

From: [Peter-Contesse, Fabienne \(DNR\)](#)
To: [Thomas Atkinson](#)
Cc: [King, Ed M \(DNR\)](#); [Mackey, Dayna M \(DNR\)](#); [Fogels, Edmund J \(DNR\)](#); [Ibias, Raquel M \(DNR\)](#); [Gatton, Samantha A \(GOV\)](#)
Subject: RE: Rep. Guttenberg"s DNR questions pursuant to today"s HFIN overview
Date: Friday, January 27, 2017 4:09:26 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[CIE Bond Fund Legis Response Jan 2017.pdf](#)

Greetings,

1. Does DNR have a plan to grow the agriculture sector of Alaska's economy? If so, what is the plan? Rep. G. considers it a vital sector that isn't growing (no pun intended).

Yes, we have a plan, but to be clear this vital sector is growing:

- We lead the Nation in per capita Farmers Market growth in recent years. In 2005 there were only 13 farmers markets across the State; in 2016 there were over 40 and we anticipate that number growing in 2017.
- The peony industry is thriving with the number of stems exported to the lower 48 and other countries surpassing expectations.
- Grain production is expanding across the State; new varieties are being trialed. In Delta and Mat Su Valley growers are growing products that at one time were said to not be viable in this region. We are producing wheat in the Matanuska valley.
- Unique crops such as rhodiola and hops are growing in popularity and viability. Hops are an important ingredient in the brewing process, one of the fastest growing segments of the food industry in Alaska.
- The livestock industry just wrapped up one of the most successful years (by pounds slaughtered) on record. Did you know that in Anchorage you can get an Alaska Grown yak burger year round? And a long-time Valley meat supplier expanded his operation into Anchorage – opening a high end retail location to satisfy the demand for local meat.
- The Division of Agriculture has been and will continue to be an important conduit between the growers, the wholesalers and the retail sector. These are important relationships that must be maintained if growers are to participate and or expand into this important part of the \$2billion dollar food industry in Alaska.

In regards to how the Division of Agriculture intends to support this growth, the division's mission is to 'support, enhance and encourage a sustainable agriculture industry.' Our plan is to provide the following programs that will continue to support the recent successes:

- Land sales – we are restructuring to better suit the growth in small-acreage production of high value crops.
- Meat plant – transitioning this facility to private ownership will provide financial

stability and long term viability to the livestock industry, allowing it to maximize its potential. Alaska currently imports over 80 million pounds of meat a year; there is tremendous opportunity for growth in this sector.

- Plant Materials Center – providing access to certified disease free seeds for the vegetable, grain and grass seed markets. In the past year the demand for these products has seen record growth – another indicator of success in the industry. We will continue to provide these vital services.
- Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) – brought on by Federal changes, we are partnering with our sister agencies to ensure industry education prior to enforcement of regulation. Preparing Alaska producers for the implementation of this Law is critical and considered high priority.
- Regulation reform – currently Alaskan producers are held to higher standards than outside producers. This puts an unnecessary burden and competitive disadvantage on our growers.

2. What is Forestry doing to create guidelines for local communities regarding Safe Space around dwellings?

The Division of Forestry has a Fire Prevention section that has a significant education component associated with both prevention and risk reduction for individual properties and at the community level. The individual program is called Firewise and it provides information about how to improve the odds that your home or business will survive a wildland fire event. Through our Forest Stewardship Program, staff secured a competitive grant that provides a cost share incentive to individuals that work with our professional staff, to have a home inspection and to implement specific recommendations to reduce risk and hazardous fuels around their property. The landowner must share in the cost and can contribute cash or in-kind labor to complete recommendations. Inspections are made before work commences and after it is completed. In CY2016, 50 Alaska homeowners were paid Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) grants after completing fuel reduction projects totaling \$79,110. An additional 65 inspections of individual properties were completed in the Fairbanks area. For additional information on the Firewise program, please see this link:

<http://forestry.alaska.gov/wildland>

At the community or neighborhood level we can assist with a program called the Community Wildland Protection Plan (CWPP). This is primarily a planning effort that maps fuels around a community and makes recommendation on where and how to reduce risk by treating these fuels. The plan also addresses other important topics such as: key evacuation routes, emergency response by local authorities, notification methods for evacuation alerts or warnings and other topics important for consideration at the community level. These plans are key requirements for some of

the federal funds that we secure annually to help communities implement aspects of their plans. Each year the Division has been able to secure approximately \$600.0 to \$1.0 million in competitive grant funding via the hazard fuels mitigation program administered by the Western Forestry Leadership Coalition and the U.S. Forest Service State and Private Forestry program. In CY2016, the Division secured funding for projects in Caswell (\$300.0) , McGrath area (\$300.0) and Delta Junction (\$74.3). Statewide there are 42 CWPPs covering 86 communities, here is a link to the list of communities and additional information about the program: <http://forestry.alaska.gov/fire/cwpp/index>. Efforts are totally dependent on federal dollars and a competitive process to secure grants.

3. On the DO&G page, what work or program does the \$150K (Other) for Cook Inlet fund?

Please see the attached information on the Cook Inlet Bond Fund.

Fabienne

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From: Thomas Atkinson [mailto:Thomas.Atkinson@akleg.gov]
Sent: Tuesday, January 24, 2017 7:36 PM
To: Peter-Contesse, Fabienne (DNR) <fabienne.peter-contesse@alaska.gov>
Subject: Rep. Guttenberg's DNR questions pursuant to today's HFIN overview

Fabienne,

Please forward as necessary; I'm not sending these questions to anyone else in DNR, but instead funneling them all through you.

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2. What is Forestry doing to create guidelines for local communities regarding Safe Space around dwellings?
3. On the DO&G page, what work or program does the \$150K (Other) for Cook Inlet fund?

Thanks. See you soon.

Tom Atkinson

Office of Representative Guttenberg