



The Division of Agriculture Activities

February 07, 2013

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

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In This Issue

- [Director's Note](#)
- [Agriculture Calendar](#)
- [Calling All Farmers Markets](#)
- [Ag Census Deadline Extended](#)
- [Farm to School Mini-Grant Update](#)
- [Nenana City School Kitchen Garden](#)
- [Shape and Grading of Potatoes](#)
- [Weed Free Forage and Gravel](#)
- [PMC Welcomes new Agronomist](#)
- [AK DEC, Environmental Health: Recreational Shellfish Beach Monitoring Pilot Program](#)
- [UAF Livestock Production Research](#)

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To be added to our e-newsletter list, [click here](#).

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

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Director's Note

February is always a busy month and this February is no exception. The legislative session is well under way and several bills and a resolution have been introduced that are of interest to the agriculture community. Representative Stoltze has introduced [HCR001: Relating to the establishment and operation of a state food resource development working group](#) requesting the Governor establish a state food resource development working group. This group would be comprised of state, federal, non-profit, and Native regional corporations to encourage the production and use of locally grown and harvested foods.

Representative Hughes introduced [HB40: An Act establishing a municipal tax exemption for certain farm structures](#). This legislation would allow a municipality to exempt from taxation farm structures that were involved in food production and met certain requirements. Representative Seaton has sponsored [HB89: An act relating to the rapid response to, and control of, aquatic invasive species and establishing the aquatic invasive species response fund](#). All hearings and legislation can be tracked at w3.legis.state.ak.us.

The Division of Agriculture has extended the comment period on the Plant Health Quarantine proposed regulation changes (Review them at dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_regulations.htm) until February 28th. A round table discussion is scheduled for February 13th at the Plant Materials Center, beginning at 10:00 a.m. For those that are unable to attend in person, the following call in number is available for teleconference: 1-800-315-6338, pass code 122#.

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 me an e-mail at Franci.Havemeister@Alaska.gov.

-Franci Havemeister

"People are only as happy as they make up their minds to be."

- Abraham Lincoln

Agriculture Calendar

- ▶ Thu. Feb. 7th, 7 pm - 8:30 pm: **SWCD Winter Conservation Series.** Mat-Su College. 'Dealing with Pesky, Non-Native Weeds' - [Details: here](#);
- ▶ Wed. Feb. 13th, 10:00 am: **Plant Health/Quarantine Roundtable Discussion.** Palmer. [Details: here](#); [Teleconference: 800-315-6338 \(passcode 122#\)](#)
- ▶ Thu. Feb. 14th - Fri. Feb. 15th: **Alaska Peony Grower's Winter Conference.** Fairbanks. [Details: here](#); [Agenda: here](#); [Registration: here](#).
- ▶ Thu. Feb. 14th, 7 pm - 8:30 pm: **SWCD Winter Conservation Series.** Mat-Su College. 'Growing a Garden into a Hobby Farm' - [Details: here](#);
- ▶ Tue. Feb. 19th - Wed. Feb. 20th: **2013 Alaska Produce Growers Conference.** Palmer Depot. [Agenda: here](#); [Registration details: here](#);
- ▶ Thu. Feb. 21st, 7 pm - 8:30 pm: **SWCD Winter Conservation Series.** Mat-Su College. 'Low-Cost Framing / Construction' - [Details: here](#);
- ▶ Thu. Feb. 23rd, 9 am - 3:30 pm: **Delta Farm Forum.** Delta High School Gym, Delta. [Details: here](#);
- ▶ Tue. Feb. 26th, 1:00 pm: **Board of Agriculture & Conservation Meeting.** Palmer. [Details: here](#);
- ▶ Thu. Feb. 28th, 7 pm - 8:30 pm: **SWCD Winter Conservation Series.** Mat-Su College. 'Bee Keeping Basics' - [Details: here](#);

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

Land Sales & Grazing Leases

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

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Marketing Section

Make sure your Farmers Market makes the list!

Even though it's only February, the Marketing Team is hard at work preparing the 2013 Statewide Farmers Market List. The Division uses this list to promote and publicize farmers markets – we've already received inquiries from the Visitor Industry about when the list will be available.

Remember that in addition to all your loyal, Alaskan customers, tourists also want to know the when/where/how often infor-

mation about your market, so please make sure that your market has provided all relevant information to our office!

You will be receiving an email from our new VISTA Volunteer, Kyla Byers soon. Be sure to respond so that we can get the word out about your market!



Follow Alaska Grown on Facebook at [facebook.com/dnr.alaskagrown](https://www.facebook.com/dnr.alaskagrown) for all of the latest updates.

USDA Extends Census Deadline; It's Not Too Late to Complete the Ag Census

WASHINGTON, Feb. 6, 2013 –Farmers and ranchers across the country are heeding the call to have their voices heard and their farms represented in the 2012 Census of Agriculture. With 1.4 million Census forms returned, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is thanking everyone for speaking up for their communities, their industry and their future by sending in their Census form. For those who missed the deadline, USDA reminds producers that their farm is important and needs to be counted. As a result, Census forms are still being accepted.

"Information from the Census of Agriculture helps USDA monitor trends and better understand the needs in agriculture," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "Providing industry stakeholders, community leaders, lawmakers and individual farm operators with the most comprehensive and accurate U.S. agricultural reports, we all help ensure the tools are available to make informed, sound decisions to protect the future of American agriculture."

Conducted every five years by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the Census provides detailed data covering nearly every facet of U.S. agriculture. It looks at land use and ownership, production practices, expenditures and other factors that affect the way farmers and ranchers do business. The deadline for submitting Census forms was February 4, and many farmers and ranchers have responded. However, those who did not respond by the original due date will receive another copy of the form in the mail to give them another opportunity.

"Accurate and comprehensive information from all farmers and ranchers is important so that the Census can provide a true picture of U.S. agriculture today and help

everyone plan appropriately for future," said Vilsack. "This level of information is only gathered and released once every five years, so we need the participation of every producer to ensure the agricultural industry and rural America receive the representation that will provide them with the most benefit and value."

Farmers and ranchers can return their forms by mail or online by visiting a secure website, www.agcensus.usda.gov. Federal law requires all agricultural producers to participate in the Census and requires NASS to keep all individual information confidential.

For more information about the Census, including helpful tips on completing your Census form, visit www.agcensus.usda.gov or call 1-888-4AG-STAT (1-888-424-7828). The Census of Agriculture is your voice, your future, your responsibility.

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BOOST
YOUR
RURAL SERVICES
Fill out your
Agriculture Census.
Visit
www.agcensus.usda.gov

USDA
United States Department of Agriculture
National Agricultural Statistics Service

2012 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE
YOUR VOICE. YOUR FUTURE. YOUR RESPONSIBILITY.

It's not too late to participate in the USDA Census of Agriculture. Visit www.agcensus.usda.gov.

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MMM&S

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

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Alaska Farm to School Program Update

Farm to School Mini-Grant update

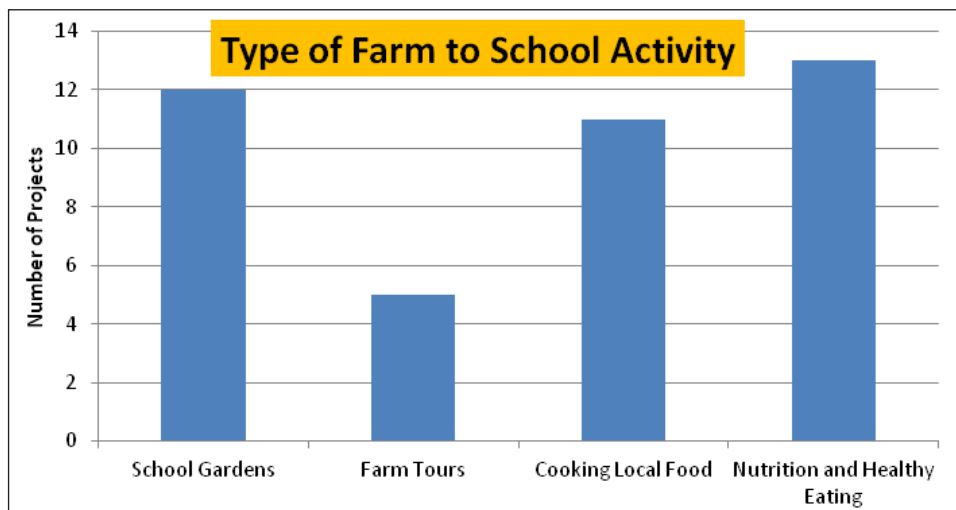
The Farm to School program is looking forward to announcing the next round of mini-grants sometime in March. This grant opportunity is made possible due to the Division's ongoing collaboration with the Department of Health and Social Services, Obesity Prevention and Control Program.

As we prepare to offer more grants, we are busy finalizing last year's grants. We have finished our 2011 Alaska Farm to School mini-grant report and can be found on the website at: dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_FTS.htm.

All of the grants were fascinating and we reviewed them with interest. We are pulling together a summary report to share successes from around Alaska. Altogether there were 18 completed projects that spanned the entire state; from Thorne Bay to Bethel.

Over 1400 students were involved in the projects involved directly, and over 3000 were indirectly impacted. (students who benefited from projects that took place; i.e eating a tasty local lunch). While the projects only numbered 18, a total of 35 schools were involved, as students shared knowledge (and food) beyond their school to others in the community.

The top food items students either learned about or grew were potatoes, carrots, lettuce, broccoli, kale and beets. Projects were recognized in a newspaper article 9 times, newsletters 51 times, school announcements 47 times, and multiple mentions on the radio and social media. As seen in the graph the most common projects were about nutrition and healthy eating, school gardens, and cooking with local food.



For updates, news, grant opportunities, and announcements join our listserv at: [list.state.ak.us/soalists/akfarmtoschool/jl.htm](mailto:listserv@alaska.gov)

Remember to check us out on facebook at: www.facebook.com/AlaskaFarmToSchool.

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.



**PALMER,
APRIL 6th**

SAVE THE DATE:



**Alaska Master Gardeners Conference:
Backyard Food Security 2013**

April 6th, 2013: 8:00 am - 5:00pm
Palmer Community Center (Depot),
610 W. Valley Way, Palmer AK 99645

More Details @ MatSuMasterGardeners.org
Email: matsumastergardeners@gmail.com

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

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Alaska Farm-to-School Program Update

Nenana City Public School Kitchen Garden

The Nenana city public school kitchen garden project, which has received funding for two years, is making impressive strides to sustainability. Only half as much funding was required this year as was required the first year. This year, the kitchen garden even made a small profit, which will be reinvested into the garden next summer.

The Nenana kitchen garden doubled in size this year and expanded their selection of vegetables to include bok choy, chard, beets, and turnips. The Head Start program helped start the squashes and pumpkins in May as a fun agricultural lesson. The produce that was grown was sold in a new Saturday market in Nenana and also the school lunch program.

Potatoes and Pumpkin/Squash had the largest yield. The school lunch program was able to purchase nearly \$800 worth of product to serve in the meals.



Virginia Young harvests produce from the Nenana garden to sell to the school nutrition services for lunch.



Pest Detection / Inspection Section

Grading Reminder! Shape in Potatoes

US No 1 requires that the potato be "fairly well shaped." Fairly well shaped is defined as not materially pointed, dumbbell-shaped or otherwise materially deformed. Please see the USDA image at right for maximum allowances.

US No 2 requires that the potato be not "seriously misshapen." Seriously misshapen means pointed, dumbbell shaped or otherwise badly deformed. Please refer to USDA image number 18 for maximum allowances.



*Fairly well shaped.
U.S. No. 1 - maximum allowed*



*Not seriously misshapen.
U.S. No. 2 - maximum allowed*



For more information about potato inspections, visit the inspection section on the web at: dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_is.htm.

If you would like additional information or have questions about grading tolerances, please contact one of our inspectors:

- Barb Hanson; 907-761-3854
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- Mia Kirk; 907-761-3853
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Plant Materials Center

Weed Free Gravel and Forage Inspector Training: Coming this Spring

The Division of Agriculture has **Weed-Free Certification** programs which strive to prevent invasive species from entering the state or being distributed throughout the state through contaminated gravel, hay and straw.

The Weed-Free certification program will be conducting inspector training in April or May at the PMC. If you are inter-



ested in becoming an inspector or learning more about the programs standards and protocols, please consider attending the inspector training this spring.

To learn more about the Weed-Free Certification programs, pick up a brochure from the Division of Agriculture or the Plant Materials Center, or your local Soil and Water Conservation District. You can download a brochure and learn more about the program by visiting plants.alaska.gov/invasives/weed-free/. Contact Invasive Plants Coordinator Brianne Blackburn at 907-745-8785, if you have questions, or to sign up.

Plant Materials Center Welcomes New Agronomist



Rusty Foreaker

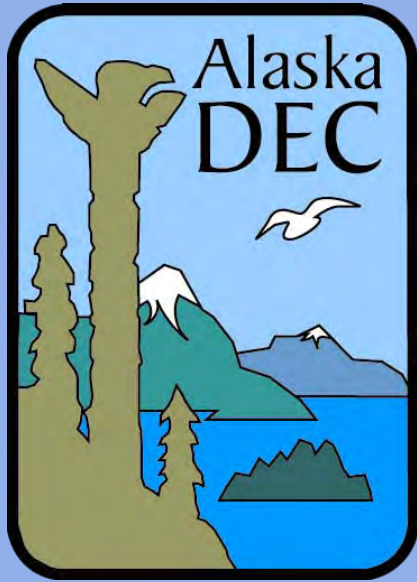
The PMC welcomed a new Agronomist to the horticulture program in January. Rusty Foreaker comes to the Plant Materials Center from Northern Latitude CEA, the former producer of 'Hydrolicious' micro greens. He was a

co-founder and partner of the Anchorage based company that produced vegetable greens for Alaskan restaurants.

Previously, he helped in the development of the geothermal, hydroponic, greenhouse facilities at Chena Hot Springs Resort. Rusty has pioneered the use of controlled environment agriculture in Alaska, and he brings considerable experience to the PMC's new horticulture program. Contact Rusty at Rusty.Foreaker@Alaska.gov or 745- 8062.

Farm Business Workshop
March 21 - 22, 2013
9 AM - 4 PM
Mat-Su College, Palmer, AK
Register online at aktfarmland.org
or call 907-745-3336 for more information
Travel & housing stipends now available

USDA RMA
RightRisk
www.RightRisk.org
Alaska GROWN
ALASKA FARMLAND TRUST



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Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation: Division of Environmental Health

Recreational Shellfish Beach Monitoring Pilot Program

Article contributed by Jennifer Kosin

An exciting new project that the Environmental Health (EH) Director's Office kicked off in the summer of 2012 is the Recreational Shellfish Beach Monitoring Pilot Program. The program, started in May of 2012, is aimed at tracking levels of Paralytic Shellfish Toxin (PST) found in shellfish harvested on popular recreational harvest beaches in the state.

EH partnered with local organizations in four communities for this pilot program:

- **Haines**, with the Chilkoot Indian Association;
- **Sand Point**, with the Qagan Tayagungin Tribe;
- **Kodiak**, with the Kodiak Island Borough School District; and
- **Kachemak Bay**, with the Kachemak Bay Research Reserve.

While the project cannot certify beaches as "safe" for harvest, it can achieve the goals of educating more Alaskans on the risks of Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP) and gathering baseline data. Over the course of time, the hope is that the data can be correlated to other environmental data and compared to naturally occurring environmental events to provide scientists more information about PSP.

Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP) is caused by consuming shellfish contaminated with algae that contain a toxin, PST,

which is harmful to humans. This toxin is so poisonous that as little as one milligram is enough to kill an adult. The toxin can be found in clams, mussels, geoducks, oysters, scallops, and the guts of crab. While shellfish commercially harvested and sold are regularly tested for PST and considered safe for consumption, recreational beaches around Alaska are not tested. Unfortunately, there is no guaranteed indicator to tell recreational harvesters whether the shellfish they collect are safe to consume or not.

The Recreational Shellfish Beach Monitoring Pilot Project aims to educate the Alaskan community on the risks associated with consuming recreationally harvested shellfish, while maintaining an appreciation and respect for the subsistence lifestyle.

Community partners from Haines, Sand Point, Kachemak Bay, and Kodiak are tasked with harvesting shellfish and preparing samples according to the Environmental Health Laboratory (EHL) Sample Submission Manual. Representatives from each community send the samples to the EHL, where they are tested for the toxin. Test results are then provided to each representative to share with their community. Educational opportunities to learn more about PST are also provided.



Recreationally harvested shellfish can contain a deadly toxin PST. The Shellfish Beach Monitoring Pilot Program which aims to increase public safety and awareness of Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning.

For more information on the Recreational Shellfish Project and Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning, visit dec.alaska.gov/eh/RecShell/.



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& AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES

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UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS

School of Natural Resources & Agricultural Sciences

UAF research will help improve livestock production in Alaska

Article contributed by Nancy Tarnai

Yes, Alaska is big. But that doesn't mean the state has expansive cattle ranches like Montana or Wyoming. The majority of Alaska's livestock is raised on small parcels of land.

With that in mind, UAF School of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences Associate Professor Norman Harris has launched a new research project at the Matanuska Experiment Farm in Palmer. The goals are to define an animal unit appropriate to Alaska's environment and to quantify the effectiveness of techniques to distribute grazing activities in small pastures.

"Many ranches have 20,000 acres, but that is not what we have in Alaska," Harris said. "Here 10 acres is considered a big pasture. I wanted to study how to get better distribution of animals on a small pasture."

The five-year project began this year, and Harris has conducted feeding trials to determine how much forage and haylage the animals consume. Nationally, a 1,000-pound cow with or without a calf will consume between 600 to 800 pounds (dry weight) of forage in a month. Harris wants to see how the national average compares to Alaska.

His subjects are five dry heifers, predominantly Angus beef cattle, outfitted with global positioning system (GPS) collars that

track each animal's position as they move around the pasture. Harris can tell what the cattle are eating by the places they visit. "We can see what the patterns are," he said.

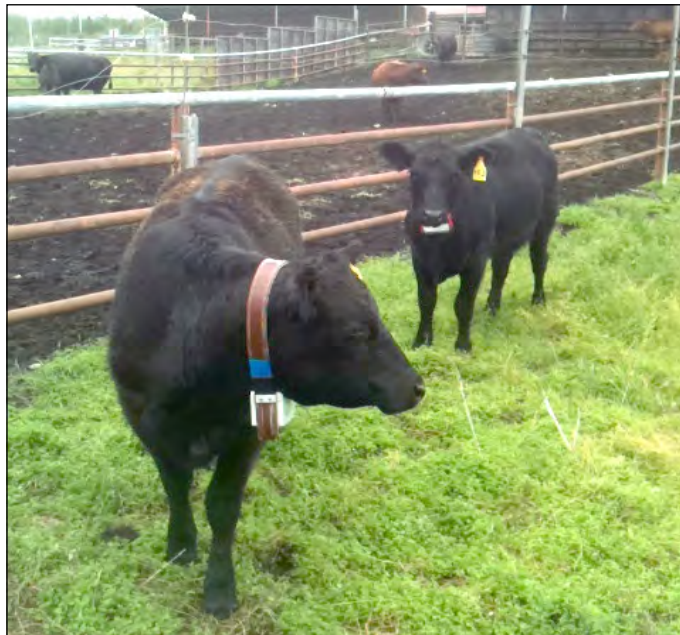
With an eye on his computer, Harris is able to tell if the animals are grazing, walking or resting. Each position is time stamped, allowing the researchers to see how the patterns change over time.

This could give producers information about what types of forage crops to plant. Should the animals need to be encouraged to move to other areas, techniques such as burning or fertilizing could be used to accomplish that.

"We want to find out better ways to raise livestock in Alaska and increase our red meat products and food security," Harris said. He hopes this research will encourage more people to start raising animals, which could help the state's economy and improve Alaskans' health.

While Harris began the project with cattle, he plans to eventually add horses and sheep to the study. Then he would like to include alternative livestock, such as yak. The research is funded by the Hatch Act formula funds, which benefit agricultural research at state Agricultural Experiment Stations.

Photo: Norm Harris, UAF



Cows at the Matanuska Experiment Farm were fitted with rapid-collection Global Positioning System (GPS) collars which collect data at one-second intervals