



The Division of Agriculture Activities

April 5, 2013

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

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Questions or Comments?
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Director's Note

Today is a good day - as April is finally here. Although it is a busy month for many Alaskans – whether you spend the month planting in the greenhouse, working on equipment, or trimming hoofs (as my family does) the longer days of spring are a welcome change from the long dark days of winter. Even the rhubarb, planted outside our office door is anticipating spring as it has already worked its way out of the frozen soil.

Although the legislative session has not yet adjourned, House Concurrent Resolution 1 has been passed out of the House and Senate and is awaiting the Governor's signature. This resolution, introduced by Representative Bill Stoltz, requests the Governor to establish a State Food Resource Development Working Group (SFRDWG). This resolution brings a variety of groups together to set policies to build a strong and sustainable healthy food system in the state.

Another item we are watching closely is our Farm to School Program increment that was included in the Governor's budget. The \$181,000 item was cut on the house side but included on the senate side. The increment will now move to the next step in the process for a final decision.

On another note, The America's Farmers are looking for nominations for the Farm Mom of the Year Program. Their goal is to receive nominations from each of the 50 states, and as of yet have not received any from Alaska. If you know of an outstanding Alaskan farm mom please visit www.americas-farmers.com/farmmom/ for more information.

Just a few quick reminders..... the PMC Annual Spring Seed Sale is April 15-26th. This sale is held each and every spring and is your opportunity to purchase foundation seed. If you're looking to expand, purchase equipment, or need additional operating money; the ARLF has funding available.

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

"Spring is when you feel like whistling even with a shoe full of slush"

- Doug Larson

Agriculture Calendar

- ▶ Sat. **Apr. 6th**, 8 am - 5 pm: **2013 Alaska Master Gardeners Conference.** Depot, Palmer. Details: [here](#).
- ▶ Tue. **Apr. 9th**, 1 pm: **Board of Agriculture & Conservation Meeting;** Palmer. Details: [here](#); Teleconference: 800-315-6338, passcode: 122#
- ▶ Tue. **Apr. 11th**, 9 am - 11 am: **Ag Research/Education Committee Meeting;** Palmer. Details: [here](#); Teleconference: 800-315-6338, passcode: 122#
- ▶ Tue. **Apr. 11th**, 7 pm - 8:30 pm: **Intro to Alaskan Gardening;** Mat-Su College, Palmer. Details: [here](#); Registration 907-357-4563 Ext. 109
- ▶ Mon. **Apr. 15th** - Fri. **Apr. 26th**: **PMC Spring Seed Sale;** 5310 Bodenburg Spur Rd., Palmer. Details: [here](#).
- ▶ Mon. **Apr. 18th** - Fri. **Apr. 20th**: **AACD 2013 Spring Conference;** Fairbanks. Details: [here](#); Registration: aacdoa@mtaonline.net
- ▶ Mon. **Apr. 22nd** - Fri. **Apr. 26th**: **UAF CES Extension Week;** Tanana Dist. Office, Fairbanks. Details: [here](#); Registration: 907-474-1530
- ▶ Fri. **Apr. 26th**: **Cooperative Weed Mgmt Workshop;** AK Is & Ocean VC, Homer. Details: [here](#); Registration: [Online](#)
- ▶ Sun. **Apr. 28th** - Sat. **May 4th**: **Wasilla S&WCD Stewardship Week;** 1700 Bogard Rd, Wasilla. Details: [here](#).
- ▶ Thurs. **May 4th**: **Deadline to submit comments to FDA regarding the proposed Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA).**

If you have an event that you would like to add to the calendar, please contact [Lora Haralson](mailto:Lora.Haralson).

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Marketing Section

VISTA Volunteer Kyla Byers Says Hello

Hello all, I am the new AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer at the Division of Agriculture. As a **Volunteer In Service To America (VISTA)**, I am a part of a large federal program, similar to the Peace Corps, that seeks to alleviate poverty across the country through year long service placements. Born and raised in the Eagle River valley, I have a strong tie to Alaska and an ever-growing commitment to the local food movement here.

My main responsibility as a VISTA is coordinating the Alaska Farmers Market Quest Card Program. This program provides funding to farmer's markets across the state to help with the purchase and operation of wireless Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) machines that accept EBT / Quest cards, also known as food stamps. I see this as a win-win for Alaskan communities as it increases access to healthy, fresh food to those in need, while bringing in more customers to local farmers markets.

The Quest card program started as a pilot program in 2011, with just two farmers markets.

Last year, seven markets participated in the Quest card program. With five newly interested applicants for this year's grant, it looks as if the program will only continue to grow. In addition to recruiting farmers markets,



Our new VISTA Volunteer~ Kyla Byers



I will also be focusing on outreach to recipients of Quest card benefits in an attempt to increase awareness of and interest in the markets.

For more information about this program, please feel free to contact me at (907) 761-3880 or kyla.byers@alaska.gov.

Visit facebook.com/dnr.alaska-grown for the latest Alaska Grown updates.



ARLF Services

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

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Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund

Update from ARLF

Spring is fast approaching and farmers and greenhouse owners alike are making preparations for this year's growing season! While planning for this year's operations, remember that the Division of Agriculture has the Agricultural Revolving Loan Fund (ARLF) program available to meet your financing needs.

The ARLF was established in 1953 to promote the development of Agriculture as an industry throughout the state by means of moderate interest rate loans. Today the fund continues with a healthy 6 million dollar cash balance available to lend to qualified borrowers.

Whether you are looking for a short term loan to pay this year's operating costs on items such as fertilizer, seed, soil; a long term loan for farming or greenhouse expansion; a loan to purchase a new piece of equipment; or if you are new to agriculture and need a combination of loans to begin your business, we are here to assist you!

Please visit the ARLF website at dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_arlf.htm for more information. You can contact ARLF Loan Officer Amanda Swanson, at (907) 761-3869 or Amanda.Swanson@alaska.gov.



| Loan Type | Maximum Loan | Maximum Term | Interest Rate |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| Short Term | \$200,000 | 1 year | 3.00% |
| Chattel Loan | \$1,000,000 | 7 years | 4.00% |
| Clearing | \$250,000 | 20 years | 4.50% |
| Irrigation | \$1,000,000 | 30 years | 4.50% |
| Farm Development | \$1,000,000 | 30 years | 4.50% |
| Product Processing | \$250,000 | 30 years | 4.50% |

- Total outstanding balance of ARLF loans for a borrower may not exceed \$1,000,000.00
- All loans must be secured by collateral, not exceeding 75% of the value of that collateral

Land Sales & Grazing Leases

dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_sales.htm

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Pest Detection / Inspection Section

What You Need to Know: Proposed Rule on Standards for Produce Safety Under the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)

Proposed Rule At-A-Glance

What is FDA doing?

FDA is issuing a proposed rule to establish science-based standards for growing, harvesting, packing and holding produce on domestic and foreign farms. The proposed rule is required by the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), which was recently signed into law. The deadline for public comments on the proposed law is May 16, 2013.

Who would be covered?

- The proposed rule would apply to farms that grow, harvest, pack or hold most fruits and vegetables when those fruits and vegetables are in their raw or natural (unprocessed) state.
- The proposed rule would not apply to certain produce: produce that is rarely consumed raw (such as potatoes), produce that will receive processing including a kill-step, such as pasteurization, etc., and produce for personal or on-farm consumption.
- The proposed rule would not apply (or would only partially apply) to certain farms.

What would the proposed standards cover?

They would focus on commonly identified routes of microbial contamination of produce, including:

1. Agricultural water;
2. Farm worker hygiene;

3. Manure and other soil amendments;
4. Animals in growing areas; and
5. Equipment, tools and buildings.

There are also specific proposed standards for sprouts.

When would the new requirements be effective?

If you are covered by the rule, you would have the following amount of time after the effective date (the effective date is 60 days after the FINAL rule is published in the Federal Register) to comply.

- Very small businesses, defined as having an average annual value of food sold during the previous three years of no more than \$250,000, would have four years after the effective date to comply; for some water requirements, they would have six years.
- Small businesses, defined as having an average annual value of food sold during the previous three years of no more than \$500,000, would have three years after the effective date to comply; for some of the water requirements, they would have five years.
- Other businesses would have to comply two years after the effective date. They would have four years to comply with some of the water requirements.

You can find more information on FDA's Food Safety Modernization Act and how it will affect you at: www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/ucm304045.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

Spring Seed Sale at the PMC: April 15th - 26th

Each spring and fall, the Alaska Plant Materials Center sells native plant seed of grasses and forbs (flowers), plus wheat, oats, and barley. The spring seed sale begins April 15th and runs through April 26th.

The Plant Materials Center (PMC) sells seed for commercial growers only. Grasses and forbs are sold by the pound. Grain is sold in 100 lb. units. There are 20 grass species, ten forb species, and eight grain varieties (3 species) available for sale this spring. A complete list will be posted to dnr.alaska.gov/ag/akpmc before April 8th.

More information about the plant species available, and links to order forms will be available from the PMC website, dnr.alaska.gov/ag/akpmc. For more information, please contact Peggy Hunt at either 745-8721 or peggy.hunt@alaska.gov.

For smaller amounts of native seed, please contact businesses listed on the **Native Plant Source Directory**, also available on the dnr.alaska.gov/ag/akpmc website.

About the Directory of Native Plant Sources

The Plant Materials Center (PMC) publishes the "Directory of Alaska Native Plant Sources" in response to numerous requests from the public, industry, and agencies for sources of native plant materials from Alaska. This Directory depends on the response of suppliers, and does not claim to include all producers or sellers of native Alaskan plants.

The PMC is not responsible for changes from the growers as to what plants they may have available. If you are aware of an omission or error, please email Peggy Hunt or contact the Plant Materials Center at (907) 745-4469.

Native plants from Alaska are needed for small and large scale revegetation projects, mass site rehabilitation, landscaping on public and private lands, stream bank restoration and habitat enhancement.

The purpose of this directory is to serve as a concise reference for consumers, a marketing tool for native plant and seed suppliers, and to encourage the production and use of Alaska native plants.

If you are involved with native plants, please visit or call. We are interested in working with you.

Know of a grower that should be on this list? Please visit our [add listing](#) page and send us their details.

Grass Seed

Wildflower Seed and Plants

Alaska Trees and Shrubs

Revegetation Resources

The Native Plant Source Directory is a resource to help non-commercial growers find seed

FUN FACT: Ethnobotany Teaching Garden

The Ethnobotany Teaching Garden at the Alaska Plant Materials Center highlights different cultural and ecological regions of Alaska and the native plants traditionally used for food, medicine or utilitarian purposes. The garden shows the ecological niches these plants occupy and their agronomic uses. Tours and workshops at the Ethnobotany Teaching Garden are a unique way for groups and individuals to interact with Alaska's native plants. The garden is fully accessible and open to all, Monday-Friday 8 am - 4:30 pm. Workshops generally do occur from mid-April until September. Contact Peggy Hunt at Peggy.Hunt@Alaska.gov to learn more or schedule a tour.



Alaska Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC) Program Seeks Coordinator

The Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC) Board of Directors is seeking a statewide coordinator to build and administer a small and growing agriculturally based educational program. This independent contract position provides a stipend of \$400/month, and it does not provide benefits. A similar amount is available for supplies and/or travel. The coordinator will work out of their home office. Telephone, Internet service, and some storage capabilities for the printed materials are necessary.

Agriculture in the Classroom is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that gives educators and students insight into agriculture by providing lesson plans, for-credit teacher training and special events that focus on Alaska's agriculture.



The program is being restructured, giving the coordinator the freedom to create, as well as the need to find funding sources. The coordinator should be an innovative individual with good communication skills and who is enthusiastic about agriculture and education.

Send resume and letter of intent to janehamilton99737@yahoo.com or mail to PO Box 760 - Delta Junction, AK 99737 on or before April 12, 2013.



Environmental Health

Alaska Department of
Environmental Conservation

Dec.Alaska.gov/eh/
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Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation: Division of Environmental Health

Food Safety Requirements at Farmers Markets

Article contributed by Lorinda Lhotka

With spring in the air, you may be looking for opportunities to sell farm products at local farmers markets. Depending on what you plan to sell, a permit may or may not be required. There are several types of foods that can now be sold without a permit from the [DEC Food Safety and Sanitation Program](#). For foods where there is a higher risk for food-borne illness, a permit is still required.

Cottage foods:

New exemptions for home-produced food went into effect last June. Foods that are exempted include low hazard foods sold directly by the producer to the consumer. Foods that do not require refrigeration generally do not need a permit, if certain requirements are met.

Examples of non-potentially hazardous foods:

Jams, jellies, pickled vegetables, bread, kettle popcorn, confections, trail mix, granola, tortillas, fry bread, fermented fruit and vegetable products, pastries, cakes, cookies, and waffle cones.

Prohibited Foods under the cottage food exemption:

Meat, poultry and fish products; cheeses, custards, stuffed breads, non-acidic canned foods, pestos, garlic in oil mixtures, and foods that require refrigeration for safety.

If you are interested in selling these foods, review the requirements on the [Cottage Food Fact Sheet](#). If you are unsure about the safety of your product or if it requires refrigeration, lab testing may be required. Contact your local [Food Safety and Sanitation Program office](#) or [UAF Cooperative Extension Service](#) for more information.

Produce

Permits are not required for the sale of whole raw vegetables in their natural state, minimally trimmed of unnecessary parts, or trimmed to separate the greens from roots.

A permit is required:

- if the product is further processed- such as cutting, slicing or shelling;



- when greens, such as lettuce, are packaged and marketed as ready-to-eat without washing; and
- for sprouts, because they are frequently associated with food-borne illness.

Before selling any produce, be sure to follow [Good Agricultural Practices](#) for fresh fruits and vegetables, to reduce the risk of food-borne pathogens on produce.

Eggs

Eggs sold directly from the producer to the consumer do not require a permit. If you are re-using egg cartons, make sure the information on the original packaging is not visible. You can learn about how to sell safe eggs by reviewing the UAF Cooperative Extension Service's "[Safe Egg Handling for Small Egg Laying Flocks and Operations](#)" publication.

Food Preparation and Sales at the Farmers Market

If you are interested in cooking, preparing or serving food at the market, it is likely you will need a [Temporary Food Service Permit](#). Season long permits that allow a vendor to sell at the same market two days a week over a 120 day period are available. To learn about this type of permit, see the [Checklist for Setting up a Temporary Food Service](#).

No permit is required for low-hazard samples that are pre-cooked, ready-to-eat, and require only dispensing to the public. Low hazard samples include dips made from mixes with sour cream or mayonnaise, commercially prepared jerky, mustards, condiments, breads, crackers, and nuts. However, a [handwash station](#) must be provided for use by employees if the samples are not packaged or pre-portioned at a permitted facility. If the samples require temperature control for safety, refrigeration at 41°F or below is necessary. This can be accomplished by using ice packs or putting the food on ice.

For more information on any of the exemptions and requirements for permits, contact your local [Food Safety and Sanitation Office](#) for more information and assistance.



Prepared food products such as jams, jellies, and vinegars don't need permits if sold direct to customers



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School of Natural Resources & Agricultural Sciences

Grain Growing Advice From the Experts

Article contributed by Nancy Tarnai

More and more Alaskans are intrigued with growing their own grain. Often, these interested growers turn to UAF, and learn that they can indeed have success growing barley and oats.

Bob Van Veldhuizen, research technician at the UAF School of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences, has been assisting professors with grain research for decades. When he first started working at the Fairbanks Experiment Farm, everything was done by hand. "We planted, maintained, harvested, dried, threshed and cleaned the seeds by hand," Van Veldhuizen said.

He assures would-be producers that growing grains on a small scale can still be done the old-fashioned way. "A small combine costs \$250,000 and a thresher \$25,000," he said, emphasizing the impracticality of gardeners purchasing such equipment.

For a 180-square foot plot, Van Veldhuizen plants a half-pound of seed, which is very easy to do. "It only takes 15 minutes," he said. "To harvest takes a couple of hours."

The yield depends on the weather, soil and location. Growers need a good seed bed to start. The seeds should be planted one to one and a half inches deep, and the soil must then be sealed around the seed. "Moisture is key to a good planting," Van Veldhuizen said.

Choosing the right variety is also crucial. "That's the reason we do variety trials; so you guys don't have to," Van Veldhuizen said. For years, he helped with the development of Sunshine Barley, which has proven very popular with growers, because of its hullless nature.

The experiment farm is not without its challenges. Observing sandhill cranes fly over on a fall afternoon, Van Veldhuizen said they are notorious for harvesting the grains before he can get to it. "And moose and grizzly bears love the oats," he said.

Alaskan seeds can be purchased from the Division of Agriculture's Plant Materials Center in Palmer. A 50-pound bag is around \$85. Seeds can be frozen or kept in a burlap sack but they will lose their germination ability over time. "You must keep squirrels and voles out," Van Veldhuizen cautioned.

He advises planting as early as possible in May. The latest he has planted is May 20th. "I like to plant early, around May 10th or 12th if it's dry enough to not get stuck," Van Veldhuizen said. "You can plant winter grains in the fall and harvest in a year." At least two

feet of snow is necessary to cushion the seeds, or they will rot. Winter grains will produce the same yields if nothing goes wrong. "I recommend spring planting," Van Veldhuizen added.

He also prefers row planting. "You could broadcast it but it's a little more difficult to maintain. It's easy to maintain weeds beneath rows with a hoe but if you broadcast the seeds it is hard to weed." Grain seeds need temperatures of 40 or warmer to germinate, but weeds can grow more quickly.

Wheat can be difficult to grow in Alaska. "If there is a killing frost; it's done," Van Veldhuizen said. "I'm lucky to get it to harvest once every five years; with barley we get it every year. Barley is just about always a success."

Associate Professor Mingchu Zhang, on the subject of soil "Chemical fertilizers are easy," he said. "But if it's on the surface it's not efficient. Phosphate is hard to get into the soil."

Fish waste is a wonderful solution. "If you bury it too deep it will hurt the plant roots; but if it's too shallow, dogs will dig it up," Zhang said. He suggested filling a five-gallon bucket with half fish waste and half soil. Let it sit till the next growing season. "Over the years you will build up soil fertility," Zhang said.

For more information on growing grains, visit www.uaf.edu/snras and find "Growing Small Grains in Your Garden" in the publications list.

Barley recipes developed by UAF Cooperative Extension Service are available at www.uaf.edu/ces/pubs/catalog/detail/index.xml?id=488

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Bob Van Veldhuizen points out oat research plots at the Fairbanks Experiment Farm, a research facility of the University of Alaska Fairbanks