



AGENDA

Community Working Group Meeting

Topic: Agricultural Land Reserve Boundary Review

Electoral Area 'H' Official Community Plan Review

Tuesday, April 4, 2017

6:30 pm – 9:00 pm

Bowser Legion

7035 Island Highway West, Bowser

1. Welcome and Introductions, Review of Agenda	6:30 – 6:40
2. Approval of draft meeting record of March 22, 2016	6:40 – 6:45
3. Presentation from Ione Smith, Upland Consulting	6:45 – 7:10
4. Questions and Discussion	7:10 – 7:45
<i>Refreshment Break</i>	<i>7:45 – 8:00</i>
5. Review of draft OCP Section 3: Natural Resource Management	8:00 – 8:50
6. Summary and Closing	8:50 – 9:00



SECTION 3 – NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

3.1 Agriculture and Aquaculture

3.2 Forestry

3.3 Mineral, Gravel and Hydrocarbon Resources



Natural resources in this section refer to those areas and features that are relied on by industries for growing or rearing foods and for extracting commodities such as lumber or gravel. These natural resource industries are an important part of the economy in the Plan Area, and are important for food security and for sustainable growth and development when products can be used locally.

Many of these industries rely on a healthy natural environment to thrive, and in turn the health of the ecosystems rely on sustainable industry practices being established and followed.

3.1 Agriculture and Aquaculture

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture and aquaculture are important activities as economic drivers and as part of a local food system. They rely on land and water that is designated for these purposes and on the health of the ecosystems of which they are a part.

A local food system allows farmers, food producers, and their customers to interact either face-to-face at the point of sale or through community partnerships or initiatives which encourage local products. It also supports a “farm to plate” relationship by encouraging farm products to be grown, stored, processed, sold and handled locally.

The Province designated an Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) in the early 1970’s based on maps of agricultural land capability. In 1987 the boundary was reviewed in the Plan Area and elsewhere on Vancouver Island based on new mapping at a larger scale and other local considerations, resulting in some lands being added to the ALR and some removed. Currently, 24% of the Plan Area is designated as ALR.

The mandate of the Agricultural Land Commission is to ensure the future productivity of lands within the ALR. Non-agricultural development, including subdivision or non-farm use of these lands is not permitted without Agricultural Land Commission approval.

Shellfish aquaculture is a significant industry for the province of BC, and much of the production is within Baynes Sound. The main species farmed are clams, mussels, oysters and scallops. The Plan Area includes the southern part of Baynes Sound as well as Deep Bay Harbour which is an important port for the industry. The rest of Baynes Sound is within the Comox Valley Regional District and the Islands Trust.

The community is supportive of the aquaculture industry in recognition of its contribution to the local economy, and also for increased availability of local shellfish at stores and restaurants.

AGRICULTURE AND AQUACULTURE POLICIES

1. The Regional District supports the Agricultural Land Commission's mandate of preserving and encouraging the use of land for agriculture.
2. The Regional District encourages the retention of large land holdings within the ALR to maintain future opportunities for farm use.
3. The Regional District discourages encroachment and fragmentation of farmland by non-farm related uses.

OBJECTIVES

1. *Protect* the agricultural land resources of the Plan Area for present and future food production.
2. *Support* the aquaculture industry by protecting marine water quality and supporting associated land-based activities in suitable locations.
3. *Recognize* and protect the needs and activities of agricultural and aquaculture operations when considering residential uses on adjacent lands and vice versa.
4. *Advocate* comprehensive resource management decisions where agricultural land is competing with forestry, or environmental protection objectives.
5. *Encourage* sustainable farming methods in order to protect fresh and marine water resources and adjacent properties.
6. *Ensure* that the quantity and quality of the water supply is protected and seek ways and means of improving water availability for irrigation purposes.

4. The Regional District may support an application for non-farm use or exclusion of land from the ALR if the proposed non-farm use or exclusion provides for an essential community service or amenity which cannot reasonably be located on land outside of the ALR and for which the community need clearly outweighs the loss to agriculture.
5. Land-based components of aquaculture such as rearing, processing, storing and distributing shellfish or aquatic plants are supported:
 - a) in the ALR where considered a farm use; and
 - b) in the Resource Lands and Rural Lands designations in a location that is not expected to negatively impact the natural environment or the use and enjoyment of nearby properties; and for land in the Rural designation, also pursuant to Rural Lands Policy 4 which supports rezoning for service commercial uses subject to a list of criteria.
6. The location and construction of new roads, utility or communication rights-of-way should be sited to avoid ALR lands wherever possible. Where unavoidable, these rights-of-way should be sited in a manner that will cause minimal impact on agricultural operations. Alignments should be established in consultation with affected landowners and the Agricultural Land Commission.
7. Subdivision of land adjacent to the ALR is regulated by development permit to prevent future conflicts between agricultural uses and other adjacent uses.
8. Agrology reports submitted in support of applications for subdivision within or exclusion from the ALR should fully consider non-soil based farming activities and environmental best practices.

ADVOCACY POLICIES

9. The owners of land adjacent to ALR lands are encouraged to provide a vegetative buffer between their lands and the ALR lands and follow all Ministry of Agriculture policies and best management practices.
10. The Ministry of Agriculture and local farm organizations are encouraged to assist and support owners of agricultural land with options and opportunities related to all aspects of farming, including business development and other land tenure options if they are unable to or uninterested in farming.

3.2 Forestry

INTRODUCTION

Forestry is a significant land use in the majority of the Plan Area. Private Managed Forest Lands cover 56% of the land base, and there are also large areas of Provincial Forest owned by the Crown. Most of these Crown land are concentrated between Qualicum Bay and Deep Bay and in the lowland areas of the Plan Area. In 2010, part of this Crown Provincial Forest was protected under a Coastal Douglas Fir Land Use Order where harvesting is no longer permitted.

There are a significant number of Crown parcels, which were originally part of the Vancouver Island Fruit Lands that may have both forestry and agricultural potential.

Although most of the first growth forests in the Plan Area have long since been harvested, second growth forests are now in various stages of maturity. This Plan supports the protection of forest lands for silviculture in the same manner as agricultural lands are protected for agriculture, and also supports protection of significant forest lands for conservation purposes. Where policies in this section relate to matters beyond the jurisdiction of the Regional District, they serve only as broad objectives to help guide senior governments and private forest landowners in decisions for the management of forest lands.

FORESTRY POLICIES

1. This Plan supports the use of Resource Lands for forestry-related uses where appropriately zoned. In addition, the Plan supports the use of Resource Lands for recreational activities (such as hiking trails), where such uses do not contribute to the degradation of the natural environment and are permitted by the landowner.
2. Forests are recognized for their role in carbon sequestration which is an important component of climate change mitigation.

ADVOCACY POLICIES

3. The Province and private forest land owners shall be encouraged to manage their forest lands so that they do not:
 - a. Pose a threat to the quantity and quality of fresh water within the drainage system of watercourses, streams, lakes or wetlands;
 - b. Alter the aesthetic appeal and visual integrity of the Plan Area;
 - c. Disturb areas of unique vegetation or wildlife; and
 - d. Increase, or contribute to, soil erosion.
4. The Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and commercial forest companies shall be encouraged to ensure the sustainability of outdoor recreation exists in the natural woodlands

OBJECTIVES

1. **Ensure** the Area's forest lands are managed on a sustained yield basis and are protected against activities that may disrupt their renewable resource potential.
2. **Support** sustainable forestry practices.
3. **Support** the Area's forest lands availability for recreational enjoyment and education.
4. **Encourage** best use of FireSmart recommendations to reduce susceptibility of buildings and property to wildfire.

of this area in conjunction with the management of the forest. This would include supporting the controlled use of private logging roads and areas during non-operational periods for public recreational use where possible, except in times of high or extreme fire hazard.

5. The Regional District will encourage Provincial leadership towards ensuring environmentally sound forestry practices on private forest land. The Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, commercial forest companies and private forest landowners will be encouraged to use FireSmart recommendations to reduce susceptibility of buildings and property to wildfire.

3.3 Mineral, Gravel and Hydrocarbon Resources

INTRODUCTION

The predominant known mineral resource within the Plan Area is gravel concentrations around Horne Lake, Spider Lake, and Nile Creek. Other potential resources include deposits of limestone and clay. It is important to note that aggregate resources such as sand and gravel have greater value in mineral production than metallic metals and hydrocarbon resources in the Plan Area. As other areas become depleted of this resource or are lost to development, there may be increasing pressure for access to aggregates in the Plan Area.

The regulation of aggregate extraction falls primarily within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Energy & Mines and the Ministry of Forests, Lands & Natural Resource Operations. The province is responsible for operational issues, such as public/worker safety, environmental protection, closure and reclamation of aggregate operations. The Regional District may regulate areas where processing of aggregate resources is permitted. The Regional District cannot regulate mining and mineral exploration activities as they are subject to the *Mines Act* and *Mineral Tenure Act*.

The objectives and policies of this section remain broad in nature to offer guidance to senior governments in their decision-making process, as part of the referral process.

OBJECTIVES

1. ***Protect*** lands underlain by gravel, sand, mineral or hydrocarbon resources from surface developments, which would render them inaccessible.
2. ***Minimize*** conflicts between extraction activities and adjacent land and water uses.
3. ***Support*** good conservation practices during mining operations so as not to prejudice the long-term renewable resource potential of the area.
4. ***Encourage*** site rehabilitation and reclamation of damaged landscapes for subsequent productive use and environmental protection.

MINERAL, GRAVEL AND HYDROCARBON RESOURCES POLICIES

1. Prior to allowing development in an area underlain by mineral resources, the feasibility of removing the resource should be adequately considered by the province and the Regional District.
2. The Regional District will recommend that environmentally sound reclamation and conservation practices be undertaken at all mineral and aggregate resource extraction operations to protect long-term resource potential in the Plan Area. Specifically, where a mine or earthworks may cause significant disturbance to the surface of the land, the Province shall be encouraged to require that a performance bond be posted to ensure the proper reclamation of the damaged landscape (this reclamation is controlled by Part 10 of the *Mines Act*, Health, Safety and Reclamation Code).

ADVOCACY POLICIES

3. The Province will be encouraged to provide adequate consideration to possible impacts on neighbouring residential and/or rural parcels and the natural environment prior to issuing a permit considering a new mining operation or re-opening an old mine (or pit). Particular attention should be focused on assessing the potential impacts of resource removal on the quantity or quality of surface and groundwater or social impact on neighbouring residences. This information should be referred to the Regional District and adjoining landowners for comment prior to a decision.

5.2 Resource Lands

INTRODUCTION

This land use designation applies to lands that are used and valued for agriculture, land-based components of aquaculture, forestry, natural resource extraction, or environmental conservation opportunities. All lands within the Agricultural Land Reserve are in this land use designation. Lands that were formerly in the Forest Land Reserve (major forestry holdings) and large parcel Crown land holdings (other than those designated as Park Lands) are also within this land use designation.

Where land is in the Agricultural Land Reserve and is proposed for subdivision or a non-farm use, approval must first be obtained from the Agricultural Land Commission.

It is recognized that certain matters considered in this section are beyond the jurisdiction of the Regional District. The objectives and policies relating to these matters are intended to serve as indicators of community preference and assist senior levels of government in planning and decision-making.

RESOURCE LANDS POLICIES

1. Lands within this designation shall have a minimum permitted parcel size of 50.0 hectares, except for lands within the Agricultural Land Reserve.
2. For lands within the Agricultural Land Reserve, an 8.0-hectare minimum permitted parcel size shall be supported by this Plan.
3. Notwithstanding Resource Lands Policy 2 above, any lands within the Agricultural Land Reserve having a minimum permitted parcel size of less than 8.0 hectares pursuant to the Regional District of Nanaimo Land Use and Subdivision Bylaw No. 500, 1987 at the date of adoption of this Official Community Plan shall retain that minimum parcel size (these parcels are illustrated on Map No. 5).

ADVOCACY POLICIES

4. Areas with environmentally sensitive or significant ecological resources within the Resource Lands designation are identified on Map No. 3. Protection of these areas shall be encouraged through federal, provincial, Regional District or private initiatives and incentives. The Regional District may consider proposals for increased development on a portion of a property to facilitate conservation of the environmentally sensitive areas elsewhere on the property, where the proposal meets the values, criteria, objectives and policies of the Plan.
5. All development on Resource Lands is encouraged to follow FireSmart recommendations to reduce the susceptibility of buildings and property to fire.

NOTE FOR DRAFT: consider separate land use designation for ALR and consider removing Resource Lands Policy 3 that allows subdivision to less than 8 ha when in the zoning bylaw.

OBJECTIVES

1. **Maintain** the renewable natural resource land base and protect it from activities that may diminish resource value and potential
2. **Encourage** more comprehensive management of the resource land base
3. **Protect** the environment
4. **Encourage** and protect outdoor recreational opportunities