



# The Division of Agriculture Activities

November 06, 2012

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

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## Directors Note

The end of October and start of November will be a time not soon forgotten in America. As Hurricane Sandy unleashed her fury on the east coast, I was amazed at the amount of devastation left in her wake and impressed with the resolve of the people impacted. For those of us watching live coverage from afar, didn't you ask yourself – "How would a natural disaster of that magnitude impact Alaska and my family? Are we prepared? Am I prepared?" If misfortune were to befall our state, I want to be a prepared Alaskan who is able to assist my family and friends. Of course, being prepared takes thoughtful planning. Please visit [www.ready.alaska.gov](http://www.ready.alaska.gov) to learn about preparing your family for the event of an emergency.

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has proposed to adopt and amend regulations in Title 11 of the AAC, dealing with Plant Health and Quarantine. The proposed amendments more clearly define invasive weeds as pests in the existing regulations and develop a process for declaring a plant invasive and the management thereof. DNR is accepting comments on the proposed weed regulations until 4:00 pm, January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013. Information on the proposed regulations can be found at [dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag\\_regulations.htm](http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_regulations.htm).

The 2012 Census of Agriculture questionnaires will be arriving in mailboxes around the state in late December. The Census is conducted every five years and information gathered plays a part in determining federal grant funds made available to producers. Please take the time to fill out the census forms and return them by Feb. 4<sup>th</sup>. For Alaska's farmers and ranchers, the Census of Agriculture is your voice, your future and your responsibility.

It is with great sadness that I share with you the passing of Bill Burton. We have lost a great Alaskan and a passionate supporter of Alaskan agriculture. Over the years, Bill has been involved and/or served on many boards and groups – including the local farm bureau, the Soil and Water Conservation board and the Board of Agriculture and Conservation, just to name a few. I visited his farm on several occasions and thoroughly enjoyed the hospitality both he and Kathy showed. I offer my sincere condolences to his family.

As always, please take the time to read through the newsletter and mark upcoming events on your calendars. If you have any questions or concerns, please send me an e-mail at [Franci.Havemeister@Alaska.gov](mailto:Franci.Havemeister@Alaska.gov) or call me at 761-3867.

*-Franci Havemeister*

*"Most folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be."*

- Abraham Lincoln

## Agriculture Calendar

- ▶ **Wed. Nov. 7<sup>th</sup>;** **On-Farm Food Safety Workshop;** Alaska PMC, Palmer  
*Registration Information: 761-3854; Details: [here](#).*
- ▶ **Fri. Nov. 9<sup>th</sup>;** **Farm Bureau Friday Forum;** Crowne Plaza, Anchorage  
*Details: [here](#).*
- ▶ **Sat. Nov. 10<sup>th</sup>;** **Farm Bureau Annual Meeting;** Crowne Plaza, Anchorage  
*Agenda: [here](#). Registration [here](#).*
- ▶ **Sat. Nov. 10<sup>th</sup>;** **ATV/ORV Stream Crossing Workshop;** Mat-Su College  
*Details: [here](#).*
- ▶ **Wed. Nov. 14<sup>th</sup>;** 9 am - 12 pm: **PMC Advisory Committee Meeting;** AK PMC, Palmer

► Fri. Nov. 16<sup>th</sup>;

**Wasilla SWCD 2012 Poster Contest deadline;** Wasilla  
Details and entry form: [here](#).

► Wed. Dec. 5<sup>th</sup>; 1:00 pm:

**Board of Agriculture & Conservation Regular Meeting**  
Details: [here](#).  
Call-in number: (800) 315-6338 (pass code: 122#)

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



## Marketing Staff

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

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## Marketing Section

### Grant Application Season at the Division of Agriculture.

The marketing team is gearing up for grant season! Many of the Divisions' grant applications become available in the first quarter of the year which means preparations are taking place now. Grant announcements are made through this newsletter, on the Division web page, at public meetings and various other events.

#### Grant Funding Sources

Grants from the Division of Agriculture are funded in two ways – from the State General Fund and from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The USDA makes decisions about funding amounts for Alaska based on data gathered by the Census of Agriculture.

The Census of Agriculture is a complete count of U.S. farms and ranches and the people who operate them. The Census is taken only once every five years, and looks at land use, ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures. Participating in the Census of Agriculture is the responsibility of every farmer and rancher, regardless of the size

or type of operation. For Census purposes, a farm is any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the Census year.

Alaskan farm and ranch operators can expect to receive questionnaires for the 2012 Census of Agriculture in late December 2012, seeking data for the 2012 calendar year. Completed forms are due by February 4<sup>th</sup>. Producers can return their forms by mail or fill out the Census online via a secure website at [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov). Responses to the Census play a part in determining the grant funds available to Alaskan producers.

Information about the various grant programs offered by the Division can be found at [dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag\\_grants.htm](http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag/ag_grants.htm). If you have questions, contact Amy Pettit at (907) 761-3864 or [Amy.Pettit@alaska.gov](mailto:Amy.Pettit@alaska.gov).

Follow Alaska Grown on Facebook at [facebook.com/dnr.alaska-grown](http://facebook.com/dnr.alaska-grown) for all of the latest updates.



## Alaska Farm-to-School Program Update

### School Districts statewide are serving Alaska Grown produce, grain and meat

The Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED), Division of Community and Regional Affairs has a pilot grant program designed to encourage school districts to purchase Alaskan foods. You can find details about the 'Nutritional Alaskan Foods in Schools' (NAFS) grant program on the DCCED webpage, at [commerce.alaska.gov/dca/grt/NAFS.htm](http://commerce.alaska.gov/dca/grt/NAFS.htm).

The Farm to School program will report on the schools and products that have received reimbursements, as we learn of them. Only one school has had purchases submitted and verified so far, but we know there are many school districts using local products. We look forward to sharing more stories as the year progresses.

#### Kodiak Island Borough School District

Kodiak student nutrition services served local broccoli, lettuce, tomatoes, and cucumber to students across their district. Since the grant also covers transportation, they were able to ship the local product to Port Lions, Ouzinkie, Old Harbor, Larsen Bay, Karluk School, and Akhiok. The products served were grown at Bells Nursery and Palmer Produce. Sandy Daws, purchasing supervisor, said that everyone was pleased with the products.

If you have stories about the NAFS grant program and would like to share, please contact Debi Kruse at [Debi.Kruse@alaska.gov](mailto:Debi.Kruse@alaska.gov) or Johanna Herron at [Johanna.Herron@alaska.gov](mailto:Johanna.Herron@alaska.gov).

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## National Farm to School Month

October was a busy month for the Alaska Farm to School program. The 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Alaska Farm to School Challenge kicked off, along with National Farm to School Month. The Division has also been following the progress of Farm to School mini-grant recipients with interest.

One exciting state-wide event was 'Local Lunch Day'. A total of 38 Alaska school food programs served a 'Local Lunch' on October 24<sup>th</sup> in celebration of Food Day and National Farm to School Month. Lunches varied in what foods were served, but each food group made its way into at least one of the 38 lunches. Program sponsors included the Alaska Department of Education, Child Nutrition Program, the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Early Development, Obesity Prevention and Control Program, and the Alaska Farm to School Program.

In Fairbanks the Farm to School team partnered with the district Student Nutrition Program and UAF Cooperative Extension Service to hold a taste test of two recipes that may end up on the district menu. Kids at Randy Smith Middle School were asked to sample and vote on two salad recipes. The salads were made from hydroponic lettuce and micro-greens at Johnson Family Farm in Fairbanks. One recipe was made with taco seasoning, black beans and corn,

while the other combined fajita chicken and mandarin oranges. Students were encouraged to submit names for the recipe. Staff from Johnson Family Farm also attended, so students were able to meet their grower.

The chicken orange salad recipe was the clear winner, receiving 70 votes. The taco recipe received only 46 votes, although half of the students that didn't pick the taco recipe as their favorite reported that they still liked it, just not as much. Mixing in healthy sweet pea micro-greens into the salads did not stop the students from enjoying the dish. Johnson Family Farm will soon be selling their micro-greens to the school district for them to add to their salads. This is a great example of the way that the NAFS grant funds are being spent.



To learn more about the Alaska Farm to School program, contact Johanna Herron at (907) 374-3714, or [Johanna.herron@alaska.gov](mailto:Johanna.herron@alaska.gov). Join the Farm to School mailing list at [list.state.ak.us/soalists/akfarmtoschool/jl.htm](http://list.state.ak.us/soalists/akfarmtoschool/jl.htm). Find us at [facebook.com/AlaskaFarmToSchool](https://www.facebook.com/AlaskaFarmToSchool).

*Edible face off: fajita chicken and mandarin orange salad vs. black bean and corn taco salad*



*Jamie Peterson from the Division of Agriculture hosts a voting booth to determine which salad recipe was most appealing*



*Amy Rouse, Director of Nutrition Services for the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District*



*Staff from the Johnson Family Farm attended the salad tasting at Randy Smith Middle School.*

## ARLF Services

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## Pest Detection / Inspection Section

### Mixed or Specialty Potato Packs

If you have been in the produce section of the grocery stores and have noted a difference in the potato displays, it could be a result of a change in the US Grade Standards. This change allows for specialty or mixed potato packs to meet grade requirements where in the past they had to be of similar varietal characteristics in order to meet grade. So what does that mean? In the past, potatoes packed to a US grade had to be of a similar type and could not be mixed with others that were not similar. For example; red, white and blue potatoes could not be mixed within the same bag. Now, the similar varietal characteristic requirement does not apply when designated on the bag as a mixed or specialty pack. After identifying what grade on the bag, this designation may be as simple as stating "red, white and blue potatoes."

Please note: The State of Alaska regulations require that all potatoes sold, displayed, or offered for sale or shipment, in a container, for general consumption **must** conform to one of the potato grades. An example of an acceptable potato grade is US No. 1 and US No. 2.

In addition to this, each container of potatoes sold, offered, or displayed for sale

for general consumption must be conspicuously and legibly labeled in the English language to show the following information:

- common name of the product;
- name and address, including zip code, of the grower or packer;
- net weight; and
- grade of potatoes, in letters not less than one inch in height on containers holding 24 pounds or more, and in letters not less than one-half inch in height on containers holding less than 24 pounds.



If there are questions in regards to the US Grade Standards for potatoes and/ or the Alaska State Potato labeling requirements please contact the Alaska Division of Agriculture Inspection Section at 745-7200.

### On-Farm Food Safety Workshop Planned for November

The Alaska Division of Agriculture is pleased to announce an "On-Farm Food Safety Workshop" on Wednesday, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012 at the Alaska Plant Materials Center in Palmer. The workshop is limited to the first 25 attendees who sign up, so reserve your spot now!

Barb Hanson, Food Safety Auditor with the Division's Inspection Program, and Johanna Herron, Coordinator of the Alaska Farm to School Program, will present information about:

- The Farm-to-School program and grant opportunities that assist schools to connect with local food producers;
- The "Ins and Outs" of a USDA Good Agricultural Practices/Good Handling Practices (GAP/GHP) Audit;
- Risk Analysis at your facility (water, crops, inputs, etc.);
- Food safety measures during Harvesting, Packing, Storage, and Distribution; and
- Traceback (Recall) methods and planning.

All participants will receive a binder of food safety information and resources, as well as the book "Wholesale Success Manual: A Farmer's Guide to Selling, Post-Harvest Handling, and Packing Produce", published by [Familyfarmed.org](http://Familyfarmed.org). A mock food safety audit of a greenhouse and outdoor growing area at the facility will also be conducted.

If you are a producer or vendor, small or large, and are interested in food safety issues, this workshop is for you. Please contact Barb Hanson at [barbara.hanson@alaska.gov](mailto:barbara.hanson@alaska.gov), or by phone at (907) 761-3854 for more details.



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<http://plants.alaska.gov/>

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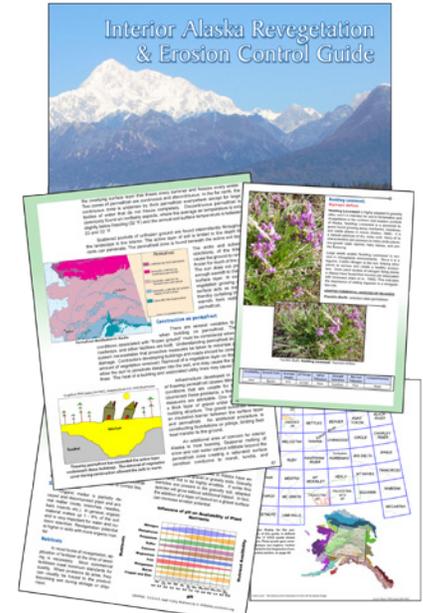
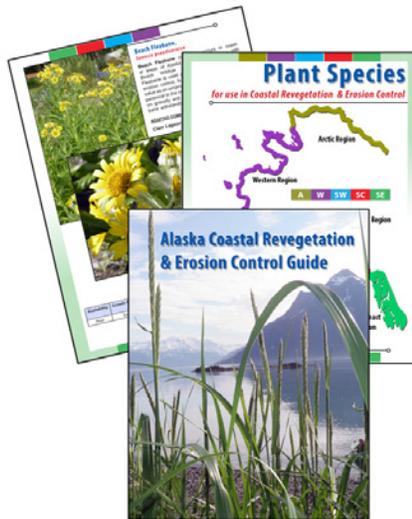
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## Plant Materials Center

### Alaska Coastal and Interior Revegetation & Erosion Control Guides receive awards from the American Society of Agronomy

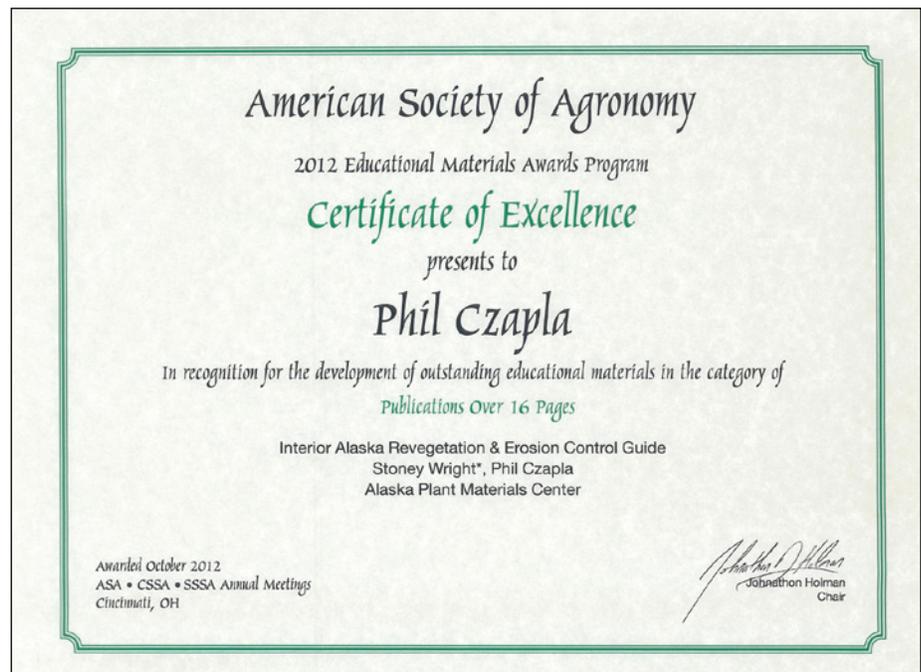
Two publications from the Alaska Plant Materials Center were recognized with 'Certificates of Excellence', in the American Society of Agronomy's 2012 Extension Education Material Awards Program. The Alaska Coastal Revegetation and Erosion Control Guide and the Interior Alaska Revegetation and Erosion Control Guide.

The two manuals were authored by Stoney Wright and Phil Czapl of the Alaska PMC. Both guides contain a comprehensive list of reclamation species adapted to various regions of Alaska, descriptions of vegetation communities, techniques for revegetation /

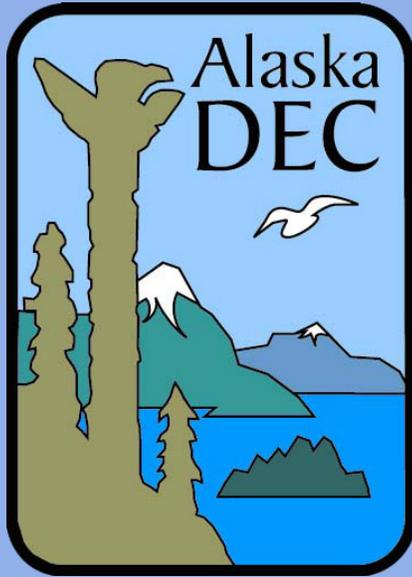


reclamation that are used in the field, and detailed case studies of past revegetation projects.

The Interior Alaska Revegetation and Erosion Control Guide and the Alaska Coastal Revegetation and Erosion Control Guide are available at the Plant Materials Center to environmental professionals and interested members of the public. The publications are also available for online browsing and download at [plants.alaska.gov/reveg](http://plants.alaska.gov/reveg). For details, contact the PMC at (907) 745-4469.



Phil Czapl & Stoney Wright received awards at the 2012 American Society of Agronomy conference



## Environmental Health

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# Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation: Division of Environmental Health

## Laboratory Testing for Cottage Food

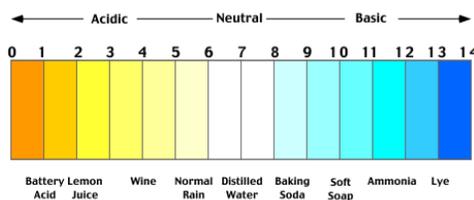
Article contributed by Emanuel Hignutt

The new Alaska Food Code regulations allow the sale of non-potentially hazardous foods directly to the consumer without a permit if certain conditions are met. One condition for pickled or dried products is that the producer must have information about the pH or water activity of the food to show it is non-potentially hazardous under [18 AAC 31.985](#).



### What are pH and water activity?

pH is a scientific measure of how “acidic” or “basic” a substance is. Scientists measure pH on a scale of 0 to 14. A lower value on the pH scale indicates that a substance is more acidic, whereas a higher value indicates the substance is more basic. Foods like water and milk are considered “neutral” with a pH value of about 7.0. Lemonade and vinegar are acidic with a pH between 2 and 4. Materials like laundry detergent and ammonia are “basic” with pH values of 11-12. Food products containing a pH of 4.6 or lower control the growth of dangerous bacteria such as *clostridium botulinum*.



Water activity is measured by how tightly bound the water is in the food product. Water activity is measured on a scale from 0 (bone dry) to 1.0 (pure water). Most food products have a water activity in the range of 0.2 for very dry foods to 0.99 for moist, fresh foods. Water activity is not the same thing as moisture content, however. While moist foods are likely to have greater water activity than dry foods, this is not always true. Water activity is important because it can be used to predict the growth of harmful bacteria, yeasts and molds. Food products with low water activity will last longer on the shelf because they do not provide a good environment for pathogens to grow.

Some foods may not require refrigeration because they have a combination of low water activity and an acidic pH. Testing product for water activity and pH allows producers to decide whether their product requires refrigeration or not.

### How do I get my products tested?

The Alaska State Environmental Health Laboratory can test your food products for pH and water activity for a small fee. The cost for pH testing is \$20 per sample. Water activity testing costs \$10 per sample.

### How do I send samples to the lab?

1. Download a [Sample Submission Form](#) from the [laboratory website](#). Fill out the form with your personal contact information, including an email address and information about the product.
2. Carefully package and seal your product to prevent drying or leaking during shipment. The laboratory needs 8 ounces of product to test for both pH and water activity.
3. Include payment, along with the completed [Sample Submission Form](#), in the package with the product and ship to:

**Alaska Environmental Health Laboratory**  
5251 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue  
Anchorage, AK 99507-1293  
(907) 375-8231

Call (907) 375-8231 or [email the lab](#) to let them know that your package has shipped. You can expect to receive test results via email 5-10 business days after the package is received by the laboratory. If you need quicker results, let the lab know and they will expedite as quickly as they can!

Payment must be received before results will be released. You may send a check or money order with the sample, or call the lab to pay by Visa or MasterCard.

### Who do I call if I have questions?

The laboratory scientists are more than happy to answer your questions regarding forms, shipping, and results. Contact them at (907) 375-8231 during normal business hours or by email at [DEC.EH-Lab-ShippingReceiving@alaska.gov](mailto:DEC.EH-Lab-ShippingReceiving@alaska.gov) with your questions or concerns.