



# MEMORANDUM

Department of Natural Resources

STATE OF ALASKA  
Division of Agriculture

**TO:** Board of Agriculture  
& Conservation

**DATE:** October 17, 2012

**FROM:** Franci Havemeister  
Director

**SUBJECT:** Director's Report  
August-September 2012

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

- Loan officer has prepared and updated one loan request resubmission and one loan modification request for the October BAC meeting.
- Loan officer has had several conversations and meetings with potential new borrowers who would like to begin farming. Several have stated they will be submitting an application at the next BAC meeting however no new applications have yet been received.
- Loan officer has closed loans approved at previous board meeting, processed Deeds of Trust, Quit Claim Deeds, Deeds of Reconveyances, warrant requests, and other duties associated with ARLF management.
- Loan officer has been in contact with delinquent borrowers, updated delinquent borrower contact list, and focused on asset management.
- Loan officer and staff have completed sealed bid auction of Mat- Maid Coins and Men's watch, bid results and remaining asset disposal recommendation has been updated on asset report.
- Interest rate comparison has been updated.

**Central Office Inspection:**

- Staff conducted 12 FV 300 Inspections with 18 products inspected.
- Staff conducted 45 FV 301 inspections, 25,633 packages inspected = total weight = 752,370
- Staff conducted six farm and eight grocery store visits to check quality of local produce.
- Staff met with one local greenhouse grower who supplies tomatoes and cucumbers to local stores regarding food safety audits.
- Staff conducted inspections for and issued 13 phytosanitary certificates.
- Staff conducted one shell egg inspection.
- Staff stopped sale of 44 trees with soil due to finding prohibited noxious weeds. The destruction occurred at 6 stores throughout Alaska.
- Staff processed and forwarded to the USDA 15 Organic Certification Cost Share Reimbursement applications and completed the annual summary report.
- Staff approved six and denied three USDA permits for interstate movement of plant pests and products into Alaska.
- Staff continued and completed sampling at Matsu peony fields for insects associated with peony, focusing on thrips species. This project is part of the 2012 Farm Bill survey cooperative agreement with APHIS. Staff began to label specimens which will be sent to the UAF museum for identification services.

- Staff continued and completed soil sampling at Matsu peony fields. This project is part of a new cooperative agreement to continue monitoring efforts for the stubby root nematodes that could vector Tobacco Rattle Virus (TRV) if found in conjunction with the virus.
- Staff completed the 2011 Farm Bill Firewood Project and submitted final report to the USDA.
- Staff completed trapping work for the Division of Forestry's, Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) and forwarded all collections to the State Entomologist.
- Staff assisted local growers with questions regarding Wal-Mart's new food safety requirements for suppliers.
- Staff worked with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) to clarify state/federal food safety regulations for commercial growers of sprouts and microgreens.
- Staff attended the Peony Growers conference and distributed a memorandum to the group describing the two USDA surveys that are being conducted. The Memorandum was well received and two new growers expressed interest in being part of the surveys.
- Staff attended two USDA FFV informational webinars – one regarding inspection services, and one on Harmonized GAP/GHP Audits
- Staff attended Dept of Commerce Nutritional Foods in Alaskan Schools (NFAS) Webinar
- Staff is planning an On-Farm Food Safety Workshop for Mat Su area first week in November.
- Staff received inquires and provided information on plants transiting Canada.
- Staff responded to request from Charlie's Produce to provide food safety audits of local growers for Nutritional Foods in Alaskan Schools (NFAS) Grant procurement.
- Staff responded to inquiries regarding organic certification & egg regulations

### **Northern Region Inspection**

- Staff submitted three proposals and work plan budgets to APHIS for 2013 projects. Projects include the Core Infrastructure funding, a state wide nematode survey, and a nursery survey for next summer. Staff also anticipates submitting projects for Farm Bill funding when announced.
- Staff continued efforts to coordinate APHIS cooperative agreements, provide guidance, and survey support to cooperators and staff.
- NRO staff conducted interviews for the NRT II position that was filled in the Fairbanks Office. The new position began work on Oct. 17 and will be assisting on various programs and projects for the Division out of the northern region.
- Staff travelled to Kodiak to assist with and get training to conduct timber inspections.
- Staff collected traps for exotic forest moths and Emerald Ash Borer surveys in SE Alaska. Insect traps were set out in June, 2012, with APHIS assistance. The trapping survey is part of a national survey conducted each year. While in the field, staff worked with US Customs and Border Protection Agricultural Officers and US Forest Service volunteers who annually assist in the trapping program.
- Staff began to receive traps and data from pest detection trapping surveyors throughout the state (including Cooperative Extension Service, Forest Service, Customs Border Protection, and National Park Service). Traps are screened and data is being prepared for national database entry.
- Staff answered and fielded questions regarding Agricultural Land sales and auctions.
- Staff traveled to Kenai and Homer Alaska in August to collect soil samples from peony growers for the TRV nematode survey (nematode vectors of Tobacco Rattle Virus), check on a weather station that is located in Kenai, and also collect samples for the Farm Bill thrips associated with peony project. Staff is working with Palmer staff to

get specimens submitted to the University of Alaska Fairbanks for screening and identification. Soil samples collected have been sent to the Oregon State University nematode lab for processing.

- Staff responded to phytosanitary questions regarding peony exports to Asian markets.

### **Northern Region Land Section**

- Held meetings with DMLW Land Unit concerning trespass issues on foreclosed Agricultural parcels.
- Inspected several areas within the Interior for possible future land sale offerings
- Conducted several field inspections to determine if parcel owners were in compliance with their development requirements.
- Finished writing sale brochure for Auction #471.
- Worked with DMLW to set up online bidding for Auction #471
- Promoted Auction #471 through Facebook, Twitter, public notices, and radio interviews.
- Printed and distributed the completed brochure for Auction #471
- Answered many calls/questions from persons interested in Auction #471.

### **Marketing & Development:**

- Staff conducted three Country of Origin Labeling audits in July and August.
- Staff added eleven new farm businesses to the Alaska Grown program.
- Staff participated in the North American Agricultural Marketing Officials (NAAMO) annual meeting held in Winnipeg, Manitoba to learn of new marketing, promotion and outreach efforts in partnering States and Provinces.
- Staff attended an Alaska Agriculture Innovation Grant farm tour.
- Staff participated in the Midsummer Garden & Art Fair as well as the UAF Ag Day at the Experiment Farm with a "Children's Farmers Market" demonstration, teaching over 500 children about where their food comes from.
- Staff attended the School Nutrition Association conference in Denver which included touring the Denver Public Schools school farm and gardens.
- Marketing staff coordinated and participated in the Annual Mat Su Farm Bureau Farm Tour.
- Staff continues to partner with and promote various 'Fish to School' efforts.
- Staff facilitated the registration of and attended the 2012 Alaska Peony Growers Association summer meeting held in Palmer.
- Staff participated in the "farmers market" event held at the JBER Commissary in Anchorage, giving away Alaska Grown promotional items and outreaching with customers.
- Staff continued promotion and facilitation of the Restaurant Rewards and Chef at the Market programs, encouraging and highlighting the use of Alaska Grown products.
- Staff created a new Farm to School bookmark as an educational tool for teachers.
- Staff spoke at the Alaska Growers School, introducing the "farm to school" and "Alaska Grown" programs to participants from rural Alaska.
- Staff participated with the Division of Parks at the "Arts in the Park" event held at the Chena Ridge State Park outside of Fairbanks, assisting in the hosting of a cook-off featuring many different Alaska Grown products.

- Marketing staff have been partnering with staff from the Dept. of Health & Social Services in the facilitation of a grant to increase the use of Alaska Quest cards at farmers markets throughout the State.
- Staff continues to participate in the Alaska Food Policy Council, with a focus on the Governing Board, as well as the School Food & Production subcommittees.
- Staff attended the National Farm to School Network annual conference and Farm to Cafeteria conference in Burlington, VT. Staff was invited to give three different presentations at this national meeting.
- Staff participated in a pre-training workshop at the Annual School Food Service professional trainings; introducing participants to new ways to incorporate and showcase Alaska Grown foods in the school salad bars.
- Marketing staff designed a new Alaska Grown flag for use at various events.
- Staff created a webinar to introduce the 'Nutritional Alaskan Foods in Schools' grant to school food professionals, farmers, distributors and others involved.
- Staff continues efforts to complete the 2012 Alaska Grown Source Book, which will include 230 farms and many new features, both in the print and online versions.
- Staff organized and hosted a Legislative Farm tour on behalf of Representative Stoltze.
- Staff created and distributed a new Alaska Grown Seasonal Availability Chart specific to school food professionals.
- Staff hosted a display during Alaska Grown Day at the Alaska State Fair, outreaching to hundreds of Fair attendees about agriculture.

### **Plant Materials Center** **Plant Pathology Program**

- Staff is working with two horse breeders near Homer, AK on potential endophyte poisoning of horses. Delimiting surveys to assess the extent of the problem are ongoing.
- Met with local producers and PMC staff to discuss disease and insect issues. Diagnosed the causal organisms, outlined epidemiology and made recommendations for management.
- Continuing to outfit new pathology lab to expand PMC capabilities to diagnose and treat plant diseases.

### **Ethnobotany and Education**

- Staff presented programs in the Ethnobotany Traditional Teaching Garden to "Master Gardeners" from Anchorage, Mat-Su Garden Club, Alaska Botanical Garden, Alaska Native Plant Society, State Forestry Board, "Walking the Red R.O.A.D.", and several groups interested in rain-garden plants.
- Staff led field trips off-site to Hatcher's Pass, Trapper's Creek, and Lazy Mountain for Intertribal groups to gather berries and other useful plants they had seen while at the Ethnobotany Garden.
- Staff met with several group leaders to plan activities for the winter and 2013.
- Staff gathered berries, seeds, and transplants for planting in the Ethnobotany Garden.

- Staff gave input to DEC on the pros and cons of the proposed changes to the requirements for the State's pesticide permitting process.

### **Foundation Seed**

- Staff inventoried, evaluated, priced, announced, listed, and advertised online twenty "Foundation" and "Selected Class Release" (39 lots) of grasses; eight cultivars of grain; and eight "Foundation" and "Selected Class Release" (13 lots) of forbs. These were on sale from September 10 – 21. Fall seed sales do not usually sell much seed. This fall was true to form, with only one order, for one pound of Iris seed.
- Two farms in North Pole asked for their seedling fields to be inspected for potential certification of seed. Two fields of Alpine Bluegrass ('Gruening'), one field of slough grass ('Egan') and two fields of Arctic Wild Chamomile (Kotzebue Germplasm) were inspected and pre-certified, pending final seed cleaning results.
- Staff answered questions about grain varieties for Alaska, determination of seed ripeness for harvest, and what seeds to plant in various areas.

### **Seed Cleaning and Conditioning**

- PMC cleaning facility cleaned 33,000 lbs of seed from Alaska Seed Growers in 2011.
- Cleaned/conditioned over 200 PMC seed lots, including backlogged inventory, in 2011-12 season.
- Digitized all PMC protocols on seed cleaning and conditioning.
- Acquired two new large Clipper seed cleaners to expedite the PMC seed house operations.

### **Rural Village Seed Production Project**

- Staff are working with Red Dog Mine and the village of Noatak to develop revegetation seed collections specifically for Red Dog Mine's needs
- Approximately five acres of cultivated seed crops have been established in Pedro Bay.

### **PMC Publications**

- The Alaska Forage Manual is being printed. Copies should be available at the PMC by the end of October.
- DNR has preliminarily authorized the creation of a 'seller' account within the Apple & Google app stores, a prerequisite for the release of a digital app for 'A Field Guide to Alaska Grasses'. A digital edition of the book is accessible from the PMC home page.

### **Invasive Weed and Agricultural Pest Program**

- Mechanically and manually controlled *Cirsium arvense* populations in Anchorage
- Coordinated with municipality of Anchorage staff; assisted in *Cirsium arvense* control on MOA property.
- Extensive educational outreach efforts targeted at locating Canada Thistle (*C. arvense*) and raising public awareness of problems of invasive plants.
- Presented material at Committee for Noxious and Invasive Plant Management conference, (CNIPM)

**Revegetation**

- Staff is assisting Kenai Fjords National Park (KFNP) with collection of native grass and forb species found throughout the park, including Exit Glacier. Collections will be brought to the PMC for seed cleaning, conditioning, and storage. Cleaned seed will be returned to the park for revegetation use.
- Staff is collecting *Bromus Sitchensis* and *Bromus Cilatus* in Southeast Alaska. Species will be brought back to the PMC for cleaning and field monitoring. Research plots may be developed around the state for additional monitoring and future brome release.