

## Regional District of Central Okanagan *Agricultural Plan* Summary

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### Regional District of Central Okanagan Statistics:

Population (2006)	162,276 <sup>1</sup>
Jurisdictional Area:	
Regional District of Central Okanagan	303,490 ha
Plan Study Area	not available: see maps
Total Area Farmed (2006)	27,201 ha
Number of Farms (2006)	1,017
ALR	27,305 ha

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**Date of *Agricultural Plan*:** June, 2005

**Title:** *Regional District of Central Okanagan Agricultural Plan*

**Length:** 55 pages

**Prepared by:** True Consulting Group, Integra Community Planning Services

### **Adoption Status:**

- Unknown. Not found in council minutes.

### **Related documents:**

- Regional District of Central Okanagan - Agricultural Plan Background Report

### **Purpose Statement:**

- *“to enhance the viability of the agricultural sector in the Regional District by addressing farm viability issues arising from resource potential, diversification opportunities, urbanization conflicts and competition for agricultural land. While it is recognized that there are a broad range of issues and jurisdictions that have an impact upon agriculture, the main focus of this Agricultural Plan will be on those issues that lie within the jurisdiction of the Regional District”. (1)*

### **Highlights:**

- Applies to areas outside of Member Municipalities, mainly consisting of ALR lands.
- *“The purpose of the Plan is to identify what the Regional District can do to encourage agricultural activity within the ALR and to help agriculture compete with other uses for a limited land base.” (2).*

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<sup>1</sup> Includes Member Municipalities: City of Kelowna, District of Lake Country, District of West Kelowna, and District of Peachland.

## Outlined Issues & Objectives

### 1. Legislative & Governance Structure

#### 1.1. Strengthening Policy and Governance

Issue: The view of the permanent role of agriculture should be clearly articulated and/or acknowledged through all policy and governance opportunities.

- There is a need to re-affirm the commitment to the long-term preservation of agricultural lands. Rapid growth has created pressure to urbanize, and created conflict at the interface between agricultural and other land uses.
- The Local Government Act provides provisions for Farm Bylaws; standards can be established and enforced, as well as varied based differing farm/agricultural characteristics.
- A more integrated approach, between levels and departments, would provide for a more “seamless” approach to the administration of agriculture.

Objectives: Re-affirm the essential role of the ALR as integral, ensure that major Plans and initiatives of the region reflect the agriculture industry, provide Farm Bylaw control of agricultural activities, to actively participate in all aspects of agricultural planning and development approvals process in the region, working towards integration of agricultural interests, and to ensure that the AAC is both best equipped and informed about agricultural matters.

### 2. Infrastructure

#### 2.1. Irrigation

Issues: Adequate protection and efficient use of water supplies is necessary to ensure water sources remain viable.

- Climatic change may introduce changes in water availability and/or quantity. Agriculture is only one of many competing interests for water.
- Seasonal low-flow periods may change as a result of climate change.
- There are numerous irrigation districts within the Regional District; no single agency has prepared a strategic plan to address water issues.

Objective: *“Support retention, growth and sustainable development of an agricultural industry that is largely dependent on irrigation.”* (13)

#### 2.2. Roads

Issues: Roads in agricultural areas support farm, local, and through traffic; there is potential for conflict. These same roads are often the only separation between urban and farm land uses.

- Traffic is increasing as regional growth is increasing.
- Expansion of road networks through agricultural areas creates loss and fragmentation of land and increased potential for traffic conflict.
- The Provincial Ministry of Transportation is a principle stakeholder in this issue.

Objective: *“To optimize traffic safety and efficiency of movement in agricultural areas while minimizing the traffic impacts on agricultural lands and agricultural activities.”* (16).

#### 2.3. Sanitary and Storm Sewer

Issue: Opportunities exist to enhance agriculture through liquid waste planning and storm water management planning.

- Liquid waste presents irrigation opportunities, while storm/farm drainage can be improved through management planning. Public education on these matters is crucial to success.

Objective: *“To enhance agricultural opportunities through utility service infrastructure planning.”* (19)

### 3. Economics

#### 3.1. External Competition

Issue: Local, national, and international agricultural economic change places strain on the Okanagan industry to remain adaptive, competitive, and economically viable.

- Cooperation between organizations and governments is necessary to market, support, and research localised food opportunities.

Objective: *“To assist in maintaining competitive agricultural market conditions in the RDCO, and nurturing an industry that is responsive and adaptive to changing conditions in agricultural product demand.”* (22)

### 3.2. Costs of Production

Issue: The costs of production (land, labour, supplies, equipment) must remain competitive to agricultural operations in other areas.

- The local economy would benefit from a local suppliers of agricultural inputs.
- Recommendations are provided for increased support of agritourism, heritage awareness, farmer's market activity, festivals, and signage to increase awareness and economic viability of local industries.

Objective: *"To provide local government assistance where feasible to minimize agricultural production costs."* (23)

### 3.3. Land Costs

Issue: Land costs are high for agricultural land due to the pressure for land for urban growth.

- There is a need to create awareness that ALR land is for agricultural use, and not future urban growth. Cooperation with the ALC and Assessment Office is necessary to create this awareness, and decrease farm land value.

Objective: *"To achieve and maintain land costs for agricultural purposes that permit current and future operations to remain as viable economic interests in the region."* (25)

## 4. Rural-Urban Fringe

### 4.1. Edge Permanency

Issue: Separation of urban-rural land uses is necessary to provide clarity and certainty of the role of ALR land.

- Possibilities for the urban side include covenants, land use regulations, DPAs, and road designs.
- Possibilities for the rural side include buffers, farm bylaws, road design, and financial support to farm industry for development.

Objective: *"To develop rural-urban edge conditions in the region that provide clarity, permanency and effectiveness for both agricultural and community development interests."* (26)

### 4.2. Edge Separation

Issue: Inadequate, ineffective and impermanent buffering provisions between rural and urban areas.

- Buffering is necessary to achieve a sense of separation. DPAs are suggested, as well as covenants, and disclosure, by developers to buyers, of farm activity. Other buffering measures are suggested, as well as the possibility of a farm bylaw.

Objective: *"To develop rural-urban edge conditions that encourage sensitive co-existence of rural-urban use"* (28).

### 4.3. Farm Practices

Issue: Conflicts between rural and urban communities on matters such as noise, dust, odour, trespass, vandalism and theft.

- The Farm Practices Protection Act establishes the rights of farms, however efforts are needed to raise awareness of these rights.
- Efforts to improve edge permanency will strengthen this awareness.
- F.P.P.A. encourages use of bylaws to support agriculture.

Objective: *"To improve awareness of farm practices and the rights and responsibilities of the farm and non-farm sectors."* (30)

### 4.4. Non Farm Rural Development

Issue: Rural settings are attractive to non-farm residential uses.

- There is significant demand to build rural estates on small ALR parcels; this type of development fragments agricultural land, often rendering it non-farmable.

Objective: *"Minimize the impacts of new estate residences in the ALR on lands with farming potential."* (31)

## 5. Environment

### 5.1. Environmental Farm Practices

Issue: Support of sound environmental farm practices, that do not adversely effect other areas.

- The Environmental Farm Plan program is in place to assist farmers., including financial assistance.
- Issues arise surrounding insect control, disposal of wood-cuttings & organic material, and weed/insect control (as well as enforcement of).

Objective: Encourage minimal adverse environmental impacts as a result of farm practices, ensure cost-effect benefits of insect control, ensure environmentally-safe waste disposal, adapt to climate change, provide for regulatory control over abandoned farmland (to protect adjacent farmland properties).

5.2. Recreation Activities & Corridors

Issue: A growing population and tourism market generates continued pressure for recreation opportunities.

- Recreation on farmland is often assumed, demand increases with population increase.
- Increases opportunities for the spread of weeds, litter, vandalism, and trespassing.
- Recreational opportunities can contribute to agriculture, through agri-tourism.
- Planning is necessary to minimize impact of recreation corridors.

Objective: Limit encroachment of recreation on agricultural land, avoid/mitigate disruption of farming activities, increase public awareness & education, incorporate recreation corridor planning with general planning & buffering for agriculture.

6. Education

6.1. Public Awareness of Agriculture

Issue: *"Commitment to the protection or agricultural land needs to be strengthened by broad public awareness of the value of local agriculture."*

- 78% of residents are urban - it is necessary to have continuing efforts to heighten local awareness of agriculture. Reinforcement of the value of ALR is necessary as well.

Objective: *"Maintain and enhance efforts to heighten awareness of local agriculture and the Agricultural Land Reserve."* (40)

6.2. Farm Succession & Research

Issue: A process is needed to ensure that farm succession and introduction of new farm practices results in an improvement of agriculture, and the passing of rural codes of conduct.

- There is an aging farming population in the RDCO. There is a need to maintain the knowledge base, and to explore new opportunities to improve agriculture. Changing global patterns (such as fuel prices) may create new opportunities, knowledge will benefit this possibility.

Objective: *"Ensure continued and/or improved productivity from the agricultural land base during changes in land ownership or changes in agricultural production"* (41).

7. Industry Support

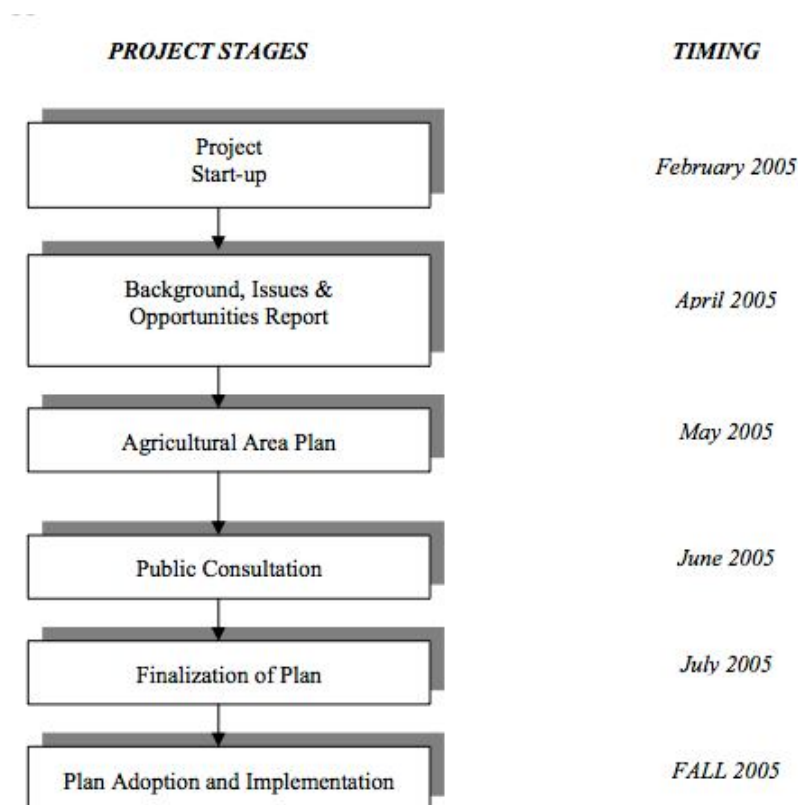
7.1. Agricultural Support Officer

Issue: *"The farm community lacks local resources to assist with the promotion and enhancement of agricultural opportunities."*

- Additional support includes business planning, educational opportunities, improved access to information and avenues to liaise with other agricultural agencies and institutions.

Objective: *"Establish an Agricultural Support Officer position as a pilot project within the organization of the Economic Development function."* (44)

## Development Process/Timeline:



## Regional District of Central Okanagan OCP Supporting Statements<sup>1</sup>:

The AAP outlines four distinct areas within the district that are covered by the plan: Ellison, North Westside, Westside & Joe Rich. See maps for details.

### 1. Ellison Official Community Plan

- “Support the ‘Agricultural Plan’ contained .... The intention of the plan is to determine actions and policies within the mandate of a Regional District that are supportive of agriculture.” (14-3)
- The Ellison OCP contains an extensive Agricultural Policy section.
- The Ellison OCP echoes many of the policies outlined in the RDCO Agricultural Plan, including:
  - Support and acknowledgement of agriculture as an important basis for economic stability & preservation of agriculture within the district.
  - Consultation with the ALC.
  - Support of secondary activities, limited residential development, development and expansion of agricultural activities, and efficient interface planning.

### 2. Westside Official Community Plan.

- The Westside OCP pre-dates the RDCO Agricultural Plan - there is no direct reference to the AAP besides from an objective to “Develop” an ‘agricultural plan’.
- There is an extensive section on agricultural policies, containing many of the objectives contained within the RDCO Agricultural plan, including:
  - Support and acknowledgement of agriculture as an important basis for economic stability & preservation of agriculture within the district.
  - Consultation with the ALC
  - Support development, improvement and expansion of agriculture, as well as secondary activities that contribute to farming income.
  - Ensure efficient interface planning. (14-4).

3. North Westside Official Community Plan
  - The Westside OCP (1999) pre-dates the RDCO Agricultural Plan - there is no direct reference to the AAP.
  - The OCP outlines a number of agricultural objectives, including:
    - Protect & maintain economic viability of the agricultural sector.
    - Support buffering & screening of agricultural land
    - Support the ALC
    - Preserve large rural & agricultural parcels.
4. Joe Rich Land Use Bylaw
  - *“Support the policies and activities of the [RDCO] in support of farming as an activity and a business, such as the Regional District Agricultural Plan and the recommendations it contains, the Regional District Agricultural Advisory Committee, and the Regional District Agricultural Support Officer.*
  - The land use bylaw states one objective: *“ Identify, protect and preserve land of good agricultural quality.”* (4-9).

**AAC Status:**

- Ongoing. Last meeting on April 13, 2010.  
<[http://www.regionaldistrict.com/departments/planning/planning\\_pubcon.aspx](http://www.regionaldistrict.com/departments/planning/planning_pubcon.aspx)>

**References to Agricultural Land Commission Act:**

- Brief mention of ALC buffering guidelines (to minimize edge conflict). (27)

**References to the Right to Farm (Farm Practices Protection) Act:**

- Acknowledgement of the rights of farmers as a result of the F.P.P.A. (30)
- A recommendation to ensure consistency between noise by-laws and the F.P.P.A. regarding the use of bird scare devices (within section 5.2: Rural-Urban Fringe) (29)
- Education information that should be provided on the farm industry & legislation. (Section 8.2: Education) (43)
- The ability to enact farm bylaws is acknowledged. (8)

**References to Water Rights (Canada Water Act, BC Water Act):**

- None.
- References to multiple jurisdictions and lack of joint strategic water plan (Section 3.1: Infrastructure) (14).