ALASKA AGRICULTURE CONFERENCE

and Grazing Lands Workshop

Downtown Anchorage Sheraton | November 12-14, 2026



RITA JO SHOULTZ
Alaska Perfect Peony



STEPHAN VAN VLIET
Director of the Center for Human Nutrition Studies at Utah State University



JEFF TRANEL
Agricultural and Business Economist with Colorado State University Extension

KEEP ALASKA GROWING

ALASKA FARM BUREAU

Homer Soil & Water Conservation District

WESTERN SARE Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education

UAF University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service

UAF University of Alaska Fairbanks Institute of Agriculture, Natural Resources & Extension

EVENT SCHEDULE

THURSDAY
12
NOVEMBER 2026

ALASKA COLLABORATIVE GRAZING LANDS WORKSHOP

Sheraton Hotel
Anchorage Downtown

8:00 AM — **WELCOME**
Katie Herzner, IAC; Kendra Young NatGLC

8:30 AM — **SOIL FORMATION AND NUTRIENT CYCLING IN ALASKAN AGRICULTURAL SOILS**
Victoria Monsaint-Queeney, PhD

9:20 AM — **ALASKA RANGELAND VEGETATION AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR RAISING LIVESTOCK**
Karin Sonnen, NRCS

10:20 AM — **THE IMPACT OF GRAZING AND FEEDING PRACTICES ON THE NUTRIENT DENSITY OF MEAT**
Stephan Van Vliet, PhD

11:10 AM — **ALASKAN LIVESTOCK PRODUCER PANEL**

12:15 AM — **LUNCH BREAK**

1:00 PM — **INTRODUCTION TO MEAT PROCESSING REGULATIONS IN ALASKA**
Jeffery Jacobsen, FSIS Alaska; Sarah Coburn, State Vet

1:50 PM — **MEAT SELLING AND MARKETING IN ALASKA PANEL**

2:50 PM — **RANCHER MATH: THE ECONOMY OF SCALE**
Jeff Tranel, Right Risk

3:40 PM — **FINANCIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR GRAZING ANIMAL PRODUCERS**
Elizabeth Bezinque, NRCS; Misty Hull, USDA Rural Dev.; Wesley Jenkins, FSA; Katie Herzner, IAC; Kendra Young, Nat GLC; and others

4:30 PM — **NAVIGATING THE 2026 ALASKA AGRICULTURE CONFERENCE**

5:30 PM — **RECEPTION**
Vendor Hall

NatGLC NATIONAL GRAZING LANDS COALITION

INTERTRIBAL AGRICULTURE COUNCIL

ALASKA FARM BUREAU

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

EVENT SCHEDULE

FRIDAY
13
NOVEMBER 2026

ALASKA AGRICULTURE CONFERENCE 2026

Keep Alaska Growing

Sheraton Hotel
Anchorage Downtown

7:45 AM — **REGISTRATION & CHECK-IN**
Arrive, collect your badge, and enjoy

8:45 AM — **WELCOME ADDRESS**
Opening remarks and introduction to the day's agenda.

9:00 AM — **KEYNOTE SESSION - CHANGES**
Rita Jo Shoultz, Alaska Perfect Peony - Main Ballroom

10:00 AM — **REGENERATIVE PILOT PROGRAM WITH NRCS**
Austin Shero, NRCS; Elizabeth Bezinque, NRCS - Main Ballroom

UPDATES TO ALASKA'S SLUG RESEARCH
Jozef Slowik, UAF IANRE - Kuskokwim East

LIVESTOCK NUTRITION
Rayne Reynolds, Alaska Farm Supply - Kuskokwim West

THE FUTURE OF PEONY EXTRACTS IN ALASKA
Mike Williams, EagleSong Alaska - Susitna

WOOD UTILIZATION: LUMBER GRADING, SAWMILL OPERATION & MORE
Matthew Labrenz, Forest Products, Specialist-UAF IANRE; Jeremy Douse, State Forester-Division of Forestry & Fire Protection - Yukon

AG COVENANT LANDS: WHAT ARE THEY AND HOW TO IMPROVE
Erik Johnson; Margaret Adsit - 3rd floor board rm

11:00 AM — **USDA NASS CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE: HOW TO BE COUNTED AND WHY IT MATTERS**
Andrew Brosier, USDA NASS; Bryan Scoresby, Alaska Division of Agriculture - Main Ballroom

GETTING STARTED IN SEED POTATOES: PANEL
Mia Kirk, Divison of Agriculture; Mickenzie Erickson, Plant Materials Center; Jeff Smeenk - Kuskokwim East

COVER CROPS AND ALFALFA FOR SOIL HEALTH AND FORAGE PRODUCTION
Caley Gasch, UAF IANRE - Kuskokwim West

RISK MANAGEMENT TOOLS IN ADVANCING ALASKA FARM FINANCING
Shannon Neibergs - Susitna

EQUIPMENT REPAIR RESOURCES: DIY AG EQUIPMENT REPAIR
Mitchell Nida, Craig Taylor Equipment - Yukon

UAF NEXTGEN INTERNSHIP SPOTLIGHT: DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE IN THE FIELD
Emily Hawley, UAF NextGen Scholar; Ramsey Sullivan, Division of Agriculture; DeShana York, UAF IANRE - 3rd floor board rm

12:00 PM — **LUNCH**
Main Ballroom

12:45 PM **UAF IANRE UPDATE: ADVANCING ALASKA'S AGRICULTURE COMMUNITY**
Jodie Anderson, Director Institute of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Extension - Main Ballroom

1:00 PM **KEYNOTE - LINKING THE HEALTH OF SOILS, PLANTS, ANIMALS, AND PEOPLE: A METABOLOMICS APPROACH**
Stephan van Vliet - Main Ballroom

2:00 PM **YES YOU CAN: APPLY FOR ANCHORAGE'S FARM USE TAX EXEMPTION: PANEL**
Panel - Main Ballroom

WILDLIFE DAMAGE MANAGEMENT IN ALASKA
Marc Pratt, USDA APHIS Wildlife Services - Kuskokwim East

VIRTUAL FENCING PANEL
Dr Sabrietta Holland, Knik River Ranch; Leslie Tompkins, Hungate Farms - Kuskokwim West

FINDING YOUR NICHE (MARKETING)
Rita Jo Shoultz, Alaska Perfect Peony; Hudson Hass, Barn2Door - Susitna

FEDERAL AND ALASKA SMALL FARM FOOD REGULATIONS
Christine Dzujna, Farm to Consumer Legal Defense Fund - Yukon

FARMER TRAINING IN ALASKA: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?
Jenn Wagaman, Director UAF Cooperative Extension - 3rd floor board rm

3:00 PM **ORGANIC SOIL NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT IN COLD SOILS**
Caley Gasch, UAF IANRE - Kuskokwim East

MEAT PROCESSING LAWS, PRIME ACT & ADVOCATING FOR FARM FOOD FREEDOM
Christine Dzujna, Farm to Consumer Legal Defense Fund - Kuskokwim West

WINTER ROOT DAMAGE SURVEY UPDATE
Ron Illingworth, North Pole Peonies - Susitna

PLANNING FOR YOUR FUTURE: COUNTRY FINANCIAL, MORE THAN INSURANCE
Brad Daggett, Country Financial - Yukon

IMPROVING AG COVENANT LAND MANAGEMENT: DISCUSSION WITH DECISION MAKERS
Facilitated by Kyra Wagner, HSWCD - 3rd floor board rm

4:00 PM **WEED MANAGEMENT WITH PERSISTENT HERBICIDES AND MANAGING PERSISTENCE WITH BIOCHAR**
Gino Graziano, UAF IANRE; Brant Woodruff, UAF IANRE - Kuskokwim East

USDA MEAT PROCESSING FACILITY UPDATE PANEL
Facilitated by Phil Kaspari: Scott Mugrage, Levee Way Processing LLC; Jeannie Pinkelman, Delta Meat and Sausage; Freeman Kingeekuk, Savoonga Reindeer Commercial Company; Adam Jenski, Alaska Meat Packers - Kuskokwim West

WHAT YOUR SOIL TEST ISN'T TELLING YOU
Justin Whittaker, Arctic Roots Analytics - Susitna

UNDERSTANDING YOUR FLOCKS NUTRITIONAL NEEDS
John Sylvester, Alaska Mill & Feed - Yukon

ADVOCACY IN ACTION
Margaret Adsit, AFT; Rachel Lord, AFPC; Amy Seitz, AFB - 3rd floor board rm

5:00 PM **SOCIAL HOUR**

6:30 PM **AWARDS BANQUET WITH KEYNOTE- 3 QUESTIONS FOR EVERY JOURNEY IN AGRICULTURE**
Jeffrey Tranel, RightRisk - Main Ballroom

EVENT SCHEDULE

SATURDAY
14
NOVEMBER 2026

ALASKA AGRICULTURE CONFERENCE 2026

Keep Alaska Growing

Sheraton Hotel
Anchorage Downtown

8:00 - 12:00 **ANNUAL MEETING OF VOTING DELEGATES**
Alaska Farm Bureau, Kuskokwim East

8:00 AM **VISIT VENDORS/NETWORKING**
Main Ballroom

9:00 AM **ATSALUGPIAQ (RUBUS CHAMAEMORUS): MINERAL AND PHYTOCHEMICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF AN ALASKAN SUBSISTENCE BERRY**
Stephan van Vliet - Main Ballroom

STATE AGRICULTURE LAND SALES AND GRAZING LEASES
Erik Johnson, Division of Agriculture; Tim Shilling, DNR MLW - Kuskokwim West

CREATING A POLLINATOR FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT
Susitna

RETHINKING FERTILIZER: A MORE NATURAL WAY FORWARD
Doug Dickey - 3rd floor board rm

10:00 AM **PROPAGATING ALASKA'S NATIVE BERRIES**
Josh Smith - Main Ballroom

CURRENT FEED RESEARCH IN ALASKA
Dr. Jim Vinyard, Kuskokwim West

AI FOR ALASKA FARMERS: UNDERSTANDING THE TECHNOLOGY AND ASKING BETTER QUESTIONS
Joseph Hawkins, Q40 Farm - Susitna

A NEW GENERAL-PURPOSE OAT FOR ALASKA
Jakir Hasan, UAF IANRE - 3rd floor board rm

11:00 AM **THE FOREST IS A FARM TOO: ALASKA'S ORIGINAL PERMACULTURE. WILD FOODS, LOCAL ECONOMIES, & SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES**
Vivian Mork - Main Ballroom

STATEWIDE HAYLAND QUALITY AND PRODUCTION STUDY
Karin Sonnen, USDA NRCS; and Bale Grazing Case Study with Otto Kilcher - Kuskokwim West

KEEP ALASKA'S GRAIN GROWING: KNOW YOUR WEEDS, PROTECT YOUR YIELD
Magdi Elsayed, UAF IANRE - Susitna

THE SCIENCE BEHIND MAKING FEED AND CUSTOMIZED BLENDS
John Sylvester, Alaska Mill & Feed - 3rd floor board rm

12:00 PM **LUNCH**
Main Ballroom

12:45 PM **REPORTS FROM AROUND THE STATE**
Main Ballroom

2:00 PM

LOCAL SUPPLY CHAIN: SCALING UP YOUR FARMING BUSINESS
Main Ballroom

LENDERS PANEL
Kuskokwim East

FORAGE NUTRITION TRENDS IN DELTA JUNCTION
Dr. Rachael Christensen - Kuskokwim West

NIX PRO COLOR SENSOR AND PLANT NITROGEN ESTIMATE
Inga Peterson - Susitna

HOW TO GROW HEMP IN ALASKA
Sara Williams, Sacred Seeds Foundation - 3rd floor board rm

3:00 PM

THE CHALLENGE OF ACCESS TO FARMABLE LAND: CONNECTING FARMS TO FARMERS
Margaret Adsit, Alaska Farmland Trust; Brad St Pierre, Goosefoot Farm - Main Ballroom

ROOT MAGGOT CONTROL & COVER CROP RESEARCH UPDATE
Grace Douglas, UAF IANRE - Kuskokwim East

COMMON LIVESTOCK BIRTHING EMERGENCIES
Dr. Joanne McCrea - Kuskokwim West

MICROBIAL SOIL TESTING
Justin Whittaker, Arctic Roots Analytics - Susitna

HOW TO GROW HEMP IN ALASKA: PANEL
3rd floor board rm

4:00 PM

INCORPORATING AGRITOURISM IN YOUR FARMING OPERATION
Rita Jo Shoultz, Alaska Perfect Peony; Scott Mugrage, Mugrage Hay & Cattle; Bonnie Scheele, Midnite Sun Reindeer Ranch - Main Ballroom

COMPOSTING
Casey Matney, UAF IANRE - Kuskokwim East

PRESCRIPTION GRAZING APPLICATIONS IN ALASKA
Anthony Lindfors, MEA; Marcus Mueller - Kuskokwim West

FLORICULTURE COMMITTEE MTG
Susitna

2026 ALASKA AGRICULTURE CONFERENCE
KEEP ALASKA GROWING

Thank You For Being Part Alaska Agriculture Conference 2026



RITA JO SHOULTZ

After retiring from commercial real estate, Rita Jo Shoultz founded Fritz Creek Gardens before turning her focus to peony farming. Working alongside her son Shannon, she helped grow Alaska's peony industry through her farm and widely read educational blogs, inspiring growers around the world. She also established community gardens throughout Homer, helping earn the city its title as "The City of Peonies" and inspiring its annual peony celebration.



STEPHAN VAN VLIET

Dr. Stephan van Vliet is the Director of the Center for Human Nutrition Studies at Utah State University. Dr. van Vliet's research is performed at the nexus of agricultural and human health. He routinely collaborates with farmers, ecologists, and agricultural scientists to study critical linkages between sustainable agriculture, the nutrient density of food, and human health. His work has been published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, Scientific Reports, the Journal of Nutrition, and the Journal of Physiology.



JEFF TRANEL

Jeff Tranel believes the best conversations about agriculture happen around kitchen tables, pickup tailgates, and community gatherings. An agricultural and business economist with Colorado State University Extension, Jeff has spent more than 40 years working with farm and ranch families to solve problems, strengthen businesses, and prepare for the future. Through his work with RightRisk™, he has built lasting relationships across Alaska and developed a deep appreciation for the resilience, innovation, and pioneering spirit of Alaska producers. Jeff will be inducted into the Colorado Agriculture Hall of Fame in 2027 in recognition of his lifelong service to agriculture and rural communities.

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USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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