# The Division of Agriculture Activities

November 30, 2011

Find us on the web at:
http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag

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Questions or Comments?
E-Mail or call 907-761-3864.

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## Directors Note

Once again the holiday season is upon us! My great grandpa used to tell me that the older he got, the quicker the years flew by. I understand that now – it seems only a few months ago I was putting away the 2010 Christmas decorations, but already another year is gone.

I attended the Annual Farm Bureau meeting in Homer earlier this month. It was well attended and had an interesting agenda. It was good to see the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) so well represented and available to answer questions and address concerns. I appreciated the discussion regarding the Division of Agriculture's long range plan and look forward to working with the agriculture advisory panel in January. If you are interested in participating in this panel please let me know.

A point of interest for many of you may be the creation of the Rural Tax Education program website - www.ruraltax.org. The site provides farmers and ranchers a resource for agricultural related income and self-employment tax information that is easy to understand and up-to-date. The site offers several fact sheets and samples, including Tax Topics; Depreciation and Expensing; Farm, Farming and who's a Farmer for Tax Purposes; Sample Tax Return; and Small Farm Tax Guide.

The Division of Agriculture would like to welcome our newest hire, Amanda Swanson. She has accepted a position as a Loan/Collection Officer for the ARLF and will start December 12th. I would also like to recognize and say goodbye to Ernest Diamond, a Production Manager at Mt. McKinley Meat & Sausage. His last day is today, November 30th. - Thank you for your many years of service and enjoy your retirement!

Many events and meetings are planned in the upcoming month so please take the time to review the calendar. DEC has several Animal Care Workshops scheduled in December and would like industry participation. This is your opportunity to make suggestions and/or voice your concerns prior to the regulations being written.

May you enjoy this holiday season with family and friends.

*-Franci Havemeister*

*"Christmas waves a magic wand over this world, and behold, everything is softer and more beautiful"*

- Norman Vincent Peale.

## Agriculture Calendar

- Thurs. Dec. 1st, 3:30 - 5 pm: **DEC Animal Care Workshop - Exotic Animals**; Anchorage.
  *Teleconference: (800)* 315-6338; Passcode: 8213
- Mon. Dec. 5th, 3:30 - 5 pm: **DEC Animal Care Workshop - Domestic Pets**; Anchorage.
  *Teleconference: (800)* 315-6338; Passcode: 8213
- Thurs. Dec. 8th, 3:30 - 5 pm: **DEC Animal Care Workshop - Horses**; Anchorage.
  *Teleconference: (800)* 315-6338; Passcode: 8213
- Mon. Dec. 12th, 3:30 - 5 pm: **DEC Animal Care Workshop - General Livestock**; Anch.
  *Teleconference: (800)* 315-6338; Passcode: 8213

*As we learn about new agriculture events throughout Alaska, we will add the details to the calendar. If you have an event that you would like to add, please contact Lora Haralson.*

# Marketing Section

## Upcoming Funding Opportunities

Did you know the Division of Agriculture awards thousands of dollars in grants each year? Have you ever received a grant from the Division of Agriculture? Now is the time to start thinking about upcoming grant projects and becoming familiar with the application procedures.

Two of the grants that will soon be available are described below. Previously funded project reports, applications and other information is available under the Grants tab on our webpage.

Division of Agriculture staff strive to keep the applications simple and to work with growers to meet the requirements. Please do not hesitate to contact a member of the marketing team if you have any questions!

### Cooperative Marketing Program Grant

- Awarded annually; funding amounts range from $1000 - $5000.
- Allowable projects include cooperative marketing efforts designed to raise the awareness of Alaska Grown products.
- Examples of previously funded projects include: web site design, group advertising efforts, farmers market cookbook creation.

### Specialty Crop Competitive Grant

- Awarded annually; funding amounts range from $5000 - $20,000.
- Project must be in support of an Alaska Grown specialty crop. Excluded industries include: livestock, dairy, aquaculture, hay and grains.
- Examples of previously funded projects include: research on the health of peony plants, support of the development of a rhodiola growers cooperative, and marketing efforts between Chefs and growers.

Further information about these grant programs is available online, dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_grants.htm. If you have any questions, please contact Amy Pettit at Amy.Pettit@alaska.gov or (907) 761-3864. Also be sure to follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/dnr.alaskagrown.

## Alaska Farm-to-School Program Update

### Farm to School Challenge Results

The Farm to School Challenge was a huge success! A total of 28 entries were received, representing 26 different schools and 13 school districts. Nearly 4,000 students were reached through efforts associated with the 2011 Farm-to-School challenge. Entries were evenly split between rural and urban schools, with 14 received from each.

The regional distribution was as follows:

- South Central – 9
- Southeast – 4
- Southwest – 1
- Kenai Peninsula – 1
- Interior - 13

Projects were very creative and wide ranging - from school gardens to subsistence food system activities. The top scoring project was the **Fish to Schools** project in Sitka which has been serving local fish in student lunches twice a month in two area schools! Some other creative activities used local food to teach math, science, nutrition, economics, art, and language arts.

### Cabbage Feasibility Study Results

After running the numbers and checking them twice, it looks as if locally grown cabbage may be a cost-effective product for schools to purchase. Exact costs will vary depending on the farm, method of distribution, quantity ordered, and labor. The example considered by the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District is shared below.

We worked directly on product pricing with a farmer, Frank Borman, taking into consideration distribution and labor costs. We also consulted with the Fairbanks Director of Nutrition Services, Amy Rouse, on labor costs, product yield, batch needs and current product prices. Factoring in labor costs of processing the cabbage, the two options can be summarized as follows:

| | Yield | Labor | Total Cost incl. Labor |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Local** [$1.00/lb] | ~75%* | 12 hrs | $1150 [$1.79/lb] |
| **Pre-cut** [$2.32/lb] | 100% | 3 hrs | $1558 [$2.43/lb] |

* 850 lbs raw cabbage yields 640 lbs shredded product

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http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_ms.htm


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# Alaska Farm-to-School Program Update

### Congratulations to Homer Soil & Water Conservation District

The Homer Soil and Water Conservation Districe (HSWCD) has been awarded one of the USDA People's Garden Grants.

The HSWCD's program, entitled ***Growing Healthy: Growing and Learning from People's Gardens on the Southern Kenai Peninsula, Alaska,*** was awarded a total of $110,500 to create or refurbish at least 18 People's Gardens throughout the Southern Kenai Peninsula.

A variety of community groups, ranging from schools to Native communities to mental and physical health organizations and public interest entities, will develop their own gardens. One of the many benefits of these gardens will be to increase

This project will help address community needs for better nutrition and will provide significant educational opportunities about growing food, what constitutes good nutrition and how to follow healthy lifestyles.

The Farm-to-School program staff is exited to work with the HSWCD on this project.

### Farm to School Grants

As the year comes to an end some of the Farm to School projects are winding up.

One project, led by UAA professor Shannon Gramse, engaged students from the Smart Start "Food for Thought" class. On Wednesday, October 19th, 2011, students from the Smart Start learning community took a unique tour of Alaskan farmland with Margaret Adsit, Executive Director of the Alaska Farmland Trust. Students visited Margaret Heaven's hay farm, an example of permanently preserved farmland thanks to the Alaska Farmland Trust.

While on the farm, students learned about the farm's history and newly protected status, discussed essay ideas around a bonfire, and toured several historic buildings from the Mat-Su Valley's agricultural past, including restored structures from the original Matanuska Colony. That day's experiences will provide the raw material for students' forthcoming essays.

On November 2nd the Smart Start students, in collaboration with faculty and student chefs from UAA's Culinary Arts program, hosted a local luncheon on the UAA campus. The luncheon featured an all Alaskan feast while students from the class read selections from their writings.

Special guests included the entire Rempel family, a representative from the AK Farmland trust, Alaska Food Challenge leader Saskia Esklinger, and nutritionists from the Alaska Native Medical center.

The menu featured an array of donated Rempel organic produce transformed by UAA student chefs into beet salad, a mélange of roasted root vegetables, mashed potatoes, carrot cake, and beet ice cream. Other mouth-watering local entrees included Alaskan halibut stuffed with Alaskan king crab and prime rib from Delta Junction.

Even the flour was locally-procured for this unforgettable learning opportunity. "Our luncheon at Lucy's was delicious. It was a special moment to have all my classmates, professors, and people we worked with together having lunch," said Mitchell Tacata, a Smart Start student from Kodiak, "it was neat when my fellow classmates came up to read their papers. I thought it was nice for Mr. Rempel and Ms. Esklinger to listen the class talk about their experiences. The luncheon was a special moment for me. I don't think I will ever have such a luncheon again throughout college."

For updates, news, grant opportunities, and announcements join our listserv at: list.state.ak.us/soalists/akfarmtoschool/jl.htm. Also remember to check out the Farm-to-School facebook page at: facebook.com/AlaskaFarmToSchool.

## Land Sales & Grazing Leases

http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_sales.htm


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# Inspection Section

### Buyer Awareness for Interstate Movement of Christmas Trees and Wreaths

Because of the growing trend to market live Christmas trees and wreaths on the Internet, we would like to inform you of the USDA regulations regarding the interstate movement of Christmas trees and wreaths. This information will help ensure that your product can move without impediment, and help prevent the movement of pests that, if allowed to spread, could affect Alaska's beautiful landscape.

The movement of Christmas trees and wreaths, among other articles, is a federally regulated activity in certain areas of the country. These regulations aim to prevent the spread of damaging forest pests such as gypsy moth, pine shoot beetle, as well as the sudden oak death pathogen, *Phytophthora ramorum*, which can spread through the movement of a number of decorative wood products.

USDA, Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) regulations require certain conditions be met in order to move Christmas trees and wreaths out of quarantined areas. APHIS and State regulatory personnel routinely work with Christmas tree farms and other holiday greenery establishments in quarantine areas to make sure companies are aware of and follow the regulations. However, there may be farms or other entities that may not be in compliance with the regulations.

To ensure that the tree and wreath suppliers you use are in compliance, we suggest that you take the following steps.

1. Check the online maps at www.aphis.usda.gov/HolidayGreeneryPests to find out if the supplying nursery is in a Federal quarantine area.
2. Contact the respective APHIS State Plant Health Director's office to learn what documentation and/or inspection is required for the supplier to move Christmas trees and wreaths from the quarantine area. A complete listing of USDA offices is at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/services/report_pest_disease/report_pest_disease.shtml
3. Contact the supplier to ensure the company has a compliance agreement with APHIS and is meeting the requirements for moving Christmas trees and wreaths interstate.

We need your help to protect Alaska's environment and natural resources from the spread of these harmful pests. Your assistance is vital and much appreciated. If you have questions, contact the Alaska Division of Agriculture at (907) 745-7200.

### Property for sale by the Board of Agriculture and Conservation:

**513 South Valley Way, Palmer**

Former Matanuska Maid Manufacturing Facility: Real Property and Improvements

3 acres in downtown Palmer, bounded by E. Dogwood Ave, Dahlia Ave, & Denali St.

**ARLF LAND SALE #09-01**
Over-The-Counter Offering:
Purchase Price $975,000.00.

*Questions or comments regarding the sale process may be directed to Director Franci Havemeister, at 761-3867 or by email to Franci.Havemeister@alaska.gov.*

# Plant Materials Center

http://plants.alaska.gov/

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# Plant Materials Center

## Seed Cleaning and Conditioning Facility Receive Needed Upgrades

Seed cleaning and conditioning is the principal activity of the Alaska Plant Materials Center. It is the essential step in preparing the foundation seed that growers will plant in their fields and certified seed for commercial growers. Much of this activity occurs in our large-lot processing facility, the Seed House.

The seed house building has recently received needed upgrades, such as a new membrane roof with R-30 insulation and R-21 spray urethane insulation on the walls. Dust collection and seed storage facilities were also upgraded. New seed cleaning machinery and hardware was installed, including a catwalk over the primary seed cleaning aparatus and a loading hopper to support an additional seed cleaning area.

The building improvements will significantly reduce heating costs at the PMC, and extend the useful life of the building. The work was completed by Tyonek Contractors LLC.

The Plant Materials Center continues to clean and process seed during this time, for growers across the state and the Alaska Seed Growers Association. If you have any questions about the services available from the PMC, or if you have seed to be cleaned, contact the Plant Materials Center at (907) 745-4469. You can also find more information at our website, at plants.alaska.gov.

*New brush machine and loading platform installed in the Seed House. The platform will accomodate hoppers that funnel uncleaned seed into the machinery*

*Catwalk installed over the large seed hopper allows for easy access, facilitating the loading and stirring of seed.*

*Roofing work continues at the Seed House at the Alaska Plant Materials Center*

Photos: Brennan Veith Low | Alaksa PMC

# Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation:

# Division of Environmental Health

## Upcoming DEC Animal Care Standards Workshops

The Office of the State Veterinarian is continuing their work to develop animal care standards for the state. These standards will be part of a comprehensive revision of the state animal health regulations. Future public workshops have been scheduled and will focus on only one animal category at a time. The schedule and focus group are as follows:

- December 1, 2011 – Captive/Exotic
- December 5, 2011 – Domestic Pets
- December 8, 2011 – Horses
- December 12, 2011 – Livestock
- January 5, 2012 – Domestic Pets

We want to encourage anyone who is interested to attend workshops by telephone at 1-800-315-6338 (use pass code 8213 when prompted) or in person at the State Environmental Health Laboratory at 5251 Dr. MLK, Jr. Ave, Anchorage, AK, 99507. All meetings will be from 3:30 to 5:00 PM. If you are unable to attend meetings, feel free to submit your comments to us in writing via mail or email.

You can find minutes from previous meetings and agendas for future workshops on our website at: dec.alaska.gov/eh/vet/AnimalCareWorkshop.html. If you would like to be placed on our group email notification list to receive automatic updates on this project, please email your name, agency (if applicable), and phone number to jay.fuller@alaska.gov.

Photo: Jay Fuller | Alaska DEC

*Musk Oxen in Palmer, Alaska*

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