Staff continues to conduct further social media outreach through the Alaska Grown YouTube, Twitter and Pinterest pages.
- There are currently 27 restaurants participating in the Restaurant Rewards (RR) Program. The RR Incentive "Go the Distance" contest closed 5/30/14. Five restaurants applied, only one restaurant completed the full application.
- Fourteen farms were added to the Alaska Grown Program in May 2014.
- Staff continues to partner with the Department of Commerce on the Nutritional Alaska Foods in Schools (NAFS) grant program; staff compiled a contact list for all vendors who have participated in the program to be distributed to school district food service directors.
- In coordination with other state agency, Marketing staff continue to prepare a "Farm to Restaurant" factsheet to help farms know the rules and regulations necessary in order to get their product into local restaurants.
- Marketing Staff held two webinars to prepare applicants for the 2014 Specialty Crop Competitive Grant cycle. Ten letters of intent were received; six projects were moved forward in the process.
- Staff received and processed 23 Farm to School mini-grant contracts.

- The marketing team is once again supporting a VISTA Volunteer in conjunction with the Department of Health & Social Services and the Alaska Food Policy Council. The primary objective of the VISTA is supporting and enhancing the Farmers Market Quest project. The VISTA volunteer has finalized contracts with 10 markets thus far.
- The Source Book is being compiled for online and print versions.
- Staff continues to participate with the North American Agricultural Marketing Officials (NAAMO) international organization. The marketing team submitted the Restaurant Rewards project for the 2014 NAAMO Marketing Excellence Award; the project placed in the top three and staff will present the project at the annual meeting in July for further consideration.
- Staff gathered and analyzed data from school food service professionals to understand state-wide use of local foods.
- The marketing team organized the Chef at the Market program again for 2014; applications were due in May, eight chefs applied; seven chefs were awarded funding.
- Staff continues to participate with the Alaska Food Policy Council where recent efforts have surrounded the research paper being prepared by Agriculture Economist Ken Meter; the document should be finalized in June.
- The marketing team is sponsoring Oyster Demonstrations at the Homer Farmers Market summer 2014.
- Staff has been coordinating with researchers and individuals in the Alaska fiber production industry to prepare an application for the 2014 USDA Federal State Marketing Improvement Program grant.
- Staff is creating a comprehensive Marketing Management Plan to reference all advertising and marketing efforts conducted in the past 10 years.
- Staff announced and promoted the 2014 Farm Family of the Year award in May; three nominations were received and will be reviewed by the committee.
- Marketing staff participated in training webinars provided by USDA on the (new) grants available for 2014 including the Local Food Promotion Program and the Farmers Market Promotion Program. The Division is not eligible to apply for these funds but has and will continue to support efforts by industry members to access these dollars.

**Central Office Inspection:**

- Staff conducted 12 nursery visits. Conducted site visits and collected plant health quarantine/survey information at nine nurseries/greenhouses in Anchorage, Mat-Su and Kenai areas
- Staff conducted six grocery store visits. Inspected produce and supplied Alaska Grown materials in Anchorage & Kenai/Soldotna
- Staff conducted five farmer's market visits to check compliance with seed potatoes for sale per Alaska regulations. Staff issued one notice of violation to one vendor for selling potatoes "for planting or eating". Staff conducted a follow up visit at another market where that vendor is located and they were in compliance.
- Staff conducted 12 USDA Grade Inspections on produce shipments for local distribution warehouse.
- Staff conducted 11 phytosanitary inspections and certifications.
- Staff conducted two USDA Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) Audits at retail grocery stores in Kenai AK.
- Staff conducted two shell egg inspections.
- Staff conducted one elk fence inspection.

- Staff conducted one farm visit with PMC Pathologist, Todd Steinlage in order to supply information and equipment for the Bacterial Ring Rot testing and core sampling.
- Staff surveyed one pet store in Soldotna for potential sales of invasive aquatic plants.
- Staff reviewed and approved one USDA interstate permits for pest movement into Alaska.
- Staff issued 3 new brands.
- Staff is receiving multiple notifications with required phytosanitary certificates from one company that distributes tomato plants to multiple big box retailers throughout Alaska.
- Staff worked with Mt. McKinley Meat & Sausage Plant to complete all physical/procedural requirements necessary for issuance of Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) facility food safety permit. Completed plan review and permit application and submitted to ADEC Food Safety & Sanitation Division for approval.
- Staff continues to respond to seed potato tag requests for the 2013 crop year and has issued over 2300 tags and three bulk certificates.
- Staff created a Seed Potato information sheet that was distributed to farmer's market manager's to address concerns of potatoes being sold for purposes of planting that were not certified.
- Staff finalized the 2014 Seed Potato certification Application and it is now uploaded on to the division of agriculture website.
- Staff submitted application for grant funding for Organic Cost Share Program through the USDA National Organic Program for FY 2013-14. This funding allows The Division to reimburse organic growers and processors for a portion of their organic certification fees.
- Staff completed annual USDA refresher training for conducting Harmonized Good Agricultural Practices/Good Handling Practices (GAP/GHP) Audits.
- Staff completed the online USDA Security Awareness Training in order to be able to access the USDA Phytosanitary Databases.
- Staff continues to draft up the deliverables for the Forest Health Protection Grant, "Improved training and partnering for the coordinated early detection of invasives by individuals in Alaska". Staff is working under a Reimbursable Services Agreement (RSA) with the Division of Forestry on this Project thru December 2014.
- Staff created a Late Blight Quarantine Reminder which describes restrictions on Tomato Plants and Seed Potatoes. This document was given to Customs and Border Protection (CBP) for distribution at Border Locations in Alaska.
- Staff set and are monitoring 3 traps at one site in the Matsu. This is the second year cooperating on this project with DNR Division of Forestry's Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) program which targets exotic beetles.
- Staff scheduled and began preparations for an On-Farm Food Safety Workshop to be held in Palmer in June.
- Staff continues to cross train with the Potato Disease Specialist and transition into management of the Alaska Potato Seed Certification program. Staff will travel to Colorado and train with the Colorado inspectors late June. Staff is reviewing other Seed Potato Certification Handbooks and Regulations.
- Staff had two inquiries in regards to seed potato certification; distributed application, handbook and other information for them to enter into certification for 2014 year.
- Staff responded to multiple Peony export inquiries.
- Staff answered several public inquiries regarding organic certification and plant health regulations

**Northern Region Office:**

- Staff travelled to Korea to supervise the fumigation of Alaska timber exported to China.

- Staff conducted Phytosanitary inspections of Alaska timber for export in Kodiak and Afognak.
- Staff conducted surveys in SE Alaska for Asian Defoliating moth project funded by USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service. Staff surveyed in the communities of Juneau and Sitka and was assisted by Eric Johnson of the land sales team in Palmer, who collected data and GPS information.
- Staff conducted annual survey training in Anchorage for the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Cooperative Extension Service Technicians.
- Staff worked on USDA cooperative agreements.
- Staff planned for USDA Pest Survey Specialist's (PSS), Yolanda Inguanzo, visit to Alaska in June. The PSS will assist in survey work in SE Alaska and in the interior to collect data, set traps, collect soil samples, assist in nursery visits and provide USDA outreach and representation.

### **Plant Materials Center:**

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

- Two Aquatic Invasive Species Field Staff Trainings were conducted on the Kenai Peninsula in Homer on the May 20, 2014 and Kenai on the May 21, 2014. Over five groups had representatives present for the trainings, including Alaska Department of Fish and Game; Sportfish, Habitat, and Boating and Angler Access program; Homer Soil and Water Conservation District; Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research and Reserve; Alaska Bioworks; and the Kenai Wildlife Refuge.
- The bi-annual Weed Free Forage and Gravel certification training took place at the Plant Materials Center May 14th. Sixteen participants were successfully certified after a day-long training.
- Staff coordinated with the Kenai Peninsula Cooperative Extension office to offer a Weed Free Forage and Gravel inspector training outside of Palmer. Twelve participants participated in a day-long training to become certified Weed Free Forage and Gravel inspectors.
- Outreach efforts for this season include a statewide invasive plant species radio PSA and an online and in print information on Canada thistle with the Anchorage Daily News. Staff has coordinated both outreach efforts to go live in the coming weeks.
- Coordination with the Anchorage Zoo and the Invasive Weeds Canada thistle project are in the process of producing educational signs about Alaska's most harmful invasive weeds. The signs will be displayed at the zoo for onlookers to read about the impacts invasive plants can have on native animal habitats.
- Fieldwork has begun for the Canada thistle management project in Anchorage. Returning staff are eager to utilize and coordinate with the Department of Transportation (DOT) Integrated Vegetation Management Plan to eradicate some of the state's most aggressive infestations.
- Staff presented information on Elodea to two pilot organizations in April and May. The Float Plane Safety Seminar hosted approximately 200 participants, and the Civil Air Patrol Polaris Squadron hosted approximately 25. Information was provided regarding Elodea's distribution, threat, and on-going management efforts.

#### **Pathology**

- Staff tested 30 potato lots, from 6 producers, for the bacterial ring rot pathogen, *Clavibacter michiganensis* subsp. *Sepedonicu*.

- Staff Consulted with DOT on fungal endophyte toxins in grasses.
- Staff tested approximately 2,000 PMC potato plants for Potato spindle tuber viroid (PSTVd).

### **Publications**

- Staff is continuing to update web pages for all PMC programs and has launched new Plant Materials Center website.
- Staff continues to prepare monthly newsletters, support other staff with computer related duties, BAC reports, forms, surveys, and general web maintenance duties.
- Staff continues to build printed and online 2014/2015 Alaska Grown Sourcebook.
- Staff is creating a newsletter for Alaska Committee for Noxious & Invasive Plants Management (CNIPM).
- Staff creating 34"x22" Elodea Awareness sign for installation in Anchorage.
- Staff is finalizing a brochure for Plant Materials Center
- Staff is printing a Terrestrial Weed Identification Guide, 2nd Edition and Revegetation Field Guide

### **Horticulture**

- Staff is writing reports from the data collected from the 2013 growing season.
- Planted asparagus plot at three locations for specialty crop evaluation; Nikiski, North Pole and PMC – 13 varieties with two more to be added in the future.
- Prepping cane berry evaluation plot for planting: 12 varieties.
- Planted onion evaluation trial: 10 varieties.
- Planted broccoli evaluation plot: 10 varieties.
- Outreach is being conducted to growers and producers throughout the state.
- Prepping Malus sp. rootstock planting – 41 surviving specimens and addition of @1,000 more.
- Staff published a survey for public input of horticulture program evaluations.

### **Seed Laboratory**

- Staff completed testing of the all PMC seed lots harvested in 2013.
- Staff completed testing of all PMC seed lots offered for spring seed sale.
- Staff worked on seed sample identification sent by Cooperative Extension Service (CES).
- Staff reviewed the updates and changes in the rules for testing seed. Changes and updates proposed by members of Association of Official Analysts.
- Staff prepared and sent invoices to customers.

### **Seeds of Success**

- Staff gave a tour to BLM representatives of seed cleaning facilities, seed lab, box garden and fields. Staff met new BLM interns with which will be working later in the summer.
- Staff completed germination tests of all the PMC seed lots selected for seed increase in 2014.
- Staff planted all PMC seed lots selected for increase in containers. Once established they will be transplanted in the field.
- Staff has been performing maintenance of box garden and field plantings.

### **Potato Program**

- The 2014 greenhouse planting and production of G-0 seed is completed and underway.

- Staff has planted the entire potato germplasm in PMC fields this season for further research.

### **Seed Cleaning**

- All PMC and commercial producer's seed lots have been completed.
- Staff is working with AK DOT PF (Public Facilities) to modernize and improve the heating systems in the large seed house for efficiency.
- Seed cleaning has had three requests for services this spring for cleaning small seed lots for the National Park Service.
- PMC is working with a local sheet metal company to fabricate new ducting for the two new cleaning machines in the large seed house to finalize their installation and be operational by this fall winter seed cleaning season.

### **Erosion Control**

- Staff assisted the public with revegetation questions in regards to project implementation and choosing seed mixtures.
- Staff is working with DOT design engineers to assist with their seeding and erosion control specifications for projects around the state.
- Staff is collecting baseline soil and vegetation data for DOT, for local projects within the Mat-Su and Anchorage area.

### **Forage & Soils Lab**

- Forage Growth Curve project is currently under way, staff members are collecting field data every two weeks in eight regions throughout Alaska. Publication to be compiled during the winter of 2014/2015.
- Staff is establishing and managing seven forage field trials at the PMC.
- Staff is currently running nutrient analysis on several hay field soil samples throughout Alaska.
- Staff has tested and analyzed nutrient composition for several soil samples collected from asparagus trial study areas.
- Staff has collected soil samples at PMC for production, future production grass, grain and potato fields.

### **Foundation Seed Production**

- Staff planted six varieties of grain and they are growing well for regeneration of seed to be made available to Alaskan producers.
- Staff has successfully overwintered 5.5 acres of cereal rye for regeneration of seed, the largest cereal rye planting at the PMC to date.
- There has been an entire re-propagation of the PMC breeders block through our greenhouse production; which will be established in the fields this season.