

John Boyle
Commissioner

dnr.alaska.gov



Department of
Natural Resources

Anchorage, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: October 15, 2024

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grants Award Research, Education and Promotion of Alaska's Specialty Crops

(Palmer, AK) – Five Alaskan agricultural projects are receiving funding from the 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. The state's Division of Agriculture is awarding more than \$254,000 on behalf of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service. The grants will fund projects that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crop products and create new market opportunities for the state's specialty crop producers.

"We are happy to once again be partnered with Alaska on the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program," said USDA Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Jenny Lester Moffitt. "The innovative projects funded through this program will strengthen U.S. specialty crop production and markets and ensure Americans have sustained access to fresh, locally grown fruits, vegetables and other specialty crops and support the region's specialty crop growers to help ensure their long-term success."

The Alaska Division of Agriculture's selected projects are:

- The Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District has been awarded funding to assist Interior Alaska specialty crop farmers by planning and implementing two Interior Alaska Farm Forums to be held in February 2025 and 2027 to share practices solving the unique challenges of farming in Interior Alaska, as well as familiarizing themselves with the agencies and advocates who serve them.
- Bridges Community Resource Network dba Kenai Local Food Connection will partner with the Soldotna Wednesday Market, the Goods Sustainable Grocery, local libraries, schools, college and local producers to hold seasonal cooking classes and chef demonstrations with locally grown specialty crops to increase education and consumption of Alaska Specialty Crops.
- Stellar Botanical Health will partner with the Alaska Plant Material Center on potato research to identify the scab varieties found in Gustavus soils. The project will include scab identification and mitigation to improve soil conditions and overall potato production in Gustavus and surrounding communities.
- The Alaska Division of Agriculture Alaska Grown program will provide support to specialty crop producers by increasing consumer awareness, establishing new customer bases and reaching new markets through hosting an Alaska Grown pavilion at the 2025-

2027 Alaska State Fairs as well as booths at two additional fairs located throughout the state each year.

- The Alaska Plant Material Center will perform field and storage extension studies to evaluate the possibilities of Alaska Grown potato availability for peak tourist season, farmer's markets, food trucks and processing during the period of July- October, when local potatoes are not available. Results will be relayed to potato growers by presentation and publication.

"The projects awarded under the program will strongly benefit Alaska's agricultural industry," said Bryan Scoresby, Director of the Alaska Division of Agriculture. "We're excited these grants support the development of projects in Alaska focused on research, education and promotion of Specialty Crops."

The funding to Alaska is part of a total of \$72.9 million in non-competitive Specialty Crop Block Grant funding awarded to 54 states, territories and the District of Columbia in fiscal year 2024. The grants support farmers growing crops including fruits, vegetables, tree nuts and nursery crops to strengthen U.S. specialty crop production and markets – ensuring an abundant and affordable supply of highly nutritious specialty crops which are vital to the health and well-being of all Americans.

The Department of Natural Resources' mission is to develop, conserve, and maximize the use of Alaska's natural resources consistent with the public interest.

Media Contact: Lorraine Henry, 907-269-8427, lorraine.henry@alaska.gov

###

STAY CONNECTED:

DNR Newsroom: http://dnr.alaska.gov/commis/dnr_newsroom.htm

DNR on Social Media: http://dnr.alaska.gov/commis/social_media.htm

DNR Public Information Center: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/commis/pic/>