



MEMORANDUM

Department of Natural Resources

STATE OF ALASKA
Division of Agriculture

TO: Board of Agriculture
& Conservation

DATE: May 10, 2013

FROM: Franci Havemeister
Director

SUBJECT: Director's Report
April 2013

Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund (ARLF):

- Loan officer has processed incoming loan applications and prepared complete applications to be submitted for review at the May BAC meeting.
- Loan officer attended the Mat-Su Farm Bureau meeting on April 17th, 2013 to provide information about ARLF.
- Loan officer has been working with the legislative auditors, answering questions and conducting research.
- Loan officer has processed loan payoffs and associated Deeds of Reconveyances and UCC filing updates, as well as other duties associated with ARLF management.
- Loan officer has had meetings and conversations with several potential new borrowers.
- Loan officer has begun drafting new letters and ARLF forms.
- Loan officer has been in contact with delinquent borrowers and borrowers in active collection. Default borrower contact list has been updated.
- Loan officer has updated interest rate comparison and asset report.

Marketing & Development:

- Ten farms were added to the Alaska Grown program in April.
- Marketing staff continue active participation with the Alaska Food Policy Council, serving on the Governing Board as well as both the Locally Grown and School Programs workgroups.
- Staff continues collaboration with the Department of Commerce on the Nutritional Alaska Foods in Schools (NAFS) grant program.
- Staff is working with rhubarb growers on market development and will host a "Specialty Products Workshop" in late May. Guest speakers from the Oregon Food Innovation Center will speak on value-added recipe development, marketing trends, labeling requirements and more.
- Marketing staff are working with the more than 35 farmers markets throughout the State to announce schedules, contact information, etc.
- Staff awarded thirteen Cooperative Market Program grants, totaling \$16,500 in funds distributed. Projects include support for new farmers markets, advertising efforts, farm tours and other exciting ideas.
- Staff gave presentations focused on the marketing and farm to school programs at the Kenai Ag Forum, to the Growers School hosted by Jeff Smeenk, at the Fairbanks

Farm Bureau Chapter Annual Meeting, the Fairbanks Interior Public Health Conference, and a University of Alaska Fairbanks Nutrition class.

- Staff awarded the 2011 Farm to School challenge winner their certificate and hosted a potato activity with students from the school.
- Staff attended the AK School Nutrition Association board meeting and is working to secure a spot on their annual conference agenda for next year.
- Staff is coordinating with Alaska Health Fair Incorporated to have a station with Farm to School information at all future health fairs hosted around the state.
- Marketing staff participated in an interview on "News and Views ABC" to share information about the Farm to School Program and the mini-grant that just opened.
- The VISTA Volunteer continues to encourage participation from statewide Farmers Markets in the EBT program which allows use of the Quest card at the market. Eleven markets have joined the program thus far; they will receive financial support to allow for staff time, advertising and "double coupon days."
- Staff produced a Public Service Announcement (PSA) reminding Alaskans to source Alaska Grown products during this gardening season. Staff also assisted in creation of a Media Release (MR) reminding Alaskan's that May 7th is Alaska Agriculture Day.
- Staff announced the availability of 2013 Farm to School mini-grants and will accept applications through May 15th.
- Staff continues to successfully manage the Alaska Grown and Farm to School Facebook pages. The Alaska Grown page has over 12,900 "likes" and a weekly average reach in April of over 22,000 people. The Farm to School page has 1854 likes.
- Marketing staff have been outreaching to wholesale produce buyers requesting feedback on increasing communication.
- In cooperation with the Inspection section, marketing staff are preparing for multiple "On Farm Food Safety Workshops" to be held this spring: Haines May 5, Kenai June 14, Homer June 15, and Fairbanks TBA.

Northern Region Inspection:

- Staff conducted inspections in Kodiak and Afognak for Phytosanitary export of Timber.
- Staff attended training in Idaho Falls to be USDA certified to conduct potato shipping point inspections. Staff was trained by the Idaho Department of Agriculture and worked with one of their senior inspectors in several of the pack houses located near Idaho Falls.
- Staff worked on Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Farm Bill cooperative agreement work plans for approved projects for FY2013: Asian Defoliating Moth Survey and a Survey of Thrips Associated with Peony Grown in Alaska.
- Staff responded to a public concern about a local box store retailer selling out of state seed potatoes that were not properly labeled. The retailer was contacted about displaying the certification information required by Alaska law. The seed potatoes in question were certified in the state of origin.

Central Office Inspection:

- Conducted (4) 300 inspections with 6 lots inspected.
- Conducted 5 farm visits to check grade on local potatoes.
- Conducted 1 grocery store visit which resulted in local potatoes being 'stop sale' due to sprouting issues.

- Assisted with seed potato bin inspections in the Matsu.
- Conducted phytosanitary inspection and certification for various seed/grain to Sweden.
- Reviewed and approved USDA permits to allow interstate movement of live pests.
- Staff is reviewing and receiving shipping point notifications and phytosanitary certificates for tomato plants from one supplier in Washington destined to various retail, garden centers in Alaska
- Visited with Derek Sikes, UAF Museum curator in Fairbanks, AK and forwarded the remaining insect specimens for the 2012 Farm Bill Peony project. Derek Sikes provided tour and update on the project.
- Attended and participated in the AK Pest Risk Committee meeting where topics of interest included; information remains pending for the heat treatment of Canadian firewood from Barbara Chambers, USDA APHIS, State Plant Health Director (SPHD) and requested Customs and Border Protection (CBP) assistance in Juneau for the supervised disposal of weeds found in container plants in nurseries for the 2013 summer season.
- Attended and participated in the 2013 Society of American Foresters meeting in Anchorage. Presented 2 presentations; "AK firewood Survey" and "What is our protection network? Which also involved being on a panel to address any questions from the group.
- Worked on drafting comments in response to Produce Rule section of FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) proposed regulations
- Attended FSMA on-site meeting with Region 10 FDA Director on April 25, 2013. Meeting was live-streamed to various locations throughout state to inform stakeholders of new FSMA regulations. Did email outreach to interested parties statewide regarding these meetings.
- Attended several webinars conducted by FDA and National State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) Technical Working Group regarding proposed FSMA regulations
- Coordinated/planned upcoming On-Farm Food Safety (OFFS) Workshops three in Haines, Homer and Kenai. Planning for two more tentatively scheduled in Skagway and Chena Hot Springs, as requested by local growers.
- Created new outreach brochures/materials for the OFFS Workshops, and created a Power point presentation for workshops that include new FSMA regulation information/regulations.
- Conducted a garden center visit to confirm proper labeling of imported seed potatoes.
- Worked with several growers regarding organic certification requirements and APHIS import requirements.
- Staff conducted 4 FV 300 inspections with 6 products inspected.
- Staff conducted 20 FV 301 inspections, 10,900 packages inspected. Total weight 327,000 pounds.
- Staff conducted inspections for and issued 2 phytosanitary certificates.
- Total Bee's Registered 2013: 7 registered Total Bee packages received: 19 (From outside).

Plant Materials Center

Invasive Weeds and Agricultural Pest Program

- Coordination efforts continue on the issue of the aquatic invasive weed, Elodea. Staff has participated in local strategic efforts in Fairbanks, on the Kenai Peninsula, and in Anchorage. Currently, the Kenai Peninsula Technical Advisory committee is pursuing funding and permits for containment and eradication efforts in Stormy and Daniels Lake.

- Staff presented two sessions of Invasive Plant Management through the Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District's Winter Conservation Series aimed at engaging the public on natural resources issues.
- Proposed amendments to the Plant Health and Quarantine Regulations (11 AAC 34) were open for public comment through February 28th, 2013. Staff is reviewing and recommending changes based on comments received during this period.
- Staff was requested to present information on the Weed-Free Gravel Certification Program at the DOT Environmental Expo and the AK Society of American Foresters meeting in Anchorage in April.
- Staff hosted a booth at the Mat-Su Outdoorsman Show with information on PMC programs and Invasive Species Issues.
- Staff participated in International discussion on the management and movement of invasive hawkweed species between northern states and provinces. This group is headed by staff from British Columbia's Ministry of Forest, Lands, and Natural Resources office.
- Gearing up for the upcoming field season, the Anchorage Canada thistle project has gotten most permits in place in order to weed whip along Right of Ways and has put together an Integrated Pest Management Plan which will be submitted to DEC in order to spray priority infestations with herbicide.

Pathology

- Conducted barley loose smut tests on two seed lots.
- Extracted DNA and performed PCR (polymerase chain reaction) on grass samples to confirm infection by fungal endophytes. Working on improvements to DNA extraction procedure.
- Determining needs for pesticides.

Publications

- The second printing of A Field Guide to Alaska Grasses has arrived. 3,700 copies await distribution. A second printing of the Alaska Forage Manual and the third printing of the Alaska Coastal Revegetation & Erosion Control Guide are in the bidding stages.

Revegetation

- Commenting on a reclamation plan for Donlin Gold. This plan applies to the natural gas pipeline component of the proposed Donlin Gold Project. The proposed pipeline, approximately 313 miles long, would originate at the west end of the Beluga Gas Field northwest of Anchorage at a tie-in near Beluga and would run to the Donlin Gold mine located in Southwest Alaska.
- Brome collections from Southeast Alaska will be planted at the PMC fields and evaluated for their revegetation and forage potential.
- Collections from Canada, Greenland, Iceland and Faroe Islands, and Norway will be planted at the PMC fields for evaluation. These will be looked at for their revegetation potential.

Seed Laboratory:

- During this period Alaska State Seed Lab performed 16 Germination tests, 11 Purity tests, 7 Noxious weed tests, and 2 TZ tests.

- Seed lab staff attended 2nd National Native Seed Conference in Santa Fe, NM.

Other Projects:

Seeds of Success

- Seed from *Arctagrostis latifolia*, *Calamagrostis purpurescens*, and *Festuca rubra* was seeded in the greenhouse for 2013 seed increase.

Rural Village Seed Production Project

- The Project started in 2010 and is now in its final season – Ends August 31, 2013
- It is funded through an ARRA Grant
- Project goals: to produce and harvest wild seed in and around native communities, by village corporations, for use in revegetation projects in their region
- Three of the six participating communities have progressed with the project and will receive the focus of PMC staff in the final season
 - Metlakatla - Field production of beach rye & lupine, as well as wild harvested berries. Potential market is USFS
 - Pedro Bay - Field production of yarrow, Jacobs ladder, and calamagrostis, as well as wild harvested fireweed. Potential market is The Pebble Partnership
 - Manley Hot Springs - Field production of wild iris, Artemisia, and calamagrostis. Potential market is AKDOT, local mines, and road projects
- Goals: Teach and assist the participating communities in creating a seed production business
 - Locate suitable land to be converted from its natural state into agricultural land
 - Introduce farm techniques that will in turn produce commercially viable seed on a small scale in rural Alaska.
- Results: Three of the participating communities had successfully harvested measurable quantities of seed (meaning harvested in small acreages)