



ALASKA DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE NEWSLETTER

Issue 8 | March 2025

The future of agriculture in Alaska starts with a conversation



By Director Bryan Scoresby

An early spring seems to be in the air, and with spring usually comes baby livestock. Mild weather makes calving easier.

Pigs, sheep, and goats are generally inside a barn and out of the weather. My little farm has 25 baby pigs, which will mostly be sold as project animals to 4-H and FFA students. The student participants are the future agriculture leaders and farmers. The state FFA convention is coming up next month, and the students will compete in many different agriculture skill competitions.

Three Bears Grocery was the clear winner of the Golden Carrot award among retailers this year. The Golden Carrot award was given to the company rather than an individual store, as several of their stores equally promoted Alaska Grown branded products more than any other retailer. Our congratulations to them for promoting locally grown products that carry the Alaska Grown brand. The challenge we issue for all Alaskans is to spend \$5 of your grocery budget on Alaska Grown products every week, all year long. Shelf-stable products are available year-round. When you want a particular product and can't find it, ask a store

worker or manager for the desired product. Use Alaska Grown, share Alaska Grown, buy them, promote them, take them home, and taste them.

Now we know that we will not be setting up a new Department of Agriculture. Changes of this magnitude begin by having a conversation. Conversations with other farmers, with the Division of Agriculture leadership, and with your elected representatives are where all change begins. The earnest conversation for the Department of Agriculture started about two years ago. This has long been a goal of the Alaska Farm Bureau. Road maintenance of rural farm roads was another topic. The DOT found \$550K for deferred maintenance for three farm roads. The changes to the ARLF loan program from a \$1M to a \$3M limit started with a conversation. These three examples are only the beginning.

Please keep bringing your ideas to the fore with conversation. The best ideas come from our farmers, not the critics, but those in the arena. Working together, we can fix issues that will improve our industry, make working here more interesting, serve each of you better, and hopefully make your farm more profitable.

Agriculture programs working for Alaskans



By Mia Kirk

Wow, 2025 has brought us what feels and looks like an early spring, with all this warm weather and limited snow

coverage, making most of us anxious for planting this season. Here, at the Division of Agriculture, we get questions about certified seed potatoes and where to purchase them. We have had a long-standing program that has successfully limited disease and pest introductions for many years. Did you know that one of the very first regulatory programs formed (before statehood) was a certified seed potato program in 1946? Luckily, they were able to learn early and implement regulatory requirements that kept Alaska relatively free of the most common potato pests and diseases. In addition to our certified seed potato program, we continue to have strict import requirements. To learn more, click here <https://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/Inspection/2025/2025%20Quarantine%20Letter%20Seed%20Potato.pdf>

Buying Alaska Grown certified seed potatoes also supports these efforts to protect Alaska's environment and the potato industry. So where do I purchase Alaska Grown certified seed potatoes? We encourage the public to contact their local greenhouse. Our certified seed potato producers sell to greenhouses directly, and buying from your local greenhouse supports our local producers!

Our new \$5 Alaska Grown campaign is in full swing, promoting shelf-stable products for the month of March. As you walk up and down the aisles of your local grocery store, I think you will be surprised how many Alaska Grown products are available: barley products, honey, freeze-dried items, birch syrup, potato chips, and kelp products. Again, if you cannot find an Alaska



Grown product when shopping, we encourage you to ask for it!

Are you interested in learning more about exports and receiving consultation from an expert on your value-added, retail-ready product? If so, our marketing team will be working jointly with a contractor through our Western US Agricultural Trade Association (WUSATA) program at the 2025 Alaska Food Festival Conference in Kodiak on March 28-29, providing presentations and consultation services, which can be done in

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BAC meeting to discuss loans

The Board of Agriculture and Conservation (BAC), through the Division of Agriculture, will hold a meeting on Tuesday, March 25, 2025, at 9 a.m. The meeting's purpose is to discuss loan applications and other board business. It is open to the public.



Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/93491802354?pwd=JTVtuknuOMdj5wcfb7uYl4ZSKX2mvr.1>

Meeting ID: 934 9180 2354,
Passcode: 12211#

Dial in by phone

+1 253-205-0468, 93491802354# United States, Anchorage.
Phone conference ID: 130757#



PMC breaks ground on new cold storage barn, prepares for field season to begin



By Casey Dinkel

February at the Alaska Plant Materials Center has been nothing short of productive. Our staff has successfully

processed 34,000 lbs of “Wainwright” Slender wheatgrass. This native grass seed will be utilized for soil stabilization and erosion control for many large construction projects and mine site revegetation throughout the state this coming growing season.

PMC staff have also begun field layout and design for future foundation grass and grain fields, maintenance potato blocks, industrial hemp testing plots, and cover crop rotation fields. Additionally, the PMC was able to take advantage of the mild winter and break ground on the construction of a new cold storage barn. This barn will house most of the farm machinery utilized at the PMC. This new facility will help protect vital farm machinery from Alaska’s harsh climate, keeping equipment in better working condition for many more years.

Construction efforts also moved forward within the PMC seed cleaning facility. Several small internal renovation projects took place within the PMC seed cleaning facility to prepare space for a new seed cleaning line to be installed this coming July. This new, fully integrated line will help the PMC clean and process grass and grain seeds faster than ever before. As we speak, engineering designs are being completed, with an expected date to start significant construction in May for concrete, electrical, and building additions.

Last but certainly not least, staff at the PMC have been diligently working on a handful of smaller remodels and updating projects within PMC’s existing greenhouses. Updates like thermal curtains, larger water tanks, work benches, and storage cabinets will help staff produce more plant material faster. The PMC plans to produce over 25,000 native grass seed plugs and 5,000 native forb plugs for the 2025 growing season. These plugs will be transplanted to the field by the end of June to establish foundation seed blocks for the next several years. As we move forward into March, the longer days motivate our staff more every day, as we cannot wait for the field season to begin.

Programs: *Continued from page 2*

person or virtually. In addition to this, there will be an opportunity in Anchorage on March 27. If you are interested in learning more about these opportunities or WUSATA, please get in touch with Amanda Swanson at Amanda.Swanson@alaska.gov.



Agriculture Education/FFA programs across the state held district competitions in February and March for Prepared and Extemporaneous Public Speaking, Employment Skills, Parliamentary Procedure, and other events. Those events were held in anticipation of the 49th Alaska State FFA Convention on April 15-18. If you want more information on FFA or starting an agricultural education program, contact Taylor Nelson at taylor.nelson@alaska.gov.



2025 CALENDAR

3 Months At-A-Glance

MARCH

- 3** SCBG qualifying projects can apply
- 7** National Cereal Day
- 11** BAC meeting
- 17** St. Patrick's Day
- 18** National Agriculture Day
- 20** Spring Equinox
- 25** ARLF Application entry deadline for April BAC meeting
- 28-29** 2025 Alaska Food Festival and Conference, Kodiak
- 31** Seward's Day, Alaska Division of Agriculture offices will be closed.

APRIL

- 1** National Sourdough Bread Day
- 4** BAC meeting
- 10** National Farm Animals Day
- 15-19** 49th State FFA Convention
- 22** Earth Day

MAY

- 5** Drive Your Tractor to Work Day
- 6** Alaska Agriculture Day
- 11** Mother's Day
- 20** World Bee Day
- 26** Memorial Day
- 29** Learn About Composting Day