

BUSINESS

Equipment for Innovative Farming in Igiugig, AK

Alaska Agriculture Innovation Grant

Igiugig Village Council

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Abstract: Final Project Report to fulfill AAIG Grant conditions and receive final 25% payment.

Final Report

On April 28, 2009, Igiugig Tribal Village Council (ITVC) signed Contract 10-09-080-10 with the State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources, Division of Agriculture to receive funding in the amount of \$4,638.50 towards equipment purchase for Igiugig's Community Garden. Subsequently, a Model 853 Walk-Behind Tractor including a Berta single rotary plow, a 30" tiller, a wood splitter, snow blower, and quick coupling kits were purchased, shipped, and assembled. ITVC provided 50% in matching funds and paid for the shipping and labor costs for the project.

The farming equipment was the first purchased for Igiugig's newly established Local Agriculture program, and thus had a great impact on local farming efforts. The Tractor arrived during the week Igiugig hosted a University of Alaska sponsored class "Food Production in a Local Environment" and Doctor Jeff Smeenk was onsite to help assemble and provide operating instruction for the new equipment.

The local potato garden was expanded an additional 20 square feet, tilled and plowed with the use of the Tractor. This was accomplished in one afternoon, whereas in the past, hand shovels and rakes were used over a week-long period to prepare the garden, which was still clumpy in the end. Six varieties of potatoes were then planted, and community gardeners focused efforts on building a greenhouse for additional crops. In October, the potato plants were pulled, yielding 500+ pounds of potatoes to distribute to the community and about 150 pounds of seedlings for the next crop season. Crop productivity nearly tripled from last year's efforts. In addition, the Tractor was used all year long because the snow-blower and wood-splitter implements are needed during the long winters.

The village is moving the local agriculture project to a 2-acre lot, including two greenhouses, three windturbines, and an outdoor central boiler. The Tractor will be used to prepare larger fields, to split wood for the outdoor heater, and to keep the operation clear of snow when we are ready to produce over four-seasons. The equipment was a great investment and has worked well in meeting the unique challenges of local production in the Village of Igiugig. On March 17, 2010, Project Manager AlexAnna Salmon presented the AAIG project at the Western subregional Sustainable Agriculture and Research Education conference in Fairbanks. The presentation detailed the Local Foods Program in Igiugig and how the innovative equipment purchased through AAIG enhanced the program efforts. It was noted that the benefits of the Tractor were its transportability, its high power operations, simple operation and maintenance, and its versatility. The main outcome of the project was that it increased residential/commercial interest in agriculture, as well as demand for Tractor use. The presentation also formally thanked Michele Herbert of SARE, for providing airfare/lodging costs for the presentation, Dr. Jeff Smeenk for onsite instruction, and the Alaska Division of Agriculture for the grant opportunity. This final report concludes ITVC's grant obligations for Contract 10-09-080-10.