**Secretary’s Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture**

**March 22, 2017**

**Specialty Crop Block Grant Funding -** It was officially announced that funds are available for this year’s round of Specialty Crop Block Grants (SCBG. This grant program, funded by USDA and administered at the state level by NJDA, provides support for projects intended to enhance New Jersey’s specialty crop (fruit, vegetable, nursery/greenhouse) producers. Commodity promotion councils, marketing cooperatives and other grower organizations have until April 28th, 2017 to apply.

**Child And Adult Care Food Program -** Two CACFP representatives are working closely with the Farm to School Coordinators to keep CACFP institutions abreast of program initiatives that emphasize how to use food-based activities to enhance the quality of education in the day care arena. We are preparing to initiate the Farm to Preschool Survey on Survey Monkey that will be sent to institutions in mid-June.

**Veterinary Feed Directive Meetings -** The meetings on the Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) were well-attended and informative. Confusion about the changes persists, and the Divisions of Animal Health and Markets fielded a number of case-specific inquiries. The divisions intend to complement the work already done on this issue by adding relevant educational materials to the Department’s website, including a comprehensive FAQ.

**The Emergency Food Assistance Program** – TEFAP foods for soup kitchens, shelters, and pantries were allocated for March from Safeway Cold Storage. A total of 39,693 cases and 941,866 pounds of TEFAP foods were offered as allocation for distribution to six Emergency Feeding Organizations (EFOs) from United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) suppliers. Additionally a total of 138,152 cases and 1,410,263 pounds of TEFAP Foods were offered in February. At the time of this report, a total of 56,024 cases and 1,574,682 pounds of TEFAP foods were scheduled for direct shipment to New Jersey for several EFOs from USDA vendors during the month of March.

**Agricultural Education CASE Grants Awarded** - As a result of the Memorandum of Agreement between the New Jersey Departments of Education and Agriculture and related funding, Curriculum for Agricultural Science Education (CASE) grant applications were reviewed and grants awarded to five (5) schools with approved agricultural education programs including Sussex Technical School, Salem Technical School, South Hunterdon Regional High School, Cumberland Regional High School and Allentown High School.

**2017 New Jersey Flower and Garden Show Exhibit -** The Conservation Partnership completed design of an education exhibit entitled Conservationfest in Germany for the NJ Flower Show, held February 16-19 at the Garden State Exhibit Center in Edison. The display was awarded a 1st place Most Educational, 1st place Best Environmental Focus, 2nd place Most Colorful, 2nd place Best Plant Material, 2nd place Best Interpretation of Theme, 3rd place overall from the Association of Professional Landscape Designers.

**School Nutrition Month –** The School Nutrition Programs Unit celebrates National Nutrition Month as well as School Breakfast Week during the month of March. On March 7th Division staff visited Brick Township School District’s Midstreams Elementary School and Lake Riviera Middle School to celebrate the growth in their Breakfast Programs.

**Bee Colony Condition -**Three apiaries were inspected by the State Apiarist after a beekeeper reported that all colonies in their apiary were dead. In most cases these colony losses are directly related to the levels of Varroa mite in the colonies. Despite treatments applied during the fall, there is some speculation and evidence from other state apiarists and bee researchers that colonies can be re-infected from other collapsing colonies in the area.

**Nursery Inspections -** Division staff completed winter nursery inspections at major “shipping” nurseries. Nurseries that ship field-grown nursery stock out-of-state benefit most from these off-season inspections that take place just prior to their spring digging/harvest. These inspections are completed in order to detect overwintering injurious insect pests that may not have been previously detected during the summer months. Staff carried out winter inspections at 73 nursery locations.

**Pathology Lab Testing -** The Pathology Laboratory Section for the months of January and February 2017 completed a total of 225 and 159 tests and/or procedures, respectively. Tests and/or procedures involved gross necropsy examination, histopathologic (microscopic), cytologic and parasitologic preparation and evaluation. Species submitted for testing in the month of February 2017 included dog, cat, goat, sheep, pig, chicken and wildlife mammal species.

**Laboratory Services Promotion -** Information about the laboratory including fees and submission procedures was provided to the veterinarians attending the accreditation meeting held at the PHEAL auditorium on 02/15/2017. The presentation on laboratory services was followed by a tour of the laboratory. The participants were excited to see the new facility and expressed interest in using the laboratory services. The commonly asked question was about provision of courier services for sample pick up. The AHDL currently does not provide courier pick up service. The number of samples submitted to the laboratory and revenues would increase significantly if the service was offered.

**Water Supply Advisory Council** - Reservoirs have responded positively to the recent wetter precipitation patterns and the Department's Administrative Orders, but overall conditions are still dry statewide. A sustained return to normal conditions is needed to measurably improve the drinking water supply indicators.