

# **The Future of Agriculture**

## **The District of Pitt Meadows**



**Agricultural Plan Steering Committee**

**Report Prepared by:**

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## 1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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### 3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The agriculture industry is one of the most important in the District of Pitt Meadows. The local economy relies on the farmland resource being used wisely for agricultural production and other agriculturally-oriented income generating pursuits.<sup>1</sup> The residents of Pitt Meadows, both urban and rural, have expressed strong satisfaction with the lifestyle offered by a smaller community where the agriculture industry is prominent. The community supports a plan for the long-term viability of the agriculture industry to ensure the industry can remain a significant contributor to the economic and social well being of the community.

The successful future of this industry will depend on several factors, but perhaps the most important is to ensure the land base, as it presently exists, is dedicated to productive agriculture. Because of this, the Agricultural Plan Steering Committee (APSC) supports the Agriculture Land Reserve (ALR) boundaries as they currently exist and encourages the District to ensure those boundaries are maintained.

The planning process for the development of this Agricultural Plan resulted in a vision for the future of agriculture in Pitt Meadows. The APSC insisted upon input by consultation with many different people; the agricultural community and the general public, representatives from Council and the District, Pitt Meadows Farmers Institute, the British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture and Food (BCMAF), the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) and the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC). Using ideas and suggestions from these participants, the APSC developed the following longer-term vision for agriculture in Pitt Meadows:

*"The District of Pitt Meadows supports a viable and progressive agriculture industry and will strive to optimize the use of all designated agriculture lands within the Agricultural Land Reserve. The District will be proactive in fostering a strong and progressive agriculture industry by supporting farmers in cooperation with the Farm Practices Protection Act (Right To Farm) Legislation, by seeking provincial regulatory reform to ensure fair and equitable taxation, and by establishing policies that encourage farmers to maintain a healthy, prosperous, and sustainable agriculture industry."*

With this vision as a guide, the APSC has developed an Agricultural Plan for the District of Pitt Meadows that consists of recommendations to the District Council related to the future of the agriculture industry. These recommendations are listed in Section 4 and are also found in their context throughout the Plan.

Central to this Agricultural Plan is a discussion in Section 7.2 of a strategy for the long-term viability of the agriculture industry in Pitt Meadows. The recommendations include more focus on agricultural awareness and understanding among the urban community and neighboring Municipalities, a Staff Person as Chief Agricultural Liaison in Pitt Meadows, and suggestions for exploring other ventures and options for agriculture.

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<sup>1</sup> Pitt Meadows Official Community Plan (OCP), page 16.

Another key recommendation is the establishment of a Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee of Council. This Committee will cooperate with the District on the implementation of the recommendations in this Plan, and advise the District on agricultural issues in the community and comprehensive reviews of agriculture-related policies, plans and development proposals when required.

Detailed discussion on the important agricultural issues facing Pitt Meadows, as well as related policies and recommendations for future decision-making, is found throughout this Plan. Issues are covered within the larger categories of Land Use in the Agricultural Area, Water Management, Waste Management, Crop and Livestock Management, Transportation, Recreation and Greenways, Boundaries and Buffers, and a section on the Pitt Meadows Airport.

Important recommendations include a “Residential Dwelling Envelope” policy, designed to address residential development issues on land parcels and recommendations for encouraging value-added agricultural enterprise activities on farm sites. Other suggestions include developing a water management strategy, developing a plan for recreational uses in agricultural areas, and developing a focused agricultural transportation plan. The need for a detailed transportation plan was identified as critical to the future survival of agriculture in Pitt Meadows. Currently farmers are forced to make important business management decisions based on traffic patterns and volume.

The closing recommendation focuses on an implementation strategy to be developed by Council in consultation with the recommended Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee. Important components of this strategy include prioritizing the recommendations in this plan, establishing appropriate timelines for their implementation, directing recommendations to appropriate agencies, organizations or staff, obtaining funding, preparing appropriate bylaws when required, and preparing a specific schedule for review of the implementation progress.

## 4. LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Agricultural Plan Steering Committee recommends to District Council the following:

### Strategy for the Long-Term Viability of Agriculture

1. Establish a Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee of Council. Suggested membership on the Committee includes a member of Council as liaison, two representatives nominated from the Pitt Meadows Farmers Institute, two representatives from the farming community at large, a representative representing agri-tourism interests, one member representing the Chamber of Commerce, one member representing ecological interests, one member representing the Katzie First Nation as a non-voting member. **(page 18)**
2. Develop an agricultural awareness strategy using the municipal website as a method for public awareness in consultation with the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee, the BC Agriculture Council's Agriculture Awareness Coordinator, BCMAF, the ALC, the AITC, and the general public. **(page 19)**
3. Request the Real Estate Board to require realtors be adequately trained about the ALR and the Farm Practices Protection Act in order to properly inform potential purchasers of ALR land about living in an agricultural area and an appropriate disclosure statement be signed. The APSC also recommends Council confirm with the Real Estate Board their commitment to maintain all ALR land in the Reserve and that tools to assist realtors with education, such as the BCMAF publication "Countryside and You", be made available. **(page 20)**
4. Appoint a staff person from the District as "Chief Agricultural Liaison". The APSC recommends the Director of Operations be considered for this position. **(page 20)**
5. Have the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee review the subject of expanding opportunities for new agricultural ventures in Pitt Meadows (such as aquaculture and farm markets) in cooperation with the Staff Person as Chief Agricultural Liaison and in consultation with the Pitt Meadows Farmers Institute, and report annually to Council what options were discussed. **(page 21)**
6. Support and encourage agri-tourism in Pitt Meadows and liaise with the Canadian Agri-Tourism Network and the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee to develop a strategy for agri-tourism options consistent with already existing agricultural enterprises. **(page 21)**
7. Cooperate with the District of Maple Ridge to gather information, increase awareness, and develop policy on agricultural issues of mutual concern. **(page 21)**

### Land Use in the Agricultural Area

8. Support subdivision of agricultural parcels only where the number of parcels does not increase, there are no parcels created that are less than 20 acres, and there is a net benefit to agriculture, as determined by the local Approving Officer in consultation with the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee, with the exception of home site severance for retiring farmers consistent with existing Agricultural Land Commission policy. Whenever possible, actively look for ways to consolidate smaller parcels to larger ones. **(page 24)**
9. Contain all future residential and farm-help dwellings within a strategically located building "envelope" in a manner that optimizes agricultural production in accordance with a policy to be developed by the District of Pitt Meadows in consultation with the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee, the ALC and the BCMAF. **(page 25)**

10. Ensure all seasonal farm labour housing projects conform to Health and Fire Code regulations. **(page 26)**
11. To maximize the agricultural land available for future agricultural uses, request the Province to review policies on non-resident ownership currently in place in other jurisdictions and consider implementing policies to encourage agricultural uses of all agricultural lands and reduce potential speculation on value of farmland. **(page 26)**
12. Develop criteria for allowing value-added farm enterprise activities to be permitted on a farm site under the AFE zoning designation, in consultation with the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee, BCMAF, and the ALC. **(page 27)**
13. Investigate a suitable site for an Agricultural Industrial Park, to house value-added agricultural enterprise activities that do not meet the criteria as developed for value-added agricultural enterprise activities on a farm site. The APSC recommends the site be selected in consultation with the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee, Engineering and Development Services, the general public and other relevant groups. **(page 27)**
14. Continue to encourage an attractive farm area through constant enforcement of Pitt Meadows Bylaw No. 1400. **(page 28)**

### **Water Management**

15. Develop a water management strategy in consultation with the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee, the Ridge Meadows Parks and Leisure Services, the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Engineering and Development Services, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the BC Ministry of the Environment, Parks and Lands, and The District of Maple Ridge. **(page 30)**

### **Waste Management**

16. Focus more resources on enforcement of Pitt Meadows Bylaw No. 1400 and the Soil Conservation Act in order to abolish fill sites on agricultural land, unless the fill is required for the operation of a bona fide farm and a building permit has been issued. **(page 32)**

### **Crop and Livestock Management**

17. Allow storage of farm inputs on a bona fide farm without further regulation, provided the farm input is not environmentally hazardous, is necessary for the farm operation, will be used in one growing year, and is safely stored at least 15 metres from natural watercourses, ditches or streams and is in accordance with established provincial legislation, regulation, and best practices guidelines. **(page 33)**
18. Have the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee, in consultation with BCMAF, the Pitt Meadows Farmers Institute and others, encourage further research into, review of, and adoption of, alternative bird management practices that are less intrusive than bird cannons. **(page 33)**
19. Acquire the new Standards and Guidelines for livestock operations when completed by the BCMAF, and incorporate the Guidelines into Land Use Bylaw No. 1250. **(page 34)**
20. Whenever possible, encourage humane and acceptable wildlife management practices that may involve selected netting, fencing, scare tactics, repellants, and cultural management and habitat modification. In instances where an animal may need to be removed, the APSC recommends liaising with Conservation Officers and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. **(page 34)**
21. Have the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee, in cooperation with the Pitt Meadows Farmers Institute and the BCMAF, continually monitor, review and encourage the use of new technologies and practices which may limit the effects of wildlife on the agriculture industry. **(page 34)**

### **Transportation**



22. Undertake a focused Agricultural Transportation Plan for Pitt Meadows referencing the Maple Ridge - Pitt Meadows Joint Master Transportation Plan in consultation with the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee, the BC Ministry of Transportation and Highways, BCMAF, the ALC, the general public and The District of Maple Ridge. **(page 35)**
23. Implement shorter-term transportation options to relieve immediate traffic problems for farmers. **(page 35)**

### **Recreation and Greenways**

24. Do not allow any more golf courses or driving ranges on any ALR land in Pitt Meadows. **(page 36)**
25. Develop a Plan for Recreation Use in Agricultural Areas as part of the Master Recreation Plan Process underway to assess the impact of recreational uses in or near an agricultural area in consultation with the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee, Engineering and Development Services, Ridge Meadows Parks and Leisure Services, and the general public. **(page 36)**
26. Continue to support the Pitt Addington Wildlife Management Area. **(page 37)**

### **Boundaries and Buffers**

27. Follow ALC Buffering Guidelines and those in the Approving Officer's Subdivision Guide to ensure proper buffering in future development areas abutting the ALR. **(page 37)**

### **Airport**

28. Ensure agricultural interests are considered by the intended Airport development plan through regular consultation with the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee. **(page 37)**

### **Implementation Strategy**

29. Following the acceptance of the Agricultural Plan by Council, have Council develop an appropriate implementation strategy, in stages, in consultation with the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee. **(page 38)**

## 5. INTRODUCTION

Farmland is one of the most valuable resources in Pitt Meadows. The local economy relies on it being used wisely for agricultural production and other agriculturally-oriented farm income generating pursuits. There are substantial areas in production for berries, horticultural products, greenhouse crops, grazing, dairy farming, and other farming activities. There are also fallow parcels of land that could be farmed productively.

The residents of Pitt Meadows have expressed strong satisfaction with the aesthetics of the agricultural environment, and the lifestyle offered by a small community, and have expressed their desire to retain these qualities despite the demand for growth facing the area. The agricultural community has also emphasized the need to support agricultural production.<sup>2</sup>

Consistent with this community viewpoint is the fundamental recognition that the best use for the farmland resource in Pitt Meadows is a long-term, viable agriculture industry. This Plan provides greater focus to the agricultural land base and attempts to more clearly define agriculture's place within the community with this fundamental principle in mind.

With this as a guide, the APSC, under the direction of the District of Pitt Meadows and in cooperation with the Pitt Meadows Farmers Institute, and with input from the Agricultural Land Commission, the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food, local farmers, the general public of Pitt Meadows, and the consulting team, has developed an Agricultural Plan that consists of recommendations to District Council related to the future of the industry. These recommendations are listed in Section 4 and are also found in their context throughout the Plan.

Following this introduction are sections that outline the purpose and the process that has been followed to develop the Agricultural Plan. Section 6 contains important background information about the history of Pitt Meadows and a description of the planning area. Also in Section 6 is an explanation of some central legislative Acts and regulations that have served as a backdrop to the Plan.

Section 7 is concerned with the future of the agriculture industry in Pitt Meadows. It contains the Vision Statement prepared by the APSC, as well as a detailed strategy for the long-term viability of the industry. There is a recommendation for the establishment of a Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee of Council (see section 7.2.1.). Many of the other recommendations in the plan refer to this particular Standing Committee.

Section 7 also contains detailed discussion on the issues that were raised by the APSC, the agricultural community and the general public. With the discussion is an explanation of the current policy and recommendations for future decision-making. Issues are covered within the larger categories of Land Use in the Agricultural Area, Water Management, Waste Management, Crop and Livestock Management, Transportation,

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<sup>2</sup> OCP, page 15.

Recreation and Greenways, Boundaries and Buffers, and a section on the Pitt Meadows Airport. Key recommendations have been made within each broad category.

Section 8 contains suggestions for an implementation strategy and the last sections contain relevant appendices (Section 9) and a list of references (Section 10).

### **5.1. Purpose of the Plan**

An Agricultural Plan applies to farm areas that are predominantly, but not exclusively, in agricultural use. In Pitt Meadows, areas in agricultural use are mainly within the Agricultural Land Reserve, and constitute some 86% of the total land area of the District.

The purpose of the Agricultural Plan is to review and address major farming and agriculture development issues incorporating input from members of the Pitt Meadows agricultural community and the general public. The findings, and range of recommendations, will serve the community by addressing potential conflicts between agricultural use of the land base and other land uses to ensure the long-term viability of farming in Pitt Meadows and the further development of a well-integrated agriculture industry.

The impetus for the development of the Agricultural Plan was the Pitt Meadows Official Community Plan (OCP). The OCP calls for the preparation of an Agriculture Plan to address agricultural issues not covered within the OCP.

### **5.2. Overview of the Process**

The process began with the establishment of an APSC by the Council of Pitt Meadows and meetings with the consultant team. Included in the process was a tour of the District's agricultural areas, numerous well-attended meetings with the APSC and resource people to the APSC, the development of a broader vision statement in consultation with the APSC, and a review of the major issues and concerns. There was also a well-attended meeting with the agricultural community and a meeting with the general public of Pitt Meadows. Final stages of the process included the development and review of a draft Agricultural Plan, another public meeting, and the submission of the Agricultural Plan to Council.

## **6. BACKGROUND**

### **6.1. History of the Community**

Pitt Meadows is on the North bank of the Fraser River, west of The District of Maple Ridge. The eastern boundary is partially the Katzie Slough, the southern boundary is the Katzie Indian Reserve, the Western boundary is the Pitt River, and the northern boundary is roughly the Pitt Lake. The topography consists of comparatively level floodplain, so low in relation to the sea that a system of dykes has been in place since the 1890's.

In 1824 James McMillan visited the Fraser River and named the confluence "Pitt", likely in honour of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham. The locality was further explored between 1837 and 1858, and became incorporated as a Municipality under the leadership of W.J. Park on April 23, 1914.

Historically, the principal agricultural enterprise was dairying. Other important crops have been cranberries, blueberries, and some vegetables. The Pitt Meadows Farmers Institute was incorporated on March 20, 1928, and has consistently worked to protect the interests of farmers and to make the agriculture industry a viable one.<sup>3</sup>

In Pitt Meadows today the majority of the land base is devoted to agricultural and rural uses. This land base consists of both small and large acreage parcels, with extensive large parcels located in the southwest and northeast portions of the District. The smaller acreage and hobby farms tend to be located in the west of the District, with two concentrations north of the Lougheed Highway, northeast of the Dewdney trunk/Harris Road intersection, and immediately north of the Alouette and North Alouette Rivers.<sup>4</sup>

## **6.2. Description of the Planning Area**

### **6.2.1. The Physical Setting**

The planning area for this Agricultural Plan consists of ALR land within the District of Pitt Meadows, which comprises 86% of the total land base in the District of Pitt Meadows. This land has been zoned for agriculture and compatible uses.(Map next page)

The topography consists of floodplain and uplands, and a dyke system to protect the land from the Fraser, Alouette and Pitt Rivers. Besides its predominant use for agricultural production, the agricultural land base also accommodates some golf courses, driving ranges and other commercial recreational activities, mainly near the Lougheed Highway and in the northeast area of the community. Approximately 15% of the total District population live in the ALR area.

### **6.2.2. Agriculture in the Planning Area**

Pitt Meadows is the sixth largest agricultural area in BC in terms of economic significance, with annual gross farm receipts of almost 60 million dollars<sup>5</sup>. Substantial areas of land are in production for berries, horticultural products, greenhouse crops, grazing, dairy farming, and other farming activities. Pitt Meadows accounts for nearly 44% of all land in nursery production in the GVRD.<sup>6</sup> There are also fallow parcels of land that could be farmed to readily achieve a higher level of productivity and greater farm revenue.

Farmland is one of the most valuable resources in the community and the local economy relies on it being used wisely for agricultural production and other agriculturally-oriented farm income generating pursuits.<sup>7</sup>

### **6.2.3. Issues and Concerns**

There were a number of issues with respect to agriculture raised by the APSC, farmers, and the general public during the course of this study. These issues were discussed and reviewed with the APSC, the Pitt Meadows Farmers Institute, the public and selected

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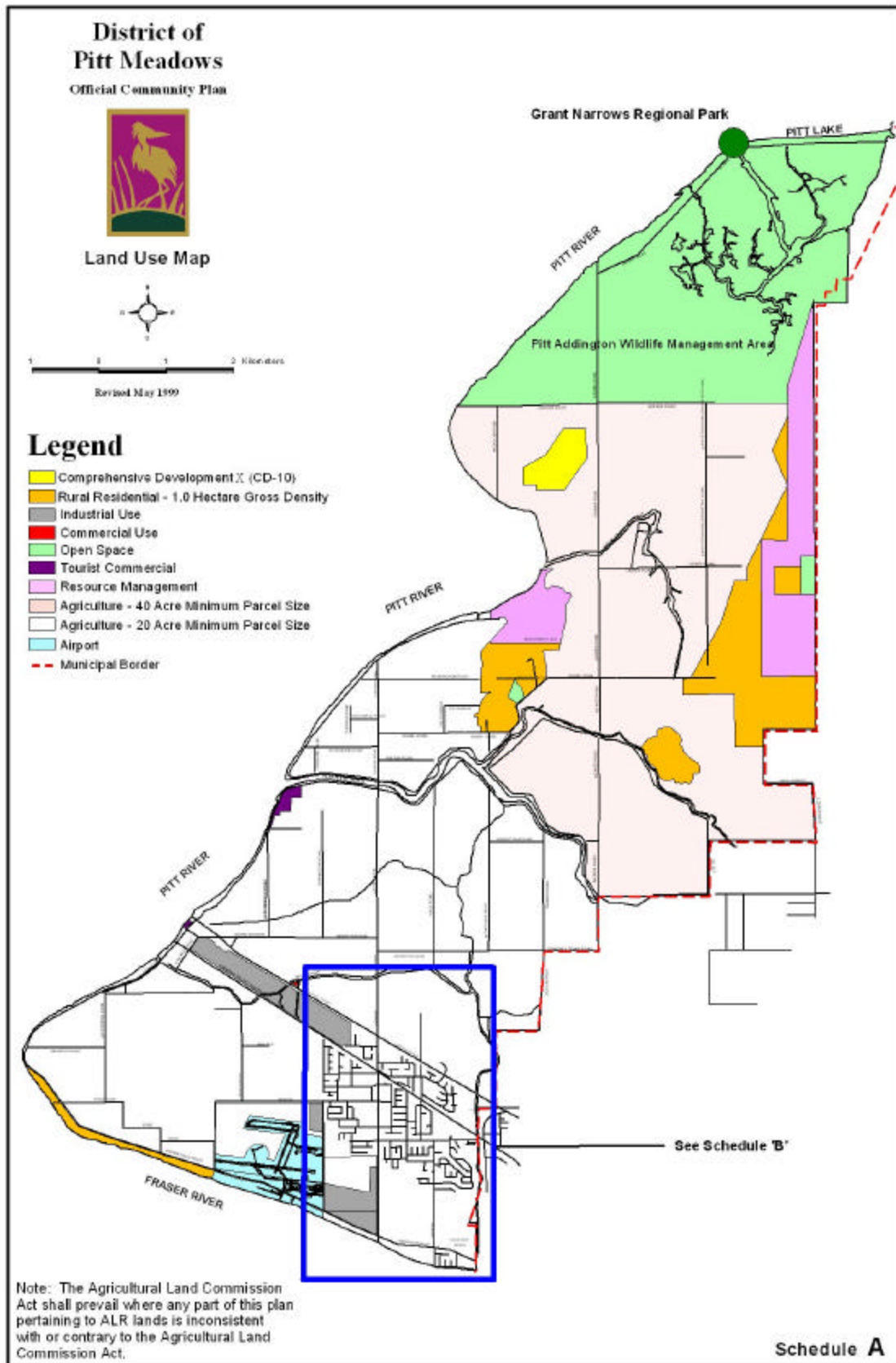
<sup>3</sup> Historical Story of Pitt Meadows

<sup>4</sup> OCP, page 12.

<sup>5</sup> BCMAF "Growing Together", Fall 1999, vol.1 no. 1

<sup>6</sup> District of Pitt Meadows Agricultural Overview, page8.

<sup>7</sup> OCP, page 16.



professionals who provided input to the plan. Section 7 of this plan provides further background, policy, and discussion on the issues.

### **6.3. Context and Legislative Backdrop for the Plan**

This section outlines the relationship between legislative Acts and regulations and the Agricultural Plan. In many cases, the legislative backdrop has determined the scope of the Plan and the recommendations possible within the parameters of the legislation. Through consideration of the legislative backdrop an attempt has been made to achieve improved federal, provincial and local policy integration.

#### **6.3.1. Federal Context**

##### *6.3.1.1. Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA)*

The goal of the new CEPA is to protect the environment and the health of Canadians from toxic substances and other pollutants. CEPA has regulations on many items, including managing toxic substances, clean air and water, controlling and moving waste, and enforcement.

##### *6.3.1.2. Fisheries Act*

The Fisheries Act is an act respecting fisheries, and contains regulations pertaining to conservation and protection of fish and fish habitat and prevention of pollution and / or obstruction of any water frequented by fish.

#### **6.3.2. Provincial Context**

##### *6.3.2.1. Soil Conservation Act*

The Soil Conservation Act is intended to protect soil on land in an agricultural land reserve by regulating its removal and the placement of fill. The process requires the Provincial Agricultural Land Commission give written approval and the local authority must issue a permit.

##### *6.3.2.2. The Weed Control Act*

The Weed Control Act places responsibility for control of noxious weeds upon occupiers of land. It provides for appointment of inspectors to ensure compliance and, failing that, for a method by which they can control weeds with costs recovered from the occupier. Weed Control Committees may be established by municipal councils to administer the Act within a municipality. A committee reports to the municipal council and the Minister.

##### *6.3.2.3. The Agricultural Land Commission Act (ALCA)*

In 1973, the ALC was given the mandate to establish the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), in order to (1) preserve agricultural land, (2) encourage the establishment and maintenance of farms, and (3) use the land in the ALR in a manner compatible with agricultural purposes.

Part of the ALC's mandate is to encourage municipalities to support farm use of agricultural land in their planning and policies. The ALCA ensures that there is a strong linkage between the ALC policies and any plans and bylaws related to the ALR. Any plans that apply to ALR land must be referred to the Commission for comment in order to ensure they are consistent with the regulations and orders of the Commission. Any

inconsistent element of a plan is of no effect.<sup>8</sup> In addition, subject to the requirements of the ALCA, individuals and government agencies who wish to alter the boundaries of the ALR, subdivide land in the Reserve, or use Reserve land for non-farm purposes, must obtain the prior approval of the ALC.

#### 6.3.2.4. *Farm Practices Protection (Right To Farm) Act (FPPA)*

This relatively recent legislation benefits both farmers and residents who live near agricultural communities. The legislation offers protection to farmers who use normal and accepted farm practices, where a normal practice is defined as “an activity that is conducted by a farm business in a manner consistent with proper and accepted customs and standards as established and followed by similar farm businesses under similar circumstances”. The legislation was designed to establish a process to manage conflicts between and among neighbours and support farmers through preventing nuisance complaints about farming.<sup>9</sup>

#### 6.3.2.5. *Fish Protection Act*

The Fish Protection Act is a cornerstone of the BC Fisheries Strategy. The four objectives of the legislation are (1) to ensure water for fish, (2) to protect and restore fish habitat, (3) to focus on riparian protection and enhancement, and (4) to strengthen local environmental planning.

#### 6.3.2.6. *Waste Management Act*

The Waste Management Act is the central piece of legislation relating to the disposal and emission of all types of waste in BC. The “Code of Agricultural Practice for Waste Management” Regulation provides specific requirements for the handling and storage of agricultural wastes. Farm operations that comply with the Code are exempt from the need to obtain a waste disposal permit under the Waste Management Act.

#### 6.3.2.7. *Growth Strategies Statutes Amendment Act*

The purpose of a regional growth strategy is to promote human settlement that is socially, economically and environmentally healthy, and makes efficient use of public facilities and other resources. Regional growth strategies deal with a wide range of public issues, including strategies for maintaining the integrity of a secure and productive agricultural resource base. Under a regional growth strategy, agricultural and urban containment policies can be stated which provide a regional context for both the Official Community Plan and the Agricultural Plan. This will ensure that the Agricultural Plan is developed in the context of broader community and regional objectives instead of in isolation.<sup>10</sup>

#### 6.3.2.8. *Municipal Act*

A sub-area plan such as this one must observe the same content requirements as a broader-based community wide OCP, with the intent of providing greater focus on issue identification and problem solving as well as providing for broad objectives and a vision for the future. The Municipal Act contains provisions empowering local governments to

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<sup>8</sup> Planning For Agriculture (PFA), page 7-30.

<sup>9</sup> Strengthening Farming in British Columbia, A Guide to the Implementation of the Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act

<sup>10</sup> PFA, page 7-29.

adopt farm bylaws to regulate farm operations subject to the approval of the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Additionally, the Municipal Act states that local governments must not adopt zoning bylaws that prohibit or restrict agriculture unless approved by the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Particularly important sections of the Municipal Act are those concerned with Agricultural Plan adoption by bylaw.<sup>11</sup>

### **6.3.3. Municipal and Regional Context**

#### *6.3.3.1. Pitt Meadows Official Community Plan*

The formal purpose of the OCP is outlined in the Municipal Act. The Pitt Meadows OCP provides a framework upon which to base future development decisions and reflects community views on land use for the District. The Pitt Meadows OCP calls for the development of an agricultural plan to address farm viability and agricultural development issues that couldn't be addressed by the OCP. Included in the OCP is a vision for the community that includes a commitment to the productive use of its agriculture lands, protection of its environmentally sensitive land and waterways, and maintenance of its unique small-town and agricultural characteristics. The community values the importance of economic development, maintaining quality parks, and managing residential growth in balance with jobs and transportation. These values are reflected in this Agricultural Plan.

#### *6.3.3.2. Pitt Meadows Land Use Bylaw No. 1250*

Land Use Bylaw No. 1250 is "a bylaw to provide for the proper use of land by the adoption of zoning, subdivision, parking, sign and screening regulations."<sup>12</sup> Specific sections of this Bylaw as well as amendments to the Bylaw have been referred to in this Agricultural Plan. The significance of this Bylaw is that it establishes a list of permitted land uses and prescriptive development requirements and standards which govern all building and land use activity in each zone in the plan area.

#### *6.3.3.3. Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) Livable Region Strategic Plan*

The GVRD's Livable Region Strategic Plan is the result of a four-year public and inter-governmental consultation process. It incorporates policies, targets and maps based on the following four fundamental strategies: (1) to protect the Green Zone, (2) to build complete communities, (3) to achieve a compact metropolitan region, and (4) to increase transportation choices.

## **7. THE FUTURE OF AGRICULTURE**

The successful future of the agriculture industry in Pitt Meadows depends on a clear vision and specific plans to realize that vision. In this section, the vision statement as developed by the APSC is presented, as well as a strategy for the future viability of the agriculture industry. Also, the numerous agricultural issues and concerns that were raised during the development of this plan are identified, reviewed and analyzed, and recommendations, where possible, are offered.

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<sup>11</sup> PFA, page 7-30.

<sup>12</sup> Land Use Bylaw No.1250, page 1.



## 7.1. Vision Statement

The Pitt Meadows OCP vision for agriculture involves achieving a community where agriculture is a priority by formulating an Agricultural Plan, discouraging land speculation in agricultural areas, encouraging environmentally friendly farm practices, promoting excellence in farming, integrating farming with community goals, and supporting ALR land policies.<sup>13</sup>

From these priorities, the APSC developed the following vision for the future of agriculture in Pitt Meadows:

*"The District of Pitt Meadows supports a viable and progressive agriculture industry and will strive to optimize the use of all designated agricultural lands within the Agricultural Land Reserve. The District will be proactive in fostering a strong and progressive agriculture industry by supporting farmers in cooperation with the Farm Practices Protection Act (Right To Farm) Legislation, by seeking provincial regulatory reform to ensure fair and equitable taxation, and by establishing policies that encourage farmers to maintain a healthy, prosperous, and sustainable agriculture industry."*

## 7.2. Strategy for the Long-Term Viability of Agriculture

Agriculture is one of the most important industries in Pitt Meadows. The vision for the future is to optimize the use of agricultural lands in Pitt Meadows and to foster the long-term viability of the industry. This Agricultural Plan contains recommendations aimed at making the vision for the future become reality, through supporting the community's farmers and creating the conditions for making their enterprises as economically viable as possible. Along with the implementation of the recommendations in this plan, the APSC believes there is a need for a larger strategy focused on new ideas and greater initiatives. The recommended strategy for the long-term viability of the agriculture industry in Pitt Meadows includes the following:

- Implement the recommendations in this Agricultural Plan; (Section 8)
- Establish a Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee of Council; (Section 7.2.1.)
- Develop an agricultural awareness strategy aimed at fostering a mutually supportive rural-urban relationship;(Section 7.2.2.)
- Discourage land speculation through education and awareness;(Section 7.2.3)
- Appoint a staff person as Chief Agricultural Liaison; (Section 7.2.4.)
- Explore opportunities to expand the range of agricultural activities in the District; (Section 7.2.5.)
- Support an agri-tourism industry in the District, where possible; (Section 7.2.6.)
- Cooperate with the District of Maple Ridge on issues of concern such as transportation, parks and recreation, and water management; (Section 7.2.7.)
- Utilize tools like the Geographic Information System when planning for, and promoting, agriculture. (Section 7.2.8.)
- Support value-added farm enterprise uses on farm sites; (Section 7.3.5.)

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<sup>13</sup> OCP, page 16.

### ***7.2.1. A Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee***

Standing Agricultural Advisory Committees, as part of a Municipality's operations, provide an effective link with the agricultural community. Standing Agricultural Advisory Committees are appointed, and are intended to function, similar to other advisory committees of Council. The key difference is that the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee will contain members of the agricultural community and will focus on agricultural issues.

#### **Recommendation:**

Establish a Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee of Council. Suggested membership on the Committee includes a member of Council as liaison, three representatives nominated from the Pitt Meadows Farmers Institute, a representative from the processing and distribution sector, an interested member from the community at large, and representatives from selected agencies and organizations, particularly the Agricultural Land Commission and the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

Duties of the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee will include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following:

- Advise and cooperate with the District on the implementation of recommendations in this Plan, where identified;
- Advise the District on agricultural issues, and environmental issues where relevant, within the community when required;
- Advise the District on comprehensive reviews of agriculture-related policies, and plans and development proposals, when required;
- Advise the District on matters referred by District Council, such as providing comments on specific development proposals, ALR applications, draft bylaws, and plans including transportation, drainage and recreation.

### ***7.2.2. The Rural-Urban Relationship***

There is a healthy respect for agriculture among the urban population in Pitt Meadows. During the public information meeting, comments of support for the industry, and for the Agricultural Land Reserve, were heard. However, because some of modern agriculture's production practices may offend some non-farm residents, there is a need for initiatives to raise the level of agricultural awareness and understanding in the community.

Issues of concern were not limited to farm practices. Issues impacting on agriculture such as urban water run-off and the volume of pesticides and fertilizers contributed to land and waterways by the urban sector were mentioned. There were also concerns raised about realtors who may not be adequately informing purchasers of land in the ALR about the accepted farming practices. And although the agricultural community supports recreational use of the dykes, problems with garbage disposal, traffic, and parking were issues of concern.

Agricultural awareness initiatives can be helpful to further the understanding of both the agricultural and urban communities and must be included as part of the strategy for the long-term viability of the industry.

**Recommendation:**

Develop an agricultural awareness strategy in consultation with the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee, the BC Agriculture Council's Agriculture Awareness Coordinator, BCMAF, the ALC, the AITC, and the general public.

The purpose of the strategy is to increase awareness and develop support from the Pitt Meadows community including farm visits by school children with support from School District No. 42, on items including, but not necessarily limited to, the following:

- Locally used farm management practices like the use of bird cannons, greenhouse lights, the use of slow-moving farm vehicles, and others;
  - The Farm Practices Protection Act as it protects the rights of farmers;
  - The ALR;
  - The Greenhouse Industry;
  - Agri-tourism;
  - Urban run-off;
  - Pesticide and herbicide use;
  - Garbage disposal;
- and other relevant issues.

Recommended components of the strategy include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

- Strategically located signs with agricultural awareness messages. A good place may be along the dykes, which many people use recreationally;
- Animal-proof garbage cans and related signs to encourage proper waste disposal;
- Fact sheets and information booklets like the BCMAF's "Countryside and You";
- Farmer of the Year awards;
- Opportunities for discussion between the urban and agricultural sectors.

**7.2.3. Land Speculation**

There is no Canadian policy on land speculation and the subject of speculation is not one that Canadian governments have been comfortable regulating. On the other hand, land speculation on ALR land creates tension for the agricultural community and may create unrealistic land values for farm use. Assuming ongoing Council and public commitment to preservation of the ALR boundaries as identified in this Agricultural Plan, the APSC felt that land speculation could be markedly reduced in Pitt Meadows.

Another way to address this issue is to ensure that realtors who sell land parcels in the ALR confirm with their clients the stability of the Reserve and work to raise buyer awareness about life in an agricultural setting. Better accessibility to the BCMAF publication "Countryside and You" may be helpful in this regard.

**Recommendation:**

Request the Real Estate Board to require realtors be adequately trained about the ALR and the Farm Practices Protection Act in order to properly inform potential purchasers of ALR land about living in an agricultural area and an appropriate disclosure statement be signed. The APSC also recommends Council confirm with the Real Estate Board their commitment to maintain all ALR land in the Reserve and that tools to assist realtors with education, such as the BCMAF publication “Countryside and You”, be made available.

**7.2.4. A Staff Person as Chief Agricultural Liaison**

As this Plan was being developed, the APSC determined that a staff person responsible for keeping current on agricultural issues would be helpful. The staff person could provide Council with updates on provincial and federal agricultural initiatives, as well as act as an information centre for the agricultural community.

**Recommendation:**

Appoint a staff person from the District as “Chief Agricultural Liaison”. The APSC recommends the Director of Operations be considered for this position.

Responsibilities will include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following:

- Monitor federal, provincial and municipal initiatives and policies as they impact on agriculture in Pitt Meadows;
- Monitor buildings on ALR land in cooperation with the Building Inspector’s Office;
- Acquire up-to-date information from BCMAF concerning Environmental Guidelines for farming and other related publications and make these available to farmers as required;
- Encourage business planning for farmers;
- Report regularly to the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee;
- Receive, review and recommend on building subdivisions and development proposals within the plan area.

**7.2.5. Exploration of Ventures and Options for Agriculture Industries**

Consistent with the vision statement for the future of agriculture and the need to support “a viable and progressive agriculture industry”, is the need to continuously explore options for expanding the range of agriculture industries. The APSC believes that the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee and the Staff Person as Chief Agricultural Liaison can do much useful work, in cooperation with the Pitt Meadows Farmers Institute, to suggest viable options for future development. Some agriculture industries for future development may include aquaculture, direct farm marketing, farmers markets and others.

**Recommendation:**

Have the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee review the subject of expanding opportunities for new agricultural ventures in Pitt Meadows (such as aquaculture and farm markets) in cooperation with the Staff Person as Chief Agricultural Liaison and in consultation with the Pitt Meadows Farmers Institute, and report annually to Council what options were discussed.

**7.2.6. Agri-tourism**

Agri-tourism is the economic activity that results when people link travel and visits with the products, services and experiences of the agriculture industry. It is important to note that the APSC does not support tourism development on ALR land unless it is an addition to an already functioning agricultural enterprise. Agri-tourism was identified as part of the strategy for viability of agriculture because it represents an opportunity to increase agricultural awareness and promote local agricultural products. Examples of agri-tourism initiatives include farm bed and breakfast operations, farm vacations, hay rides, on-farm craft and food shops, tours, agricultural fairs, farmers markets and others. The Canadian Agri-Tourism Network is made up of representatives from across the country with the goal of making Canada the top agri-tourism destination in the world.

**Recommendation:**

Support and encourage agri-tourism in Pitt Meadows and liaise with the Canadian Agri-Tourism Network and the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee to develop a strategy for agri-tourism options consistent with already existing agricultural enterprises.

**7.2.7. Neighbours**

Although this Agricultural Plan relates only to agricultural land in the ALR within the District of Pitt Meadows, many of the land parcels in question are directly adjacent to agricultural land in the neighbouring District of Maple Ridge.

This Plan was built on the belief that the best way to maximize positive community development is through a process of agreement and consensus. Because many of the recommendations in this Plan may involve people living in The District of Maple Ridge, the APSC supports cooperation and discussion between Pitt Meadows and The District of Maple Ridge regarding agricultural issues of mutual concern. Attaining consensus through consultation will do much to ensure the long-term success of this and other planning projects.

**Recommendation:**

Cooperate with the District of Maple Ridge to gather information, increase awareness, and develop policy on agricultural issues of mutual concern.

Issues to discuss include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

- Water management, specifically drainage and irrigation issues;
- Transportation issues;
- Recreational uses in agricultural areas.

### **7.2.8. Geographic Information System (GIS)**

A GIS is a multi-purpose tool designed to facilitate decision-making by integrating one or more databases using several layers of information ultimately linked to selected maps of Pitt Meadows.

The uses of a completed GIS include the ability to display development options on each parcel of land, recommend management inputs to help optimize yields, determine the effects of watercourse buffers on land use, and suggest buffering specifications along the ALR edge. A GIS can help examine the impacts of different regulations on farm commodities. It can also assist with promoting farming in the community. If economic models are integrated into the database it may be used for economic analysis of future development. The opportunities for developing or enhancing tools within the GIS model are numerous and should be explored to ensure the future viability of the industry.

In 1996 the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the District of Pitt Meadows began the process of developing a pilot GIS for the District, and continue to work closely to finish the GIS project.

#### **Recommendation:**

When the Pitt Meadows Geographic Information System is completed, use it as a tool to plan for, and promote, agriculture, with applications including development options and determining effects of buffers, examining the impact of regulations on farm commodities and promoting farming in the community.

### **7.3. Land Use in the Agricultural Area**

In 1973, the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) was given a mandate to establish the ALR “to preserve agricultural land, to encourage the establishment and maintenance of farms and the use of land in the ALR in a manner compatible with agricultural purposes.”<sup>14</sup> The majority of the land in the District of Pitt Meadows (86%) is within the ALR, and hence is subject to the provisions of the Agricultural Land Commission Act.

Pursuant to the Municipal Act, most of the land within the ALR has been zoned for agricultural uses as a General Agricultural Zone (AG) in Land Use Bylaw No. 1250. The intent of the General Agricultural zoning is to protect the farming area as a biophysical resource of the District and provide an economic space for agriculture and appropriate ancillary uses in the community.

Land Use Bylaw No. 1250 defines an Agricultural Use as “a use providing for the growing, rearing, producing, and harvesting of agricultural products; includes the processing on an individual farm of the primary agricultural products harvested, reared or produced on that farm and the storage of farm machinery, implements, and agricultural supplies, and the repair of farm machinery and implements used on that farm, and specifically includes the keeping of dogs, horses, cattle, and other livestock; excludes all manufacturing, processing, storage and repairs not specifically included in this definition.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> PFA, page 4-5.

<sup>15</sup> Land Use Bylaw No. 1250, page 9.

The Bylaw lists the following appropriate uses for land zoned General Agricultural: <sup>16</sup>

- Agriculture and agricultural buildings;
- Construction of one single family dwelling unit and accessory buildings and structures including ancillary service and utility installations and connections, per land registry parcel;
- Storage and sale of agricultural products on the individual farm where storage or sale is taking place;
- Harvesting of trees;
- Ecological reserves;
- Wildlife reserves;
- Aquaculture;
- Minor highway, road, or railway operations;
- Construction and maintenance of dykes;
- Land development works;
- The keeping of boarders and lodgers;
- Farm retail sales;
- Agri-Tourism;
- Bed and Breakfast.

In 1999, a new agricultural zone called the Agricultural and Farm Enterprise (AFE) zone was adopted by Council to allow for value-added agricultural uses that are not permitted within the General Agricultural zone. Further discussion related to this is in Section 7.3.5.

### **7.3.1. Parcel Sizes**

Pitt Meadows currently has a broad range of parcel sizes within the ALR. Smaller lots in the 2-4 hectare (5-10 acres) size offer opportunities for more intensive farming operations and/or hobby farm use.

While subdivision of land parcels on ALR land is generally the domain of the Agricultural Land Commission, the Agricultural Land Commission Act provides a local Approving Officer with authority to approve ALR land parcel subdivision provided (1) the number of lots does not increase, (2) there are no lots created that are less than 2 acres, and (3) there is a net benefit to agriculture.<sup>17</sup>

Current Pitt Meadows policy is that land shall not be subdivided in such a manner as to create any lot less than 8 ha (20 acres), nor any lot whose least width is less than one-quarter its least depth.<sup>18</sup> Council supports no fracturing or subdividing of agricultural parcels, with the exception of home site severance for retiring farmers who have owned and operated a farm before and since December 21, 1972 and in accordance with the Agricultural Land Commission regulations.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Land Use Bylaw No. 1250 Amendment No. 1952, 1999.

<sup>17</sup> BC Regulation 448-98, Section 2, Agricultural Land Commission Act

<sup>18</sup> Land Use Bylaw No. 1250, page 84.

<sup>19</sup> OCP, page 17.

The APSC would like to see adjustment of this policy by allowing for the subdivision of agricultural land parcels provided the number of lots does not increase and none less than 20 acres are formed, and provided there is a net benefit to agriculture, as determined by the local Approving Officer in consultation with the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee. The APSC would also like the District to actively encourage the consolidation of ALR land parcels.

**Recommendation:**

Support subdivision of agricultural parcels only where the number of parcels does not increase, there are no parcels created that are less than 20 acres, and there is a net benefit to agriculture, as determined by the local Approving Officer in consultation with the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee, with the exception of home site severance for retiring farmers consistent with existing Agricultural Land Commission policy. Whenever possible, actively look for ways to consolidate smaller parcels to larger ones.

**7.3.2. Residential and Secondary Dwellings in the ALR**

The ALCA and regulations set a limit of one single family dwelling and accessory building and structures per land registry parcel unless necessary for farm help. The ALCA currently provides for, and does not restrict, the number of additional dwellings if they are necessary for farm help. The Municipal District may issue permits for additional residences necessary for farm use without application to the ALC.

Land Use Bylaw No. 1250 states that no more than one dwelling shall be permitted on any lot except for:<sup>20</sup>

- One temporary mobile home as a temporary accessory dwelling
- Temporary farm labourer accommodation
- Accessory residential use for full-time help

The APSC supports the “one house, one lot” principle and the guidelines in place for additional dwellings for farm help.

There is no current municipal or provincial policy regulating the location and size of dwellings in the ALR. The APSC does not believe the District should regulate the floor area of dwellings in the plan area, but there was concern over the potential impact large dwellings may have on the future agricultural use of land parcels, especially if the buildings are located in the middle of a parcel.

Because of this, while the APSC supports the guidelines in place regulating the *types* of buildings allowed on an agricultural land parcel, the APSC would like to see the guidelines strengthened to regulate the *location and size* of the portion of agricultural land impacted by development. The intent is to maximize the amount of land available for any future agricultural use. The APSC supports the development of an “envelope” policy, where only a fixed portion of the land parcel (based on the size of the parcel) may

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<sup>20</sup> Land Use Bylaw No. 1250, page 82.

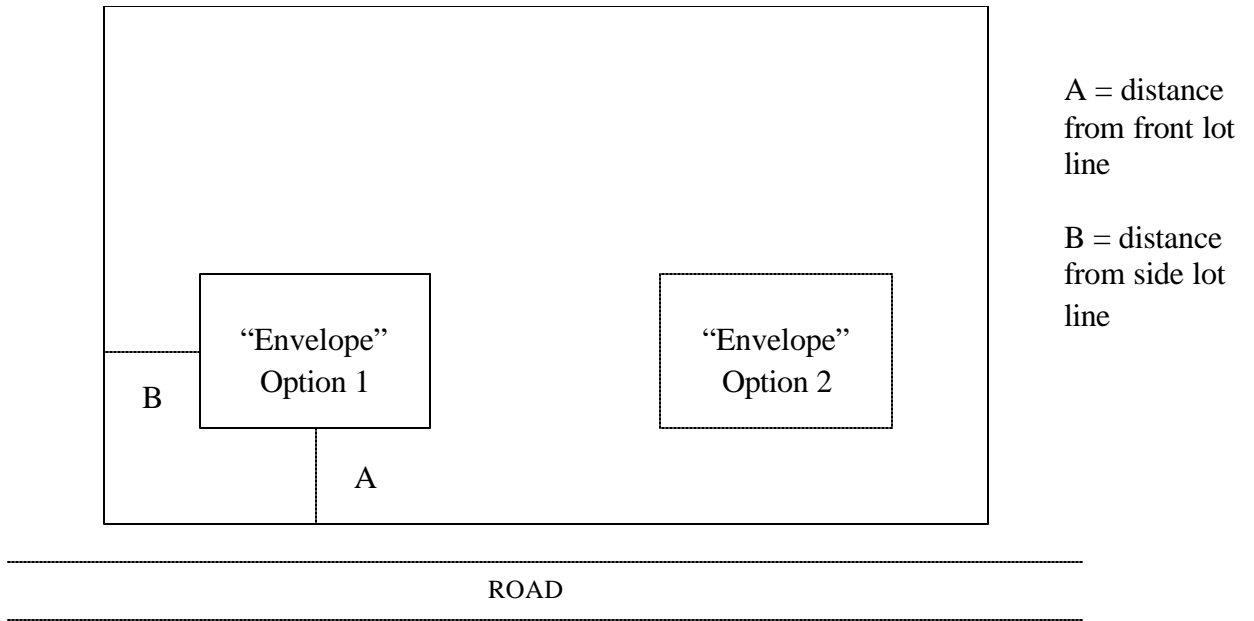


be used to situate residential and farm help buildings. The “envelope” would also need to be located at certain predetermined distances from the side and front lot lines in order to minimize the impact on the agricultural land. The APSC felt that all associated farm buildings, such as barns and storage facilities, when necessary for a farm operation, and any farm enterprise uses, should be exempt from the “envelope” policy.

An example of an agricultural land envelope is diagrammed below. Dimensions of the envelope and distances from lot lines must be developed and are not being recommended at this time.

**Example of a Residential Dwelling “Envelope”**

On a given land parcel, there would be two options for the location of the “envelope”.



**Recommendation:**

Contain all future residential and farm-help dwellings within a contiguous “envelope” in accordance with a policy to be developed by the District of Pitt Meadows in consultation with the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee, the ALC and the BCMAF.

The policy should be applied within the context of an appropriate zoning bylaw and regulate items including, but not necessarily limited to, the following:

- The dimensions of the envelope. The APSC recommends that the envelope be either a maximum square footage or a specific percentage of the land parcel, whichever is greater.
- The location of the envelope. The APSC recommends that the envelope be confined to one corner of the land parcel through designating maximum distances from front and side lot lines.
- The type and number of dwellings and associated residential uses allowed in the envelope. The APSC recommends that principal residential dwellings and dwellings for farm help be contained in the envelope and that all associated farm

buildings, such as barns and storage facilities, when necessary for a farm operation, and any farm enterprise uses, should be exempt from the envelope policy.

Exceptions may be identified as non-conforming and sent to the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee for review with the Board of Variance.

### ***7.3.3. Seasonal Farm Labour Housing***

Seasonal farm labour is an integral part of farm operations where mechanical harvesting is not possible and crops mature quickly and within a restricted time frame. Current policy as stated in Land Use Bylaw No. 1250 is that temporary farm accommodation shall be at the ratio of 10 persons for each 4 hectares (10 acres) up to a maximum of 40 persons per bona fide farm. The APSC recognizes the importance of seasonal farm labour accommodation and supports the existing policy, with the addition of conformity to Health and Fire Code regulations. The rationale for enforcing limits on the number of people accommodated seasonally on the farm is to minimize the impact of residences on the ALR land. Other components of the temporary farm accommodation, such as lot size, floor area, etc., are supported.

#### **Recommendation:**

Ensure all seasonal farm labour housing projects conform to Health and Fire Code regulations.

### ***7.3.4. Non-Resident Ownership***

At the present time there is no policy on non-resident ownership. The APSC recognized the difficulty of restricting land ownership and that action on this issue must come from senior governments. However, it also recognized that non-resident ownership can present a possible threat to the future agricultural use of a land parcel.

#### **Recommendation:**

To maximize the agricultural land available for future agricultural uses, request the Province to review policies on non-resident ownership currently in place in other jurisdictions and consider implementing policies to encourage agricultural uses of all agricultural lands.

### ***7.3.5. Guidelines Regarding Agricultural and Farm Enterprise Zone***

In 1999, Council adopted a new zoning designation called The Agricultural and Farm Enterprise (AFE) Zone with the intent to enhance the economic viability of farming and to promote investment and diversification of the agriculture industry in Pitt Meadows. According to the policy, a farm enterprise use provides for the processing, storing, distributing, wholesaling, grading, sorting and packaging of farm produce, animal and fish products, feed and seed (excludes mushroom growing medium preparation use). Permitted uses within an AFE zone include those permitted in the General Agricultural Zone, as well as farm enterprise uses and farm enterprise buildings.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Zoning Text Amendment Bylaw No. 1955.

The APSC supports these types of farm enterprise activities as a way to add value to, and enhance the viability of, the Pitt Meadows agriculture industry. While the General Agricultural zone allows for processing of the primary products produced on a farm site, the AFE zone permits further value-added activities which may not be otherwise possible. However, the APSC recommends criteria be developed for the permitted uses of the AFE zone. In particular, the APSC also recommends at least 50% of the product used in a farm enterprise be produced on the farm site, and recommends the impact on the community be minimized.

Currently BCMAF is reviewing the issue of on-farm processing of products grown or reared on the farm. When this review is completed, some adjustments to the discussion in this section of the plan may be required.

**Recommendation:**

Develop criteria for allowing value-added farm enterprise activities to be permitted on a farm site under the AFE zoning designation, in consultation with the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee, BCMAF, and the ALC.

Items to consider include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

- The amount of product involved in the farm enterprise that must be grown on site. The APSC recommends that at least 50% of the product must be grown on site, where “site” can include all producer-held land holdings in Pitt Meadows;
- The percentage of the land parcel involved in the value-added agricultural use;
- The square-footage of the building(s) to be used;
- The maximum number of people to be employed;
- The proximity of the land parcel to services and roads;
- The overall impact of the farm enterprise on the surrounding community;

And others as considered necessary by the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee.

**Recommendation:**

Investigate a suitable site for an Agricultural Industrial Park, to house value-added agricultural enterprise activities that do not meet the criteria as developed for value-added agricultural enterprise activities on a farm site. The APSC recommends the site be selected in consultation with the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee, Engineering and Development Services, the general public and other relevant groups.

Items to consider include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

- The location of the Agricultural Industrial Park. The APSC supports the investigation of the Airport as a possible location;
- The size and scale of the Park;
- The types of operations allowed in the Park;
- The proximity of the Park to services;
- The proximity of the Park to roads;

And others considered necessary by the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee.

### **7.3.6. Standards of Maintenance Guidelines**

The BC Weed Control Act obliges all farmers to control noxious weeds. However, there are many factors related to keeping an attractive agricultural community that are unrelated to weed control.

Pitt Meadows Bylaw No. 1400 establishes required standards for the maintenance of real property and prohibits littering. It prohibits “unsightly” premises resulting from the accumulation of building materials, motor vehicles, discarded materials, fuels, mechanical equipment, and the presence of graffiti and others.

#### **Recommendation:**

Continue to encourage an attractive farm area through constant enforcement of Pitt Meadows Bylaw No. 1400.

### **7.4. Water Management**

Pitt Meadows is a community serviced by three major rivers, including the Fraser, Alouette, and Pitt. Because of the relationship to the three rivers and the fact that the majority of the agricultural land in Pitt Meadows is on a floodplain, water management is very important. A series of dykes have been installed to protect the land from flooding. Besides floodplain management, other important water management issues are drainage and irrigation. Both have a direct bearing on agricultural production.

#### **7.4.1. Drainage Ditches**

A District ditch-maintenance schedule is currently in place to allow for maintenance once every three years. However, The Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans has jurisdiction and enforcement support to protect fish that enter agricultural drainage ditches, and recommends that ditches be maintained at times suitable for fish stock stability. These recommended maintenance schedules don’t always integrate with the District’s schedule.

Despite the fact that the ditch has been built and maintained by a farmer, if fish are attracted to the ditch, the ditch falls under the jurisdiction of the DFO and the fish must be protected. There are recommended guidelines for riparian setbacks, but they are often considered to be excessive by farmers. Having to comply with these regulations can result in extra costs to the farm operation and may interfere with necessary drainage.

Concerns were also identified about urban water run-off, which is putting pressure on farmers to install more ditches or clean out the existing ones more often. There was also concern regarding materials in the run-off such as fertilizers and pesticides, often originating from urban lawn applications. Concerns were also expressed regarding run-off from The District of Maple Ridge and increased urban development in that municipality as it effects ditch maintenance and pumping stations. Nutrient run-off is a concern with farms near natural streams and lakes, those with high rainfall, and those with higher animal densities. Concern for the possible run-off from the CPR sites was also identified.

The District is able to control the level of water within drainage ditches by using a series of floodboxes and pumping stations. All floodboxes are equipped with flap gates that function in relation to the river levels. Current drainage ditches meet BC Ministry of the Environment Standards.

For recommendations on these and other water management issues, see section 7.4.5.

#### **7.4.2. Irrigation**

In many cases farmers rely on the drainage system for irrigation purposes. Farmers require a water license from the Ministry of the Environment for irrigation. Although water use is critical to farm operations, the APSC recognized the possible need to regulate water use.

For recommendations on water management issues, see section 7.4.5.

#### **7.4.3. Dykes**

The first dykes were constructed in Pitt Meadows in the 1890's by pioneering farmers. The current dyke system was completed in the 1980's. The system was designed to protect against a flood with a magnitude equal to the 1894 Fraser River flood. Large floods of that volume could happen in any year. Sediment deposition and bank erosion could cause the dykes to overtop or fail during a more frequently occurring flood.

Because of potential dyke failure, BC environment regulations in floodplain areas require the underside of the floor system in all new construction for habitable buildings to be elevated to the Flood Construction Level.<sup>22</sup> There are also provincial floodplain regulations governing enclosed livestock buildings.

For recommendations on these and other water management issues, see section 7.4.5. and map next page.

#### **7.4.4. Floodplain Management**

Floodplain management encompasses two general tasks: (1) protecting human life and property from flood hazards, and (2) managing the use of floodplain areas to sustain the many other values (ecological, cultural, spiritual, recreational and aesthetic) associated with floodplain environments. Reduction of flood hazards through structural or non-structural measures is paramount.

Dykes are only a partial solution. The Fraser River provides an annual challenge to the community as the potential floods it creates occur due to various factors like rapid snowmelt, precipitation and tidal action.

It is generally accepted that lands within the floodplain should, as much as possible, be used for activities such as outdoor recreation or agriculture. There are also building

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<sup>22</sup> Floodplain Hazard Management Bulletin, page 1.

regulations for properties on the floodplain to provide for minimum flood construction levels.<sup>23</sup>

The Agricultural Community believes there is need for more pumps in some areas of the District and at some floodgates.

For recommendations on these and other water management issues, see section 7.4.5. and map next page.

#### ***7.4.5. A Water Management Strategy***

Because of the nature of the water management issues directly related to agriculture, and the number of agencies and organizations involved, the APSC recommends that an overall water management strategy be developed to adequately address the issues.

##### **Recommendation:**

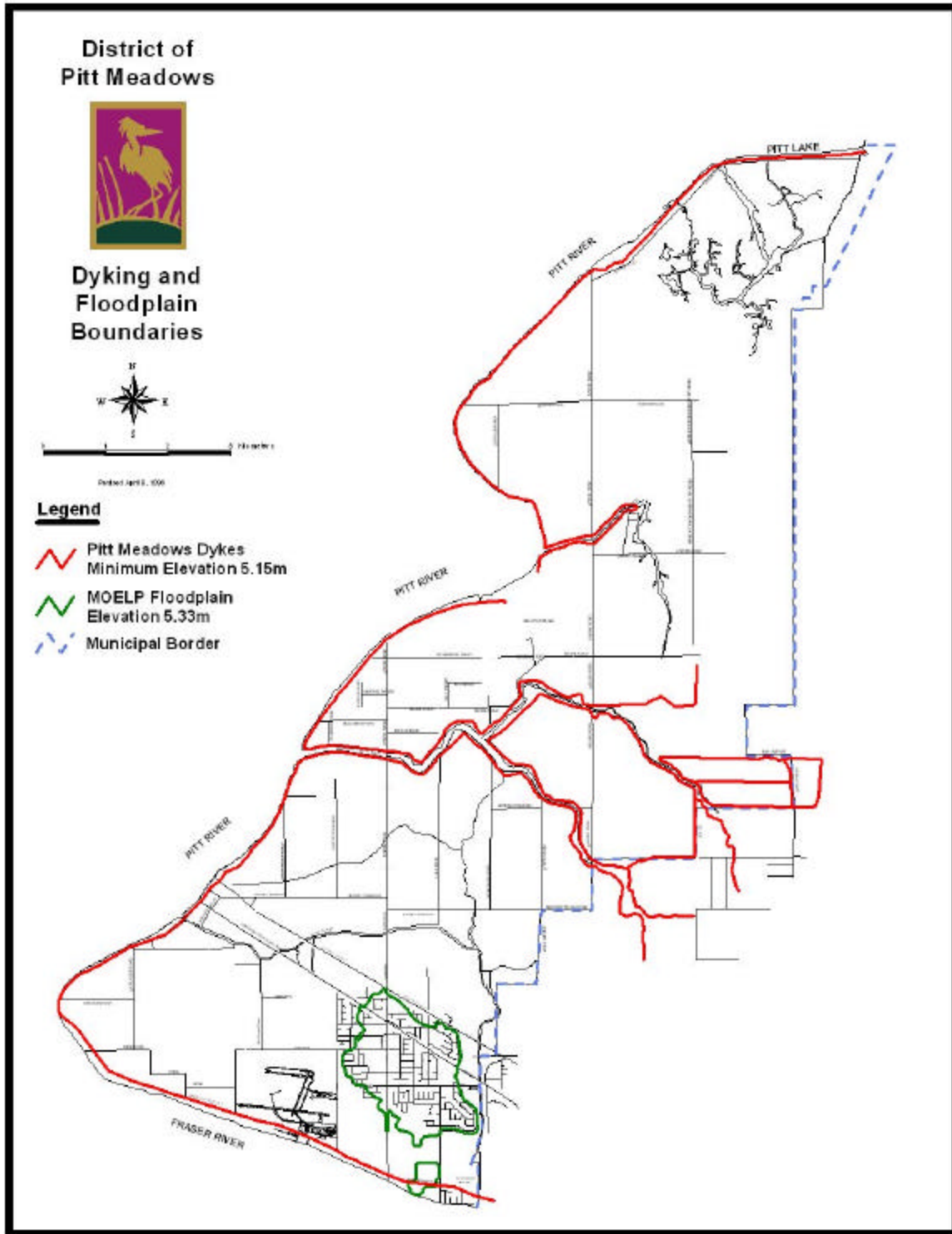
Develop a water management strategy in consultation with the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee, the Ridge Meadows Parks and Leisure Services, the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Engineering and Development Services, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the BC Ministry of the Environment, Parks and Lands, and The District of Maple Ridge.

Items to consider include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

- Appropriate drainage-ditch maintenance schedules;
- Appropriate recommendations for determining Riparian setbacks;
- An investigation into potential funding sources and options for increasing the funding available for maintenance of drainage ditches, such as a development cost charge or drainage utility;
- Urban water run-off. The APSC supports regular monitoring of the run-off from The District of Maple Ridge to ensure that the run-off is not increasing as urban development increases. The APSC also supports the working principle that post-development flow must equal pre-development flow;
- Possible compensation for farmers for bearing the costs of setbacks and drainage ditches where additional costs relate to increased water volume from urban water run-off;
- Maintenance of the dyke system. The APSC supports regular monitoring of the dykes by Municipal Engineers;
- The floodplain. The APSC supports regular monitoring of the floodplain and endorses the current policy of regular review;
- Any recommendations made by the current Partnership Committee involving the BC Ministry of the Environment, BCMAF, and the BC Agriculture Council.

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<sup>23</sup> Floodplain Hazard Management Bulletin, page 2.



### 7.5. Waste Management

The establishment of appropriate waste management strategies is important for the agriculture industry.

### **7.5.1. Fill Sites**

Concern was expressed about the dumping of non-agricultural materials on agricultural land, excluding those materials required for the operation of a bona fide farm. Pitt Meadows Bylaw No. 1400 does not permit this use of land by prohibiting the accumulation of building materials, motor vehicles, discarded materials, fuels, mechanical equipment, and the presence of graffiti and others.

#### **Recommendation:**

Focus more resources on enforcement of Pitt Meadows Bylaw No. 1400 and the Soil Conservation Act in order to abolish fill sites on agricultural land, unless the fill is required for the operation of a bona fide farm and a building permit has been issued.

### **7.5.2. Manure Spreading**

Manure is a byproduct of all animals and has much value as a soil conditioner and a source of nutrients. Farmers may spread manure on crops or bare soil either to fertilize or condition the land, as per the Waste Management Act. The timing of spreading needs to be considered carefully to minimize the risk of run-off and to maximize the utilization of nutrients.

The BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food has developed environmental guidelines for manure storage and spreading for livestock, greenhouse and crop commodities. It is important that this and other relevant information be made available to farmers to keep them informed and up to date. The APSC feels that this responsibility should be directed to the Staff Person as Chief Agricultural Liaison. See Section 7.2.4.

## **7.6. Crop and Livestock Management**

The policy of the Farm Practices Protection Act (FPPA) is that farmers have a right to farm in the ALR and other areas zoned for agricultural uses, provided they use “normal” farm practices and follow other legislation listed in the Act.

A “normal” farm practice is defined in the FPPA to include an activity “that is conducted by a farm business in a manner consistent with proper and accepted customs and standards as established and followed by similar farm businesses under similar circumstances”<sup>24</sup>.

The BCMAF has also prepared guidelines to promote environmentally responsible agricultural practices for commodity specific production. It is important that this information be made available to farmers to keep them informed and up to date. The Committee feels that this responsibility should be directed to the Staff Person as Chief Agricultural Liaison. See Section 7.2.4.

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<sup>24</sup> Farm Practices Protection Act



### **7.6.1. Storage of Farm Inputs**

Commercial fertilizers, petroleum products and pesticides are subject to strict storage regulations and guidelines. Other products such as feeds and sawdust may be stored on farms if they are stored in an appropriate manner.<sup>25</sup>

Some discussion by Council has been held concerning storage of farm inputs.

#### **Recommendation:**

Allow storage of farm inputs on a bona fide farm without further regulation, provided the farm input is not environmentally hazardous, is necessary for the farm operation, will be used in one growing year, and is safely stored at least 15 metres from natural watercourses, ditches or streams and is in accordance with established provincial legislation, regulation, and best practices guidelines.

### **7.6.2. Bird Cannons**

The use of bird cannons is considered a normal farm practice between dawn and dusk and is therefore protected under the FPPA. The Farm Practices Protection Board has set guidelines for the use and operation of bird cannons, including suitable hours and cadences for operation, and regular movement of the cannons. Despite this, the use of bird cannons can create considerable discomfort for the non-farming public. There is need for further communication and awareness among both the non-farming and farming communities about farm practices and the FPPA. See section 7.2.2.

However, there is also some disagreement within the agricultural community about the effectiveness of bird cannons, and some believe there is a need for better technology or management practices.

#### **Recommendation:**

Have the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee, in consultation with BCMAF, the Pitt Meadows Farmers Institute and others, encourage research into, review of, and adoption of, alternative bird management practices that are less intrusive than bird cannons.

### **7.6.3. Greenhouse Lights**

The use of greenhouse lights is considered a normal farm practice and is therefore protected under the FPPA. However, in some areas greenhouse lights may disturb people in neighbouring homes. This is an example where there is a need for further communication and awareness among the non-farming community about farm practices and the FPPA. See section 7.2.2.

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<sup>25</sup> Farm Practices Protection Act

#### **7.6.4. Livestock Operations**

The current policy regarding animal units vs. acreage is in Land Use Bylaw No. 1250. The BCMAF is discouraging the use of animal units vs. acreage policies and is currently developing other Standards and Guidelines.

##### **Recommendation:**

Acquire the new Standards and Guidelines for livestock operations when completed by the BCMAF, and incorporate the Guidelines into Land Use Bylaw No. 1250.

#### **7.6.5. Wildlife**

Agricultural land provides valuable wildlife habitat, but wildlife can significantly disrupt, damage, and harm agricultural crops and livestock, and can spread undesirable insects, weeds and diseases. Wildlife of particular concern to the Pitt Meadows agriculture industry are bears, Canada Geese, ducks, swans, starlings, deer, raccoons and beavers.

There are many ways to control the impact wildlife has on an agricultural enterprise, including the use of netting, fencing, scare tactics, and repellants. Access to the food, water and shelter wildlife requires can be reduced or eliminated through proper clean-up and storage, and cultural management techniques such as mowing, cutting down weeds and plant debris and removing breeding and hiding places may also be effective.

Despite these methods, sometimes it may be necessary to remove certain animals that are responsible for excessive damage to crops. When required, liaising with Conservation Officers and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals should be considered.

##### **Recommendation:**

Whenever possible, encourage humane and acceptable wildlife management practices that may involve selected netting, fencing, scare tactics, repellants, and cultural management and habitat modification. In instances where an animal may need to be removed, the APSC recommends liaising with Conservation Officers and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

##### **Recommendation:**

Have the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee, in cooperation with the Pitt Meadows Farmers Institute and the BCMAF, continually monitor, review and encourage the use of new technologies and practices which may limit the effects of wildlife on the agriculture industry.

#### **7.7. Transportation**

Transportation and traffic pose major problems for the agriculture industry in Pitt Meadows. Often farmers must make farm and business management decisions based on traffic volume and transportation limitations.

### ***7.7.1. A Focused Agricultural Transportation Plan***

Planning for transportation improvements must be placed in the context of the long-term protection of the foodlands in Pitt Meadows. The vision for Pitt Meadows is to “optimize the use of all agricultural lands” within the District (See section 7.1.). This will require serious upgrading of farm to market roads. Increased traffic on all District roads has become a burden to agricultural enterprises.

Because of the range and depth of the transportation problems affecting the agriculture community in Pitt Meadows, the APSC supports the development of a separate Transportation Plan to more clearly and carefully study the issues and make recommendations.

#### **Recommendation:**

Undertake a focused Agricultural Transportation Plan for Pitt Meadows in consultation with the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee, the BC Ministry of Transportation and Highways, BCMAF, the ALC, the general public and The District of Maple Ridge.

Items to consider include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

- Transportation, safety and traffic issues pertaining to the agricultural community in Pitt Meadows;
- Appropriate signage and lane use;
- The development of an agricultural road network;
- “Yield to Farm Vehicle” legislation;
- An investigation into “farmer-activated” lights at selected intersections;
- An appropriate arterial route to bypass Pitt Meadows.

### ***7.7.2. Shorter-term Transportation Options***

In recognition of the acuteness of the transportation problem the APSC believes there are some shorter term options that may relieve some of the immediate transportation problems.

#### **Recommendation:**

Implement shorter-term transportation options to relieve immediate traffic problems for farmers.

Recommended options are as follows:

- Install 4-way stops at selected interchanges, especially at 203<sup>rd</sup> and Dewdney Trunk, but only in consultation with the Engineering Department and with the support of other Municipalities and the RCMP;
- Place “Respect Slow Moving Farm Vehicles” signs appropriately within the District;
- Implement double lines at Dewdney Trunk intersections to disallow passing. This must be done in consultation with the Engineering Department, other Municipalities and the RCMP;

- Where possible, extend lanes to accommodate both bicycles and farm vehicles.

## **7.8. Recreation and Greenways**

Recreation and Greenways were considered by the APSC to be an opportunity to increase the awareness and respect for agriculture in Pitt Meadows. Some development has occurred already and the farm community may encourage some future options. See section 7.2.2.

### **7.8.1. Golf Courses and Driving Ranges**

There are currently four golf courses in Pitt Meadows and this was one area where the APSC believes future development should be discouraged.

#### **Recommendation:**

Do not allow any more golf courses or driving ranges on any ALR land in Pitt Meadows.

### **7.8.2. Dykes, Parks and Trails**

Dykes, parks and trails are used by the urban community for recreational activities such as bicycling, walking and running. (See Map page 31)

While the APSC supports this type of use and recognizes dykes, parks and trails as an opportunity for increased agricultural awareness, a problem exists with respect to parking because parked cars along many of the narrow roads in Pitt Meadows interfere with the movement of agricultural vehicles.

The APSC also recognizes that there may be other issues with respect to recreational use of the agricultural areas that have not been considered here. Because of this, and the nature of the parking problem, the APSC feels there is a need for a separate plan to study the relevant issues and to make appropriate recommendations.

#### **Recommendation:**

Develop a Plan for Recreation Use in Agricultural Areas to assess the impact of recreational uses in or near an agricultural area in consultation with the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee, Engineering and Development Services, Ridge Meadows Parks and Leisure Services, and the general public.

Items to consider include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

- An investigation into the issues with respect to recreational use of agricultural land;
- An investigation into appropriate parking and entrance points for recreational use of the dykes. The APSC supports concentrating parking in specific locations to minimize the impact on the agricultural community, and recommends that all areas along the dyke system besides the area(s) to be designated staging areas have *No Parking except Area Residents* Signs erected and that signs directing traffic to the designated staging area(s) be put in place;
- Funding options for maintenance of the dykes, parks and trails. The APSC supports an “Adopt a Dyke/Trail” program to provide effective and cost-

sensitive maintenance of the recreation facilities, and supports an investigation into sharing the costs of maintenance with neighbouring Municipalities.

### **7.8.3. Wildlife Conservation**

Pitt Meadows lends itself well to a natural progression from urban to agriculture to wildlife reserve area from the southern to northern ends of the District.

#### **Recommendation:**

Continue to support the Pitt Addington Wildlife Management Area.

### **7.9. Boundaries and Buffers**

A technique for mitigating potential conflicts between farming and urban development is to provide a physical separation between the two uses. Pitt Meadows has done a good job of buffering in some areas, and has the advantage of the Lougheed Highway and the Airport that already separate, to some extent, the ALR from the urban community.

Possible buffering devices include vegetative screens (low impact situations) and more comprehensive buffers like berming, ditching, fencing and planting to screen noise, views, and dust and sprays. Some trespass prevention may be needed in higher impact situations. In recognition of the need to ensure harmony between the farm and the non-farm community, the ALC has developed "Landscaped Buffer Specifications".

The District may also wish to review other methods for managing potential conflict along the urban/agriculture edge, such as increased building setbacks, building orientation, lighting orientation and others.

#### **Recommendation:**

Follow ALC Buffering Guidelines and those in the Approving Officer's Subdivision Guide to ensure proper buffering in future development areas abutting the ALR.

### **7.10. Airport**

The airport consists of nearly 750 acres, much of which is within the ALR. It is currently zoned for three intended uses: (1) airports and helicopters, (2) agriculture, where consistent with the safe operation of the airport, and (3) public administration. The APSC supports the current uses of the Airport lands, and would like to see the Airport investigated as a possible site for an Agricultural Industrial Park. (See Section 7.3.5.)

The APSC would also like to ensure that any future development plans involving the Airport consider agricultural interests.

#### **Recommendation:**

Ensure agricultural interests are considered by the intended Airport development plan through regular consultation with the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee.

## 8. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The APSC, in the development of this plan, understood the need to consider implementation. To that end, the APSC recommends Council develop a thorough implementation strategy, in consultation with the recommended Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee.

### **Recommendation:**

Following the acceptance of the Agricultural Plan by Council, have Council develop an appropriate implementation strategy, in consultation with the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee.

Items to consider include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

- Develop priorities for the recommendations in this Plan;
- Establish appropriate timelines for implementation of the recommendations;
- Direct the recommendations to appropriate agencies, organizations or staff;
- Obtain funding to implement the recommendations;
- Prepare appropriate bylaws, when required, to support the recommendations in this Plan;
- Prepare a specific schedule for review of the implementation of this Plan. The APSC supports two reviews in the first year and annual reviews in each successive year by the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee. These reviews will include a progress report to Council.

## 9. APPENDICES

### I. Maps

- A. Land Use Schedule B
- B. Urban Transportation Network
- C. Development Permit Areas 1
- D. Development Permit Areas 2
- E. Economic Development Areas
- F. Industrial Areas

### II. Pitt Meadows Official Community Plan Excerpts

### III. District of Pitt Meadows Agricultural Overview

## 10. REFERENCES

British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture and Food, District of Pitt Meadows Agricultural Overview, December 1999.

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