



ALASKA DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE NEWSLETTER

Issue 9 | April 2025

Co-op slaughterhouse in Kodiak is example of ARLF success story



By Director Bryan Scoresby

Several of us were in Kodiak for the Alaska Food Festival and Conference. We were able to take a lunch break and tour the Alutiiq hydroponic facility right in Kodiak. In the evening, we drove out to see Chris Flickinger at his ranch on the south side of the road system. We were also fortunate to be introduced to Jason Pyron, who is ranching on Sitkinak Island. He shared stories about his challenges with shipping beef off the island, by air and water transportation. The ingenuity of both ranchers brings the strength and passion that is required of Alaskans as we grow food to sell and make our living.

They were kind enough to give us a tour of the Kodiak slaughter facility. The facility was a USDA-inspected slaughter plant financed by an ARLF loan in the past. Cattle numbers have declined in Kodiak from a high of about 15,000 to the current numbers. A co-op has been formed that owns and operates the slaughterhouse, earning the money to operate the plant. The industry has changed, and all beef grown on Kodiak is now processed under custom-exempt rules.

Producers have leveraged more value by selling

to individuals rather than keeping the retail/food service sales of past years. The members manage the co-op and have paid off their ARLF loan many years ago. The slaughterhouse is truly an ARLF success story of borrowing money for a specific purpose, using it for that purpose, and paying the loan off with the earned proceeds. The property continues to be a suitable facility serving the ranchers and producers on beautiful Kodiak Island.

When we work with all of you in the field, it brings a lot of joy to our work. When we review ARLF loan applications, we can see the growth in your farm business. Sometimes, we see your financial struggles and mourn with you the difficult situation you are in. We do not have all the answers, but when we all work together searching for solutions and freely sharing information, we will have more understanding and a better outcome.

Spring always brings out the optimism of the farmer. They invest a lot of money to acquire land and equipment to raise crops or livestock. Mother Nature provides the sunshine, rain, and temperature to grow the crop. The farmer provides the rest. The business plan is to produce a quality product to sell, making a return on the investment. The returns could be in labor, money, relationships, or even personal satisfaction.

April brings new staff members to the Division



By Mia Kirk

First, the Division of Agriculture welcomes Rodney Chiddix and Ramsey Sullivan, our two newest Agricultural Development (Ag Dev) staff members.

Rodney will be working with our grants team as a Grants Administrator 2, focusing on the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBG) and the Micro-Grants for Food Security (MGFS). The SCBG seeks to increase production, consumption, access, knowledge, and sustainability of Alaska Grown specialty crops, sustain farmers' livelihoods, and strengthen local communities. The MGFS seeks to increase the quantity and quality of locally grown food through small-scale gardening,



Rodney Chiddix

herding, and livestock operations in food-insecure communities in areas of the State with significant food insecurity levels and import a substantial quantity of food.

Ramsey will work with our inspection team as a State Survey Coordinator, focusing on Cooperative Agricultural Pest Surveys (CAPs). The CAPs surveys that will be conducted this year and are supported by the USDA are Asian Defoliator Moths, Nursery Survey, Snails and Slugs, and Honeybee Pests and Diseases. These surveys target invasive pests currently unknown in Alaska, and provide for early detection and response if these unwanted pests are introduced.



Ramsey Sullivan



Our \$5 Alaska Grown Challenge campaign continues. This month, we are highlighting greenhouses and nurseries, as this time of year, they are in full production with beautiful Alaska Grown hanging baskets, bedding plants, vegetable starts, and much more! Last month's issue mentioned supporting local seed potato producers by purchasing certified seed potatoes at your local greenhouses and nurseries. That purchase not only supports those producers, but it also supports your local greenhouses and nurseries!

We need marketing interns this summer!

The marketing team will have a couple of opportunities supporting agriculture, which are located right here in our Palmer office! This is an opportunity for high school, undergraduate, and graduate students to contribute to their academic and career development while contributing to the state. If you know of a student interested in learning more about the internship program and how to apply, please visit the DNR internship website at <https://dnr.alaska.gov/commis/pic/intern.htm>. We would love to see Alaskans interested in supporting agriculture apply for this opportunity!

Lastly, the 2025 Official State of Alaska Brand Book has been published and is available to download at <https://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/Marketing/2025%20Official%20Brand%20Book.pdf>.

Mild weather gives PMC staff a head start



By Casey Dinkel

Mild weather during March was a welcome surprise for all the Alaska Plant Materials Center staff. These warmer-than-

average temperatures allowed PMC staff to get a jump start on outside facilities projects that were slated to happen in April. Staff managed to process 31,000 lbs. of “Wainwright” slender wheatgrass by the 21st of March. With all the slender wheatgrass processed, staff focused on cleaning ‘Nortran’ tufted hairgrass during the last week of March. Cleaning efforts for tufted hairgrass will likely continue through April and May 2025.

Staff leading the Industrial Hemp program also took advantage of the warmer weather and delineated the field layout of a small variety field trial in preparation for spring planting sometime in

May. This exciting trial will examine what varieties may or may not grow well in Southcentral Alaska. Future trials will be conducted in several other regions of Alaska, such as the Interior, the Kenai Peninsula, and Southeast Alaska.

The PMC’s Invasive Plant Coordinator, Cody Jacobson, laid out field logistics for treating the aquatic invasive elodea. Treatment for several lakes including Sucker, Alexander, Crescent, and Big Lake will take place this growing season. Monitoring and future treatments of these watersheds will continue as needed. As we move closer to summer, the staff at the PMC grows more anxious and can’t wait to get into the thick of field work, plant production, and construction projects.

BAC meeting to discuss loans

The Board of Agriculture and Conservation (BAC), through the Division of Agriculture, will hold a meeting on Tuesday, April 22, 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/99733421322?pwd=pkBfUx3lr6MfGD8RLHppXVJq3RLPMx.1>

Meeting ID: 997 3342 1322,
Passcode: 12211#

Dial in by phone

+1 253-205-0468, 99733421322# United States, Anchorage.
Phone conference ID: 807305#

2025 CALENDAR

3 Months At-A-Glance

APRIL

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

MAY

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

JUNE

- 3** National Egg Day
- 15** Father’s Day
- 18** Sustainable Gastronomy Day
- 21** Summer Solstice



FFA youth pack 50,000 meals for Meals of Hope

About 200 youth gathered in Palmer on Tuesday, April 15, for their Day of Service project, which kicked off the 49th State FFA Convention. The packaged meals will benefit the Mat-Su Food Bank and the Food Bank of Alaska in Anchorage.

