



# MEMORANDUM

Department of Natural Resources

STATE OF ALASKA  
Division of Agriculture

**TO:** Board of Agriculture  
& Conservation

**DATE:** October 15, 2009

**FROM:** Franci Havemeister  
Director

**SUBJECT:** Director's Report  
July/Aug 2009

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

Staff has been processing 3 loan applications, 7 loan disbursements, 4 loan defaults, 1 bankruptcy case, ARLF FY09 year-end reports and ARFL FY11 budget process.

### **Northern Region**

- Inspected 5 fields for seed certification
- Completed midterm reports for 6 Pest Survey grants
- Collected 55 soil samples from potato and peony fields from Interior, South Central and Kenai Peninsula fields for nematode analysis
- Surveyed Matanuska Valley, Anchorage and Girdwood areas for exotic slugs and snails
- Retrieved exotic insect traps from throughout Alaska – all negative
- Inspected grain fields in Delta Junction area for bison damage
- Working with ADF&G to help resolve conflict between Bison and Delta area farmers
- Assisted Les Eklund with Interior Alaska Organic Farm certifications
- Worked with Division of MLW on conservation easement issues
- Rewriting sale brochure for upcoming auction in response to new DNR policy
- Conducted farm inspections for contract compliance
- Conducted field inspections of potential sale parcels
- Work with MLW and FNSB on getting parcels replatted for future sale
- Staff assisted farmers with information about subdividing agricultural land, including approving preliminary surveys and housing right applications;
- Identified new lands for potential sale
- Arranging for new appraisals for parcels to be offered for disposal

### **Plant Materials Center**

#### **Potato Disease Control Program**

- First and second seed certification inspections were performed on 11 farms.
- 120 acres were entered and passed inspections.
- PMC field and greenhouse were harvested and placed into storage. Approximately a ton was harvested.
- Tissue culture clone bank was updated.
- Provided information to Legislative committee concerning the PMC potato project.
- Attended the 73<sup>rd</sup> annual meeting of The Potato Association of America. Bill Campbell was elected vice president elect.
- Made selections from variety development plots.
- Developed variety release notice for purple fleshed Magic Molly.

### **The Alaska State Seed Laboratory**

- *Facilities* - Repair of germination room cooling system was completed, and a third small germinator was installed.
- *Laboratory Testing* - Approximately 35 lots of seed were tested, including several from Division of Forestry and ARS.
- *Seed Cleaning* - Bureau of Land Management
- *Training* - Training is ongoing in preparation for analyst certification anticipated in December 2009. Several staff trained on seed moisture testing. Staff hosted and attended a grass taxonomy course presented at the PMC. Staff attended "Grown in Alaska" marketing conference. POMS data base training was conducted in the seed laboratory facility.
- *Visitors* - Numerous single visitors were in during the season, including John Englert, USDA, Washington DC, and a few tours were conducted including more than 70 attendees of the "Grown in Alaska" marketing conference.

### **Invasive Plants and Agricultural Pest Management**

- Spotted knapweed control continued through all three months with visits to sites in Kake, Prince of Wales, Valdez, Turnagain Arm, Kenai, Kasilof, Haines. All sites with knapweed present were treated with hand pulling/digging to remove all knapweed plants and plant parts.
- Public Service Announcements were aired throughout this time to inform listeners of the invasive weeds issue. Listeners are directed to [www.alaskainvasives.org](http://www.alaskainvasives.org) to request their free pocket weed guides. We continue to receive requests for the free materials.
- Staff traveled to Fairbanks to give a presentation at an Invasive Weeds Awareness workshop sponsored by the Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District.
- Staff attended a grass identification class.
- Staff traveled to Prudhoe Bay as part of the development of the grass field guide to Alaska. We visited some reported infestations of Common Tansy along the way, however, no remaining Tansy was present. We did observe massive amounts of white sweetclover along the highway south of Coldfoot.
- Staff interviewed and hired a Natural Resource Specialist to work on the Spotted Knapweed, Plant Industry Certification, Gravel Certification, and Canada thistle control in Anchorage. Andrew Weaver started work on August 25<sup>th</sup>.
- Staff attended a regulations class through the Regulatory Commission of Alaska.
- Staff attended the Anchorage Cooperative Weed Management Area Strategic Planning Meeting.
- Staff attended Grown in Alaska Conference and presented a poster about the Invasive Species Cooperator program for the plant industry.

### **Other PMC Projects**

- Responded to many requests about revegetation materials and techniques.
- Presented PMC tours to NRCS representatives, Legislative team, Grown in Alaska Workshop attendees, Division of Forestry, Community Foresters, Mat-Su Farm Tour attendees.
- Updated website as needed.
- Planted many plants in the Ethnobotany Garden.
- Continued the construction of the Yukon and ponds.
- Collected medicinal native plants for UAF chemistry project.
- Gave tours of the Ethnobotany Garden to several interested groups.
- Monitored the willows and poplars growing in the biofuel experiment.
- Evaluated the growth of the combination of forbs and grasses in the revegetation experiment.
- Wrote paper on Alaska Conks for Alaska Plant Profiles.
- Don Ross retired after working for the state for 25 years.
- Attended and assisted at 3 day Alaska Grass Taxonomy Workshop.
- Presented activities for Alaska Agriculture in the Classroom Educator Institute.
- Harvest of Chugach National Forest crops in field 3 and 4. Species include: *Deschampsia beringensis*, *Calamagrostis canadensis*, *Leymus mollis*, *Hordeum brachyantherum*, *Agropyron violaceum*, *Festuca rubra*, *Phleum alpinum*, and *Poa alpina*.
- Two trips were made to Red Devil for plant evaluation and seed collection.
- Evaluated plants at the Kanuti Pit project.

**Foundation Seed and Conditioning Program**

- Harvesting activities have been completed as the fall weather has settled in at the PMC. The 2009 crops harvested at the PMC are listed below:

Grasses		
• 'Alyeska' Polargrass	• 'Norcoast' Bering Hairgrass	
• Andrew Bay Germplasm large-glume bluegrass	• 'Nortran' Tufted Hairgrass	
• 'Arctared' Red Fescue	• Pacific Reed Grass	
• Cantwell Germplasm downy wildrye	• 'Reeve' Beach wildrye	
• 'Egan' American Sloughgrass	• Richardson's fescue	
• 'Gruening' Alpine Bluegrass	• 'Service' Big Bluegrass	
• Henderson Ridge Germplasm red fescue	• 'Sourdough' Bluejoint Reedgrass	
• 'Kenai' Polargrass	• Siberian wildrye	
• Lowell Point Germplasm meadow barley	• Solomon Germplasm thickspike wheatgrass	
• Nelchina Germplasm spike trisetum	• Teller Germplasm alpine bluegrass	
• Nome Germplasm glaucous bluegrass	• Wainwright Germplasm slender wheatgrass	
Forbs		Grains
• Butte Germplasm jacob's ladder	• Boreal yarrow	• 'Sunshine' Barley
• Dwarf goldenrod	• Sierra larkspur	• 'Nip' Oats
• Jacob's ladder	• Smallflower anemone	• 'Toral' Oats
• King Salmon Germplasm Rocky Mountain goldenrod	• Tok Germplasm Yakutsk snowparsley	• 'Vigal' Wheat
• Knik Germplasm wild iris	• Western columbine	
• Mentasta Germplasm staghorn cinquefoil	• Twenty Mile Germplasm boreal yarrow	
• Plantain	• Alpine sweetvetch	

- The seasonal crews have prepared the fields for winter. As field activities slow, we are also preparing the seed conditioning equipment for the Alaska Seed Growers Association and PMC crops that will be cleaned over the winter months.

**Marketing & Development**

- Marketing staff facilitated the launch of the first annual Mat Su Farm Tour along with the Mat Su Farm Bureau. It was considered a resounding success with 54 participants and a lengthy waiting list.
- Staff created the new Alaska Teachers Scholarship Program, releasing the sample proposal and application package in August.
- Staff continued outreach to industry through the release of two Division e-newsletters and seven Fresher-by-Far e-newsletters (with a focus on the wholesale produce industry).
- Marketing staff participated in the South East Alaska Fair in Haines, providing promotional supplies to the public and increasing the awareness of and support for the Alaska Grown program.
- Staff continued work with the two outstanding USDA Federal State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP) grants, the Peony Project and the Red Meat Livestock Project. The final conference facilitated by the Division for the Peony Project was held on the Kenai Peninsula with guest speakers from Oregon, four farm tours and over 50 participants. The Red Meat Project will wrap-up in December; staff prepared for the final conference to be held in Kodiak.
- Staff met with Nutrition Services staff of the Mat Su School District to discuss the opportunities and barriers to getting more Alaska Grown produce into the schools.
- Staff participated on the planning committee for the upcoming "Grown in Alaska" conference.
- Marketing staff participated in the Alaska Farm Bureau forum to discuss sustainability and food security in Alaska.

- Staff continued participation with the North American Agricultural Marketing Officials, attending the 2009 delegates meeting.
- Marketing staff attended and spoke at the Agriculture in the Classroom Teacher Institute; the three-day training session was also funded through a 2009 Cooperative Marketing Program grant.
- Staff attended the Western United States Agriculture Trade Association Summer meeting in Oregon.
- Staff facilitated the 2009 Alaska State Fair Farm Family of the Year award.
- Staff organized a Chef Farm Tour at the request of members of the Alaska Chefs Association. The group toured VanderWeele Farms & Palmer Produce to gain a richer perspective of the products available.
- Staff attended a Mat Su Borough Economic Development Meeting for public enterprises; others attending included the Department of Transportation, Department of Fish & Game, Railroad, etc. The meeting was to assist the writers of a "Borough Economic Development Plan" in gaining a better understanding. Our attendance was imperative given that none of the other attendees had agriculture on their priority list.
- Staff prepared for and submitted a 2009 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant application; the state is eligible to receive \$176,642 in grant funds to enhance the competitiveness of Alaska Grown specialty crops.
- Staff attended Regulations Training to further prepare for the production of regulations for the Alaska Grown program.
- Staff organized a farm tour at the request of a local teacher.
- Staff once again assisted Representative Bill Stoltze in the facilitation and organization of a "Legislative Farm Tour" held on opening day of the Alaska State Fair. Attendees visited VanderWeele Farms, Glacier Valley Farm, and the Plant Materials Center.
- Staff launched the second annual Alaska Grown "Eat Local Challenge" week in August. The media campaign included tv commercials, radio spots, and direct involvement with over 50 statewide restaurants. Results are still being tabulated but are expected to show an increase in purchases of Alaska Grown specialty crops during that week.
- Marketing staff met with representatives of the Alaska Center for the Environment to discuss their launch of a Sustainable Food movement amongst their members. Staff agreed to participate in the upcoming "Alaska Local Food Film Festival" to be launched in early October.

### **Inspection**

- Staff completed 14 FV 300 and 49 FV 301 inspections in July and August.
- Staff successfully completed Good Handling Practices/Good Agricultural Practices (GHP/GAP) Auditor Refresher Training, and then subsequently completed five GHP/GAP audits in July & August.
- Seven new farms were added to the Alaska Grown program and one new brand was issued.
- Inspection staff conducted fourteen farm visits to inspect produce in the field and during harvest to provide feedback to growers.
- Staff accompanied Washington State Dept. of Agriculture staff on annual Alaska USDA Organic inspections.
- Inspection staff completed a Food Safety Manager training course.
- Staff completed seven USDA Country of Origin Labeling audits in July & August.

### **Regulatory**

- Staff issued ten international phytosanitary certificates during July & August.
- Staff supervised 5 international shipboard phytosanitary treatments on \$7.4 million dollars worth of timber exports. These treatments often include a training / educational component for foreign companies on applying U.S. treatment protocols.
- Staff met with USDA to discuss international trade impacts to Alaska of the most recent bi-lateral trade negotiations between the U.S. and China.
- Staff was requested to meet with a Washington state exporter, the Washington Dept. of Agriculture and the USDA, PPQ regarding developing protocol for phytosanitary treatments by third party countries of U.S. export products.