

Cooperative Extension Service Delta District

Commitments and Activities

August 2011

CES – Delta District’s goal is assisting the farmers of this community and to an extent the agriculture industry across Alaska.

Several activities in which CES involvement is beneficial to the industry are as follows:

The Delta Farm Forum is an annual, late winter, gathering opportunity for producers to hear presentations by various agency representatives and/or researchers. This day long event provides information pertinent to general crop production, financial management, commodity marketing, USDA programs and other topics designed to assist individuals with farm management decisions. A local farmer is also highlighted and asked to share their knowledge and expertise. Attendees can also meet with vendors throughout the day. This has been a successful event for over 34 years growing to an audience of over 100 people. The local SWCD is also a sponsor of this event and assists with many aspects of the program along with the local 4-H group.

The Delta Farm Tour celebrated its 16th year (2011) of bringing the people to the producers. In July folks come from all over for a personal tour of agriculture in the “last frontier”. These tours provide an understanding as to where and how our food and fiber is produced. Due to the influence of the Delta Farm Tours – meeting the farmer and seeing the quality products produced – numerous participants have become staunch supporters of the “Alaska Grown” program. In 2007 CES stepped down from the Delta Farm Tours and have passed the reins to the Alaska Farm Bureau – Delta Chapter to promote and present this event. Extension will continue to be involved but on a very behind the scenes capacity.

The Harvest Wrap-Up is also an annual event in Delta and is scheduled for late fall to early winter. This casual event brings researchers with USDA, ARS, and the UAF SNRAS along with representatives of Alaska Division of Ag and CES together with area farmers to discuss successes and failures of the past crop season. The researchers share information from the various trials that they are currently engaged in and discuss future research projects. I have found this to be successful in allowing dialog among producers, and for producers to provide some direction toward prioritizing research needs. This also allows for networking among the researchers to make best use of personnel and resources and minimizing duplication of efforts.

CES is directly involved in various efforts disseminating awareness and management information regarding the introduction and spread of noxious and invasive weeds. I have provided advice to the Alaska Farm Bureau – Delta Chapter/Salcha-Delta SWCD Noxious Weed Program (NWP) for the past thirteen years and have seen it evolve into a well-regarded, successful control program. Local landowner participation in the NWP has steadily increased thus allowing for more thorough scouting of infestation sites. CES is often contacted by farmers and/or agency folks who have heard of Delta’s program and are interested in forming a similar noxious weed program in their community. Phil is also a board member of the Alaska Statewide CNIPM group which meets monthly via audio and attends the annual meeting.

CES has assisted in the implementation of the Alaska Certified Noxious Weed Free Forage Program as an instructor for an inspector certification course and discussing the program at different venues. In general the goals of this program are to encourage the in-state production of an inspected certified commodity for purchase and use by folks accessing the “back country”. This will limit the spread of noxious weeds to natural ecosystems and provide a higher value market opportunity for skilled managers. Phil is a member of the North American Weed Management Association (NAWMA) and the American Association of Pesticide Safety Educator (AAPSE).

The Delta District is managing the Pesticide Safety Education Program, (CES) and USDA-CSREES Grant management. Working with state and national agencies updating and reporting issues regarding pesticide safety and education training. Attending the National Western Region Pest Management (WRPM) meeting annually.

2009 is the first year as State contact for the I-R4 program, participating in audio's and an annual National meeting.

CES assistance is frequently requested by private as well as municipal, state, and or federal agency folks regarding weed management recommendations especially regarding the use of herbicides.

The NRCS EQIP has been a significant workload addition in preparing nutrient and pest management recommendations. CES is committed to this program as it provides incentives to producers/land owners for improving their roles in environmental stewardship.

Helped organize the Producer/Bison Conflict group and address the damage and management of the Delta Bison herd, to discuss issues with local producers, state and federal agencies with on going meetings.

Work with USDA ARS CRP Study – evaluating existing CRP fields to provide recommendations for establishment and maintenance of CRP lands.

One of the stronger attributes CES brings to this position is Agricultural Agent, Phil Kaspari, who has an open dialog with Alaskan farmers. He has gained their respect as a fellow farmer, and they know he is as optimistic in his views of the industry as they are. This has allowed Phil to gain their confidence as the agricultural agent.

Sullivan Roadhouse Gardens

For the past several years CES with assistance from local master gardeners and volunteers have been renovating/improving the gardens at the museum. Pat Holloway from the AFES paid a visit a couple years ago and encouraged us to plant an heirloom roadhouse garden. This will be the eighth season we have predominately incorporated plants specific to the roadhouse era – with great success. The roadhouse is open May-September and is a shining piece of history that has been relocated to our community; located on the Richardson Highway in an area of high traffic and visibility. The gardens have flourished – and travelers from around the world have admired their presentation. Efforts continue to make the gardens a very desirable tourist attraction. In cooperation with the local SWCD a 4th/5th grade class came to amend soils and learn about gardens and heirloom plants. They are encouraged to volunteer in the summer. Also, in the fall a harvest “soup” day was held with volunteers preparing “garden soups” and fresh breads to serve to the community. New Horizons alternative high school students assist with cleaning out the gardens and helping with fall projects.

Other Extension Programs/Workshops held in Delta coordinated by the Delta District Office:

- Cold Climate Building – Rich Seifert
- Solar Energy - Rich Seifert
- Livestock Workshops – Milan Shipka
- Food Preservation – Roxie Rogers Dinstel
- Financial Planning – Roxie Rogers Dinstel
- Garden/Horticulture – Taylor Maide

Events in Delta

- Deltana Fair - Last weekend in July – Friday, Saturday, and Sunday
- We share a self-manned booth with ag and nr folks. Our (CES) “space” has a publication display. Our booth moved from it's original location several years ago and since then we have rebuilt it to a barn and have added raised beds and flower barrels. Each year we try to improve upon the site to attract fair goers. Our local 4-H group is involved with livestock and usually a horse event. Phil Kaspari, is instrumental in getting the local farm bureau involved by bringing their farming equipment to the parade and putting them on display at the fair grounds. We also send out letters to our crop producers encouraging them to display their crops.
- Annual Frontier Days – Memorial Day Weekend – 1 Day event held behind the Sullivan Roadhouse Museum near the Highways End Farmers Market, across the street from the Visitors Center. CES serves cake – one decorated with CES/UAF Logo one with Sullivan Roadhouse Logo.
- Fall and Winter Carnivals misc info supplied – CES is a member of the Delta Chamber of Commerce.
- Highways End Farmer's Markets misc info supplied.