The Division of Agriculture Activities

May 3, 2013

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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Director's Note

As we all know, spring has come very slowly to Alaska this year. With temperatures remaining well below average the fields in front of my house still have large patches of snow. I assume the geese that noisily announced their arrival early this morning are second guessing their travel plans as they maneuver around the mounds of snow looking for bare fields. The ducks have also been slow to arrive, as open water remains scarce in the fields as the ponds are still covered in ice. Hopefully, Mother Nature will loosen her wintery grip soon and temperatures will return to normal!

April has come and gone which means the legislative session has gaveled out for the year. Every session is interesting and this year was no exception, with several agriculture related bills being introduced during the 90 day session and several passing. These bills were mentioned in past newsletters so I will not go into details, but links are available for further information. The two items passed this session were HB40 Municipal Tax Exemption and HCR001 Creation of a State Resource Development Group. HB89 Aquatic Invasive Species was introduced this session and may be taken up again next session as it was not passed through the house and senate.

Two bills of significant agriculture interest were introduced during the last few days. HB202 "An act raising the application fee for a drawing permit for the hunting of bison to $20; requiring the management plan for bison in the Delta Junction Bison Range Area to include mitigation of bison damage to farm crops and farm and personal property; and authorizing the commissioner of natural resources to make grants to mitigate or prevent damage caused by bison." HB207 establishes the Board of Agriculture, Conservation, and Development; transferring the powers and duties of the Natural Resource Conservation and Development Board to the Board of Agriculture, Conservation and Development; transferring to the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development the authority to approve loans from the agricultural revolving loan fund; terminating the Natural Resource Conservation and Development Board; and for providing for an effect date. Both of these bills should lead to interesting discussions next session.

The 2014 operating and capital budget has also been passed from the legislature to the Governor's office for signature. The legislature's budget includes funding for the remaining year of the Farm to School Program as well as a $300,000 capital appropriation for testing, promotion and education for the purposes of potato export.

Tuesday, May 7th is Alaska Agriculture Day see Governor Sean Parnell's Alaska Agriculture Day Proclamation, here. This is a great opportunity to partner with your local Soil & Water Conservation District or Farm Bureau Chapter and educate our youth on agriculture in Alaska.

Be sure to take note of the calendar and the teleconferences, meetings and conferences scheduled for this summer and fall. It is quickly shaping up to be another busy season.

As always, please look through the newsletter for topics of interest, grant availability and upcoming conferences. If you have any comments or concerns please give me a call @ 761-3867 or send an email to Franci.Havemeister@alaska.gov.

-Franci Havemeister

"Always do right. This will gratify some people and astonish the rest." - Mark Twain

Agriculture Calendar

► Sun. **Apr. 28** - Sat. **May 4**:	**Wasilla S&WCD Stewardship Week;** 1700 Bogard Rd, Wasilla. *Details*: here.
► Thurs. **May 4- Sept 16**:	**Deadline for comments regarding the proposed Food Safety Modernization Act** (FSMA) **extended to September 16, 2013.**
► Tues. **May 7**:	**Alaska Agriculture Day;** View media release, Statewide.
► Thurs. **May 9**, 10am:	**Specialty Crop Competitive Grant Webinar;** Online. *Details*: here.
► Fri. **May 10**, 1 pm:	**Board of Agriculture & Conservation Meeting;** Palmer. *Details*: here; Teleconference: 800-315-6338, passcode: 122#
► Wed. **May 15**, 2pm:	**Specialty Crop Competitive Grant Webinar;** Online. *Details*: here.
► Wed. **May 29**- Thu. **May 30**, 8:30am-5pm:	**Specialty Products Workshop;** Train Depot, 610 S Valley Way, Palmer. *Details*: here.

If you have an event that you would like to add to the calendar, please contact Lora Haralson.

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Marketing Section

Specialty Crop Competitive Grant NOW OPEN

The Division of Agriculture is pleased to announce the availability of funding through the Specialty Crop Competitive Grant. Please note that the grant outline has significantly changed this year. You can read the full Request For Proposals (RFP) online at http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_grantsSCCG.htm.

The application is a two-part process, starting with a Letter of Intent due to the Division no later than May 24th. Full applications will only be accepted from those who are invited to apply after the Letters of Intent have been reviewed and ranked.

The Division intends to award multiple projects through this funding program; no project will exceed $25,000. Funds will be disbursed from USDA and passed on to successful applicants in September or October of 2013.

The Division will host two webinars to answer questions related to the grant.

Thursday May 9, 10-11am
Wednesday May 15, 2-3pm

Alaska Farm to School Program Update

Farm to School Mini-Grant Update

Farm to School mini-grant NOW OPEN!

In collaboration with the Department of Health & Social Services, Obesity Prevention and Control Program we are thrilled to offer the 3rd round of grants. This year we have changed the eligibility and award amount to allow for more flexibility to meet the diverse needs around the state. Applications are being accepted until 5:00pm on May 15th, 2013. For more information please go to: http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_grantsFTS.htm.

As a reminder, the purpose of the Farm-to-School (FTS) grant program is to:

- Increase understanding by Alaska youth about how food gets from its original form to the plate;
- Promote healthy food choices, and
- Encourage a preference for food grown and harvested in Alaska.

May 7th is Alaska Agriculture Day!

What are you doing for Alaska Agriculture Day? This year we prepared instructions on a Seed Potato Activity – you can find more information on our website on the Farm to School page: http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_FTS.htm

For more information about the Alaska Farm-to-School program, or if you have any questions, contact Johanna Herron at Johanna.herron@alaska.gov or (907)374-3714.

For updates, news, grant opportunities, and announcements join our listserv at: http://list.state.ak.us/soalists/akfarmtoschool/jl.htm

Don't forget to check us out on facebook at: www.facebook.com/AlaskaFarmToSchool .

Students at Fairbanks Montessori School learn to make carrot seed tape for Alaska Ag Day 2012.

Land Sales & Grazing Leases

dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_sales.htm

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Pest Detection / Inspection Section

Is Your Elk Fence in Compliance?

In accordance with AS 03.05.075, "Elk may be raised and bred as domestic stock for commercial purposes, including the sale of meat, by a person who lawfully owns the elk and who holds a current valid elk farming license…" In order to obtain an elk farming license, an application must be submitted to the Department of Natural Resources, Division of Agriculture with a biennial license fee.

An applicant and/ or current licensee must possess facilities for maintaining elk under positive control. What is defined as possessing facilities for maintaining elk under positive control? A physical barrier must be provided to prevent elk from escaping and to exclude wild ungulates. Perimeter fencing on an elk farm must be constructed and maintained using adequate

materials and workmanship strong enough to withstand animal impacts and tall enough to preclude escape by jumping. The perimeter fence must be inspected and approved by a representative of the Division of Agriculture. For more information on the elk fencing specifications and application please go to the Division of Agriculture Website at http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_is.htm.

Pest Detection / Inspection Section

Bee Registration

It is that time of year!

Please complete the Alaska Bee Registration form that is accessible on our website at dnr.alaska.gov/ag/Inspection/BeeRegistrationCard.pdf.

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

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

Plant Materials Center

http://plants.alaska.gov/

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Plant Materials Center

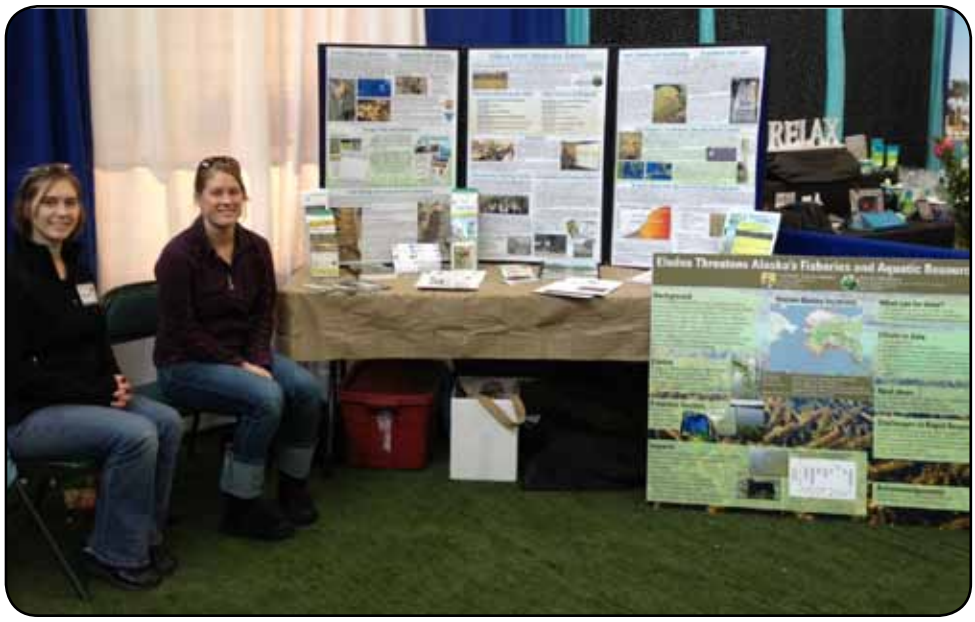
Invasive Species at the Wasilla Outdoorsman Show

The Plant Materials Center coordinated with the Mat-Su Cooperative Weed Management Area to spread the word about invasive species in Alaska at the Wasilla Outdoorsman Show, which was held March 22-24, 2013 at the Menard Sport's Center. The main focus of this booth was to introduce various invasive species to the public and discuss different methods invasive plant managers use to control these pesky weeds.

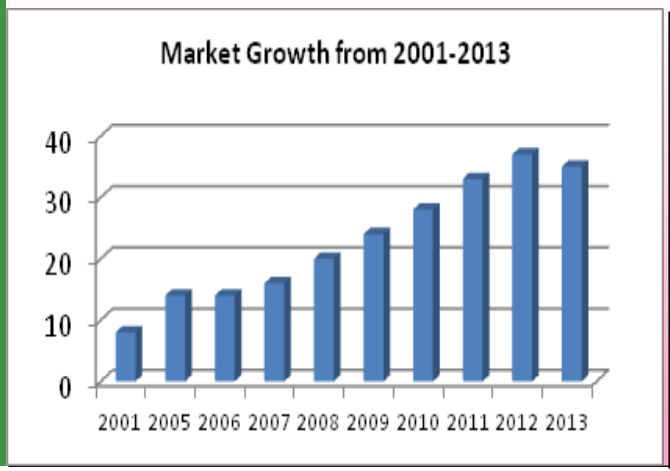
The booth was well received with a variety of people and knowledge bases discussing invasive species with booth attendants. A major topic was Elodea in Alaska: What it is, how it got here and what is going to be done about it.

Elodea is a freshwater aquatic invasive plant, which was first spotted in Alaska in 1980 in Cordova. In 2010, it was found in Chena Slough in Fairbanks and has since been found in Lakes in Anchorage and the Kenai. Invasive species managers are attempting to act quickly in order to control the weed and keep it from spreading.

Other invasive weeds discussed included Canada Thistle, Bird Vetch, Orange Hawkweed, and White Sweetclover. If you would like to learn more about invasive weeds in Alaska, or if you have any questions, contact Brianne Blackburn at Brianne.Blackburn@alaska.gov or (907) 745-8785.



FUN FACT: Farmers Market Growth



Specialty Products Workshop

May 29th-30th ~ 8:30am-5pm

Palmer Train Depot

- 1-1/2 days of classroom time with 1/2 day of ***hands-on*** product development.
- EXPERT guest speakers from the **Oregon Food Innovation Center** specializing in product development from recipe to shelf.
- Topics to include: marketing trends, labeling guidance, shelf-life and food safety, buyers' perspectives and MORE!
- Find more details at: dnr.alaska.gov/ag

Registration cost = $0!
Register by May 20th to be signed up to win GREAT PRIZES!

Contact Kristi Krueger
Division of Agriculture
907-761-3858
to reserve your seat!

University of Alaska Fairbanks

School of Natural Resources & Agricultural Sciences

UAF Puts Fish Waste to Good Agricultural Use

Article contributed by Nancy Tarnai

Rather than seeing a mountain of waste left over after 2 million metric tons of fish are filleted in Alaska each year as an insurmountable problem, Mingchu Zhang, associate professor of agronomy and soil sciences at UAF's School of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences, saw an excellent opportunity for Alaska agriculture.

Through research and testing, Zhang and his associates created a recipe for fish compost that can be used to enrich the soil and improve agricultural yield while at the same time making use of a byproduct that would ordinarily be discarded in the state's seas or rivers.

"Using fish waste in the soil works," Zhang said. Nitrogen, phosphorus, potash, zinc and copper, found in fish waste, are essential nutrients for plant growth.

While the fishing industry routinely grinds up its waste and returns it to the local water source, waste for compost doesn't need to be processed at all. Heads, tails and other fish parts are mixed with peat moss and allowed to heat up in the summer sun, creating an organic, inexpensive solution for gardeners. The fishermen in Homer were so supportive of the tests and pleased that they didn't have to grind up and dispose of the waste that they even made regular deliveries of their byproducts to the farm where Zhang did the testing.

With the summer warmth heating the compost piles, it took only two months to complete the process. Probes measuring the internal temperatures showed that at times the mixture was as hot as 120˚F. The only maintenance throughout the composting process is occasional turning of the mixture and sometimes adding moisture.

Working with a Homer farm called Ocean Earth in the summer of 2008, Zhang conducted field trials that demonstrated the nutritional value of the compost. Plots were tested at different ratios of compost to soil and resulting salt concentrations were measured. One of the most visible signs that the compost is useful is a photograph Zhang took of a hay field where half the crop had no compost applied and the other had a generous portion. The side with the compost grew lush and green, while the other appeared pale and sickly.

This fertilizer could be used anywhere in the state that has access to fish and peat moss. Villagers could create community gardens and grow their own produce. In urban areas school lawns and golf courses perk up when the mixture is applied.

On one acre a mix of 100,000 pounds of salmon waste and 400,000 pounds of peat can yield one million pounds of garden soil.

Most often, regions that are tied to the fishing industry also have rich reserves of peat moss. This makes for a low-cost way to transition the waste into a valuable product. In addition to the Homer testing, experiments were conducted in Fairbanks and Palmer. Researchers at the Matanuska Experiment Farm used plastic containers as "cookers" to try new ways of creating fish compost. In addition to working peat moss into the fish waste, there were experiments with cardboard and hay. "We are working toward concrete solutions," Zhang said.

He is creating a users' manual so farmers will know how to produce the product to an optimum blend and apply it properly and he plans to visit Dillingham and Togiak this spring to conduct composting workshops.

When making presentations about the compost project, Zhang likes to quote a poem by Ryan Bundy he found on a plaque near the shoreline in Homer.

The sea tells a story
It tells of the cycle of life
Running through the waters
Fish, spawning, dying, sinking to the ocean
Returning to the circle that engulfs life.

"That says what we do," Zhang said.

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Bob Van Veldhuizen and Mingchu Zhang test temperatures in a compost pile in Homer.

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