The Division of Agriculture Activities

May 04, 2011

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

Director's Office

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To remove your name from our e-newsletter list, click here.

To be added to our e-newsletter list, click here.

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

Directors Note

Tuesday was Alaska Agriculture Day, and an appropriate day to thank our Alaskan producers who have dedicated their lives to providing fresh, flavorful and healthy food for the citizens of Alaska. Whether you enjoy baking with the barley grown in Delta, eating healthy Alaska grown vegetables, grilling some tasty red meat, or digging into a delicious bowl of local ice cream – Alaskan agriculture is diverse and benefits us all.

Please take the time to review the Division Calendar to stay up-to-date on statewide agriculture events. If you would like to be added to our newsletter mailing list, would like to post an upcoming agriculture event on the Division calendar, or have any questions, comments or concerns, please give us a call - (907) 745-7200.

-Franci Havemeister

"If you're riding ahead of the herd, take a look back every now and then to make sure it's still there."

Bee Registration

It is that time of year!

Please complete the Alaska Bee Registration form, which is available on the division of Agriculture's website:

http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/Inspection/BeeRegistrationCard.pdf

Please email the completed form directly to Kirk.Brown@alaska.gov, fax it to 907-745-7254 or mail it directly to the Inspection Office at the address below:

Alaska Division of Agriculture
1800 Glenn Hwy, Ste 12
Palmer, AK 99645

Agriculture Calendar

- 5/5: **Board of Agriculture & Conservation - Regular Meeting**, Palmer (details here)
  Info: Lora Haralson, 761-3851

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

Alaska Grown Specialty Crop Competitive Grant (SCCG) program

We are pleased to announce the availability of funding under the Alaska Grown Specialty Crop Competitive Grant (SCCG) program! The Division intends to award a total of $40,000; $10,000 each to four successful applicants. Funding for this program is a component of the 2011 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. We anticipate approval of these funds in September, and projects will commence after that time.

Eligible grant recipients include: for & not-for-profit organizations, government entities, industry trade associations, universities, producers and producer groups. The grant program is intended to solely enhance the competitiveness of Alaska Grown specialty crops. Eligible specialty crops include fruits, vegetables, and nursery crops, including floriculture. Alaska Grown products that DO NOT qualify as specialty crops under the federal agreement, and are therefore ineligible for this grant include: feed crops (barley, corn, hay, oats) livestock, dairy products, eggs, and aquaculture products.

Examples of projects for which an industry group could apply for funding include:

- A targeted marketing campaign,
- Market or product research designed to enhance variety knowledge,
- Document publication,
- Efforts to enhance consumer awareness of specialty crops through informational materials, websites, etc.,
- Efforts that encourage/support the use of Alaska Grown specialty crops in school lunches, restaurants or other underutilized outlets.

Project concept papers may be submitted for a total of $10,000 and for a project timeline of up to two years. Applicants are encouraged to provide evidence of matching funds, either in-kind or cash. Projects will be eligible to receive grant funds on a reimbursement schedule; no advance payments will be made.

Grant funds will not be awarded for a project that directly benefits or provides profit only to a single individual. Funds may not be used to purchase fixed assets or personal property. In addition, expenditures incurred prior to grant award are not eligible for reimbursement, and may not be included in the grant request.

A contract and final report on the project will be required. This project is designed to inform as many specialty crop producers as possible, therefore the award recipient will be required to present information at a growers meeting regarding the results of their project.

The Division intends to award four $10,000 grants, totaling $40,000. A more complete outline of program policies is available on our website at www.dnr.alaska.gov/ag under "Grants." If you have any questions please contact Amy Pettit at 907-761-3864 or Amy.Pettit@alaska.gov.

Farm-to-School Program Update:

The Alaska Farm to School (FTS) program continues to make great progress. We now have over 180 people in the contact database and have presented the information to over 20 audiences (almost 500 people). We are proud to announce the success of a third school / farm tour with Anchorage, the largest school district, this month.

Anchorage School-Farm Tour

In attendance were representatives from VanderWeele Farms, Palmer Produce, Division of Agriculture, child nutrition services, and Anchorage District School food service professionals. The event began with a tour of Palmer Produce, showing the warehouse, coolers, potato grading and green houses, where all vegetable crops start. Following this, attendees headed to the Division of Agriculture offices to discuss ideas for potential products and logistical challenges. Afterwards, the Anchorage School District food service professionals toured the carrot barn at VanderWeele Farms.

Some highlights from the Anchorage School-Farm tour were:

- The potential for utilizing the central production kitchen exists, in the summer months while it is dormant. Logistics issues include the cost of keeping the boilers running, other maintenance considerations, facility use forms, and the need for a contract/agreement between school district and producer users of the facility.

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

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- Discussion centered on identifying products that farms could produce and schools could incorporate into their meal planning. Many product suggestions were made. The idea of using some products in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable snack program was explored.
- The need for some minimal potato processing equipment was identified. One of the farms expressed some interest in pursuing this option.

Second Farm to School Summit

Over 40 people participated in the second statewide Farm-to-School summit, via the webinar and in person. The Division's strategic plan was presented, and was favorably received by a majority of those in attendance, as indicated by a particpant survey .

Anupama Joshi, the director of the National Farm to School Network, also gave a presentation, detailing similar efforts across the country. She was very impressed with the Alaska Farm to School Program, expressing her confidence in the efforts underway.

There were many comments, suggestions, and questions brought up during the summit. These will be incorporated into the strategic plan, which will be posted to http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_FTS.htm. A recorded version of the webinar will also be posted, as well as a form for questions, comments, and feedback.

Our most sincere thank you goes out to everyone that took the time to attend and provide input. If you did not participate in the strategic plan development and are interested in doing so, please contact Johanna Herron, at Johanna.herron@alaska.gov or (907) 374-3714.

Inspection Section

U.S. Food Safety Modernization Act Passed

In January, the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) was signed into law. This federal law will mandate stricter enforcement of the nation's food supply from farm to table, and is aimed at reducing the more than 48 million cases of foodborne illnesses that Americans experience each year.

The law gives greater authority to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), expanding their oversight of all food products sold in the nation except for meat, poultry and dairy, which are under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Here is a brief overview of the major changes enacted by the FSMA:

Integration Among Agencies

The FSMA calls for strengthening existing collaboration among all food safety agencies, and authorizes grants for training, conducting inspections, and other food safety activities.

Food Recall Power

The FSMA gives FDA the power to directly issue a food recall. Previously, the agency had to arrange a voluntary recall with the food provider in question.

Updating Performance Standards

The FDA will be required to identify the most significant food threats and disperse new science-based outlines and regulations for food production companies.

Access To Records

Upon request, the FDA will gain expanded access to food production facility records. The agency may obtain records for tracking purposes or if there is reason to suspect a potential public health risk.

Power To Suspend

The FSMA gives the FDA power to suspend a food production facility if a possible health risk is suspected.

Risk/Hazard Prevention

Food production facilities must alert the FDA, in writing, of all hazardous practices currently in place, and plans to implement preventive measures going forward.

Produce Safety Standards

The FSMA gives the FDA the power to set nationwide standards for producing and harvesting fresh produce. The bill includes

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exemptions for small companies and local farms that may be unable to reach standards designed for larger companies.

Regulations on Food Unfit To Eat

Regulations will be issued that prevent food companies from knowingly including illegal additives, chemicals or other substances in their food products.

Food Allergy Management

Food allergy management guidelines will be developed, which schools and early childhood programs may voluntarily implement. Successful programs will become eligible for federal grants.

Response and Recovery Plans

Specific response and recovery plans must be in effect in case of a food-borne illness outbreak. Grocery stores will now be responsible for actively alerting customers of latest product recalls.

Increasing Inspection Frequency

Under the FSMA, the FDA must increase the frequency of its inspections.

Tracking of Produce

The FDA will create a new method of effectively tracking and tracing fruits and vegetables, to ensure any contaminated produce is located and recalled in a safe and timely manner.

Foreign Regulatory Powers

The FDA will have increased oversight of foreign-produced foods being imported into the country.

For more information about the Food Safety Modernization Act, visit the FDA's website, at www.fda.gov/Food/FoodSafety/fsma/, or call the Division of Agriculture's Inspection Section, at (907) 761-3857.

Northern Region / Pest Detection Section

Summer Preparations

It finally appears that spring is here. In Fairbanks, this past month, many insects have already begun to appear in the leaf litter where the snow has melted away. Overwintered adult butterflies and moths are beginning to flutter around. Lady bugs are crawling around and leaf hoppers are active while in the warmth of the sun.

April and May are always busy months for Alaskans. While preparing for all of the summer projects, there just does not seem to be enough time to get everything done. One thing is for certain, however, the days are getting longer and that is good.

With the advent of spring, there is the renewed concern that invasive pests might be introduced into Alaska from regions where they are actively causing problems. Wood boring insects may travel here on solid wood packing material; gypsy moths might hitchhike a ride on a ship bound for one of our port communities, or possibly hitchhike on a recreational vehicle from an infested location in the lower 48. The gypsy moth has been detected in Alaska in previous years but fortunately, those detections were of singleton moths and no established populations are known to occur.

Photo: John H. Ghent, USDA Forest Service

Asian Gypsy Moth, Lymantria dispar

Things are different in other parts of the country. In some of the mid-western states, there is news about pests that are causing major problems, such as the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). This pest of Ash trees is believed to have arrived to the U.S. from Asia on solid wood packing material and since its detection in 2002, it has been responsible for killing tens of millions of ash trees in Michigan alone, and tens of millions more trees in other surrounding states as well as north into Ontario and Quebec. The movement and spread of this pest has been due in part to the movement of firewood and nursery stock from infested areas to locations where the pest does not occur.

Firewood is a well known pathway for the movement of wood pests, not just the EAB, but the Asian Long horned beetle, Gypsy moth, as well as pathogens. If you purchase bundled firewood and happen to notice that it did not originate from Alaska, please be sure to burn it all. This will help to reduce the likelihood that surviving larvae, if present, will emerge later in the season.

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Plant Materials Center

http://plants.alaska.gov/

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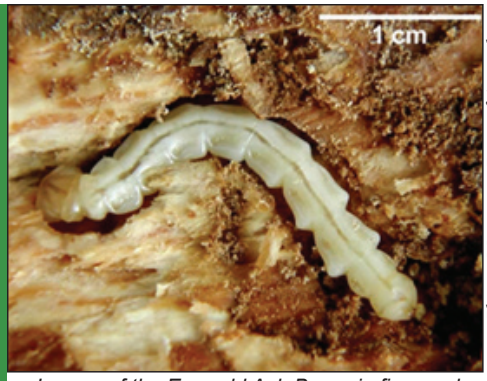

Photo: Minnesota Dept. of Agriculture

Larvae of the Emerald Ash Borer, in firewood

Currently, the Division of Agriculture is coordinating insect trapping surveys for this summer. This involves mailing traps out to surveyors and working with individuals to ensure the traps are set out according to the survey protocols. This effort can be logistically challenging, as we must coordinate with many folks throughout the state.

The intent of the insect trapping surveys is to monitor pathways or locations where there is the highest likelihood for a pest to be introduced. These pathways might include recreational sites that receive high visitation, shipping ports and even border crossings. As always, we hope that the traps are negative for any invasive insects that might come to Alaska and cause problems.

If you would like more information about wood pests of concern in Alaska, please contact the Northern Region office, at (907) 328 1950, or email Curtis.Knight@Alaska.gov.

Plant Materials Center

Invasive Weed & Agricultural Pest Management Strategic Plan Released

The invasive weeds program at the PMC has recently completed a Strategic Plan for Invasive Weed & Agricultural Pest Management in Alaska. The plan is available online, at plants.alaska.gov/invasives/.

The strategic plan was developed as a result of meetings of interested persons and a community survey. Soil and Water Conservation Districts from across the state were involved in the review of the plan, as were the Cooperative Extension Service, and state and federal agencies. These collaborative efforts resulted in a plan that addresses the goals of many concerned stakeholders.

The core of the plan is the development of the following 8 goals:

- Prevention
- Regulations and Policy
- Coordination
- Early Detection and Rapid Response
- Control and Management
- Inventory and Monitoring
- Education
- Research

Within each goal, objectives have been identified, as well as action strategies to accomplish these tasks. A complete list of these strategies is available online, at plants.alaska.gov/invasives/SP-action-items.php.

The invasive weeds and agricultural pest management program will regularly update the plan, including the accomplishments of the Division of Agriculture and its partners.

Having a strategy for invasive weeds and agricultural pest management will help guide natural resource management in Alaska for years to come. The goals and objectives in the plan will serve to support organizations seeking grant funds, and to inform newcomers about invasive species and agricultural pests of concern in Alaska.

For more information about the Strategic Plan for Invasive Weed & Agricultural Pest Management in Alaska, please contact Gino Graziano, at (907) 745-8127, or Gino.Graziano@alaska.gov.

ARLF Services

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

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Land Sales & Grazing Leases

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Opportunities

Sign-up period for 2012 EQIP funding is now through June 15th, 2011

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) sign-up period for fiscal year 2012 funding is now through June 15, 2011. These funds have been used to fund installation of seasonal high-tunnels across Alaska.

By capturing solar energy, seasonal high tunnels create favorable conditions enabling farmers to grow vegetables, berries and other specialty crops in climates and at times of the year in which it would otherwise be difficult. Farmers who sell their high tunnel produce locally benefit from the extra income, and the community benefits from the availability of fresh, locally grown food.

Seasonal high tunnels are manufactured kits made of metal pipe and covered with UV resistant 6 mil plastic. Easy to build, maintain and move, high tunnels provide an energy-efficient way to extend the growing season. Unlike greenhouses, they require no energy, relying on sunlight to modify the climate inside to create favorable conditions for growing vegetables and specialty crops.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is providing financial assistance for seasonal high tunnels as part of a trial to determine their effectiveness in reducing pesticide use, maintaining vital soil nutrients, and increasing crop yields.

For information on EQIP funding, visit the NRCS Mat-Su Service Center at:

1700 E. Bogard Rd.
Suite 203, Building A
Wasilla, AK 99654

Or call (907)373-6492, ext. 101.

Photo: UAF Cooperative Extension

High tunnels have been used to extend the growing season in cold climates, such as Alaskas

Public Notices

Properties for sale by the Board of Agriculture and Conservation (BAC):

The State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources is offering two properties for sale.

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.

7411 Kenai Spur Highway, Kenai

7.4 acres of commercial zoned land, between the cities of Kenai and Soldotna. Lot dimensions: Approx: 330 ft. x 1900 ft.

This parcel is being offered "AS IS, WHERE IS, W/ NO IMPLIED OR EXPRESSED WARRANTY OF CONDITION WHATSOEVER."

ARLF LAND SALE #11-01
Over-The-Counter Offering:
Purchase Price $14,000.00.

Properties are offered as fee-simple real estate, surface estate only. Financing from the Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund may be available, but isn't guaranteed. For more information on these offerings, please visit dnr.alaska.gov/ag/.

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.