

Fairbanks Soil & Water Conservation District

Summer Newsletter

JULY 20, 2016

THANK YOU TO THE VOLUNTEERS WHO HELPED WITH THE ANNUAL TREE AND SHRUB SALE! IT WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT YOU!!!

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The fair is coming soon!

The Tanana Valley State Fair is August 5-14, 2016.

Fairbanks Soil & Water Conservation District (FSWCD) will be sponsoring the "Bucks 4 Bales" hay bale contest, the Farm & Garden Display, and the Giant Cabbage Contest again this year.

Judging of "Bucks 4 Bales" hay bales will occur on July 28th. Prizes are \$100 for first place,

\$75 for second place, and \$50 for third. Winning bales will be displayed at the Tanana Valley State Fair in the Largen Barn. FSWCD will have a Soil Tunnel with fun kids' activities at Kid's Day on August 8.

Look for other FSWCD displays and information in the Kiwanis Agricultural Hall and Largen Barn!



The Soil Tunnel offers a fun hands-on learning experience for kids, where they can crawl through a tunnel with veggies above while learning about soil!

Free Soil Testing for Riverfront Landowners

FSWCD has partnered with the US Fish & Wildlife Service to improve the long term health of the Chena River and its salmon population, but we can't do it by ourselves! We are in search of Chena River and slough property owners who are willing to partner with us to improve their streambank. It is important to keep a well vegetated streambank to prevent erosion and create vital fish

habitat. We would like to visit your property to collect a soil sample from your lawn (a free fertilizer recommendation will be provided to the landowner), scout for invasive weeds and evaluate streambank health. If your streambank could use improvements (erosion prevention, fish habitat improvement), you could qualify for the cost-share program which would allow

FSWCD to pay for 50% of the costs of improving the condition of your streambank. We would like to work collaboratively with landowners to reach our vision of improved streambank health, while maintaining your desire for riverfront views and access. To learn more, or to set up a visit to your property, please call Joe at 479-1213 ext. 108

Green Infrastructure in North Pole



Progress is being made on North Pole Memorial Park

FSWCD's two North Pole projects at Memorial Park and City Hall are in their second year of development. Alaska DNR's Community Forestry Program grant showcases green infrastructure projects. Both locations are along waterways and use a variety of techniques to redirect the rainwater runoff and snowmelt from running directly into the

Chena River. This allows the soil to act as a filter before the water enters the ground water system. Working with the contractor Weber Inc., techniques include using a berm and swale combination near the parking lot, sloping the paved walkway away from Chena slough instead of towards it, installing gravel and grass mesh, and

practicing strategic planting to reduce erosion. These are all techniques designed to demonstrate that green infrastructure can be used successfully in Alaska. Construction is well underway and we're looking forward to the grand opening of Memorial Park at the end of the summer. Stay tuned to our website and Facebook page for the event!

"After following your recommendations, we had a 40lb cabbage!"

Test Your Soil This Fall!

The ideal time to collect soil samples is after harvesting your garden in the fall. The analysis will take place over the winter and you will be ready for spring with a lime and fertilizer recommendation from FSWCD.

For a \$35 fee you will find out all of the macro and

micro nutrient levels in your soil, the pH, organic matter content, Cation Exchange Capacity, and more. FSWCD technical staff will analyze this information to provide you with an easy-to-understand recommendation.

In the words of one happy customer, "Before we

tested our soil, the garden would never produce cauliflower heads and our yields were low.

After following your recommendations, we had a 40lb cabbage!"

If you would like to test your soil, please call us at 479-1213 x108.

Interior Alaska Food Network: Fighting Food Insecurity



IAFN working to establish its goals and vision

We are pleased to announce that FSWCD is part of the newly formed Interior Alaska Food Network (IAFN), a group focused on improving food security in Interior Alaska. Melissa Sikes and Lorinda Lhotka, members of the Statewide Alaska Food Policy Council (AFPC) Governing Board,

spearheaded the formation of this group, which includes representatives from Fairbanks Farm Bureau, FSWCD, DEC, the Fairbanks Food Bank, Bread Line's Stone's Throw and Stone Soup Café, Tanana Chief's Conference, Calypso Farm, UAF, and many others. IAFN is working to build a stronger

market for Interior-grown products by creating a "Golden Heart Grown" logo. The group is also assisting the Fairbanks Economic Development Corporation with developing a directory of Interior related agriculture and food security organizations. For more info, call 479-1213 x105.

Weed Cost Share is Now Taking Applications



Bird Vetch (*Vicia cracca*) is one of the notorious Interior Alaska invaders

The Weed Cost Share is a program to help landowners manage their invasive plant or agricultural weed problems through technical assistance and a cost share for incurred

expenses. Funds will be awarded based on need, which is determined by the type of invasive species and whether or not you are an agricultural producer.

The maximum amount each landowner can be reimbursed is up to 50% of control costs with

a cap of \$250.

Types of expenses that can be reimbursed include herbicide purchase, labor, or fuel for equipment. Equipment purchases will not be reimbursed through the cost share program. More info can be found on the FSWCD website at <http://www.fairbankssoilwater.org/resources-invasive.htm> or by calling Aditi at 479-1213 x104.

FSWCD was one out of only 42 conservation districts nationwide to be awarded this grant!

New Agriculture Projects for South Side Fairbanks!

FSWCD was recently awarded a grant to provide technical assistance for gardening and agriculture in south side Fairbanks, an “urban food desert”.

This grant will help FSWCD to offer agricultural workshops, promote local community

gardens and markets, and offer technical expertise to gardeners.

Local partners include JP Jones Community Development Center, Calypso Farms, City of Fairbanks, Breadline Inc., No Limits, Cooperative Extension Service, and others.

This project will bring together a diverse group of citizens and organizations to produce food and learn conservation practices. The community will be greener and cleaner, storm water and erosion issues will be addressed, and agricultural assistance will be provided.

Kenai Agriculture in the Classroom Teacher Workshop

Sharon Lockwood and Melissa Sikes presented an Agriculture in the Classroom workshop at UAF through the Summer Sessions program from May 31st – June 3rd, 2016. 10 local school district teachers participated in the course. The class visited and learned about the UAF Reindeer Research program, the Large Animal Research Station, the Tanana Valley Farmer’s Market, Hawks Greenhouse, North Pole

Peonies, Smith Family Farm, Mid-State Meats, Arctic Qiviut, Ruth Barnett Fish Hatchery, Hunter School Garden, and Funny Farm Feed Folks. An additional workshop is scheduled to take place in Kenai from August 26-28th. Contact fairbankswwcd@gmail.com for more information. We are proud to announce that Alaska Agriculture in the Classroom has received a

\$5000 grant from the Alaska Farm Bureau to continue offering workshops and resources to educators throughout Alaska. Please visit the AK AITC website at www.agclassroom.org/ak for lesson plans and more information about the Agricultural Literacy resources available.



Teachers learn about the UAF Reindeer Research Program



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Elodea Update

The Fairbanks Elodea Steering Committee is continuing to plan for herbicide treatments in Chena Slough, Chena Lake, and Totchaket Slough. Permitting and environmental assessment are still ongoing, and should be completed over the next month. In the meantime, FSWCD staff are continuing outreach and education, and surveying for

Elodea in order to prevent the further spread of this invasive aquatic plant in Alaska. A group of floatplane pilots are helping to survey for Elodea in more remote locations. This season, a crew of divers are using suction dredging equipment to eliminate the small patches of Elodea that were found in the Chena River.

For more info, call 479-1213x104

Calendar of Events

- July 25-28** Western Regional Cooperative Soil Survey Workshop
- Aug 5-14** Tanana Valley State Fair
- Aug 14** Chena Hot Springs Energy Fair
- Aug 26-28** Kenai Agriculture in the Classroom Teacher Workshop

Fox Springs

FSWCD has been contacted by community members for assistance with forming a task force with the goal of keeping Fox Springs open for public use. To join the task force, please contact Joni at jonisc@gmail.com or 978-1727.



<http://www.adn.com/alaska-life/2016/07/09/state-puts-famous-fairbanks-watering-hole-up>