

9 AGRICULTURE

9.1 Introduction

Lands designated for agriculture by virtue of their zoning and/or status within the Agricultural Land Reserve exists within the City; however, with the exception of a small farm near the wastewater lagoons, these lands were not actively farmed at the time of OCP preparation. Approximately 90 ha within the current City limits are designated as Agricultural Land Reserve.

Cranbrook is an important regional centre for agricultural producers. Businesses within the City provide supplies and services for producers including farm equipment, feed, fertilizer, seed, veterinary services, as well as more general supplies and services such as financial institutions, medical facilities, building supplies, food and clothing. The revenue spent by the agricultural producers makes a valuable contribution to the City's economy. The City competes with suppliers in SW Alberta, the Creston valley and across the US border for a share of the agricultural market.

Actions within the City and surrounding area can have a definite impact on the quality of water in the watershed, the ability of rangeland to sustain cattle, the amount of water in area streams and the disposal of wastewater. For example, if cattle are able to enter streams within the watershed, dangerous contaminants may be introduced that could travel downstream and enter the City's domestic water reservoir.

The Joseph Creek Watershed is Cranbrook's source of drinking water and the City monitors water quality and the agricultural activities in the watershed potentially affecting its water source.

Knapweed seeds may be inadvertently carried by hikers, mountain bikers, vehicles, wildlife or pets to cattle grazing areas where the weed is known to inhibit the re-growth of grasses and other forage plants. This plant is of particular concern as it is able to establish itself easily at most locations thereby disrupting the balance of natural functioning ecosystems. Infestations of invasive/noxious plants in the watershed can pose a threat to water quality by increasing sedimentation levels and negatively affecting the natural water cycling processes.

Agricultural producers in the area benefit greatly from the City's spray effluent program. Producers manage two forage crops per season, which are irrigated with centre pivot systems in the late summer and early fall. Producers are also able to graze cattle on City lands. In 2002, there were approximately 728 ha under irrigation and there is potential to expand the program. This program is one of the examples of the sustainability steps that the City has undertaken.

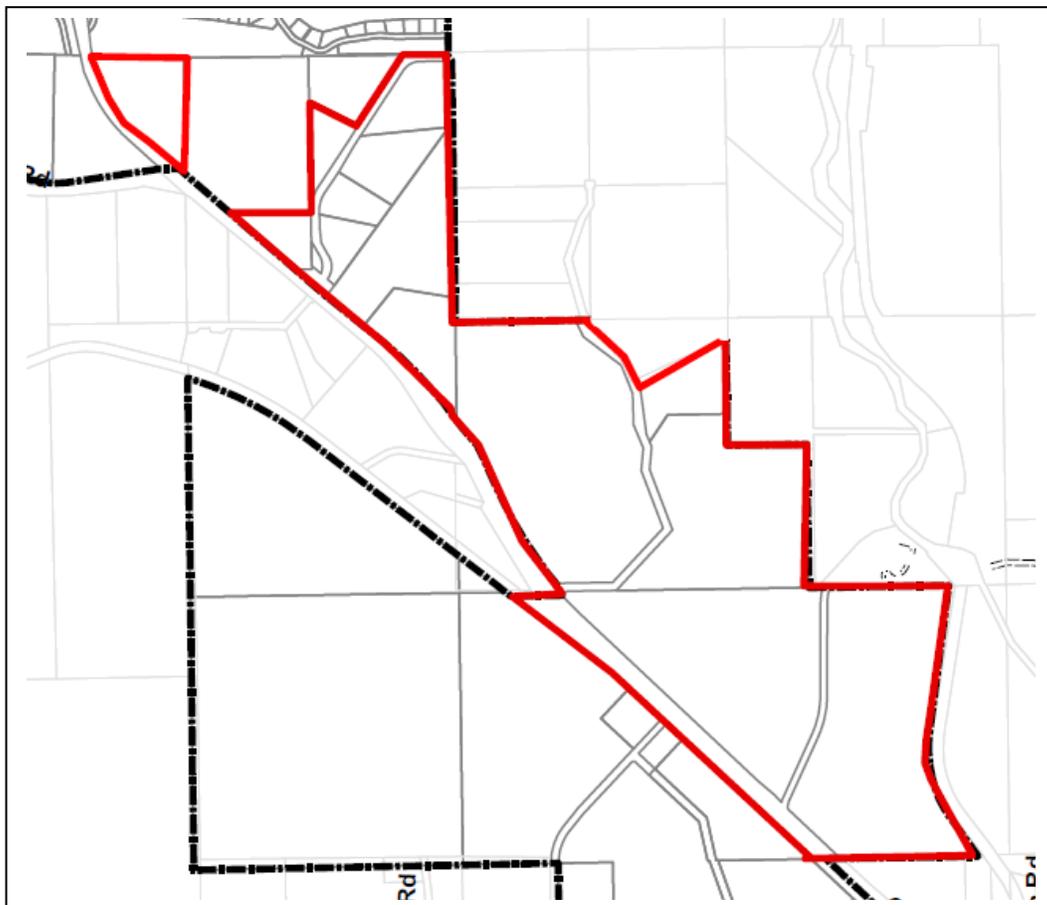
See **Section 16, Natural Environment & Hazardous Condition Areas** regarding issues related to low stream water flows resulting, in part, from the licensed use of water for both urban and agricultural purposes.

9.2 Policies

The City of Cranbrook shall:

- (a) **ALR Lands** - Establish dialogue with the Agricultural Land Commission regarding options for the future use of Agricultural Land Reserve lands within the City of Cranbrook, including consideration of any proposed expansion or enhancement of the effluent spray irrigation program.
- (b) **Potential ALR Exclusion** - In recognition of the benefits to agriculture resulting from the City's Spray Irrigation System, current and former land uses and parcelization of the area identified, the City supports the exclusion of municipal lands from the ALR as identified on Figure 1. It is recognized that land availability for urban development within the City boundaries reduces development pressures on rural Agricultural Land Reserve and other natural resource lands within the Regional District of East Kootenay. It is further recognized that the Agricultural Land Commission has not endorsed the potential exclusion and their support would depend on the merits of a proposal in an application process.

Figure 1 – ALR Exclusion



(OCP Amendment Bylaw 3755, 2013)

- (c) **Spray Irrigation** - Continue the successful operation of the effluent spray irrigation program.
- (d) **Livestock in Watershed** - Work in cooperation with the Regional District of East Kootenay, senior government authorities and landowners to restrict the access of livestock to streams within the City's watershed.
- (e) **Invasive/Noxious Plants** - Work in cooperation with the Regional District of East Kootenay and senior government authorities to raise public awareness about the problems associated with invasive/noxious plants such as knapweed and precautionary steps that should be taken to prevent such infestation. Develop an overall Invasive Plant Management Strategy in cooperation with the RDEK.
- (f) **Urban/Rural Interface** - Consider impacts of proposed new residential development in urban/rural interface areas keeping in mind that agriculture is an industry that may, at times, have unpleasant impacts on nearby residences. Appropriate measures including fencing, vegetative buffering and building setbacks shall be considered for proposed residential subdivision interfacing with agricultural lands in the interest of mitigating potential negative impacts.
- (g) **Urban Agricultural** – encourage the expansion of urban agriculture in forms such as community gardens as a creative and productive use of parks and other underutilized green spaces. Conduct an inventory of potential lands. **(OCP Amendment Bylaw 3665, 2010)**
- (h) **Local Agricultural** – continue to promote and support the Cranbrook's Farmer's Market and encourage other initiatives involved with local food production. **(OCP Amendment Bylaw 3665, 2010)**

