



# MEMORANDUM

Department of Natural Resources

STATE OF ALASKA  
Division of Agriculture

**TO:** Board of Agriculture  
& Conservation

**DATE:** May 8, 2014

**FROM:** Franci Havemeister  
Director

**SUBJECT:** Director's Report  
April 2014

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

- Loan officer has received and processed incoming loan applications and an extension request.
- Loan officer has prepared and closed most of the applications approved at the March BAC meeting.
- Loan officer has prepared and submitted requests for proposals for appraisals regarding two ARLF properties to the procurement department.
- Loan officer has updated the asset report.
- 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 had conversations over the phone with several potential new borrowers and forwarded them application information.
- Loan officer has had conversations over the phone and in person with current borrowers requesting potential loan modifications and new applications.
- 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.

**Marketing & Development:**

- Staff continues to promote sales of Alaska Grown produce with the Alaska Grown recipe project. In March and April, Staff began introducing recipes featuring Alaska Grown items other than potatoes.
- Staff continues to make daily posts on the Alaska Grown and Alaska Farm to School Facebook pages. The Alaska Grown Facebook page now reaches 17,532 people and the Alaska Farm to School page reaches 2,024 people.
- Staff continues to manage the Alaska Grown YouTube page, twitter page and Pinterest page.
- There are currently 26 restaurants participating in the Restaurant Rewards Program.
- Thirteen farms have been added to the Alaska Grown Program in March/April 2014.

- Staff announced the availability of funding through multiple grant projects in March/April including: Farm to School Mini-grants, Chef at the Market grants, and the Specialty Crop Competitive grant program.
- Staff completed a summary of the Alaskan Farmer and Rancher surveys conducted throughout the state. The summary is available on the Division of Agriculture website.
- Staff represented Alaska at the National Governor's Association Summit on Reducing Childhood Hunger in an effort to gain a better understanding of how the Farm to School and Alaska Grown programs can partner with other State agencies on this topic.
- In coordination with other state agency, marketing staff has put together a "Farm to Fork" factsheet to help farms know the rules and regulations necessary in order to get their product into local restaurants.
- Staff continues to collect data for the 2014-2015 Source Book. Applications were due April 15, 2014. Deadline has been extended to April 30.
- Marketing staff attended a follow up meeting between farms and restaurants in Talkeetna on April 15, 2014. Information about Alaska Grown, the Restaurant Rewards program, and Farm Food Safety Workshops was relayed to the farms and restaurants.
- Staff continues to participate with the Alaska Food Policy Council, serving on the Governing Board and as liaison to the Locally Grown sub-committee. Staff has also participated on the advisory group that was directing the work of Economist Ken Meter in his efforts to prepare a report on the Food System in Alaska. The report is expected to be released in July.
- Marketing staff attended the 2014 Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education conference held in Fairbanks in March.
- Marketing staff were guest speakers for two separate high school "career choices" classes about the division of agriculture and different employment opportunities in Alaskan agriculture. One presentation was held at the Mat-Su Career Technical High School; the other presentation was held at Chugiak High School.
- Staff continues to collaborate and provide guidance/approval on reimbursements through the Nutritional Alaskan Foods in Schools (NAFS) grant funding.
- Marketing staff presented at the Eagle River Chamber of Commerce luncheon in March about Alaska Grown and other various programs within the division.
- Marketing staff continues to serve as the Secretary/Treasurer for the North American Agricultural Marketing Officials (NAAMO); staff applied for the 2014 Marketing Excellence award that NAAMO offers, submitting the Restaurant Rewards program as an 'innovative marketing technique.'
- Staff assisted the PMC man their booth at the Matsu Outdoorsman show in March.
- Staff visited Machetanz Elementary and did the "carrot seed tape" activity with all grade levels, and with a total of 139 students. The students were able to take home a strip of carrot seeds to plant in the spring.
- Staff created advertisements for Make-a-Scene magazine and Last Frontier magazines along with placing the radio advertisement that includes verbiage from first lady Sandy Parnell and the Hobo Jim jingle.

**Central Office Inspection:**

- Staff travelled to Korea to supervise the fumigation of Alaska timber exported to China.
- Staff conducted 10 seed potato storage inspection visits in Fairbanks, Trapper Creek, Homer, and Haines and in the Matsu. The seed potato storage inspections are a requirement for producers participating in the Alaska Certified Potato Seed Program.

- Staff has responded to multiple requests for seed potato certification and has issued over 2300 tags and two bulk certificates.
- Staff conducted six nursery visits. Staff followed up on certified seed potatoes sold at Wal-Mart with no certification posted. Visited store and nursery license posted. Certification in boxes for all varieties. Pulled all certification out of boxes and highlighted needed information on certificates which was then posted by garden center staff. Also, followed up with Wal-Mart Buyer/ Supplier on the grades statement on the seed potatoes for sale. Statement is a not recognizable grade per US Grade Standards. Informed them of this and notified them and supplied US grade standards that future shipments need correct statement.
- Staff issued 10 phytosanitary certificates.
- Staff conducted nine USDA Grade Inspections on produce shipments for local distribution warehouse
- Conducted 12 visits to local grocery stores to check quality and condition of produce
- Staff fielded calls from growers regarding seed potato certification.
- Staff continues to work with the Potato Disease Specialist with the transition into managing the Alaska Certified Seed Potato Program.
- Staff is currently drafting up the 2014 Seed Potato certification Application.
- 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 (DOF) on this Project thru December 2014.
- Staff has responded to multiple requests for the list of the 2014 AK Seed Potato Growers/ Varieties.
- Staff has responded to multiple inquiries regarding requirements for the importation of nursery stock, export of plants and labeling of seed potatoes in Alaska.
- Staff presented a PowerPoint presentation on "Seed Potato Certification" at the Sheldon Museum and Cultural Center, while in Haines AK conducting a seed potato storage visit. The audience consisted of home gardeners and hobby farmers, including a representative from Chilkat Indian Affairs.
- Staff attended the Potato Symposium at the Plant Material Center. The Symposium involved five discussions presented by subject matter experts from Idaho Colorado, North Dakota and New York. Presentations discussed Potato Virus Y, Bacterial Ring rot, Certification, Trade regulations and challenges within the potato industry.
- Staff participated in the quarterly Alaska Pest Risk Committee (AKPRAC) Meeting, where topics discussed was a request for the Potato Late Blight Quarantine to be disseminated to Customs and Border Protection stations in time for the summer season. In addition to this, staff shared the invasive weed quarantine.
- Staff attended the Forest Health Protection 2014 Coordination Meeting which discussed the 2014 Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) work conducted in the state as well as opportunities for future collaboration.
- Staff continues to attend monthly meetings with Cornell's Produce Safety Alliance to plan for implementation of FDA's Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA).
- Staff attended the annual Pesticide Recertification Conference sponsored by Cooperative Extension & Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), received Continuing Education Units (CEU's) toward maintaining mandatory pesticide applicators' license

- Staff attended the Annual Sustainable Agriculture Conference in Fairbanks and participated in panel discussion for new farmers, presenting information on Farm Food Safety. Also set up an information booth and disseminated information to local growers on Food Safety, including GAP/GHP audits, FSMA, and safe composting.
- Staff attended ADEC Food Safety meeting where new Cottage Food Regulations were introduced.
- Staff attended USDA-sponsored Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) Tier 3 Training in Sacramento. This training allows Division of Ag staff to do COOL audits in the state on behalf of USDA
- Outreach: Sent program information on State Egg Regulations, Food Safety, USDA GAP/GHP Audits and Organic certification to several interested parties
- Staff conducted two USDA Country of Origin Labeling Audits at grocery stores in Anchorage
- Staff conducted Phytosanitary inspections of Alaska timber for export in Ketchikan, Kodiak and Afognak.
- Staff conducted potato shipping point inspections in Delta Junction. State inspection certificate issued indicating potatoes meeting or exceeding grade for US No 1 Seed.
- Staff participated in a Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS) survey call with Division of Ag and APHIS staff on cooperative agreements and surveys current and planned for 2014.
- Staff working on cooperative agreement paperwork for Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). Total funding for 2014 projects currently awarded is \$133,064. This includes the Pest Detection (CORE), Asian defoliating moth survey, a small grains survey, and a survey focusing on TRV and vectors.
- Staff is currently working on 2013 cooperative agreements scheduled to end this summer.
- Staff reviewed a United States Forest Service (USFS) annual briefing paper for Gypsy moth and invasive introductions.
- Staff attended HAZWOPER training in Fairbanks in order to be compliant to conduct phase one surveys on Agricultural land for potential hazards prior to sale and to be trained in the use of respirators and Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) equipment utilized during fumigation projects.
- Staff currently coordinating with all participants in the state who will be setting out Asian defoliating moth monitoring traps. Staff currently coordinates the project with US Forest Service, Customs and Border Protection, US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, and Cooperative Extension Service.
- Staff received trapping and survey supplies from APHIS and is in the process of organizing trapping supplies to be mailed out to participants of the Asian Defoliating Moth Survey. Trap database is currently being updated and revised to reflect new updates in APHIS National Agricultural Pest Identification System (NAPIS) database reporting requirements and functionality. Staff is also working on survey logistics for this summer and coordinating activities with the APHIS Pest Survey Specialist who is planning to work in Alaska and assist with projects in June.
- Staff met via teleconference with CES Anchorage and Kenai, Integrated Pest Management (IPM), to coordinate the RSA and expected work for this summer to be accomplished.
- Staff met with Fairbanks CES and the UAF Botanical Garden (since UAF and CES merge) to discuss National Pest Detection Network (NPDN) reporting and protocol update, Data collection, and to provide a general overview for APHIS programs and org structure, key components, etc.

- Staff responded to a military call regarding spiders found on shipment of household material from overseas. The military currently “bug bombs” their shipments for spiders and mites, and other potential hitchhikers. USDA entomologists are not particularly concerned with spiders, however, since wood packing material was being utilized; staff visually surveyed the shipment being held at a local shipper and found no sign of agricultural pest activity. Staff thanked the military officer for contacting the Northern Region Agriculture office and for being aware and on the lookout for potential agricultural and environmental pests that can be moved around or introduced into the state.

### **Plant Materials Center:**

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

- Aquatic Invasive Species Field Staff Trainings were conducted on April 8th at the PMC. Nineteen participants from ADF&G, BLM, and U.S. Forest Service attended the half-day training on field identification, sampling, and best management practices for Alaska’s aquatic invasive species: Northern Pike, Purple loosestrife, Reed canarygrass, Signal crayfish and Elodea. Participants also learned about seven other Early Detection Rapid Response aquatic invasive species potentially found in Alaska’s water bodies. A web-based course will soon be available for distance learners.
- Elodea statewide distribution and 2013 surveyed water body maps are available through the Invasive Plants websites (<http://plants.alaska.gov/invasives/elodea.htm>). Click on your area of interest to download a PDF.
- Staff joined the University of Nebraska at Lincoln’s North American Invasive Plant Short Course (NAIPSC) webinar discussing control of Canada thistle and Leafy spurge. Expert Rod Lym from the Western Society of Weed Science shared in-depth knowledge on the diverse control of these forbs species. This knowledge will be implemented in the field this summer with the current Canada thistle project. Thankfully, leafy spurge is not found in Alaska.
- A public meeting regarding Elodea was held in Fairbanks March 18th discussing the 2013 field season results and future steps taken by the Soil and Water Conservation Districts in the Chena Slough and Chena Lake. Invasive Weeds staff participated via teleconference and was able to help present updates on Elodea issues around the state and answer questions regarding the latest aquatic plant quarantine.
- Staff attended the Department of Transportation (DOT)’s South Central Environmental Expo in Anchorage on April 14th. Information was provided to attendees on how to incorporate invasive plant management best management practices into DOT projects.

#### **Pathology**

- Staff attended the Certified Pesticide Applicator Training in Anchorage on March 5, 2014.
- Staff attended training at the North Dakota State University, Plant Diagnostic Laboratory for testing potatoes for bacterial ring rot March 10-13, 2014.
- Staff attended the Alaska Potato Symposium on March 22, 2014
- Staff tested 185 accessions of PMC potatoes for bacterial ring rot.

- Staff has begun testing growers' seed potatoes for bacterial ring rot.
- Staff is continuing preparing for field season.

### **Publications**

- Staff is continuing to update web pages for all PMC programs and preparing for launch of new pages.
- Staff continues to prepare monthly newsletters, support other staff with computer related duties, BAC reports, and general web maintenance duties.
- Staff continuing to build printed and online 2014/2015 Alaska Grown Sourcebook.
- PMC staff participated in the Mat-Su Outdoorsman show March 21st to the 30th. Many public participants were offered information about each of the PMC programs, and questions regarding invasive species, upcoming garden projects, seed sales, and potatoes were answered.
- Staff beginning brochure and trade show booth design to reflect PMC services.

### **Horticulture**

- Staff is writing reports from the data collected from the 2013 growing season.
- Staff is planning and preparing the 2014 field season over the next few months.
- Variety trials plans and maps are being designed for the upcoming growing season.
- Outreach is being conducted to growers and producers throughout the state.
- Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan updates are being made for the 2014 season.
- Finish seeding for the 2014 trial season.
- Conducting a Malus seed germination study.
- Prepping greenhouses and equipment for the 2014 growing season.

### **Seed Laboratory**

- During this period Alaska State Seed Lab staff performed total of 91 seed tests including 52 Germination, 25 Purity tests and 14 Noxious weed tests.

### **Seeds of Success**

- Staff assembled 1000 seed packets of native seed mix for BLM. Seed packets will be given away on Earth Day.
- Staff started work on 2014 seed increases.

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

- Staff submitted final report for the project.

### **Seed Cleaning**

- All seed cleaning for the season is complete.
- General end of season maintenance on cleaning equipment will finish all seed cleaning and conditioning operations until late summer.
- 56 Foundation seed lots were cleaned and available for sales to Alaskan producers.
- 21 Commercial producer seed lots were cleaned and conditioned this season, roughly 40,000 lbs of seed.



- Six other agency seed cleaning requests on 44 lots of seeds were processed.
- Continued planning for the rejuvenation of foundation seed crops for the 2014 season.
- Evaluation of historical seeding records to help better define yields of found seed species to better assist Alaskan producers.

### **Revegetation**

- Staff is preparing for field evaluations of 70 accessions. Records will be kept on horticultural performance.
- Staff assisting the public with revegetation questions in regards to project implementation and choosing seed mixtures.
- Staff working with the Department of Transportation design engineers to assist with their seeding and erosion control specifications for projects around the state.

### **Ethnobotany Education Program**

- Staff assisted with dormant willow harvesting four days during the month of March. These willow cuttings will be used by the Wasilla Soil and Water Conservation District to revegetate several areas near Big Lake this summer. Coordination with Ted Pyrah allowed these groups to harvest along his fallow land via access from the PMC. Willows are stored in the PMC cooler until needed later on this summer.
- Staff presented programs to adult students from Mat-Su Community College twice in March and once in April. The students were from the Environmental Science Educator Course and the Life Science Course. These programs touched on invasive plants, PMC programs, potatoes, seed analysis, seed cleaning, revegetation with willows, and the ethnobotany garden. There were 14, 12, and 15 students that attended consecutively.
- Questions about seeds, curricula, poplar buds, dormant willow harvesting, potatoes, community forestry, gardening with native plants, revegetation with native plants, native poppy seed availability, and wild herbs were answered via e-mail and phone.
- Staff attended the Alaska Botanical Garden Annual Conference in Anchorage, setting up an informational booth on Plant Materials Center's and Division of Agriculture programs. Approximately 200 people asked questions about various programs and services.

### **Ethnobotany Programs**

- Staff presented two in-depth plant study classes, one in March on Artemisia's in Alaska and one in April about Planting Native Alaska Plants via Seeds, Transplants, and Cuttings in Home Gardens. Attendees came from notification in the Division of Agriculture Newsletter, "Walking the Red R.O.A.D." cultural group's e-mail list, and from word of mouth. In March, six people attended plus 12 responses and handouts were given out via e-mail after the program. In April, 14 people attended with five responses and handouts sent out via e-mail to those unable to attend, but wanting the information.
- Staff worked with three different organizations to schedule, plan, and develop up-coming programs. These organizations are "Walking the Red R.O.A.D." cultural group, Palmer Museum and Visitor Center, and a coordinated program with the Meadow Lakes Elementary School, Title One, and the Mat-Su Conservation Services.

**Foundation and Natural Selection Seed**

- Staff inventoried, evaluated, priced, and sorted the foundation and natural selection seed for the annual spring seed sale from the PMC for commercial growers. The sale runs from April 14 – April 25, 2014. The media release and seed lots for sale are listed on the Division of Agriculture and the PMC's websites. 24 lots of grass seed, 6 lots of grain seed, and 14 lots of forbs are for sale.
- Staff decided that any seed lot with less than 70% germination would not be sold during the sale. All seed lots need to have a current germination test (within 18 months) before being sold.
- Staff is evaluating changes in how the PMC stores and records seed inventory.