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<http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag>

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To add or remove your name from our newsletter list [click here](#).

Questions or Comments?  
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# The Division of Agriculture Activities



## Director's Note

This year it seems spring has come and gone all winter. The temperature rose to unseasonably warm weather in December and then see-sawed back and forth for the next three months. It has been an abnormally mild winter and now I recently read some are predicting an unseasonably warm summer. Time will tell, but Alaska's weather has been anything but predictable and keeps everyone guessing what next week will bring.

As we all know, these are challenging fiscal times in Alaska. With the price of oil hovering around \$50.00 a barrel and the legislature grappling to deal with a \$3.5 billion dollar deficit, the budget discussions are difficult. This year's cuts will affect agencies and programs across the board. The Division of Agriculture is watching the Senate side closely as their decisions will determine if there is a next step in the budget process. The House closed out and passed the operating budget to the Senate. The House closeout included the elimination of the Farm to School Program and one inspector position, and added a "One Time Increment" (OTI) language to the Potato Program and to McKinley Meat & Sausage (MMM&S). The OTI language funds the programs for only one year and then will require legislative approval for further funding. These programs are all before the Senate now. The Senate has the ability to accept the budget as put forward by the House or make changes. Any changes made or differences between the House and Senate budget will be addressed by the Conference Committee. The Conference Committee is made up of 6 members from both the House and Senate and will make the semi-final decision before the budget is passed to full body for final approval. Stay tuned.....

We continue to watch multiple bills that may impact agriculture – they are as follows:

- HB20 – “An Act limiting the application of neonicotinoid pesticides.”
- HB 38 – “An Act relating to the rapid response to, and control of, aquatic invasive species and establishing the aquatic invasive species response fund.”
- HB 53 – “An Act relating to the application of pesticides and broadcast chemicals in certain public places near fish habitat or water used for human consumption and on state-owned land, land leased by or to the state, state highways, and state-owned rights-of-way.”
- HB 59 – “An Act relating to marijuana concentrates; and providing for an effective date.”
- HB 92 – “An Act relating to the labeling of food; relating to the misbranding of food; requiring labeling of food produced with genetic engineering; and providing for an effective date.”
- HB 100 – “An Act establishing a credit against the net income tax for an in-state processing facility that manufactures urea or ammonia; and providing for an effective date.”
- SB 8 – “An Act relating to the regulation and production of industrial hemp.”

## ARLF Services

[http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag\\_arlf.htm](http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_arlf.htm)

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- SB 62 – “An Act relating to the regulation of marijuana, marijuana testing, marijuana products, and marijuana accessories; relating to the licensing of marijuana retailers, producers, processors, boutique producers, brokers, and home growers; relating to taxation of marijuana; and providing for an effective date.

The Division of Agriculture is interested in hearing from you, the agriculture community, regarding your interest in utilizing inmate labor if it were made available in your area. Last fall, a pilot program was trialed which provided inmate labor on a farm in the Mat-Su which was experiencing difficulty finding laborers. It was considered a great success by the producer. If you are interested in exploring this option please send me an e-mail or give me a call. The Department of Corrections (DOC) would like to get a better understanding of the numbers, needs, and regions of interest. It is important to note that a qualifying correctional facility must be located in your general area to participate in this program and that DOC and Division of Agriculture are working together to see if inmate labor is a viable solution to on-farm labor challenges.

Also, don't forget that Alaska Agriculture Day is just around the corner. If you or your organization has an event scheduled to celebrate that day or week let us know and we will add it our division calendar. This is our opportunity to highlight and educate our friends, neighbors, and consumers about what Alaskan farmers, ranchers, and producers do so well!

Please take the time to read through the newsletter to find out more about upcoming grant opportunities, seed sales, and agriculture events.

As always, please give me a call if you have any questions at 761-3867 or send me an email at [franci.havemeister@alaska.gov](mailto:franci.havemeister@alaska.gov).

~ Franci

In the spring, at the end of the day,  
you should smell like dirt.

~Margaret Atwood



## Agriculture Calendar

- **Mon. April 6** **Alaska Specialty Crop Competitive Grant Webinar** 11-12pm. *Details:* [here](#)
- **Thur. April 9** **Intro to Alaska Gardening (Winter Conservation Series - Free)** Mat-Su College, Palmer. 7-8:30pm. *Details:* [here](#)
- **Thur. April 16** **Tree Care, Maintenance & Pruning (Winter Conservation Series - Free)** Mat-Su College, Palmer. 7-8:30pm. *Details:* [here](#)
- **Sat. April 18** **Kenai Peninsula Ag Forum** Kenai Peninsula Fairgrounds. 16200 Sterling Hwy., Ninilchik. 9am-4pm. *Details:* [here](#)
- **Thur. April 23** **BAC Regular Meeting** Division of Agriculture, 1800 Glenn Hwy., Suite 12, Palmer. 1pm. *Details:* [here](#)
- **Thur. April 23-24** **Food Safety Modernization Act Public Meeting** Webcast. 4:30 am. *Details:* [here](#)

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

## Marketing Section

### ATTENTION Alaska Farmers Market Managers!

The Division of Agriculture is updating the **2015 Farmers Market list**.

Please review your listing for accuracy, or if you are a new or existing market that would like to be added, contact us at the information provided below.

The existing 2014 Farmers Market list can be viewed at:

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/Marketing/FarmersMarkets.pdf> or  
<http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/sourcebook/ALLMarketIndex2014.html>.

Email your updates or additions to [Jacquelyn.Schade@alaska.gov](mailto:Jacquelyn.Schade@alaska.gov) or call (907) 761-3858.

### Alaska Farmers' Market Quest Program Market Season 2014 Wrap-Up

The 2014 market season was very successful for the Alaska Farmers' Market Quest Program (AFMQP). AFMQP provided grants to participating farmers' markets to cover all costs of taking Quest (EBT machine fees, advertising, staffing, etc.) as well as a matching program. The matching program matched the first \$20 spent on a Quest card at participating markets. In 2013 matching incentives were offered the first market day of every month, while in 2014, they were offered every market day. The statewide Quest and match total was \$30,000 (\$13,000 match) in 2013 and in 2014 the total was \$35,000 (\$17,000 match). Additionally the number of Quest transactions increased from 884 (2013) to 954 (2014). This data indicates that the increased availability of funding for matching incentives drew more Quest customers to participating markets.



AFMQP also provided an indirect benefit to all participating markets. The EBT machines covered by grant funding also accepted processed debit and credit card transactions. Before the funding from this grant many markets were only able to accept cash. In total, the statewide total amount of Quest, debit, and credit revenue from markets in AFMQP in 2014 was \$140,000. AFMQP created a win-win scenario in participating communities. It stimulated local economies and helped to stem the tide of obesity at its source.

## Inspection Staff

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## Showcase your **Alaska Grown** products at the 2015 Alaska State Fair in Palmer!

Contact Pamella Meekin [pamella@alaskastatefair.org](mailto:pamella@alaskastatefair.org) to take advantage of this unique opportunity for special booth space & rates available to Alaska Grown members only!

This opportunity is open to any Alaska Grown member with products to sell or display; such as raw fruits & vegetables, peonies, packaged meat, value-added products, etc. Food items that are considered “ready to eat” will not be allowed.

## Pest Detection / Inspection Section

### Attention *Organic* Producers

**The USDA is currently conducting its  
2014 Organic Producer Survey, and needs your input**

The 2014 Organic Survey is a complete inventory of all known organic producers that are certified, exempt from certification (those grossing less than \$5,000 annually from organic sales), or transitioning to organic production. The study serves as a census of all organic operations, as directed under the FY2014 Farm Appropriations Bill.

The USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service mailed survey forms to producers in January, and producers can respond either by mail or online until April 3rd, 2015.

The agriculture industry and all levels of government use data from the survey to prepare a wide variety of organic agriculture-related programs, economic models, legislative initiatives, and market analysis and feasibility studies. These programs directly affect the lives and communities of growers, and help to improve agriculture production technologies and practices. All responses remain confidential, and will help USDA to develop programs and services for organic crop and livestock producers.

The online survey can be accessed on the web at:

[http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/Organic\\_Survey](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/Organic_Survey)

## The Division of Agriculture is pleased to announce the availability of the 2015 Specialty Crop Competitive Grant (SCCG)

Find full details about the application process on our website at [http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag\\_grants.htm](http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_grants.htm)

A webinar will be held to introduce attendees to the grant process and answer questions:

April 6, 2015: Webinar 11:00am – 12:00pm

Sign up to attend this webinar at <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/7902975485347156994>

The deadline for submitting a Letter of Intent for the 2015 SCCG is April 15th, 2015. Questions about the 2015 SCCG should be directed to Amy Pettit at 761-3864 or via email at [amy.pettit@alaska.gov](mailto:amy.pettit@alaska.gov).

## Mt. McKinley Meat & Sausage

[http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag\\_mmms.htm](http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_mmms.htm)

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## Land Sales & Grazing Leases

[http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag\\_sales.htm](http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_sales.htm)

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## Tuesday, May 5<sup>th</sup> is Alaska Agriculture Day!

Alaska Agriculture Day is a great way to inspire youth, engage your local farmers, and have fun forming your own agricultural connections. This year the Farm to School Program wants to hear how you and your community are celebrating Alaska Agriculture Day. The Division of Agriculture will announce an opportunity for you to share what you are doing, enter to win an Alaska Grown prize, and be featured in the newsletter and social media sites.

Anyone engaging in agriculture education during the week of May 3<sup>rd</sup> is welcome to submit their activities. Do you need ideas for activities? Check out our Alaska Agriculture Day Packets on the Farm to School website:

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/FarmToSchool/AlaskaAgricultureDayLessons.pdf>

Keep an eye out in next month's newsletter to hear how to submit your activity information.



## Alaska Bee Registration

Spring is here and it is time to start thinking about bee hives and honey. In accordance with Alaska Law AS 03.47.030 & 11 ACC 35.010 – 35.020) "ALL" bees must be registered in the State of Alaska.

Why is it important to register your bees? This information allows the division to respond in-case of an outbreak of Foulbrood or any other bee related diseases. If an outbreak or suspicion of a diseased hive is reported, the division will take a sample and have it tested.

The registration form is now [available online](#) at the Division of Agriculture website. Under the "Programs" title you will see a category titled "Inspection Services", there you will find "Bee Registration" to directly access the [application](#).

When you open the application online, you can type your information straight into the application. When you have completed the form, click "Save As" to save for your own records. If you choose to email the document in, simply click on the "Email" button at the top of the application, and if you are using Outlook or something similar (a "desktop application"), it will automatically fill out the necessary information and attach your application. If you are using "Internet Email" you will need to copy [Kirk.Brown@alaska.gov](mailto:Kirk.Brown@alaska.gov) into the "To" line, and attach your application. Hard copies of the application are also available and accepted at the Division at: Division of Agriculture, 1800 Glenn Highway, Suite 12, Palmer, AK 99645, phone: 745-7200, fax: 745-7112. Feel free to contact us if you have any questions.



## Plant Materials Center

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## Job Opening at Northern Service Center

A permanent full-time **Loan Analyst** vacancy located at the Northern Service Center in **Delta Junction, Alaska** is being advertised under the following USAjobs.gov job announcement ID numbers:

FSA-15-0694-AK-PBP  
FSA-15-0695-AK-PBP  
FSA-15-0697-AK-PBP  
FSA-15-0698-AK-PBP

Applicants wishing to be considered for all announcements must submit separate and complete application packages for each vacancy announcement. The closing date is April 6, 2015. We are looking for applicants with a passion for helping Alaska farmers succeed, and an interest in working with a great team of USDA farm professionals. If you are interested and meet the qualifications for the position, you are encouraged to apply. Please go to the Federal Government's Official Job site USAjobs to view this vacancy announcement <https://www.usajobs.gov/>.

## Plant Materials Center (PMC)

### PMC Staff Presented at Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE) Conference, Fairbanks

The Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE) conference was held in Fairbanks on March 3-5. In 1988 Congress established SARE to promote ecologically sound agricultural practices, sustain rural communities, and to address the disappearance of the diverse family farm. SARE does this by supporting research and educational programs, networking through newsletters, conferences, and listservs, and encouraging farmers to get more involved in sustainable agricultural practices through grants. Long-term sustainability of Alaska's agricultural community will depend on the cooperation and sharing of information among ourselves.

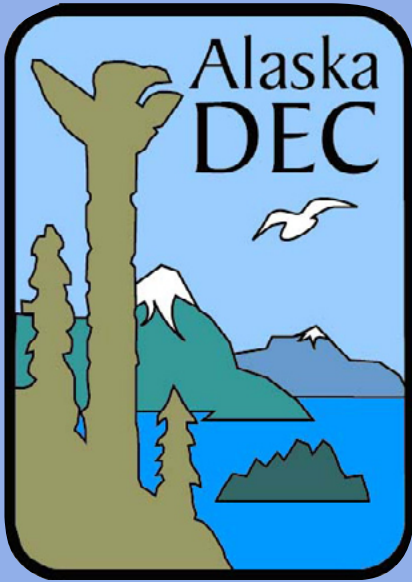
Plant Materials Center staff, Heather Stewart, Rusty Foreaker and Todd Steinlage presented topics on herbicides, apple rootstock trials, and the PMC Pathology Program, respectively.

The 2016 conference will be held in Anchorage. To join the SARE listserv and to follow progress as plans progress visit <https://lists.alaska.edu/mailman/listinfo/ak-sare-l>.

## 2015 PMC Seed Sale for Commercial Growers

The Plant Materials Center seed sale program will be switching from a bi-annual spring/fall seed sale to an annual seed sale thus making seed available throughout the production season. This year, the seed sale will begin on **April 15<sup>th</sup> and run through September** while supplies last. A complete list of available product will be posted on <http://plants.alaska.gov/> by April 14.

For more information please contact Peter Johnson at 745-8105 or [peter.johnson@alaska.gov](mailto:peter.johnson@alaska.gov).



## Environmental Health

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# Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation: Division of Environmental Health

## **Pigs Respond Differently to Stress**

Farmers select for pigs that efficiently convert feed to weight gain but a recent study showed that breeding for improved feed efficiency may decrease the animal's stress adaptation, causing aggressive behavior, increased fighting, and decreased piglet survival. Residual feed intake (RFI) is a way to genetically select pigs for feed efficiency. The RFI model developed at Iowa State University measures the difference between observed and expected feed intake, based on a given amount of growth and backfat. In a recent study, 2 different genetic lines were selected; one with low-RFI pigs (which are more feed-efficient) and one with high-RFI pigs (which are less feed-efficient).

The study looked at stress hormones in these 2 groups of pigs and their behavior in response to a stressful situation. The study showed that low-RFI (more feed efficient) gilts tend to lower levels of stress hormones and tend to be less responsive to the stress challenge. They also recovered back-to-normal behavior compared to the high-RFI (less feed efficient) gilts. So low-RFI (more feed efficient) barrows were less stressed during the stress test compared to high-RFI (less feed efficient) barrows. Overall, these findings suggest that low-RFI pigs may be better at coping with stressful events, which in turn likely contributes to their increased feed efficiency. This is important to the swine industry because they show that pigs can undergo genetic selection for improved feed efficiency without negatively impacting swine welfare in regards to the stress response.





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## UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS

### School of Natural Resources and Extension

#### **Agricultural research by a Washington State University graduate student brings Alaska a step closer to a wheat variety adapted to the far north**

*Story contributed by Nancy Tarnai*

Karen Hills, who grew up in Fairbanks and worked summers at the University of Alaska Fairbanks Large Animal Research Station during high school, crossed several types of wheat to try to achieve a hard red spring variety that matures early and is shatter resistant. Most of her work was done at WSU's Mount Vernon Research Center but she visited the Fairbanks Experiment Farm at UAF to see how the wheat was growing.

"This was a great opportunity to see how I could collaborate with UAF folks to benefit the work in Alaska," Hills said. "We chose varieties that show promise." They were Ingal, Roblin, AC Intrepid and CDC Bounty.

She said she hoped her work will eventually give more options for well-adapted wheat to grow in Alaska's climate. "The varieties that were available were developed a long time ago and there hadn't been much improvement," Hills said. "I hope the work I did is helping growers."

Professor Mingchu Zhang at UAF said the primary purpose of Hills' research was to overcome the shattering issue of Ingal in the state's short growing season. "After crossing, we are now in the field and selection processes," Zhang said. Over the past three years, he's had only one year of reliable data due to extreme weather conditions. "We will continue for the selection until we select a no shattering, short growing wheat variety for Alaska," he said.

Wheat suitable for Alaska's short season would be in high demand, Zhang said. "If we have wheat that can grow here, then we will be able to provide Alaska

*continued on next page*



Karen Hills conducted wheat research for Alaska at Washington State University.





## UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS

### School of Natural Resources & Agricultural Sciences

with wheat flour. That will be big progress for Alaska's food security."

One farmer in Palmer grew the new wheat in 2013, and sold all his products in Anchorage markets.

Hills, who earned a Ph.D. in crop science from WSU, credited Glen Franklin of Delta Junction for helping fund her research. Franklin, retired from the Alaska Division of Agriculture, established an endowed graduate fellowship in crops and soils at WSU, stipulating that the research should benefit Alaska and Washington.

Hills began her work in the WSU greenhouses at Mount Vernon, grew the new crosses in the field and provided germplasm to UAF researchers Zhang and Bob Van Veldhuizen.

The work continues now at UAF. "We need to make continued evaluations of the three crosses for agronomic qualities, non-shatter seed when ripe, early maturity, high yields, no lodging, all compared to the same agronomic qualities of the parents Ingal and the three Canadian wheat varieties," Van Veldhuizen said. "We need to do this over a number of years to rule out goofy weather conditions like the drought of 2013 and the cool wet of 2014 at Fairbanks, Delta Junction, and Palmer to see if it does better at one location. And then, after comparing the three crosses, we need to evaluate at least one, perhaps all three, if all three are good enough, for milling and baking qualities.

"After all that we will pick the best selection for eventual release as a named variety," Van Veldhuizen said. "All of which will take years yet to complete."

He said another potential graduate student project at WSU would be evaluating the genetics within each cross to look at the genes for early maturity to determine if there is a link between early maturity and head shatter.

"The biggest problem will be how to do all this in times of increasing budget restrictions," he said.

