



December 3, 2015

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

## Director's Office

**Franci Havemeister, Director**  
907-761-3867  
[Franci.Havemeister@alaska.gov](mailto:Franci.Havemeister@alaska.gov)

**Curt Sandvik**  
907-761-3866  
[Curt.Sandvik@alaska.gov](mailto:Curt.Sandvik@alaska.gov)

**Lora Haralson**  
907-761-3851  
[Lora.Haralson@alaska.gov](mailto:Lora.Haralson@alaska.gov)

**Rebecca Jeffers**  
907-761-3850  
[Rebecca.Jeffers@alaska.gov](mailto:Rebecca.Jeffers@alaska.gov)

Fax: [907-745-7112](tel:907-745-7112)

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

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

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# The Division of Agriculture Activities



## Director's Note

First and foremost, I would like to thank the agriculture community for the work that you do. As a result of your labors, Alaskans have the opportunity to purchase local product that is grown in communities around Alaska; and it is your quality products that have made the **Alaska Grown** program the most recognized logo in the state.

I want to thank you for your commitment to agriculture in Alaska and to strongly encourage you to make your voices heard this upcoming legislative session. As state agencies prepare to go into this legislative session, agencies that provide services to the public (such as health, safety, and education) tend to be safeguarded while those that fall outside those areas are potentially facing additional reductions. If Division of Agriculture programs benefit your farm operation – this is a crucial year to make that known. Alaska is facing an unprecedented budget shortfall. If the agriculture community supports continued funding of the programs that promote agriculture this is the year to put differences aside and pull together and take a united stand.

It is bitter-sweet that I will leave this position on December 4th. I am thankful for the opportunity I had working with the agriculture community but I must admit, I am looking forward to spending time with my ever growing family. My family welcomed three new grand babies during the past three weeks. We now have a grand total of eight!

*I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a healthy, happy and prosperous new year.*

From my family to yours, *Franci Havemeister*



## Marketing Staff

[http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag\\_ms.htm](http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_ms.htm)

David Driscoll, Manager

907-761-3861

[David.Driscoll@alaska.gov](mailto:David.Driscoll@alaska.gov)

Johanna Herron 907-761-3870

[Johanna.Herron@alaska.gov](mailto:Johanna.Herron@alaska.gov)



## ARLF Services

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

Amanda Swanson, Loan Officer

907-761-3869

[Amanda.Swanson@alaska.gov](mailto:Amanda.Swanson@alaska.gov)

## Agriculture Calendar

- Fri., Dec. 4 **Board of Agriculture & Conservation Meeting.** Division of Agriculture, 1800 Glenn Highway, Suite. 12, Palmer. 1pm. *Details:* [here](#)
- Fri., Dec. 4 **Solicitation of Interest: Director, Division of Agriculture** Deadline 3pm. *Details:* [here](#)

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

## Marketing

### FDA Requests Comments on Use of the Term “Natural” on Food Labeling



Because of the changing landscape of food ingredients and production, and in direct response to consumers who have requested that the FDA explore the use of the term “natural,” the agency is asking the public to provide information and comments on the use of this term in the labeling of human food products.

The FDA is taking this action in part because it received three Citizen Petitions asking that the agency define the term “natural” for use in food labeling and one Citizen Petition asking that the agency prohibit the term “natural” on food labels. We also note that some Federal courts, as a result of litigation between private parties, have requested administrative determinations from the FDA regarding whether food products containing ingredients produced using genetic engineering or foods containing high fructose corn syrup may be labeled as “natural.”

Although the FDA has not engaged in rulemaking to establish a formal definition for the term “natural,” we do have a longstanding policy concerning the use of “natural” in human food labeling. The FDA has considered the term “natural” to mean that nothing artificial or synthetic (including all color additives regardless of source) has been included in, or has been added to, a food that would not normally be expected to be in that food. However, this policy was not intended to address food production methods, such as the use of pesticides, nor did it explicitly address food processing or manufacturing methods, such as thermal technologies, pasteurization, or irradiation. The FDA also did not consider whether the term “natural” should describe any nutritional or other health benefit.

Specifically, the FDA asks for information and public comment on questions such as: Whether it is appropriate to define the term “natural,” If so, how the agency should define “natural,” and How the agency should determine appropriate use of the term on food labels.

The FDA is accepting public comments beginning on November 12, 2015. To electronically submit comments to the docket, visit <http://www.regulations.gov> and type FDA-2014-N-1207 in the search box.

Submit documents by mail to Division of Dockets Management, HFA-305, Food and Drug Administration, 5630 Fishers Lane, Room 1061, Rockville, MD 20852. Be sure to include docket number FDA-2014-N-1207 on each page of your written comments.

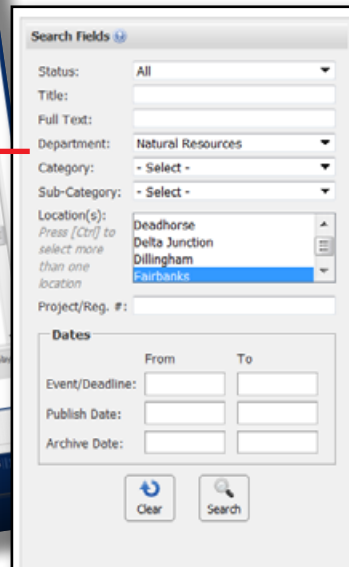
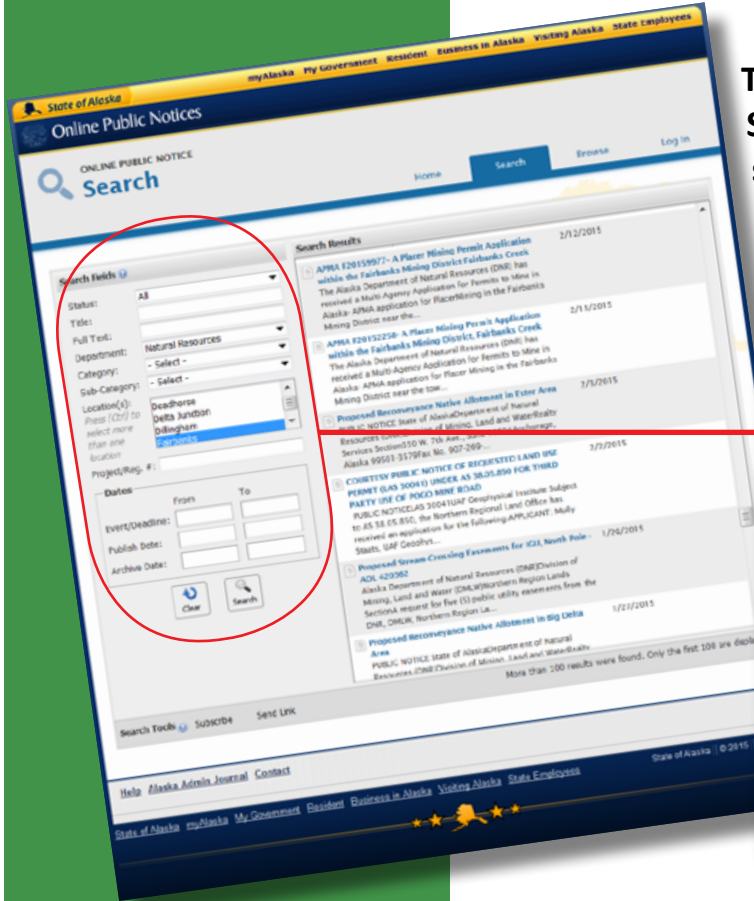
For more information visit the [Federal Register website](#).

# DID YOU KNOW?

That you can easily stay informed with the State of Alaska via the new **Public Notice** system that was implemented June 2015?

You can subscribe, customize, and save your

searches as you wish by using your **MyAlaska** login and browse by title, department, categories, locations, and dates to be sure you never miss a land sale, permit applications, public reviews, and much more!



Search the new Public Notice webpage at:

<https://aws.state.ak.us/OnlinePublicNotices/default.aspx>

## Moving On....

During October 2015, **Barbara Hanson** accepted a position with the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Division of Environmental Health and is no longer with the Division of Agriculture. While at the division Barb worked as an agriculture inspector. She accomplished much more for agriculture programs than her required duties dictated. For eight years Barb was available to provide Food Health & Safety training for farmers, institutions, or anyone interested in learning about the USDA's complex food safety laws.

She also provided knowledge and support as the division's main point of contact for FSMA/GAP/GHP & COOL while being responsible for overseeing State and Federal inspection and regulatory programs.

Although we are sad to see her go she still works in public service for the state and has moved on to a more challenging appointment worthy of her expertise. Feel free to congratulate Barb on her new appointment, [barbara.hanson@alaska.gov](mailto:barbara.hanson@alaska.gov).

You may visit the Division of Environmental Health's webpage at: <http://dec.alaska.gov/eh/>.

## Mt. McKinley Meat & Sausage

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

**Frank Huffman** 907-745-5232  
[Frank.Huffman@alaska.gov](mailto:Frank.Huffman@alaska.gov)



## USDA Sets Deadline for Proposals for the 2015 Specialty Crop Multi-State Program

WASHINGTON, Nov. 19, 2015 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) today announced the deadline for multi-state partners to submit proposals for the 2015 Specialty Crop Multi-State Program (SCMP). Proposals are due via email to participating state departments of agriculture by 11:59 p.m. Eastern time, Dec. 15, 2015. (See the [SCMP website](#) for the full list of participating states and email addresses.)

Created by the 2014 Farm Bill, the SCMP makes available approximately \$3 million to help develop solutions to problems affecting the specialty crop industry across state boundaries. AMS administers the program, which is designed to support food safety and research; address plant pests, disease, and crop-specific issues; and increase marketing opportunities for specialty crops which include fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture. USDA encourages partners to submit projects related to the following priority areas: benefitting underserved communities and veterans, improving producer capacity to comply with the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act, developing adaptation and mitigation strategies for farmers in drought-stricken regions of the country, increasing opportunities for new and beginning farmers, developing strong local and regional food systems, protecting pollinator habitats and improving pollinator health, and supporting the growth of organic specialty crops.

USDA is calling for specialty crop producer associations and groups, other state agencies, Tribal governments, universities, nonprofits, and other stakeholder groups and organizations to submit proposals to one of the participating state departments of agriculture. Proposals must include partners located in at least two different states to qualify. Participating state departments of agriculture will accept SCMP applications and those that meet the requirements outlined in the [2015 SCMP Request for Applications](#) must be submitted to AMS via [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) by Jan. 14, 2016. Multi-state partners from states that are not participating may still apply by submitting their applications to one of the participating states. Email addresses for SCMP participating state contacts are available at the [SCMP website](#).

USDA encourages multi-state partners to select and contact a participating state department of agriculture soon to receive timely updates on the SCMP application process in the coming weeks. Participating state departments of agriculture will:

- Screen proposals to ensure that they are complete and meet the basic requirements outlined in the 2015 SCMP Request for Applications.
- Submit applications to AMS via [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) by Jan. 14, 2016.
- Assume administrative responsibility for any application they submit that is selected for funding.
- Establish sub-grants and/or contracts with the multi-state partners to complete the project.

A [definition of specialty crops](#) and complete list is available at the AMS website. For more information visit the [SCMP website](#) or contact Janise Zygmunt by email: [Janise.Zygmunt@ams.usda.gov](mailto:Janise.Zygmunt@ams.usda.gov) or phone: (202) 720-5024.

**SCMP  
Applicant  
Instructions  
[Here](#)**



## Farm to School

# SAVE THE DATE:

## National Farm to Cafeteria Conference

The 8th National Farm to Cafeteria Conference will be held **June 2-4, 2016** in **Madison, WI**. This biennial event is hosted by the National Farm to School Network and will convene more than 1,500 diverse stakeholders working to source local food for institutional cafeterias and foster a culture of food and agricultural literacy across America.

Cafeterias in schools and early care, colleges and universities, hospitals and other institutional settings serve tens of millions of Americans every day, placing the farm to cafeteria movement at the forefront of the fight to end obesity and strengthen local food systems. The 2016 conference theme “Moving Forward Together” lifts up new and innovative partnerships to continue to build momentum and ensure long-term sustainability in the movement.

The event is inviting you to join as a presenter, panelist, or showcase a poster representing your research or a case study from your community. If you have an idea for a conference workshop or subject of discussion please [contact them](#) prior to 11:59 p.m. EST, December 4, 2015 to submit a proposal.

Registration will begin on February 15, 2016. Keep your eye on the Farm to School website for more details and registration information by visiting <http://www.farmtoschool.org/our-work/farm-to-school-cafeteria-conference>.



A well-balanced, healthy, lunch served to students at Bristol Bay Schools featuring roasted **Alaska Grown** carrots.

## Farm to Summer Meal Mini-Grant & Farm to University/Hospital Mini-Grant

The Farm to School Program will also be running a Farm to Summer Meal mini-grant and a Farm to University/Hospital mini-grant early next year. Keep checking the Division of Agriculture newsletter, the Division of Agriculture [Farm to School website](#), or contact [Johanna.Herron@alaska.gov](mailto:Johanna.Herron@alaska.gov) for more information on these or other Farm to School Programs. You can also join the [Farm to School listserv](#) for emailed updates on the program, upcoming events, and grant opportunities.

## As Schools Buy More Local Food, Kids Throw Less Food In The Trash

~Oct. 20, 2015, [npr.org](#)

More and more schools are trying to serve meals with food that was grown nearby. The U.S. Department of Agriculture just released some [statistics](#) documenting the trend.

According to this “census” of farm-to-school programs, at least 42,000 schools spent almost \$600 million on local food during the 2013-2014 school year. That’s up almost 50 percent from the previous census, conducted two years earlier. (Both “censuses” were actually a questionnaire that the USDA sent to schools.)

The schools reported that when they served local food, their **kids ate more healthful meals** and threw less food in the trash. Read more on this story [here](#).

There are 146 schools in Alaska that have a school garden or greenhouse. Garden based education has been linked to kids eating more fruits and vegetables AND doing better in school!



## Inspection Staff

[http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag\\_is.htm](http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_is.htm)

David Driscoll, Manager

907-761-3861

[David.Driscoll@alaska.gov](mailto:David.Driscoll@alaska.gov)

Kirk Brown 907-761-3857

[Kirk.Brown@alaska.gov](mailto:Kirk.Brown@alaska.gov)

Mia Kirk 907-761-3853

[Mia.Kirk@alaska.gov](mailto:Mia.Kirk@alaska.gov)

Jacki Schade 907-761-3858

[Jacquelyn.Schade@alaska.gov](mailto:Jacquelyn.Schade@alaska.gov)



## Land Sales & Grazing Leases

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

David Driscoll, Manager

907-761-3861

[David.Driscoll@alaska.gov](mailto:David.Driscoll@alaska.gov)

Erik Johnson (Palmer Office)

907-761-3863

[Erik.Johnson@alaska.gov](mailto:Erik.Johnson@alaska.gov)

Dan Proulx (Fairbanks Office)

907-374-3716

Fax: 907-328-1951

[Dan.Proulx@alaska.gov](mailto:Dan.Proulx@alaska.gov)

# Pest Detection / Inspection Section

## PEST NOTICE

It was recently brought to our attention that a non-native insect, **SITKA SPRUCE WEEVIL (*PISSODES STROBE*)**, was detected in a tree purchased at Costco, this past summer. The Sitka spruce weevil, not known to exist in Alaska, infests and kills the main shoot of young spruce and pine trees and is considered a threat to Alaska's native and ornamental trees. If you purchased a Sitka spruce or limber pine please see the pest notice below with important information on how to inspect your trees for damage caused by this non-native insect and who to contact if you suspect your trees may have the Sitka spruce weevil. For more information contact [Mia.Kirk@alaska.gov](mailto:Mia.Kirk@alaska.gov) or to enlarge the flyer below visit [http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/Inspection/2015\\_PestNotice\\_SSW.pdf](http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/Inspection/2015_PestNotice_SSW.pdf).



### PEST NOTICE

A non-native weevil called the Sitka spruce weevil (SSW), *Pissodes strobi*, was recently detected in a shipment of trees from the Pacific Northwest, where the weevil is native. SSW infests and kills the tops (Figure 2) of young spruce and pine trees and could pose a threat to our native and ornamental trees.

#### Purchase information:

Colorado blue spruce and 'Vanderwolf's Pyramid' limber pine purchased from Costco Wholesale in Anchorage (Debarr and West Dimond locations) during the 2015 growing season (May-June, 2015).

#### Weevil description:

Adult SSW (Figure 1) are about ¼ inch long and brown with tan and white spots on their backs. Immature stages live and feed within the stem of the tree and are rarely seen.



Figure 1: Adult Sitka spruce weevil. Photo credit: Natasha Wright, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Bugwood.org

#### Damage:

Immature weevils feed beneath the bark near the top of the tree, causing the top to wilt, droop, and eventually die (Figure 2). By late summer, adult weevils chew their way out of the stem. The adult emergence holes (Figure 3), approximately 1/10 inch in diameter, may be observed along the upper main stem of the tree.

#### Hosts:

Common hosts of SSW include native species such as Sitka spruce, white spruce, and black spruce and several popular ornamental species, including Norway spruce, Colorado blue spruce, Scots pine, and limber pine. SSW is primarily a problem in seedlings and young trees.

#### What will happen to the trees:

Under normal circumstances, SSW does not kill trees, but it can limit growth and deform trees. Several years of attack may result in a bushy looking tree and may make the tree more susceptible to other pests.



Figure 2: Left-Damaged top of a SSW infested tree. Photo credit: Whitney Cranshaw, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org. Right-Healthy top of a spruce tree. Photo credit: Tom DeGomez, University of Arizona, Bugwood.org.

#### What to look for:

**Now:** Look for wilted, drooping, or dead tops in trees and adult weevil emergence holes.

**Later:** If you did not see damage in the top of your trees this year, chances are good that your trees were not affected. To be sure, you should monitor your trees next spring for excessive sap along the upper main stem in the spring and wilting or drooping in the summer.



Figure 3: Adult emergence holes in spruce stem. Photo credit: Jessie Moan, 2015, UAF-CES

#### Who to contact:

If you observe any of the symptoms in your recently purchased and planted trees, or in any nearby established trees, please contact UAF-Cooperative Extension Service or the Alaska Division of Forestry.



Integrated Pest Management Program  
Cooperative Extension Service  
907-786-6300



Forest Health Program  
Alaska Division of Forestry  
907-269-8460

## Plant Materials Center

<http://plants.alaska.gov/>  
Main Phone: 907-745-4469

**Alicia Holladay** 907-745-8104  
[Alicia.Holladay@alaska.gov](mailto:Alicia.Holladay@alaska.gov)

**Rob Carter, Manager**  
907-745-8127  
[Rob.Carter@alaska.gov](mailto:Rob.Carter@alaska.gov)

**Phil Czapla** 907-745-8747  
[Phil.Czapla@alaska.gov](mailto:Phil.Czapla@alaska.gov)

**Casey Dinkel** 907-745-8108  
[Casey.Dinkel@alaska.gov](mailto:Casey.Dinkel@alaska.gov)

**Rusty Foreaker** 907-745-8092  
[Rusty.Foreaker@alaska.gov](mailto:Rusty.Foreaker@alaska.gov)



**Brianne Blackburn, Manager**  
907-745-8785  
[Brianne.Blackburn@alaska.gov](mailto:Brianne.Blackburn@alaska.gov)

**Kim Allen** 907-745-8735  
[Kim.Allen@alaska.gov](mailto:Kim.Allen@alaska.gov)

**Peter Johnson** 907-745-8105  
[Peter.Johnson@alaska.gov](mailto:Peter.Johnson@alaska.gov)

**Christine Macknicki** 907-745-8021  
[Christine.Macknicki@alaska.gov](mailto:Christine.Macknicki@alaska.gov)

**Lyubo Mahlev** 907-745-8782  
[Lyubomir.Mahlev@alaska.gov](mailto:Lyubomir.Mahlev@alaska.gov)

**Todd Steinlage** 907-745-8138  
[Todd.Steinlage@alaska.gov](mailto:Todd.Steinlage@alaska.gov)

**Heather Stewart** 907-745-8721  
[Heather.Stewart@alaska.gov](mailto:Heather.Stewart@alaska.gov)

## Plant Materials Center (PMC)

# Plant Materials Center 2015 Holiday Party

*Wednesday, December 16th, Noon - 2pm*

*You are cordially invited to attend the PMC's annual potluck and holiday party. Please bring a dish to share.*

5310 S. Bodenbug Spur, Palmer, AK 99645

For more information call:  
907-745-8735



## Call for Seed Potato Orders

Dear Growers,

Please be thinking of what varieties and quantities of Generation zero (G0) seed potatoes you will be requesting from the Plant Materials Center (PMC) for planting on your farm in 2017. In order to establish our greenhouse production plans for 2016 at the PMC, we will be accepting order requests until **January 31, 2016**. To encourage high quality seed in Alaska potato production we encourage you to renew your seed stocks as often as possible with disease-free seed from the PMC. In this regard, we are here to serve you and provide the industry with a healthy start.

Please review the list of available material at <http://plants.alaska.gov/PotatoSeedProduction.html> for ordering information. The list represents 36 varieties which have seen order activity in Alaska in the past four years. If you do not see a variety that interests you please contact us to explore future possibilities. Based on production logistics, we are setting a minimum order limit of five pounds per variety. The price per pound will remain the same as last year, \$12.00/lb.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.



[Brianne.Blackburn@alaska.gov](mailto:Brianne.Blackburn@alaska.gov)  
Program Manager • (907) 745-8785

[Christine.Macknicki@alaska.gov](mailto:Christine.Macknicki@alaska.gov)  
Potato Technician • (907) 745-8027

# PMC 2015 SEASON UPDATES

***The Plant Materials Center had a very busy year. From hosting its first summer Open House, participating in community outreach events, continued disease testing and monitoring, completing existing projects, and embarking on new ones, the PMC will enter 2016 strong. Now that field season has ended and winter has settled in, we take this opportunity to update you on a few of these exciting projects.***

**Horticulture Program:** Continues its search for hardy varieties that can tolerate our extreme weather conditions. Current trials include *apple rootstock, broccoli, cauliflower, and asparagus*. Some of these trials are being monitored at off-site locations to simulate the diverse landscape found in the state. These trials are necessary to ensure food security and sustainability in Alaska.

**Invasive Plants Program:** Battling *Elodea* kept this program in the media spotlight during its efforts to eradicate the aquatic invasive plant from five Anchorage Lakes and its discovery elsewhere in the state. It also continues to manage *Canada thistle* in DOT Right-of-Ways.

**Potato Program:** Fulfilling clean, disease-free seed potato orders is a two-year process from germination to completion. Plantlets germinated and tested in the lab last year were grown in the greenhouse this past summer and will be available to producers for field planting summer 2016. Producers, in turn, increase these potatoes for sale to the public. In 2015, 37 varieties of Generation Zero (G0) certified seed potatoes were harvested from the greenhouse as ordered by Alaskan Potato Growers. Over 1,000 lbs of G0 seed potatoes were produced and will be provided to growers for the 2016 growing season. All material in the greenhouse was screened for six viruses of concern and inspected by Certification Staff.

The program also planted 155 varieties to overhaul its clonal potato germplasm collection. The PMC has maintained this collection for over 30 years. These are used for varietal identification, virus and disease monitoring, and germplasm maintenance.

The PMC also planted 30 new varieties to study and test for hardiness and based on the interest of producers.

**Revegetation Program:** The *Native Plant Commercialization Project* continued to research, locate, and collect native plant species ideal for use in conservation efforts. Field evaluations continued and seed collected from the top five plants with desirable traits for use in an additional cycle of establishment next growing season. The goal is to increase seed for commercial production and to ensure that seed stock is available in the event of field failures or seed supply shortages.

The program also collaborated with Teck Alaska, Inc. (TAK) and NANA Regional Corporation to study the feasibility of establishing a local native-seed harvest business in Noatak to help support their local economy.

**Seed Cleaning:** The facility had a record-breaking number of requests for cleaning commercial lots. The upcoming year is already showing signs of breaking last year's record. Raw seed is sent to the PMC and unwanted seed and debris is removed. This ensures a high standard of pedigree retention, varietal purity, and that they are free of weeds, diseases, and physical damage.

**Seed Sales:** Since transitioning from a bi-annual sale to selling throughout the growing season (April-September) sales numbers have increased in this program as well. Over 1,000 pounds of 'Berberal' Rye was ordered in addition to a large variety of other forages and grasses. This seed is ultimately used by producers for agricultural and conservation interests.

**Soil Conservation:** This program began the '*Denali' Alfalfa Project*. This project will run through 2020. A research plot will be established at the PMC and its seed increased. Currently, there is less than 50lbs. of 'Denali' Alfalfa seed in existence and it is not commercially available.

The *Soil Health Project* is also new. Changes in soil health will be studied by comparing and contrasting selected mixes of cover crop species. Data on biomass production, soil nutrients, biological measurements, and soil physical properties will be collected over four growing seasons. Once the project is complete, this data will be analyzed and a technical reference guide will be published for agency and public use.

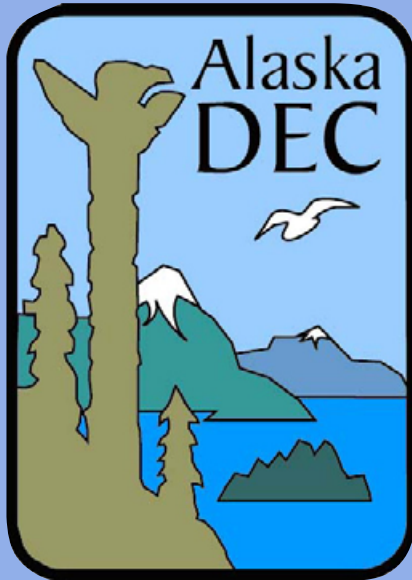
The *Growth Curve Project* has been extended into its fourth year. This project provides a series of technical reference guides for commonly utilized forage species throughout Alaska.

Lastly, but certainly not least, let's not forget the management, administrative, publications, and labor staff. Without whom this ship could not run as efficiently as it does!

***Please visit us to learn more during our Holiday Party on Wed., Dec. 16, Noon - 2pm at the PMC.***



## Division of Environmental Health



### Environmental Health

Alaska Department of  
Environmental Conservation

[Dec.Alaska.gov/eh/](http://Dec.Alaska.gov/eh/)  
907-269-7501

Robert Gerlach  
Alaska State Veterinarian  
907-375-8214  
[Bob.Gerlach@alaska.gov](mailto:Bob.Gerlach@alaska.gov)

Jay Fuller  
Assistant State Veterinarian  
907-375-8213  
[Jay.Fuller@alaska.gov](mailto:Jay.Fuller@alaska.gov)

### **World Zoonosis Summit Warns Against Rising Risks from Avian Influenza**

Dramatic changes in avian influenza (AI) outbreaks are posing an increasing threat to animal welfare, the global economy and human health. This was the key conclusion of a presentation to the world's leading experts at the 3rd Global Risk Forum on public and animal health. In 2003 a major outbreak in of the H5N7 strain in the Netherlands, 255 farms were affected, 30 million poultry birds culled. In 2014, H5N8 hit and over 350,000 birds were lost. The total cost of these outbreaks was over 560 million euros. AI outbreaks have spread over Europe, Asia, down into Africa 2015 and crossed the Pacific resulting in the US outbreak with losses of 48 million birds costing over \$500 million.

Avian Influenza is spreading across the globe and the control mechanisms that have been relied on do not seem to be effective to contain the spread. In 2015 there have been over 309 outbreaks of avian influenza reported to the World Organization for Animal Health, which is a unbelievable increase of 147% over those reported in 2014. The economic consequences have been devastating and both animal and public health officials are watching closely since some strains of AI can infect humans, as well as, other species, such as pigs.

### **Stuck By a Needle? Don't Let It Happen Again**

Over 80% of farm workers have accidentally stuck themselves with a needle. This includes farmers and employees who work on dairy or swine farms. The Upper Midwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center (UMASH) has posted educational videos at <http://www.bovinevetonline.com/news/video-stuck-needle-dont-let-it-happen-again-0>. The video identifies the most common injuries associated with needlesticks and review guidelines for correct use and disposal of needles as well as what to do if you are injured.

### **USDA Awards to Build Local Food System and Food Security**

The USDA recently announced nearly \$35 million in awards for three grant programs that specifically support local and regional food systems. Local Food Promotion and Farmers Market Promotion Programs, local food systems are emerging as a means for both community and economic development. The Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) and Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) makes \$25.2 million available in grant awards to 324 organization across the country. In addition, USDA awarded \$8.1 million in SNAP Farmers Market Support Grants for projects across 23 states. Visit USDA AMS for a full list of FMPP awardees, LFPP awardees, and SNAP awardees.

Fall Guaranteed Loan Program Newsletter is now available on the agency's web site at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/Assets/USDA-FSA-Public/usdfiles/Farm-Loan-Programs/pdfs/fall2015glnewltr.pdf>. For more information or answers to any questions contact the Farm Loan Programs at [AskFSA@usda.gov](mailto:AskFSA@usda.gov).