

# Planning for Agriculture



Provincial Agricultural Land Commission

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1998

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British Columbia

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Planning for Agriculture* is the result of a collaborative effort of many individuals. Jim Plotnikoff, Director of Strategic Planning & Corporate Policy, has been with the Commission since its first year of operation. Drawing upon this experience, Jim was instrumental in developing the concept of building an idea package that would encourage more focused and progressive planning for agriculture. Subsequently, Jim has overseen the project, providing advice and direction.

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Lastly, *Planning for Agriculture* has drawn on the experiences of many local governments in their efforts, over the years, to grapple with agricultural issues. Many of these experiences are directly used as examples throughout the work. Of particular importance was the Township of Langley's *Rural Plan* developed principally by Paul Crawford and Kurt Alberts. This planning effort, which focused largely on the Township's agricultural lands, was an initial inspiration in developing *Planning for Agriculture*.

—Agricultural Land Commission, January 1998.

## CREATING A SHARED VISION

Rural areas evoke a multitude of values and perspectives. For almost 25 years the Agricultural Land Commission has had the opportunity to view and develop insights into the changing uses, varied perspectives and planning of the agricultural portion of B.C.'s rural lands.

Naturally the Commission's focus has been on those areas either in agricultural use or reserved for food production—the Agricultural Land Reserve. Maintaining the best of the Province's scarce farmland and supporting the activities of farming and ranching in the face of rapid population growth and associated urbanization has been a constant challenge. To suggest that our rural areas can be locked away and shielded from change would be naive at best. Rural areas in many parts of the Province are under tremendous pressure and the Commission has been in a position to view this phenomenon better than most.

Even within active agricultural areas there is a diverse range of human and natural activities taking place which tend only to heighten the challenges facing agriculture. Yet, while the use of these lands is evolving, we have several critical land, water, environmental and human settlement issues to address if we are to achieve economic and environmental sustainability for future generations.

The consideration of land use impacts, so common in the management of complex urban issues, is no less important in the countryside. A starting point in addressing land use complexities and competing demands within farming areas is to ensure a far better understanding and appreciation of that portion of the working land base with the ability to produce food and other agricultural products.

All too often, decision-making works at cross purposes; effectively solving one problem, only to create another. To meet the challenges being placed on our rural lands we must direct a greater part of our energies to the development of joint policies that are at the same time locally, regionally and Provincially sensitive and implemented jointly with common ownership and mutual respect. Achieving greater coordination may demand new approaches and working arrangements. It will require working from the point of view that our resources can be better sustained in an atmosphere and appreciation of shared, rather than competing values.

The ALR is the Provincially designated home for agriculture.

While agriculture is obviously not the only activity embraced by the ALR, it is the use of priority within the Reserve. Agriculture is the looking glass through which we should view this part of B.C.'s land base when land use decisions are being made.

Too often the business of farming and preservation of agricultural land has been portrayed as an impediment to urban development and, at times, environmentally destructive. However, there is growing evidence that the preservation of farmland is having a far more positive effect on urban form than previously considered. The ALR has influenced the development of more compact and efficient urban areas with consequential benefits. Far from being a distraction from the many other important land use and social issues, planning for agriculture should be regarded as a central ingredient in the planning of complete communities. In recent years there have been numerous initiatives coming from within and supported by the farm sector to advance the cause of stewardship, adjust farm practices and build links with environmental interests. Undoubtedly this process will continue. The Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust is at the cutting edge in demonstrating the level of mutual interest between the activity of farming and wildlife protection.

There are many persons, agencies and programmes making contributions to the well-being of B.C. agriculture—none more important than those of the producers themselves. However, travelling to almost every corner of the Province and talking about agriculture with local Councils and Regional Boards, the Agricultural Land Commission has often heard, “What can we do to help agriculture in our area?” Local initiatives designed to meet local challenges and support local farm communities clearly have an important role.

The planning, zoning and service delivery functions of municipalities and regional districts and the initiatives of other locally based groups will play a central and enhanced role in implementing a shared vision of our working land base. It is for this reason that the Commission has developed *Planning for Agriculture* to examine new approaches and suggest solutions in the spirit of building lasting partnerships to help sustain agriculture’s place in B.C.

An important starting point is developing a shared vision—a vision founded on the ethics of resource stewardship, the need to ensure that the business of agriculture has a secure home and a vision developed by forging strong alliances among land use decision-makers and the Province’s agricultural producers and others who form our agri-food sector.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K.B. Miller', with a horizontal line underneath.

K.B. Miller  
Chair, Agricultural Land Commission

## PREFACE

*Planning for Agriculture* has been prepared as a resource document to encourage greater focus on the issues and opportunities important to agriculture. It encourages the use of planning and regulatory tools progressively to secure farming's place in our agricultural communities and to assist in ensuring agriculture's position within the planning mainstream. This document, along with *Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials*, is a detailed planning guide containing numerous recommendations with varying application throughout the Province.

All persons engaged in land use planning processes involving farming and farmland should find *Planning for Agriculture* of value. While this will include numerous committees, groups and associations directly and indirectly involved with agriculture, the document should be of particular interest to planners and land use technicians and the elected officials they advise.

Land use planning is central to the operation of municipalities and regional districts. For this reason much of the material is associated with, but is not exclusive to, actions that can be taken by local governments in the context of present legislative parameters. *Planning for Agriculture*, however, also suggests measures that can be taken by the Province to be more supportive of local efforts. It also advocates that stronger links be forged between local and Provincial governments to ensure more mutually supportive planning and policy development. A continuous thread running through the work is the need to ensure processes that are inclusive of the agricultural community.

It is suggested that planning exercises within farm areas be more focused, built upon enhanced inventory work and a heightened awareness of issues important to agriculture. There is also a need for an improved understanding of the relationships between farming and other land uses. In many areas the business of farming and ranching will be well served by the development of focused agricultural area plans and policy development directed along agriculture's edge.

*Planning for Agriculture* also encourages a shift in perspective. A clear starting point is an acknowledgement of farming's place within our communities on a continuum. In some cases this may require the shedding of past assumptions that the urbanization of farmland is inevitable or a natural process. In its place is the need to recognize that the most appropriate long-term use of agricultural land is agriculture. It is from this foundation that plans can be built that will best serve both the needs of the industry as well as the community at large, ensuring, to the greatest extent possible, an appropriate fit within the environmental and land use context within which it rests.

Beyond the necessity of food and farming's contribution to the stability and economic health of local communities, planning for agriculture should be regarded, not as a distraction from other important issues, but as a key factor in the planning for complete communities.

*Planning for Agriculture* summarizes and condenses the larger, more detailed, *Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials* document and serves three main purposes:

- to act as a standalone document and useful resource in its own right;
- to act as a source for all of the major recommendations and concepts contained within *Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials*; and
- to serve as a road map, providing ease of access to the larger document both in its hard copy and electronic form.



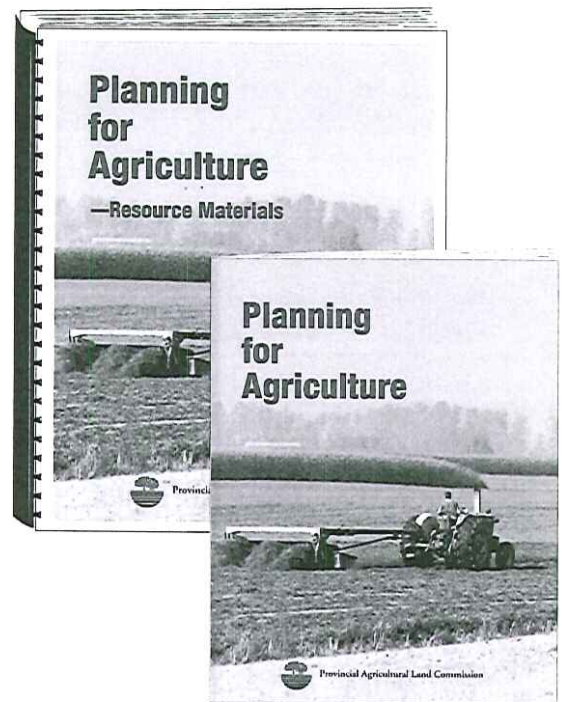
## Linking with *Planning For Agriculture—Resource Materials*

There are numerous cross-references provided within *Planning for Agriculture*. The italicized chapter and page number references will lead the reader to the beginning of the section in *Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials* where the topic in question is considered in more detail.

*Example:*

2. Planning Studies and Inventory  
(Chapter 6, page 20)

Reference to *Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials*



## ACRONYMS

AAC	Agricultural Advisory Committee
AAP	Agricultural Area Plan
AAPWG	Agricultural Area Plan Working Group
ALC	Agricultural Land Commission
ALCA	<i>Agricultural Land Commission Act</i>
ALR	Agricultural Land Reserve
APC	Advisory Planning Commission
BCAC	British Columbia Agricultural Council
BCLI	British Columbia Land Inventory
CLI	Canada Land Inventory
CORE	Commission on Resources and Environment
EDC	Economic Development Commission
FPPA	<i>Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act</i>
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
IAC	Intergovernmental Advisory Committee (Regional Growth Strategies)
LRMP	Land and Resources Management Planning
LTA	<i>Land Title Act</i>
LUCO	Land Use Coordination Office
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Food
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
MELP	Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks
MLS	Minimum Lot Size
MOTH	Ministry of Transportation and Highways
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
OCP	Official Community Plan
PALC	Provincial Agricultural Land Commission (same as ALC)
RLUB	Rural Land Use Bylaw
UBCM	Union of B.C. Municipalities
WTO	World Trade Organization



## INTRODUCTION

*For full text of this section see Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials, Chapter 1, pages 1–10.*

All prime agricultural land within the Agricultural Land Reserve represents only about 1% of B.C.'s overall land base.

British Columbians have been facing—and meeting—the serious challenge of agricultural land preservation for 25 years. While this effort must continue, it is time to pay far greater attention to planning for the long-term agricultural use of agricultural land. We must approach agricultural land issues in a way that clearly recognizes agriculture as the highest and best use of the farmland resource. There will always be a need to balance resource values. However, if the people of B.C. place a value on providing for a strong proportion of their own food needs, the scarcity of the agricultural resource and importance of the farm sector must be recognized. In an environment of steady population increases—both globally and Provincially—we must move beyond the preservation of farmland, eliminate uncertainty and ensure a regulatory climate and infrastructure base that specifically meets agriculture's needs for the long-term.

Local governments and other groups have traditionally played an important and continuing role in ensuring agriculture's place in our communities. *Planning for Agriculture* represents an effort to highlight practical means that can be undertaken at the local level to help sustain and strengthen agriculture in B.C. It is this contribution at the local level, and the actions necessary to support these efforts by other agencies, that are the focus of this report.



## B.C. AGRICULTURE —FINDING ITS PLACE

### A Challenging Geography (Chapter 1, page 3)

The physiography of British Columbia has had a clear impact on the availability of land for agricultural use and settlement patterns. With the establishment of permanent settlements in B.C. came the need for local forest and farm products and improved transportation links to far flung settlements. Local agriculture was a necessity of subsistence for these early communities.



*Mountains—the dominant land form for much of British Columbia.*

This relationship between settlement patterns and the need for land suitable for growing food resulted in many of our modern centres being built on the best agricultural land in the region. Settlement is also highly concentrated. Over 82% of British Columbians live in urban areas and about 79% live in an area of less than 3% of B.C. centred on the Okanagan Valley and southwest corner of the Province.<sup>1</sup> In this same small area about 78% of B.C.'s gross farm receipts are generated.<sup>2</sup> This concentration of both human settlement and agricultural production has resulted in an obvious

competition for a very limited supply of land in which human activities can reasonably be undertaken.

### B.C. Agriculture—A Study In Diversity (Chapter 1, page 6)

Despite the considerable physical constraints over much of the Province, B.C. is blessed with an agricultural land base of both surprising capability and contrast—from small vegetable farms in Burnaby's Big Bend to 500 hectare grain farms in the Peace to Douglas Lake Ranch stretching some 96 kilometres from corner to corner. The hallmark of British Columbia agriculture is its outstanding diversity. With almost 22,000 farms and ranches, B.C. produces over 200 different commodities and exports them around the world.

The primary value of British Columbia's agricultural land—why it should be regarded as a precious resource—relates to three key factors. First, functionality—its ability to provide for one of the most basic of human needs. Secondly, production from these lands makes an important contribution to the Province's economy, defines part of the Province's social fabric and creates a valued visual characteristic. And thirdly, in many areas the agricultural land base is of high quality but quite limited in quantity—about 5% of B.C.'s land is in the Agricultural Land Reserve and only 1% has prime agricultural capabilities.

These factors make planning for the preservation, husbandry and use of this resource of critical importance.



*Sumas Prairie.*

- 1 Statistics Canada, *A National Overview—Population and Dwelling Counts*, 1996, Cat. No. 93-357-XPB, Table 18, page 240.
- 2 Statistics Canada, *Census of Agriculture Profile Data—British Columbia*, 1996, Table 6.



## FARMLAND: DIFFERENT THINGS TO DIFFERENT PEOPLE

*For full text of this section see Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials, Chapter 2, pages 1–15.*

“Soils and arable land are considered to be a form of productive natural capital with only limited potential for technological substitution. Its unique properties and immeasurable value as an essential component of our global life support system justify the exclusion of adequate stocks of agricultural land from competing land markets. In short, a range of considerations and values beyond short-term efficiency bear on critical land use decisions. This is more likely to ensure food security in a world of rapid ecological change and political uncertainty. As a bonus, we may succeed in preserving important elements of rural life and landscape, a significant part of our national heritage.”

—W.E. Rees,  
*Why Preserve Agricultural Land?*,  
1993, page 10

### GUIDING PRINCIPLE:

Park and recreation facilities serving urban communities should be accommodated within urban areas.

As is the case with most resources, agricultural land means different things to different people. In planning for the long-term agricultural use of agricultural land, it will be a continuing challenge to effectively deal with these varied and conflicting perspectives. It is important, however, to acknowledge and understand these varying points of view.

### Farmland as Natural Capital (Chapter 2, page 3)

Besides the more site or area specific productive and environmental functions that agricultural land plays, farmland is part of our ‘global life support system’. Natural Capital consists of three kinds of “ecological assets”: (1) non-renewable resources, (2) the finite capacity of natural systems to produce renewable resources (one example being food crops) and (3) the capacity of natural systems to absorb pollutants arising from human actions.<sup>3</sup>

### Wildlife Habitat (Chapter 2, page 4)

Agricultural land can play a complementary role in sustaining wildlife populations. Increasingly, wildlife and farming interests are coming together to achieve a balanced integration of wildlife and agricultural policy. Partnership models, based upon one-on-one relationships with farmers, emphasizing voluntary rather than prescriptive solutions, are emerging. The Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust is an excellent example of this form of partnership programme in action.

### Green Space (Chapter 2, page 5)

For some, agriculture represents a pleasant scenic vista. Farmland is a valued visual component of the Province and defines the character of many of our communities and regions. It also plays a role in maintaining air quality.

### Parks and Recreation (Chapter 2, page 6)

Some see agricultural areas as sites for recreational pursuits such as hunting, golf, horseback riding and walking trails. Farmland can be an attractive choice for these activities. However, park and recreation uses located in the ALR have strong potential for off-site impacts on agricultural uses. Several conflicts can emerge and farmers are having to bear increasing costs from unmanaged recreational use in farming areas.

### Amenity Value (Chapter 2, page 7)

Agriculture plays a major role in defining the attractiveness of many areas as a place to live, to visit, to study and to invest. In some areas, like the Okanagan, agriculture and tourism are inextricably linked.

## Rural/Estate Residential (Chapter 2, page 7)

The rural/estate residential use of the agricultural land base continues to have a strong appeal as a setting to live and raise a family. In any effort to sustain agriculture, the gentrification of farmland will clearly demand consideration to avoid agriculture being destroyed from within.

## Agriculture or an Urban Tomorrow?: Speculating on Land Use Change (Chapter 2, page 9)



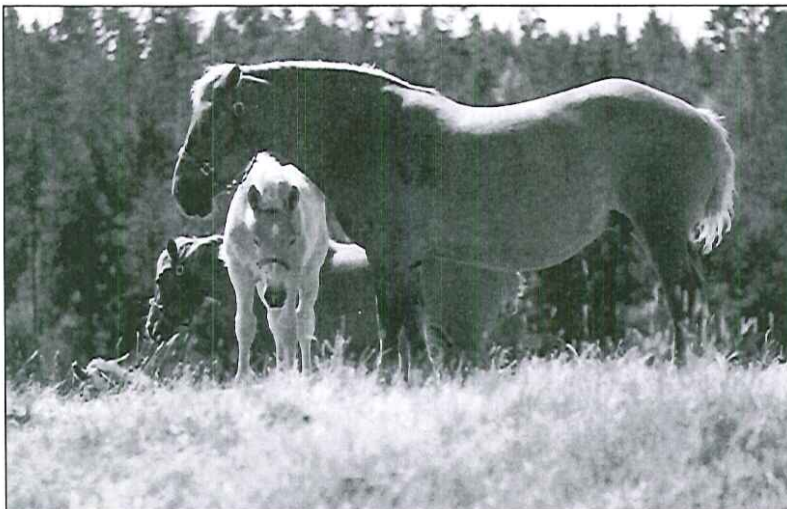
Another view of farmland's utility is the speculation on land use change. An attitude continues to persist that farmland is simply an urban area in waiting. This particular vision of agricultural land has a number of serious implications and represents a fundamental threat to the preservation of farmland and the agricultural sector. Many communities and regional districts are moving towards abandonment of what might be referred to as "old style land use thinking"—where agricultural land was considered the appropriate and natural place for urban development. Today there are significant efforts being directed towards what the Commission refers to as the "Up Not Out" planning approach. Policies promoting compact and complete communities, increased density and the redevelopment of existing urban areas are receiving widespread support.

## Hobby Farms and Small Holdings (Chapter 2, page 11)

Hobby farms are often the product of a heavily parcelized landscape. While making only a limited contribution to agricultural production, hobby farms tend to be reasonably compatible with other farm uses. Local governments can lessen the pressure on agricultural areas by protecting suitable rural lands outside the ALR for hobby farm use and help to discourage the further parcelization of land in the ALR.

## Alternative Productive Capability (Chapter 2, page 13)

In addition to food production, floriculture, nurseries and sod farms are important components of the agricultural scene. Some agricultural lands are also used for silviculture. Products of agriculture are also being used as sources of renewable energy and for medicinal purposes.



## The Horse Industry (Chapter 2, page 13)

Horse operations, while providing a viable use of small parcels, can act as a buffer between urban and other agricultural uses. In many parts of B.C. the horse industry has a significant economic impact—\$464 million province-wide in 1994.<sup>4</sup>

## Farmland: For Farmers and Farming (Chapter 2, page 14)

For farmers, there is a different relationship to the land. It is their home, place of work and source of livelihood. Farmers and farmland sustain all of us through the growing of food and other agricultural products. Despite its apparent charm, farming is a business. Like many businesses, farming demands dedication, a heavy financial investment and the application of skills that most of us simply do not possess. It is a business that must be able to adapt to changing circumstances—particularly in technology, the marketplace and more recently in response to the environmental imperatives of society at large. Farmers are also owners and custodians of extensive areas of land.<sup>5</sup> As providers of a safe and abundant source of food, farmers play a crucial role in the health and well-being of all British Columbians.

## Summary (Chapter 2, page 15)

Most of the alternative perspectives on farmland have varying degrees of legitimacy. Fortunately most people continue to recognize that farming represents the long-term use of priority of the agricultural land base. For land in the ALR this should constitute the key perspective from which to plan for agriculture. Accordingly, land use decisions and economic programs must be designed to support the retention of land in farm use over the long-term.

Society today is having to come to grips with setting its agricultural agenda, not from a prevalent agrarian outlook, but within the context and under the influence of urban dominated perspectives. This is at the very core of the challenge to plan for agriculture in the long-term.



*Pemberton Valley.*

- 3 Roseland, M., Toward Sustainable Communities, National Round Table on the Environment and Economy, Ottawa, 1992, page 8.
- 4 Robbins, Mark, B.C. Horses: A Significant Agricultural Activity; Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, 1994.
- 5 Over 70 per cent of privately-owned land in B.C. (excluding private forests) is owned by farm families. (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Strengthening Farming in British Columbia, Consultation Background Report, February 1995, page 5.)



## WHY PLAN FOR AGRICULTURE?

*For full text of this section see *Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials, Chapter 3, pages 1–12.**

After reviewing almost 1,300 land use documents, the Commission has seen the “good”, the “bad” and at times the “indifferent” in planning for agriculture.

The number of mouths to feed is growing rapidly—births over deaths world-wide equals a new City of Vancouver every two days.

From: Gwynne Dyer  
*The Human Race*  
CBC Documentary

### Introduction (*Chapter 3, page 2*)

Since the inception of the ALR the Agricultural Land Commission has reviewed plans, bylaws and other land use documents from all regions of the Province. From this experience the following conclusions can be drawn:

- There has been little if any specialized technical guidance on how to plan for agriculture in the face of settlement pressures.
- Despite local governments having a strong role to play in dealing with land use issues, agriculture has commonly not commanded a prominent position in policy development at the local level.
- Regional districts and municipalities, with strong local knowledge, are well positioned to make positive contributions to agriculture’s future.
- An enhancement of local and Provincial partnerships will achieve considerable benefits to ensure agriculture’s long-term health.

*Planning for Agriculture* promotes and calls for practical means that can be undertaken, particularly at the local level, to assist in ensuring the sustainability of agriculture in British Columbia. As a detailed planning guide it often draws upon the efforts of local governments and other organizations.

### Planning For Agriculture—Some Broader Contexts (*Chapter 3, page 3*)

#### The Necessity of Food (*Chapter 3, page 3*)

Planning for agriculture’s long-term future must be grounded on a basic understanding of the unequivocal necessity of food.

British Columbians have a responsibility to ensure the security of their local food supply to satisfy domestic needs which in turn lessens the broader social, economic and environmental implications on other regions of the world. Food security must be founded on the sanctity of our foodland resource and supportive policies that will ensure the viability of the farm sector:

#### A Sustainable Future (*Chapter 3, page 5*)

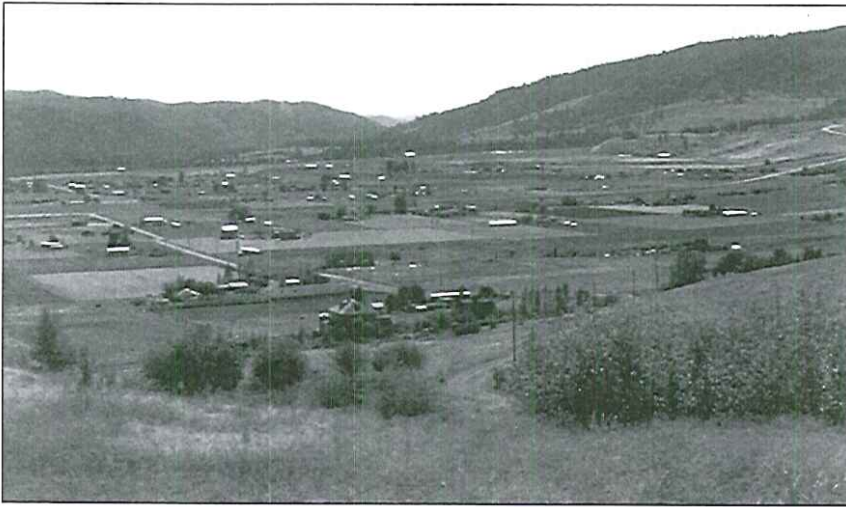
There are two sides to the sustainability coin—the environment and development. If farms are going to be successfully operated in an agriculturally and environmentally sustainable manner, a climate must exist in which farming is economically viable. In the face of population growth leading to land development pressures, local governments have primary land use planning authority over private lands and the private use of Crown land (with the exception of the ALR). They also have development control authority as well as a range of servicing and other regulatory authority. All of these land use controls can affect agricultural operations. Thus, the future viability of agriculture will depend on local governments using these extensive powers in a manner which supports agriculture. Otherwise, there will be ongoing land use and economic uncertainties, despite Provincial efforts. As Gary Runka has commented, “Sustainability is about permanence.”<sup>6</sup>



### A Lack of Agricultural Focus (*Chapter 3, page 6*)

From the Commission's perspective, there has been a lack of focus by many local governments on the concerns important to the agricultural community. Even after 25 years of a Provincial agricultural preservation programme, two basic attitudes continue to persist:

- economic forces will doom agriculture;
- urbanization of farmland is a natural and inevitable phenomenon.



*Grand Forks Area Farmland. Maintaining the ALR is only one part of ensuring sustainable agriculture.*

There has also been a traditional split in B.C. between the resource planning of Crown land, most often the purview of the Provincial government, and that of planning for settlement, usually related to private lands and undertaken by regional and municipal governments. Given that local government planning has been called on primarily to deal with population growth pressures leading to housing, commercial and other development, there has been a tendency to focus on accommodation of growth at the expense of resource based land uses, including agriculture.

Local governments, however, have a critical role to play in helping to create a regulatory climate that ensures preservation of the resource base and enhances the economic viability of farming. There is a clear need for agriculture to be firmly within the planning mainstream with far greater focus on agricultural issues.

### Moving Beyond Preservation (*Chapter 3, page 8*)

The ALR has been largely successful in securing a land base for food production (see *Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials*, Appendix 3). However, creating a reserve for agriculture is not an end-product. There is a need to move beyond preservation and focus on efforts needed to sustain agriculture. This is not a perspective that is exclusionary of all other concerns or interests. The challenge for agriculture is not segregation but integration, especially with respect to environmental and other resource concerns and enhancing compatibility between farm and non-farm land uses.

To move beyond preservation it is important to:

- emphasize the resource value of agricultural land;
- recognize agriculture as the use of priority in the ALR; and
- build stronger co-management partnerships between local and Provincial interests.

## The Local Importance of Agriculture (Chapter 3, page 10)

“However brilliant its economic star, every city is an ecological black hole drawing on the material resources and productivity of a vast and scattered hinterland many times the size of the city itself.”

—W.E. Rees  
*Globe '92*

## City and Farm—Disconnections and Connections (Chapter 3, page 10)

Agriculture is one of several activities that ‘fuel’ our cities. Yet, because most British Columbians live in an urban setting, there has been a gradual distancing between the general population and agriculture. However, there is an explicit link between city and farm that makes the security of the resource base and the business of farming in the interest of every community. As a result decision-makers in our cities and towns should have just as keen an interest, on behalf of their citizens, in the stewardship of the resource and agricultural productivity as those in more rural regions. In cases where urban municipalities and regions contain portions of the Province’s foodland, an interest in agriculture’s welfare should be unambiguous.



## Agriculture—A Part of Complete Communities (Chapter 3, page 11)

Too often the preservation of agricultural land has been portrayed as an impediment to urban development. However, there is growing evidence that the preservation of farmland is having a far more positive effect on urban form than previously considered. The ALR has influenced the development of more compact and efficient urban areas with consequential benefits. Beyond the necessity of food and farming’s contribution to the stability and economic health of local communities, planning for agriculture should be regarded, not as a distraction from other important issues, but as a key factor in the planning for complete communities.

6 Runka, Gary; *Action Steps to Sustainable Agriculture*; a paper given at Seeking Assurances —A Forum on Sustainable Agriculture, Summerland, October 1994, page 3.



## PROVINCIAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLES

*For full text of this section  
see Planning for  
Agriculture—Resource  
Materials, Chapter 4,  
pages 1–20.*

### **The Provincial Role** (*Chapter 4, page 2*)

#### Ministry of Agriculture and Food (*Chapter 4, page 2*)

For over a hundred years the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF) has supported and encouraged agricultural development in B.C. The Ministry is responsible for over 40 pieces of legislation (see *Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials*, Appendix 14) and is involved in a wide range of services including economics and marketing, extension, resource management, animal health and many specialized interests. (See *Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials*, Appendix 12 for a list of MAF offices.)

With passage of the then *Land Commission Act* in 1973, the long standing programmes of the Department of Agriculture remained in place. The advent of the ALR was not intended to replace, but rather augment, this effort. The Commission and MAF have many common interests. However, there has been an informal, but far from exclusive, split in focus between the two organizations. The Ministry has continued its traditional programmes promoting industry development, while the ALC has concentrated more on the preservation component of its mandate and ensuring that land use planning and regulation is agriculturally supportive. Despite this split in focus, the ALC and MAF have a strong working relationship which has been enhanced with development of the Strengthening Farming Initiative and the passage of the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act* (FPPA).

MAF has historically had a relatively minor involvement with local governments; however, this is changing. The former Greenzone programme and the work of district agriculturists often involve the Ministry in local issues. For many years MAF has conducted informative farm tours as part of the Union of B.C. Municipalities' annual convention. The Strengthening Farming Initiative, including 1994 amendments to the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, and the 1995 FPPA, were aimed specifically at building much stronger partnerships between local governments, farm communities, MAF and the ALC.

The FPPA has in fact resulted in a significant re-orientation of MAF resources to implement the legislation and support strengthening farming. Provincial Agri-Teams have been developed to provide ongoing support to local governments and material has been developed for approving officers in conjunction with the FPPA amendments to Section 86 of the *Land Title Act*, including a commitment to ongoing support and advice. The *Guide for Bylaw Development in Farming Areas*, produced by MAF, stands as a cornerstone document to assist in the review and updating of zoning and rural land use bylaws and the development of farm bylaws.

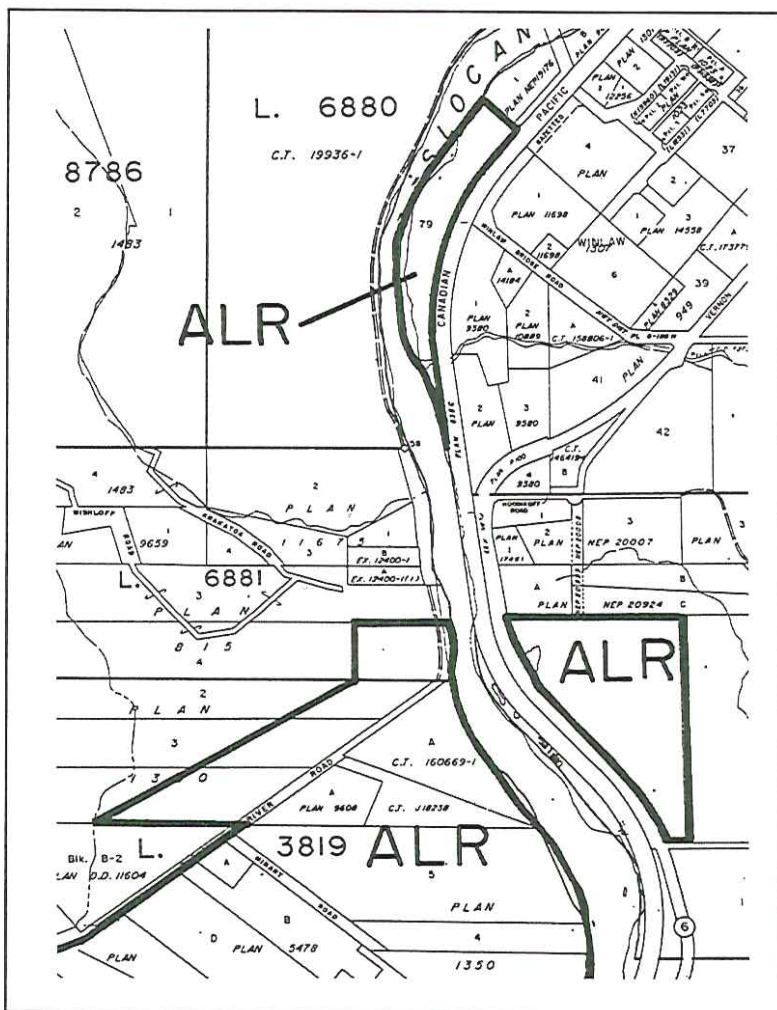
A basic principle at work is that strengthening farming can be best achieved by working with and supporting local governments and within the context of local plan delivery and bylaw processes.

A Program to Preserve Agricultural Land (*Chapter 4, page 4*)

The loss of agricultural land to urbanization in the 1960's and early 1970's was clearly a concern for the Provincial government and the people of B.C. The decision to undertake a Provincial agricultural land preservation programme was based on several factors:

- quantitatively B.C. is agriculturally land poor;
- agriculture is an important part of the Provincial and many local economies;
- there was an appreciation of world food shortages;
- there was a growing land use uncertainty in many farming areas due to considerable urban pressure; and
- land management techniques at the local government level were ineffectual in the face of urban sprawl onto farmland.

The passage of the *Land Commission Act* in 1973 marked a turning point. This was a conscious decision by the Province to identify the preservation of agricultural land as a Provincial interest of high priority. However, the Commission has long recognized that the preservation of agricultural land should not rely on a single means such as exclusive farmland zoning even when Provincially inspired. There are several other techniques that should work as a policy package (see pages 14–17). An important part of the package is agriculturally progressive and comprehensive community and regional plans.



Sample Map of ALR.

The Agricultural Land Commission, ALR and Local Governments (*Chapter 4, page 5*)

Before the passage of the Act, most decisions concerning the use of agricultural land in private tenure rested almost exclusively with municipal and regional district governments. The Agricultural Land Commission was given the mandate to preserve agricultural land. This included the authority to determine the appropriateness of future subdivision and non-farm land uses proposed in the ALR and to exclude land and advise on inclusion.

The initial ALR proposals were developed in conjunction with regional districts and member municipalities and citizens through a public hearing process. Once the ALR was established, any initiative to amend the ALR or consider the subdivision or non-farm use of agricultural land had to first be considered by the regional district or municipality where the proposal was initiated. When the Commission does make a decision to allow a non-farm use or subdivision, this action does not usurp local regulation. The proposal only proceeds if the local government determines it is in its best interest. A possible exception is where local land use plans and bylaws have not been adopted.

The Act also provides a direct means, often referred to as block applications, for local governments to initiate amendments to the ALR. While fine-tuning the ALR has been necessary and will continue, many important parts of the Reserve have been reviewed and there is every reason to believe that the Reserve is now in a

period of much greater stability. This should afford all concerned an opportunity to focus more on what is going on inside the ALR and along its interface and much less on adjusting the ALR boundary.

The Commission is often viewed as simply a single focus organization with the preservation of agricultural land ruling its every decision. Indeed its mandate is quite clear. However, its operating methods and decision-making history speak of an organization that is determined to work within the mainstream of land use policy as comprehensively as its mandate allows. The approach of the Commission is to engage local governments in an effort to find mutually acceptable solutions. This approach belies the single focus label that has often been attached to the Commission's efforts.

With the inclusion of a specific objective in the 1994 amendments to the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* to encourage bylaws, plans and policies that support agriculture, and with the enactment of the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act* in 1995, there is now a clear mandate for enhancing partnerships in the development of land use policies affecting the ALR.

### **Regional District and Municipal Role** (*Chapter 4, page 9*)

It is not surprising, given the Federal and Provincial roles associated with agriculture, that many local governments tend to either give agricultural issues low priority or be under the impression that the subject is being taken care of by others. However, local governments have a pivotal role to play in securing our agricultural land base, creating a positive regulatory climate within which agriculture can flourish and promoting a healthy agricultural sector that is important to many local economies.

Close to 70% of B.C.'s annual gross farm income is generated within municipalities.

### **Contrasting Agricultural Settings** (*Chapter 4, page 10*)

The amount of agricultural land within a jurisdiction, the forms of agriculture undertaken, its relationship to urban and other rural uses and its perceived importance in terms of policy development will vary between local governments. Most of our farmland is in the electoral areas of regional districts. Yet some of our fastest growing municipalities are also our most important agricultural areas. It is estimated that between 65 and 70% of British Columbia's annual gross farm income is generated within municipalities.

Given contrasting agricultural settings it would be wrong to suggest that a single approach or model for dealing with agricultural issues can be applied equally in all parts of B.C. There are, however, several basic ingredients that can guide planning for agriculture:

- connect with agricultural interests to seek input and to better understand issues important to the farm community;
- approach agriculture as the *use of priority* within farm areas;
- develop a better understanding of agricultural areas through the application of improved land use inventories and monitoring of policy effectiveness; and
- undertake in key agricultural areas, more focused and cross-jurisdictional agricultural area plan development.

## A Broad Range of Functions (*Chapter 4, page 12*)

Local governments have responsibility for a wide and growing range of functions from building sidewalks to managing land use. Agricultural policy development must not only be balanced but also integrated with other, often competing interests. Added to a large number of responsibilities are the challenges faced by most local governments in dealing with the settlement issues of a highly urbanized society. Food security, however, is as much an urban as a rural issue.

## Current Legislative Opportunities to Plan for Agriculture (*Chapter 4, page 13*)

Legislative opportunities in B.C. put local governments in a pivotal role to ensure agriculture's place in the planning mainstream.

The task of land use planning in most settled areas is largely undertaken by municipalities and regional districts. Local government planning and regulatory powers are particularly focused on privately-held land. With over 70% of privately-owned land in B.C. (excluding private forests) owned by farm families,<sup>7</sup> the importance of local governments in planning for agriculture is clear. Broadly, local planning may take the form of regional growth strategies, official community plans and implementing bylaws. Each represents important opportunities to plan for and contribute to agriculture's long-term sustainability.

As summarized on pages 14 to 17, there are currently several opportunities within British Columbia's legislative framework to influence or provide latitude to plan for agriculture. Although spread amongst a number of different pieces of legislation, when examined as a package there is strong connectiveness between the various elements. As might be expected, the *Municipal Act* provides a particularly strong focal point. In almost all cases this legislative package places local governments in a central role to shape agricultural land use policy and regulation and ensure agriculture's place in the planning mainstream.

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Strengthening Farming in British Columbia, Consultation Background Report, February 1995, page 5.

# A Summary of Current Legislative Opportunities for Agricultural Policy Formulation, Plan and Bylaw Development

## Provincial Agricultural Land Commission Act (*Chapter 4, page 14*)

The *Agricultural Land Commission Act* is the most prominent and influential agricultural planning instrument in British Columbia. While Provincially administered, the Act has strong ties to local government land use planning and bylaw functions.

The ALCA identifies and preserves agricultural land within the Agricultural Land Reserve. Before regional growth strategies, and in many areas still today, the ALR functions as a form of urban growth boundary.

The initial designation of the ALR directly involved local governments. They continue to participate in the ALR application processes and provide advice on policy initiatives. Major ALR reviews are often part of local community planning processes and are normally completed jointly by the ALC and local governments.

The Commission encourages agriculturally supportive bylaws, plans and policies.

Working with local governments during plan and bylaw development has been a long-standing commitment of the Commission. One of the Commission's objectives is to encourage "...local, Provincial, Federal and First Nations to support and accommodate the farm use of agricultural land within bylaws, plans and policies."

(*Agricultural Land Commission Act*, Section 10(1)(d), "Objects and Powers")

There is a need for plans and bylaws to be consistent with the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*.

Harmonizing local plans and bylaws and the Provincial agricultural land preservation programme is seen as a critical underpinning of any effort to preserve agricultural land and support a healthy farm sector. As such, an important Provincial/local government goal is maintaining consistency between plans and bylaws and the objectives of the ALCA, regulations and orders of the Commission.

(*Agricultural Land Commission Act*, Section 47(2), "Conflict with Bylaws")

Community Plans must be forwarded to the Commission for comment.

It is also a requirement that community plans be forwarded to the Commission for review and comment prior to adoption to ensure consistency with the ALCA.

(*Municipal Act*, Section 882(3)(c), "Adoption Procedures for Municipalities")

The ALC and MAF are committed to working closely with local governments.

With passage of the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act* a concerted effort is being made by both the ALC and MAF to work closely with local governments in a proactive, rather than reactive mode during the development of plans and bylaws affecting agriculture.

Developing strong working relationships between the Provincial and local governments, as well as with members of the farm community represents a fundamental building block in planning for agriculture and provides a forum for multi-directional influence on policy development.

Regional Growth Strategies—  
“...maintain the integrity of a secure  
and productive resource base,  
including the ALR”.

Farming represents an important and  
growing part of most regional district  
economies.

#### RECOMMENDATION:

Regional districts should  
consider how their growth  
strategy contributes to food  
security.

Intergovernmental Advisory  
Committees will help to facilitate  
policy coordination.

Agriculture and non-conforming  
use provisions.

## Regional Growth Strategies (Chapter 4, page 16)

Each of the following ‘purposes’ of regional growth strategies should have positive implications for agriculture:

“...avoid urban sprawl...;

, ...minimize the use of automobiles...;

...efficient movement of goods and people...making effective use of  
transportation and utility corridors;

...maintain the integrity of a secure and productive resource base  
including the agricultural...land reserve;

...economic development that supports the unique character of the  
communities;

...reducing and preventing air, land and water pollution;

...protecting the quality and quantity of ground water and surface water;”

(*Municipal Act*, Section 849(2), “Purpose of Regional Growth Strategy”)

Growth strategies are to consider the needs of the projected population including,  
“...economic development”. In agricultural terms this is important because the  
farm sector forms an important component of the local economy for almost all  
regional districts in the Province.

(*Municipal Act*, Section 850(2), “Content of Regional Growth Strategy”)

Within the content of a regional growth strategy, opportunity is afforded to “...deal  
with any other regional matter” to provide for the needs of the projected population.  
It is recommended that every regional district should carefully consider how its  
growth strategy contributes to food security as an important regional matter.

(*Municipal Act*, Section 850(3), “Content of Regional Growth Strategy”)

The formation of Intergovernmental Advisory Committees (IACs) provides  
opportunity for the development of Provincial agricultural “interest statements”.  
The IAC will also “...facilitate coordination of Provincial and local government  
actions, policies and programs...”. This coordinating role is particularly important  
to achieve mutually supportive actions and to enhance the development of shared  
visions of agricultural areas.

(*Municipal Act*, Section 867, “Intergovernmental Advisory Committees”)

## **Municipal Act, Part 26, Management of Development** (Chapter 4, page 16)

In 1985, the non-conforming use section of the *Municipal Act* was amended  
making specific provision for agricultural practices.

(*Municipal Act*, Section 911(2), “Non-conforming Uses and Siting”)



*Municipal Act* provides for Sub–Area Community Plans.

While the *Municipal Act* provides for the adoption of official plans and implementing bylaws<sup>8</sup>, local governments, “...may adopt one or more community plans for one or more areas.” This is an important provision since it allows for more focused sub–area plans to be adopted, including agricultural area plans where farming is a dominant land use.

(*Municipal Act*, Section 875(1), “Application of Community Plans”)

Community Plan content and agriculture.

Community plans shall include statements respecting “the approximate location, amount and type of present and proposed commercial, industrial, institutional, agricultural, recreational and public utility land uses...”.

(*Municipal Act*, Section 877(1)(b), “Required Content of Official Community Plans”)

Community Plans may include policies respecting the maintenance and enhancement of farming.

To encourage a stronger focus on agriculture within official plans the *Municipal Act* was amended in 1995 by adding that a “...community plan may include policies of the local government respecting the maintenance and enhancement of farming on land in a farming area (ALR or area licensed for aquaculture) or in an area designated for agricultural use in the community plan.

Along with the opportunity to develop sub–area plans, this amendment provides opportunity for a greater level of plan detail and more issue–focused action policies for achieving broader objectives in support of agriculture.

(*Municipal Act*, Section 878(1)(c), “Policy Statements in Community Plans”)

Rural Land Use Bylaws.

Instead of an OCP and zoning bylaw, a Regional Board may adopt a rural land use bylaw (RLUB) which combines elements of both a plan and implementing bylaws. The RLUB only applies to the electoral area portion of regional districts as designated by the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

The RLUB has two parts. Part 1 is a statement of broad objectives and policies, with similarities to an OCP. Part 2 is a hybrid, providing for some aspects of both OCP and zoning bylaw provisions, including provisions for agricultural use. Like an OCP, a regional, “...board may adopt one or more rural land use bylaws for one or more areas.” This provides opportunity to selectively focus an RLUB on agricultural areas of the regional district.

(*Municipal Act*, Section 886 “Rural Land Use Bylaws” and Section 887, “Content of Rural Land Use Bylaws”)

Development Permit Areas for the protection of farming.

Community plans may include development permit areas for the “...protection of farming” to buffer or separate development from farming. This largely urban side land use instrument improves the potential for greater compatibility between agriculture and other land uses. It allows for the sensitive planning and application of buffering at the time of development to improve the quality of life for persons on both sides of the interface, minimize nuisance complaints and increase the range of farming opportunities within the ALR in close proximity to urban areas.

Applying development permit areas also has the ability to provide direction for approving officers when considering subdivision near farming areas and the ALR under new provisions of the *Land Title Act* (see below).

(*Municipal Act*, Sections 879(1)(c), “Designation of Permit Areas” and 920(10), “Development Permits”)

Provincial Bylaw Standards.

With passage of the FPPA, further consequential amendments to the *Municipal Act* provide for the development of Provincial standards with respect to agriculture to guide the preparation of rural land use and zoning bylaws applied to the ALR and areas licensed for aquaculture. The Provincial bylaw standards will provide a strong basis for bylaw review, but it is anticipated that some circumstances will demand local modification of the Provincial standards. In addition, a process has been put in place for the review of these bylaws and for approval by the Minister responsible for the administration of the FPPA.

Bylaw Reviews.

Farm Bylaws.

In addition, there is now opportunity for local governments to adopt a new type of bylaw—the farm bylaw. Farm bylaws offer opportunities on the farm side to complement the efforts of development permits to enhance land use compatibility on the urban side. Farm bylaws, which need the approval of the Minister, may also provide for the application of on-farm management techniques that enhance compatibility but also could provide for greater flexibility when these operating methods are in place.

The intent of the new legislation is to work within the context of local bylaw processes guaranteeing local government's full involvement. The objective is to remove unreasonable prohibition and restrictions on agriculture and replace them with regulation which fosters a healthy and growing farm sector in a manner that enhances land use compatibility and encourages sound stewardship and farm practices.

The process of bylaw review will demand partnership building and the sharing of expertise and knowledge. It is important that regulation is appropriate and sensitive to the local setting while addressing the needs of the farm sector and Provincial agricultural objectives.

(*Municipal Act*, Sections 887(8), 903(5) and Division 8 (Use of Land for Agricultural Operations) Sections 916, 917, 918, and 919)

Intensive Agriculture Provisions.

The *Municipal Act* provides for intensive agricultural uses within the ALR notwithstanding regulations contained in a rural land use or zoning bylaw. This 1985 amendment to the *Municipal Act* was substantially amended by the FPPA in 1995. While maintaining its basic intent, in practice, once local bylaws are updated and approved by the Minister of Agriculture and Food the effect of Section 915 will cease within the bylaw area. Replacing the provisions of Section 915 with updated bylaw regulations based upon the review process is an important objective of the FPPA.

(*Municipal Act*, Section 915, "Intensive Agriculture")

### **Land Title Act** (Chapter 4, page 19)

Opportunity to provide buffering and avoid "road-endings" pointed at the ALR at time of subdivision.

With the adoption of the FPPA, the *Land Title Act* was amended to provide approving officers with opportunities to require buffering at the time of subdivision to protect farming from development and to discourage unnecessary road access into the ALR. The changes to the *Land Title Act* will most often find urban side application and can serve to implement development permit area guidelines for the protection of farming.

(*Land Title Act*, Section 86(1)(c)(x) and (xi), "Matters to be Considered by Approving Officer on Application for Subdivision Approval")

## A Shared Vision to Practical Solutions (Chapter 4, page 19)

Historically, agricultural issues have not been the subject of consistent policy interest at the local level. It is important, particularly in key agricultural areas, that issues surrounding food security and farmland preservation be given due attention.

Fostering a shared vision of how best to protect agriculture's working land base and sustain a vibrant farm sector is a starting point. Regional growth strategies and community plans provide important opportunities to enunciate both broad land use objectives as well as provide more precise policy direction. Given agriculture's diversity in B.C., many situations will demand a site specific, custom-made solution. At the local level resolving agricultural issues will not be the sole prerogative of the official plans, bylaws or even local governments. There are a host of other agricultural interests at the local level—from producer groups to economic development commissions—and all have important insights, expertise and contributions to make. The following sections of *Planning for Agriculture* provide a package of ideas. A variety of issues pertinent to agriculture are explored. Some are broad in scope such as examining plan delivery systems; others are more focused. Necessary supportive actions that the Province and others can provide are also considered.

In observing the Oregon experience, Arthur Nelson found that a mix of policy initiatives is most effective in preserving farmland and providing agriculturally supportive land use policy.<sup>9</sup> His summary of the necessary package of policies and approaches are highlighted in *Figure 1* with reference to our local counterparts. British Columbia has all these ingredients now in place. The challenge is using the tools available and using them wisely.

Figure 1:

### Basic Ingredients for Farmland Preservation and Agriculturally Supportive Land Use Policy

1. **Exclusive Agricultural Districts** ..... the ALR (Provincial/local government support)
2. **Urban Growth Boundaries** ..... Regional Growth Strategies (Regional Districts and Municipal/Provincial support)
3. **If possible, secure rural (non-ALR) areas to direct rural residential growth** ..... OCPs and Rural Land Use Bylaws (Municipal and Regional Districts/Provincial support)
4. **Farm Use Tax Deferral** ..... Farm Assessment/ALR tax relief (Provincial)
5. **Right to Farm Provisions** ..... *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act*
6. **Comprehensive Community Plans** ..... OCPs and Rural Land Use Bylaws (Municipal and Regional Districts/Provincial support)

8 In the case of the City of Vancouver, its statutory powers are found in the *Vancouver Charter*.

9 Nelson, A.C., *Preserving Farmland in the Face of Urbanization*, APA Journal, 1992, page 472.



## AGRICULTURE: TAKING ITS PLACE IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

*For full text of this section see Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials, Chapter 5, pages 1–22.*

Planning for Agriculture is to:

- ensure agriculture's continued economic contribution, both locally and Provincially;
- preserve a portion of B.C.'s natural capital;
- contribute to healthy and complete communities; and
- contribute to food security.

Figure 2: Key Provincial/Local Government Land Use Planning Instruments



The effectiveness of local government planning programmes to deal with agricultural issues has varied. There are several reasons why planning for agriculture has often not achieved a prominent place in plan and regulatory bylaw delivery systems. The value of agriculture to a community's overall well-being has not always been recognized. Society in general has grown apart from previous strong agricultural connections and British Columbia's rapid population growth has resulted in significant settlement pressures that local governments have had to face. However, while Provincial legislation has sought to protect agricultural land and encourage farming, there are an increasing number of local governments that are complementing this effort. *Planning for Agriculture* builds on this experience.

To expand and improve on these good examples it is important that planning processes are inclusive by ensuring strong links with the farm community. There is a need to significantly increase the focus of planning processes on issues important to farming particularly where agriculture interfaces with non-farm uses. Appropriate integration with other priorities within rural areas and broader Provincial and community objectives is also important. It is, however, crucial that land use plans applied to farmland be developed from a distinctly agricultural perspective.

### Local/Provincial Policy Coordination (Chapter 5, page 3)

Despite the traditional separation of planning responsibilities between the Province and local governments, agriculture must achieve an integration of settlement and resource planning. The various land use planning instruments of the Province and local governments are like layers of flooring stacked on top of the other. Each influences subsequent tiers in the process. As each layer of plan, strategy and bylaw authority is peeled back, the level of detail and complexity becomes greater, demanding coordination between levels in the process. When

planning for agriculture, it is important that a consistent policy thread be woven between each of these planning instruments.

Coordination cuts in many directions. Of particular interest for agriculture is the Provincial↔local government policy relationships. However, there are also regional district↔municipal and municipal↔municipal (or electoral area) relationships. With the emergence of regional growth strategies there will be need for regional district↔regional district coordination and coordination with Provincial, Federal and First Nations interests.

See *Planning for Agriculture* —*Resource Materials*, Appendix 4 for a list of B.C.'s Land Use Goals related to agriculture.

At the Provincial level, B.C.'s *Land Use Charter and Goals* act as broad performance guidelines which other planning and policy development should respect and assist in achieving. When completed, the *Agri-Food Policy for British Columbia* will provide guidance to other Provincial ministries, agencies and local governments. The *Agricultural Land Commission Act* and ALR represent a prominent example of a clearly defined Provincial strategic interest.

"Municipal autonomy must be integrated with Provincial needs. This is best accomplished where the Province is able to articulate its interests."

—CORE, *Planning for Sustainability*, page 71

## Local Government Land Management (Chapter 5, page 5)

### Regional Growth Strategies (Chapter 5, page 5)

The *Growth Strategies Statutes Amendment Act* gives regional districts the opportunity to undertake region-wide planning and adopt growth strategies. Regional growth strategies should provide policy directions in two broad areas that can contribute to food security: (1) support the preservation of the regional agricultural land base and provide for and support the farm use of these lands; and (2) define the broad regional form of urban growth, including transportation and communication policy, and urban growth boundaries.

Establishing urban growth boundaries is one of the basic ingredients needed to support farmland preservation and agriculturally supportive land use policies.

### Official Community Plan<sup>10</sup> (Chapter 5, page 7)

The community-wide official plan has, at times, come up short as a problem-solving instrument for agriculture. In response, some local governments have begun to use sub-area plans as far more effective instruments to deal with local agricultural issues. While searching for more effective means to enunciate agricultural policy, the Official Community Plan (OCP) will have an increasingly important role to play in planning for agriculture, including:

- providing linkages with Provincial and Federal agricultural policy, regional growth strategies and other regional initiatives;
- continuing to express the community's broad agricultural objectives and policies to form a philosophic and strategic underpinning for more detailed sub-area agricultural plans (where appropriate) and implementing bylaws;
- defining agricultural planning areas and giving policy direction for the undertaking of *Agricultural Area Plans* (see page 29);
- providing policy direction for undertaking focused edge planning along defined portions of the agricultural interface (see page 40);
- designating, where appropriate, development permit areas for the protection of farming (see page 46);
- within those areas designated for agricultural use, but not defined as areas for the undertaking of *Agricultural Area Plans*, providing focused agricultural policies for the maintenance and enhancement of farming on land in the ALR and other lands designated for agricultural use as encouraged by the *Municipal Act*, Sec. 878(1)(c).

### RECOMMENDATION:

The development of regional growth strategies should be based upon:

- an enhanced understanding of agriculture's regional importance;
- consideration of municipal agricultural policy;
- input from the local farm community;
- consideration of broad Provincial agricultural policy; and
- support by MAF and the ALC through their contribution to Provincial mandate statements and participation on Intergovernmental Advisory Committees.

Official Community Plans have several important functions in ensuring agriculture's place in their communities and on planning agendas.

## Implementing Bylaws<sup>11</sup> (Chapter 5, page 8)

While plans are visionary in nature and broad in scope, bylaws provide much finer regulatory brush strokes. Bylaw provisions are more immediate in determining what a landowner can do in terms of real property development and can assist in ensuring greater land use compatibility between differing uses.

For further information on subdivision, see *Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials*:

- Chapter 9, pages 35 to 51  
—Subdivision of Agricultural Land;
- Appendix 9—Minimum Lot Size Provisions, Proposed Bylaw Language;
- Appendix 10—Discussion Paper, Subdivision of Farmland, A New Approach;
- Appendix 11—Ancient Subdivisions and Parcel Consolidation.

There remain some areas of the ALR within the Province not subject to local zoning. The Agricultural Land Commission has found that agricultural land preservation is well served when local and Provincial land use visions coincide through mutually consistent and supportive plans, bylaws and ALR policies and regulations. The effect is to lessen uncertainty and enhance confidence and support for agriculture.

Commission decisions concerning applications under the ALCA do not override local planning and zoning authority. Therefore, local zoning acts as a regulatory net when the Commission excludes land from the ALR or allows non-farm use or subdivision within the ALR.

There are a number of points that should be considered when applying zoning provisions to agricultural areas:

- More agriculturally-focused planning should influence the development of bylaws that are sensitive to and supportive of farm operations.
- Zoning provisions should provide the greatest number of agricultural options over the largest possible area of the ALR or agricultural zone.
- Regulatory provisions that may be commonly applied in an urban setting are not necessarily transferable (or required) in an agricultural area.
- A concern within farming areas is the apparent inconsistency of zoning bylaws within single or similar agricultural regions.
- Bylaw provisions applied to land in the ALR related to non-farm use and minimum lot size can set off false expectations of possible use and subdivision potential. The ALR is largely restricted to farm use; the Agricultural Land Commission does not define minimum lot sizes for the ALR and generally discourages the further parcelization of agricultural land.

Several local governments have amended their zoning bylaws to improve the regulatory climate for agriculture. It is important, as bylaws are updated, that regulations applied to farm areas are consistent with the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* and developed in a manner supportive of agriculture. This, in fact, is an important objective of the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act*.

## The *Farm Practices Protection Act* and Bylaw Reviews (Chapter 5, page 11)

With the coming into force of the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act*, a new era began with respect to the application of zoning and rural land use bylaw provisions affecting agricultural uses in the ALR.

The FPPA introduced two broad components. One is associated with right to farm provisions, the establishment of the new Farm Practices Board and new means to deal with complaints related to farm operations. Other provisions were consequential amendments to the *Municipal Act* and *Land Title Act* dealing with plans, bylaws and subdivision next to farmland. The primary purpose of these amendments was to ensure a home for agriculture in the ALR while enhancing compatibility between farming and other uses.

## Bylaw Reviews and the FPPA

For further details concerning the bylaw review process see Div. 8, Sec. 915 to 919 of the *Municipal Act* and the *Guide for Bylaw Development in Farming Areas*.

- The agricultural components of zoning and rural land use bylaws should be reviewed and updated to ensure bylaws applied to the ALR are sensitive to and supportive of farming, enhance compatibility between farming and other land uses and take a balanced approach with respect to other resource and community values.
- Bylaw standards developed by MAF are provided to act as a guide in the updating and development of bylaws. Where appropriate, the standards may be modified to reflect local circumstances.
- MAF and ALC will provide assistance, as required, during bylaw reviews.
- Prohibitions and restrictions on the use of land in the ALR for farming contained in bylaws must be approved by the Minister of Agriculture and Food after the passage of a regulation under Sec. 918 of the *Municipal Act*.
- With the approval by the Minister, and after adoption of updated bylaws, the provisions of Sec. 915 of the *Municipal Act* providing for intensive agriculture anywhere in the ALR will cease to apply and will be replaced by the provisions of the updated bylaw.
- Where required, new farm bylaws may be adopted by local governments, upon approval of the Minister, to add greater flexibility and site specific detail regarding farm operations.

## New Planning Approaches—A Focus on Agriculture (Chapter 5, page 12)

A central theme of planning for agriculture is the need for a more focused approach in dealing with agricultural issues. It is important that land use policy applied to farm areas is developed from an agricultural perspective, recognizing farm activities as the priority use within agricultural areas. This is a cornerstone of food conscious decision-making. Far more attention must be afforded farming activities and the agricultural land base within official plans and implementing bylaws. An improvement in the understanding of agricultural issues and the impact of decisions on the business of farming are required by those charged with developing and adopting plans and bylaws.

There are several prerequisites which can make a significant contribution to achieving greater local government focus on agricultural issues:

- Define urban growth boundaries and policies related to urban form in regional growth strategies (alternatively, where growth strategies are not undertaken, use Official Community Plans for similar purposes).
- Enhance agriculture's status within *Official Community Plans* and *Rural Land Use Bylaws*.
- Develop consultative links with the farm community on an ongoing basis (example: Agricultural Advisory Committees) and through direct participation in the development of plans and bylaws.
- Undertake necessary inventory work to enhance the understanding of agricultural land use and farming activities, identify issues important to the farm community and determine potential impacts of planning and regulatory proposals. Additionally, define and use outcome or performance measures to ensure that agricultural planning goals and objectives are clearly understood and monitored, and actions are taken to ensure their effective implementation.
- Utilize more fully sub-area plans in the form of *Agricultural Area Plans* (AAPs) in key farm communities.

- Encourage focused, comprehensive land use planning along critical portions of agriculture's interface in the form of edge planning.
- Apply the new and modified implementing tools flowing from the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act* including:
  - agriculturally-sensitive subdivision of land near farming;
  - the review and updating of zoning and rural land use bylaws;
  - the application of new farm bylaws where appropriate; and
  - the use of development permits, as appropriate, for the protection of farming.
- Encourage the development of local/Provincial co-management partnerships in the development of plans and bylaws applied to the ALR.

### Products of More Focused Planning for Agriculture

- Ensures agriculture is the priority use within the ALR.
- Enhances public awareness of agriculture.
- An improved understanding of agricultural issues and the creation of information benchmarks to allow policy assessment, accountability and performance measurement through improved land use inventories and monitoring.
- Improved opportunities for members of the farm community to participate in the development of policies affecting farm areas.
- Increased certainty for both the agricultural resource base and the activity of farming within agricultural/ALR areas.
- Plans and bylaws used as problem-solvers in a manner that is supportive and sensitive to the needs of agriculture.
- Making available the widest possible number of agricultural options over the widest possible portion of the farm area.
- Less potential for land use conflict.
- An improved integration of agricultural land use activities with other land and resource priorities of the Province and local communities.
- Going beyond preservation of the land base to incorporate social and economic objectives that will assist in sustaining an economically viable and environmentally responsive agricultural sector.
- Greater local and Provincial policy harmony and opportunities for co-management partnerships.

### A Shared Commitment (Chapter 5, page 15)

Agriculture has not always been fully integrated into the planning fabric of the community as a whole. The agricultural industry has been keen to assert that it is not enough to only preserve the agricultural land base. Farming itself must be afforded security to operate within the ALR in a climate conducive to the industry's economic viability.

After 25 years and over 200,000 hectares of adjustments to the ALR we must approach the planning of this land base from a position of greater geographic certainty. Ultimately what is at stake is not just our foodlands but the agri-food industry itself. It is important that all parties with an interest in farming have a shared commitment to developing policies that will effectively work for agriculture's benefit. Being armed with this commitment does not guarantee the resolution of all issues to everyone's mutual satisfaction; however, without this commitment, some degree of conflict is guaranteed. Mutual commitment does, however, provide the foundation to develop a shared vision of agriculture's future.



The proposals contained in *Planning for Agriculture* are based on the continuation of a strong, Provincially administered ALR acting as a broad policy foundation. However, local government's planning authority is not only appropriate, given its ability to bring focus at the local level, it also has sufficient scope and opportunity to deal effectively with many of the land use issues important to farming.

Municipal and regional planning should not stop at farming's edge. However, policy development in farm areas must be based on a clear understanding and sensitivity to issues important to the farm community and a commitment to deal effectively with these issues. At the same time, planning for agriculture cannot be divorced from settlement planning any more than urban planning can occur without consideration of resource and environmental implications.

The following sections examine a number of ways to establish stronger links with the farm community, the development of agricultural area plans and planning along agriculture's interface—each of which can assist in ensuring a greater focus on agricultural issues and strengthening agriculture's place in the planning mainstream.

### Cornerstones—Planning for Agriculture

- Stronger partnerships must be elicited among local governments, the farm community and the Province.
- Plan delivery systems must be based on a model of inclusion (particularly for the farm community), and governance guided by mutual support and mutual respect leading to a shared vision.
- Evolving from enhanced partnerships, planning for agriculture should be a shared responsibility, drawing on a cross-section of talents.
- Local governments, in most cases, must ensure a more focused effort in dealing with farm issues.
- The Province must be prepared to act in a more supportive role to assist local efforts in planning for agriculture.
- Agriculture's role and place must be defined and clarified consistently throughout the planning process from Provincial policy to regional growth strategies, through to local plans and bylaws.
- In key farm areas, agricultural planning areas should be defined to provide a focal point to expressed policy through operational level plans (Agricultural Area Plans) drafted by working groups that bring together the talents of government, the farm community and others for this specific task.
- With the support of improved regulatory tools and guide documents, detailed policy should be developed along critical portions of the agricultural interface to ensure greater land use compatibility and permanence.
- Local bylaws should be gradually reviewed for the purpose of implementing Provincial agricultural standards and to ensure bylaws are designed as documents that enable and support agriculture to the greatest extent possible.

<sup>10</sup> This discussion of OCPs can generally apply to Rural Land Use Bylaws as well.

<sup>11</sup> This discussion, while focused on zoning bylaws, is generally applicable to Rural Land Use Bylaws as well.



## MAKING AGRICULTURAL CONNECTIONS

*For full text of this section see Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials, Chapter 6, pages 1–14.*

The number of farms in Canada has been declining since 1941. Between the wars almost one out of every three Canadians lived on a farm. Today it's one out of every twenty-five."

—Stuart McLean  
*Welcome Home, page 347*

See Principles of Partnership in *Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials*, Chapter 6, page 5.

(Drawn from Growth Strategies Act Draft Legislation, Ministry of Municipal Affairs.)

Since the turn of the century, when 62% of Canadians lived in a rural setting, settlement patterns have changed dramatically. By 1991 only 1.5 of every 100 persons in B.C. lived on a farm<sup>12</sup> and in 1996 over 82% of British Columbians lived in urban settings. Today, most people living in rural areas are not farmers.<sup>13</sup>

Elected officials at all levels of government, along with those persons advising elected officials, have not been immune to the demographic shifts towards increased urbanization. Accordingly an awareness of agriculture for most persons in the position of making or advising on land use decisions has been gradually declining. Moreover, land use planning and agriculture have not been particularly vigorous examples of cross-over disciplines.

There is a clear need to build stronger partnerships at several levels to enhance an understanding of agriculture and act as a foundation upon which to plan for agriculture's sustainable future. There are several legislative imperatives that demand the building of strong partnerships, including:

- the administrative procedures of the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*;
- overlapping regulatory responsibilities between local governments and the Agricultural Land Commission for land in the ALR;
- relationships between the general public, farmers, local governments and the Province in the successful administration of the right to farm elements of the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act*;
- the bylaw review processes of the *Municipal Act* (Part 26, Div. 8); and
- the need to ensure community plans support, accommodate and enhance opportunities to farm in the ALR (*Agricultural Land Commission Act* and the *Municipal Act*).

### **Building Partnerships** (*Chapter 6, page 4*)

If success is to be achieved in planning for agriculture's sustainable future it will be important that working relationships be strengthened. These include relationships between levels of government, and government and the agricultural industry. There is a need to find effective means to break jurisdictional and attitudinal log jams thwarting coordinated policy development. One effort to do so is the *Growth Strategies Statutes Amendment Act*, much of which is directed at providing opportunities for improved coordination.

Ensuring that Municipal Councils and Regional District Boards play an increasing and central role in the development and implementation of agricultural policy will guarantee sensitivity to local concerns and provide for strong linkages with other local planning issues and programmes.



*Representatives of the Bulkley–Nechako Regional District, MAF and the ALC meet on-site.*

Support documents and guides have been developed by MAF and the ALC to aid local planning and bylaw development processes which will improve agricultural awareness and articulate Provincial agricultural policy. While acting as a point of reference to assist local plan and bylaw development, it is important that the Provincial commitment to the partnership does not end with the completion of policy documents. The commitment must be ongoing and steps have been taken to ensure this is the case.

### **Farm Side Connections** (*Chapter 6, page 6*)

There are two broad areas in which it is important that strong connections are maintained with farm communities. The first involves developing strong day-to-day, year-by-year connections with agricultural interests. The second is ensuring that the farm community is involved in the development and revision of OCPs and bylaws—and most particularly, during the development of plans involving agricultural areas.

### **Maintaining Ongoing Links with Agriculture** (*Chapter 6, page 6*)

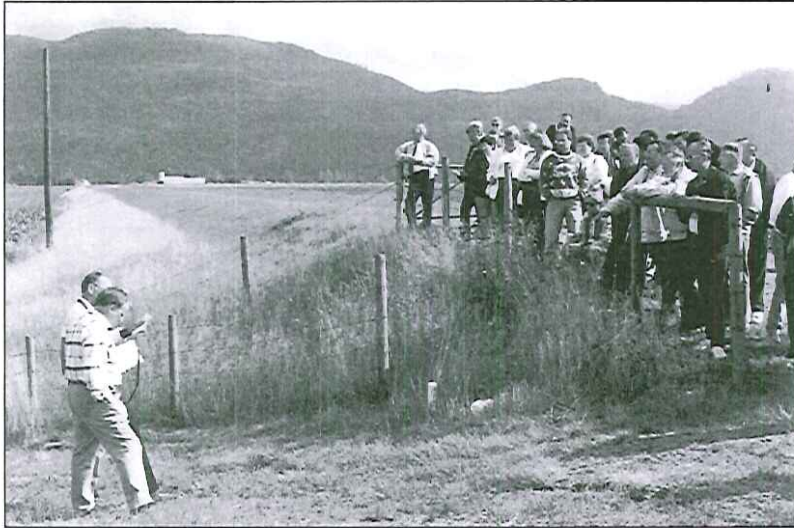
The development of plans and bylaws focusing on agricultural areas will obviously benefit from the inclusion of members of the farm communities in these processes. Many local governments attempt to ensure that a farm representative sits on their advisory planning commissions. More recently, agricultural advisory committees (AACs) are finding a place as advisors to local governments. Farmers' institutes are also playing important and growing roles in providing farm side connections.

Information and awareness is a two-way street. Involving members of the farm community on advisory committees of Council or the Board will enhance the farm community's awareness of the variety of challenges and competing interests faced by local governments.

Where agriculture makes an important contribution to the local economy or represents a significant portion of an area's land base, it is suggested that the following be considered to enhance local government connections with the local farm community:

- In the case of municipalities, designate a Council member as a "farm/ranch liaison" person. Similarly, a specific staff person could be designated to deal with agricultural matters.
- In the case of regional districts, in those areas with a significant agricultural presence, the electoral area director should make a special effort to consult with the farm/ranch community.
- Consider appointing an AAC with members representing key agricultural sectors in the area.
- A strong consultative relationship should be developed between area farm and ranching organizations and the Council or Board. Commodity groups, non-governmental organizations and farmers' institutes can provide useful advice on various agricultural issues.
- Maintain a "seat" for agricultural representatives at the table of key local government commissions and committees such as the Advisory Planning Commission, Economic Development Commission, Healthy Community Committee, Environmental Advisory Committee and Drainage and Irrigation Committee.

For a summary of the ALC's Survey of Local Government Links with Agriculture, see *Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials*, Chapter 6, pages 7–9.



*UBCM Farm Tour.*

- Maintain avenues of consultation with Provincial and Federal agricultural ministries and agencies. These include the ALC and MAF as well as Agriculture Canada and Agri-Food Canada.
- Direct farm marketing is a growing part of the B.C. agricultural scene. Producers retailing from their farm gates provide an opportunity for everyone to make direct connections with B.C. agriculture.
- Elected officials may wish to make contact with their local agricultural community through farm tours and agricultural workshops and conferences. MAF regularly conducts “field days” and for the past several years has organized farm tours at the annual Union of B.C. Municipalities convention.

#### Engaging the Planning Process (*Chapter 6, page 12*)

Most local governments are regularly involved with the development and updating of plans and bylaws. Where agriculture is a prominent feature within a planning area, it is important that the farm and ranching communities be directly engaged in these processes to ensure full consideration of issues and concerns of the agricultural community.

To provide an improved focus on agricultural issues there should be a conscious effort to tap into the input of farm area representatives. There are a number of ways that this can be accomplished:

- The direct involvement of producers in the development of planning studies and agricultural strategies, including assistance in the inventory process.
- If an AAC has been appointed, involve the committee in the plan update or development process.
- Where an AAC has not been appointed, identify farm groups within the area and invite representatives to focus group sessions, attended by Council and staff representatives, to help identify agricultural issues and later review and comment on the draft plan prior to adoption.
- Engage MAF and the ALC Provincial Agri-Team members at an early stage in the process to help assist with plan development.
- As outlined on pages 29 to 32, if an Agricultural Area Plan (AAP) is considered as the best means to focus land use planning processes on agricultural issues and solutions, appoint an AAP working group, including strong producer representation, to oversee the actual development of the draft plan.

## Provincial Agri-Teams

- Provincial Agri-Teams represent a means to develop closer working relationships with local governments, achieve the objectives of the FPPA and the 1994 amendments to the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, as well as support regional growth strategy processes in a proactive manner at an early stage in the process when planning studies, policy development and bylaw reviews are being considered that affect agriculture.
- Along with Agri-Teams is a commitment on the part of MAF and the ALC to develop guide documents, conduct workshops and reassign personnel to provide meaningful and timely assistance to local governments. The objective is to assist municipalities and regional districts to the greatest extent possible.
- The core of the Agri-Team will be regional and district MAF personnel familiar with the local area and the ALC regional planning officer. Augmenting the team will be central support from the Resource Management Branch of MAF and the ALC Policy Branch. In addition, other MAF personnel may be drawn upon for technical advice on an as needed basis. Also, information support is being developed for inclusion on the MAF web site.

### Involving the Farming Community (*Chapter 6, page 13*)

Involving members of the farm community should be regarded as a priority when developing land use inventories and background material concerning farm areas, seeking advice on agricultural issues, or undertaking the development or review of plans and bylaws affecting farming and farm areas.

However, farmers are busy people with long days and during certain periods of the year the work days get even longer. The farm population, as a percentage of the general population, has been gradually declining. When involving members of the farm community in planning processes on an ongoing or project specific basis, demands on the farmers' time should be carefully considered. Participation can quickly tax the human resources available in the farm community. This may mean shifting day-time meetings to evenings or closing down the work of a committee for a number of weeks during critical periods of the year. It is important to be aware of these time constraints. New members from the farm community on a committee should be made fully aware of time demands and the committee's meeting schedule.

It is also important that the objectives of committees or focus groups be clearly established and participants be made aware of their part in the process. Where their role is strictly advisory, this should be enunciated. It should be made clear that elected officials may, on complex issues, have to consider input from several points of view. As a result, advice from one particular group may not always be wholly acted upon.

12 Statistics Canada, Cat. No. 94-129, May 1988 and Cat. No. 93-330, April 1993.

13 In just 10 years—1986 to 1996, the number of persons in B.C. living in an urban setting increased nearly 3% from 79.2% to 82.1% of the total population. (Statistics Canada, [A National Overview—Population and Dwelling Counts](#), 1996. Cat. No. 93-357-XPB).



## AGRICULTURAL AREA PLANS

*For full text of this section see Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials, Chapter 7, pages 1–44.*

It is relatively common for municipalities to adopt an OCP that geographically encompasses the whole of the municipality. However, the *Municipal Act* provides opportunity for local governments to adopt one or more community plans for one or more areas. Commonly a sub–area plan finds expression as a neighbourhood plan applied to a defined portion of a jurisdiction and can provide far greater policy detail than a community–wide OCP.

Within key agricultural communities, the development of sub–area Agricultural Area Plans (AAPs) has the greatest potential to ensure a sufficient level of detail to identify and effectively deal with issues important to the farm community. It also ensures that agriculture provides the context within which to judge competing land use activities in farm areas. Within a defined agricultural planning area, the AAP can avoid agriculture being overwhelmed by settlement/urban planning issues.

### An Agricultural Area Plan (AAP)

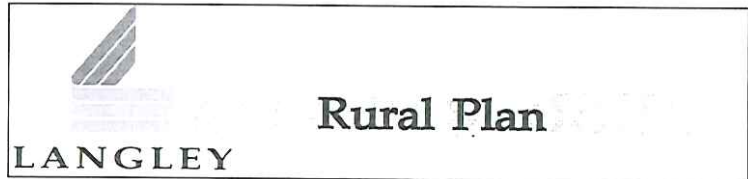
- An AAP is a sub–area plan applied to a farm area(s) that will be predominantly, but not necessarily exclusively, in agricultural use; will be geographically smaller than the full jurisdictional area of either a municipality or regional district; and may involve two or more jurisdictions.
- The general legislative status of an AAP and means of adoption are similar to an OCP as prescribed in the *Municipal Act* although there is a need for policy consistency with an adopted OCP.
- The primary purposes of an AAP are to express agricultural policy at a level of detail that can effectively deal with issues important to the farm community, enhance the potential for land use and resource compatibility and clearly define agriculture’s place in the larger community.
- An AAP is intended to achieve:
  - an enhanced understanding of agriculture as a basis for establishing solution–oriented policies;
  - greater focus on the farmland base and agricultural issues;
  - inclusive planning processes where members of the farm community are full partners in the plan’s development; and
  - improved local and Provincial (and Federal as appropriate) policy integration.

#### RECOMMENDATION:

Where appropriate, planning exercises should focus on the issues of agricultural sustainability through the use of a sub–area *Agricultural Area Plan*.

## The Langley Rural Plan

The Township of Langley was one of the first, largely urban municipalities, to intentionally focus a planning exercise on its agricultural area with the adoption in 1993 of the *Langley Rural Plan*. The Plan is a form of AAP, and both the approach taken in developing the Plan and several of the key policies have been highlighted in *Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials*, Chapter 7, pages 40 to 44. Other local governments that have completed or begun land use studies or plans focused on their farm areas include: Delta, the municipalities of Saanich Peninsula, Kelowna, Surrey, and Maple Ridge.

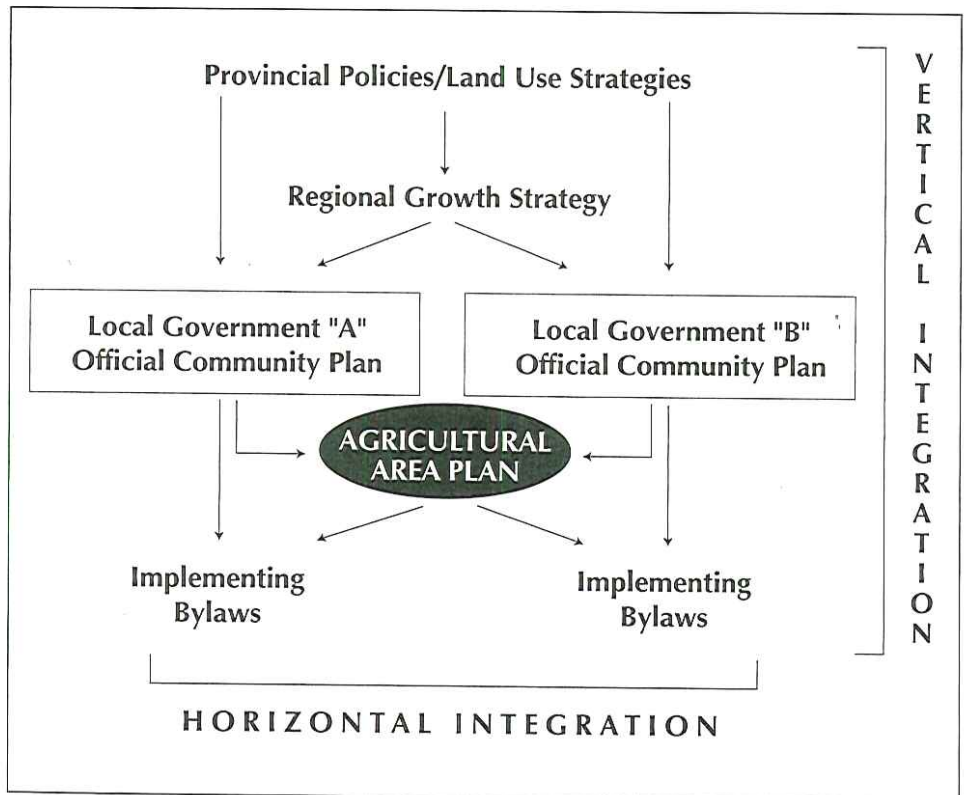


### Linkages with Other Plans (Chapter 7, page 4)

Planning for agriculture should be undertaken in a focused manner but not in isolation from other community concerns—integration, not segregation.

The Official Community Plan will perform its traditional function of providing broad policy objectives, leaving policy detail to the AAP. The OCP will, in many cases, be linked to regional growth strategies or other regional initiatives and Provincial policy. *Figure 3* illustrates an example of vertical and horizontal linkages where a single agricultural planning area involves two local governments, resulting in the development and adoption of a cross-jurisdictional AAP.

Figure 3: Potential for Vertical and Horizontal Integration of Plan Policies



## Defining Agricultural Planning Areas (Chapter 7, page 5)

### RECOMMENDATION:

All land in the ALR within a jurisdiction should be the subject of more focused processes aimed at planning for agriculture's sustainable future. This may include farmland not in the ALR as well as non-farmland that may form part of the larger agricultural community.

For a checklist of factors defining Agricultural Planning Areas see *Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials*, Chapter 7, page 6.

Agricultural Area Plans should be applied to relatively cohesive, complete agricultural communities with a strong biophysical and ecological basis and/or other agricultural criteria. An AAP will be predominantly made up of agricultural lands, but will invariably include other land uses that are often found in association with farm areas. The overriding objective is to define, as an agricultural planning area, that portion of a jurisdiction within which agricultural land or farm use is dominant. For this reason the inclusion of relatively large, non-agricultural and non-ALR, forest, recreation or rural or urban uses is discouraged. While there may be reasons of convenience for including a host of different uses and land forms in a single planning area, doing so will tend to defeat the purpose of focusing the planning exercise on agricultural issues.

Traditional planning instruments have tended to stay within prescribed jurisdictional boundaries in their development, adoption and administration. However, it is common for agricultural areas, based upon biophysical realities, to defy local government jurisdictional boundaries. For this reason, it is suggested that the process of defining an agricultural planning area consider, but not necessarily be dictated by, local government jurisdictional boundaries. Thus a logical agricultural planning area may involve two or more local jurisdictions.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

The defining of AAP areas should consider, but not necessarily be dictated by local government jurisdictional boundaries.

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Where appropriate, the ALC and MAF should encourage cross-boundary, agricultural area planning processes.

### Cross-Jurisdictional Agricultural Area Planning

- Define the AAP area and determine if more than one jurisdiction is involved.
- Where two or more jurisdictions are involved consider a joint planning process.

Upon agreement to undertake a joint planning process:

- an AAP working group (see page 33) with an appropriate balance of interests is appointed and terms of reference jointly agreed to;
- the working group oversees necessary land use inventory, identifies issues, undertakes a public participation programme, develops plan policies, completes a draft plan and recommends a joint monitoring programme; and
- each of the Councils/Boards involved in the process adopts associated portions of the joint plan as per normal (sub-area) OCP procedures.



## Developing An Agricultural Area Plan (Chapter 7, page 9)

The following points outline a process for the development of an AAP. It incorporates the key principles of fostering partnerships and shared responsibilities. There may, of course, be other variations on this theme.

- Local governments, in consultation with representatives of the farm community and with input from MAF and the ALC, should identify cohesive agricultural communities to provide a geographic basis for undertaking agricultural area planning.
- Where an agricultural planning area involves two or more jurisdictions, a joint cross-boundary planning process should be considered by the affected jurisdictions.
- Local government, through standalone policy statements or policies within an Official Community Plan, should indicate the need to develop a sub-area Agricultural Area Plan (AAP) and through associated map schedules, define the agricultural planning area.
- Funding sources should be pursued from existing programmes and, in the case of cross-boundary planning processes, a joint funding strategy should be developed and agreed to by participating jurisdictions.
- Local government, by resolution, initiates the agricultural area planning process.
- Local government organizes a joint agency meeting<sup>14</sup> including representatives of the local farm community, to discuss the broad outline of the planning process.

This may include:

- consideration of inventory necessities;
  - division of responsibilities;<sup>15</sup>
  - an outline of the consultative process;
  - the need for outside assistance to complete the Plan; and
  - membership on the *Agricultural Area Plan Working Group* (AAPWG) (see below).
- The report of the joint agency meeting should be reviewed by Council/Board. The geographic extent of the planning area, timing and basic terms of reference and membership on the AAPWG should be formally established by resolution.
  - The AAPWG is established to oversee the development of the draft AAP.

### RECOMMENDATION:

The ALC and MAF participate, as requested on AAPWG and provide, to the fullest extent possible, basic technical support to the AAPWG to assist in plan development.

## Forming an Agricultural Area Plan Working Group (AAPWG) (Chapter 7, page 11)

Municipal Councils or Regional Boards will continue to assume ultimate responsibility for the adoption of the Agricultural Area Plan within the framework of the *Municipal Act* and other relevant Provincial legislation. In its linkage role, the AAPWG membership should provide for the blending of strong local government representation with local, non-governmental interests—both agricultural and non-agricultural—as well as Provincial interests.

The primary function of the AAPWG is to oversee the development of the draft Agricultural Area Plan and report to the Council or Regional Board. While local circumstances will influence the duties and membership of the AAPWG, the following model may serve as a guide.

## The Agricultural Area Plan Working Group (AAPWG)

See *Planning for Agriculture*  
—Resource Materials, Chapter 7,  
pages 12–14.

### Duties

The AAPWG is the task force charged with creating a draft Agricultural Area Plan. This will include:

- creating detailed terms of reference for plan development;
- reporting, periodically, on progress to the Council/Board;
- ensuring necessary inventory work is completed;
- outlining longer-term plan monitoring needs;
- coordinating the completion of work by outside agencies, ministries and consultants;
- undertaking a consultative process as part of the plan’s development; and
- overseeing the final draft Agricultural Area Plan.

### Membership

Membership in the AAPWG will vary depending upon local issues but may include:

#### Example:

- 1 local government planning staff;
- 1 or 2 other local government staff—building inspector, approving officer, or environmental manager as appropriate;
- 1 member of the Economic Development Commission (EDC) which may be the EDC’s agricultural representative, if available;
- 2 or 3 representatives from the agricultural community (potentially drawn from an Agricultural Advisory Committee or local farmers’ institute, where these exist);
- 1 local (non-farm) representative;
- 1 ALC planning officer; } . . . . .
- 1 MAF regional staff; } **Provincial Agri-Team**
- 1 MELP (if environmental issues foreseen); and
- 1 MOTH (if transportation issues foreseen).

10 to 12 AAPWG representatives

### Consultative Process

The following represent a number of different consultative means that the AAPWG may undertake to contribute to the development of the plan:

- survey farmers in the plan area to identify important agricultural issues;
- survey sample populations within the plan area on particular issues;
- identify and maintain contact with bona fide interest groups (i.e., local farmers’ institute, ratepayer group, wildlife organization);
- develop a newsletter/brochure explaining the process, issues and purpose of the plan and request input;
- slide and/or video presentation;
- movable mall display; and
- workshops or focus groups with various interests.

## Agricultural Area Plans and ALR Reviews (*Chapter 7, page 14*)

### RECOMMENDATION:

The process of developing an AAP should not be used to undertake a major review of the ALR.

The ALR has seen over 219,000 hectares of physical change (inclusion and exclusion) up to 1997 using several well-established means of review. With the possible exception of minor modifications, it is suggested that the AAP process not be used as a means to undertake a major review of the ALR. The key reason is that the energy and resources needed for the Agricultural Area Plan could be absorbed by the ALR review process. Furthermore, the primary intent of the AAP is to develop a positive set of policies in a problem-solving format. An ALR review is a much narrower process and could easily shift the Plan's focus. A simple rule of thumb—if you are still questioning the integrity of the ALR, you are not ready to plan positively for agriculture's long-term future.

## Planning Studies and Inventory (*Chapter 7, page 15*)

When planning for an area predominantly in agricultural use, a planning study and associated inventory will help provide:

- an historic overview of the planning area;
- a description of the community's vision for the planning area;
- a general description of the physical make-up of the plan area including a more detailed profile of the agricultural land base;
- an analysis of the area's land uses, human activities and resource values and their relationships;
- a comprehensive understanding of the state of agriculture—its historic development, current farming activity, its social, land use and economic role in the planning area and larger region and an identification of problems, opportunities and issues impacting the industry;
- a documentation of critical environmentally-sensitive features and habitats;
- an analysis of the impact and appropriateness of current policy and regulation;
- an outline of legislative and non-legislative tools for resource management as well as programmes of other government and regulatory bodies affecting the planning area;
- an identification of broader issues and opportunities within the plan area; and
- strategies and policies aimed at ensuring the sustainability of the farm sector and enhancing land use and resource compatibility.

### a) A Focus on Agriculture (*Chapter 7, page 16*)

There are a number of approaches that may be taken to complete studies and inventory work. When undertaking an AAP, a question arises as to whether policy should be founded upon a focused agricultural study or a more comprehensive planning study. A key product is a full understanding of the land base, agricultural activities, other land uses and resource values in the plan area and an appreciation of the relationships between differing uses and resources.

A fundamental principle of the AAP is to recognize agriculture as the highest and best use of the farmland resource and that the plan be developed from this basic position. However, any defined agricultural planning area will normally have several other issues and uses that must be taken into consideration. For this reason a more comprehensive planning study in the context of an Agricultural Area Plan is suggested as being the most appropriate approach.

Agriculture should be the key, but not the only focus of a planning study associated with an Agricultural Area Plan.

### RECOMMENDATION:

Consideration should be given, at the beginning of the plan and inventory phase, to have a session to familiarize everyone, particularly the non-farm members of the AAPWG, with agriculture in the planning area. A tour could include an agricultural overview by MAF, review of ALR application activity and Commission policies by the ALC representative, and on-farm visits organized by farm representatives of the AAPWG.

A fundamental principle of the AAP is to plan for agriculture from the standpoint of "agriculture forever". This might be viewed as stating the obvious if it were not for the fact that land use planning has often been approached from a very different philosophic position. Considering farming as an activity without end turns on its ear the otherwise self-fulfilling prophecy of agriculture's eventual demise.

### RECOMMENDATION:

The presentation of the findings of a planning study to elected officials could be combined with a farm tour developed by a local farm organization.

#### b) Surveys and Focus Groups (*Chapter 7, page 16*)

Tapping into the general population, key interest groups and members of the farm community within the planning area can provide valuable input into a planning study.

#### c) Involving the Farm Community (*Chapter 7, page 17*)

Developing an inventory of farm operations through one-on-one interviews with farm operators as well as through contact with local and Provincial farm organizations can provide valuable input into planning studies. As an example, during the development of the *Delta Agricultural Study* an effort was made to interview all farm operators. In total, approximately 85% of Delta's full-time farm operators managing about 6,100 hectares of farmland participated in the survey. In doing so, the farm community made a valuable contribution to the Study.

### Involving the Farm Community in Survey Work:

#### Some Suggestions

- Involve and seek the cooperation of the local farmers' institute, agricultural advisory committee and other local farm organizations at an early stage. Discuss the overall planning study, and the purpose of the survey, and request the organization's help to review the survey and design the questionnaire.
- Provide farm operators with pre-interview information (through local farm organizations) about the planning study and its significance. This is important to gain input from the farm community and identify issues, ensure a full and accurate understanding of agriculture in the area and help shape subsequent plan policy. The confidentiality of all information collected concerning individual farm operations should be made clear.
- If feasible, the survey of farm operators should be conducted away from the busiest periods of farm activity.
- If possible, engage members of the farm community to help conduct interviews and assemble data.
- Talk to some of the long-time farm operators in the area. They can provide valuable insights into how agriculture has evolved in the area.

#### d) Inventory (*Chapter 7, page 18*)

During plan development or update, it is important that a relatively comprehensive inventory take place. Simply put, an inventory represents a recording of the past, a snapshot of the present and a glimpse into the future. The inventory should represent the resource heart of the planning study and as such, act as a fundamental building block to enhance an understanding of the planning area, identify key issues and act as a foundation upon which to develop plan policy and subsequent regulation. Besides assisting in plan preparation, inventories will also form an information benchmark for future monitoring of the plan.

Four important elements of any inventory are the collection and analysis of data, presentation of material, and the retrievability of information. The use of computer technology has emerged as a key tool to record, analyse, present and enhance the retrievability of inventory work. A detailed discussion of the application of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) has not been provided within this document. However, Appendix 8 of *Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials*, includes an excerpt from the publication—*Strategic Land Use Planning* by D.W. Brown, which provides some GIS basics and its key uses.

For a more comprehensive list of possible features to include in a land use inventory of an agricultural area see *Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials*, Chapter 7, pages 22–27.

#### RECOMMENDATION:

MAF continue to develop material, modeling and documentation to assist local governments in the undertaking of planning studies and inventory work within agricultural areas. This information will identify sources and availability of information, approaches to data collection within the farm community, the use of GIS well-suited to the collection of data within agricultural areas, the most appropriate air photo and map scales for geographic referencing, and other information pertaining to collection and analysis. This information can assist local governments during the initial stages of planning studies and inventory work leading to the development of Agricultural Area Plans and the updating of OCPs, and could have application during the development of regional growth strategies.

“...the District of Pitt Meadows has undertaken a project in cooperation with BCMAF to compile computer-based land-use data to help test and evaluate various planning scenarios along the Agricultural Land Reserve and urban boundaries. Development of a prototype is underway which will serve as a model for supporting other local governments in planning for agriculture.”

—*Strengthening Farming News*,  
Spring 1997, page 5

A land use inventory geared to an agricultural area may include data on:

- population
- topography/physiography
- climate
- geology
- hydrology
- resource capability
- ecological resources/environmentally-sensitive areas
- urban and on-site waste disposal suitability
- historic/archeological features
- scenic vistas/‘special places’
- jurisdictional and land use boundaries
- land tenure
- land use
- parcelization
- farm units
- agricultural interface
- agricultural land reserve
- housing in the ALR
- agricultural markets

#### e) Relationships with Other Planning and Regulatory Bodies (Chapter 7, page 20)

Any official community or sub-area level plan should, as part of a background planning study, identify relationships with broader Provincial, regional and local influences.

For example consultation during the planning process with other levels of government, improvement districts, school boards, etc. is important to ensure that a high degree of policy and programme consistency is achieved. Engaging the Provincial Agri-Teams should provide valuable input by drawing upon their exposure and involvement in similar processes in other areas of the Province.

The objective, in the long run, is to gain mutual respect and a high degree of consistency between levels of government. The comprehensive local government plan can act as the glue to bind various land use policies together and provide the foundation of a shared vision of agriculture’s future.

#### Financial Assistance (Chapter 7, page 28)

Emphasis has been placed on the need for detailed planning studies and inventory work to act as a foundation upon which to build an Agricultural Area Plan. The need for planning studies, inventory work, consultative processes, workshops and special studies, will all have an impact on resources.

Currently the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing administers a coordinated planning grant programme. In particular, the *Community Planning*, *Regional Growth Strategy Planning* and possibly the *Infrastructure Study* grant programmes may provide an opportunity for funding assistance in the development of Agricultural Area Plans. The Ministry has guidelines for eligibility and application requirements, with each application considered on its own merits.<sup>16</sup> The Ministry of Agriculture and Food also has a multi-year programme—*Partners In Progress* which is another potential cost-sharing mechanism. However, Partners In Progress was not developed with community planning in mind.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, ALC and MAF, and in some cases the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, jointly consider the provision of planning grants and other sources of funding that will assist local governments in the pursuit of focused agricultural planning.

Consideration should be given to the appropriateness of providing funding to support:

- planning studies and inventory work;
- special studies related to agriculture's sustainability and environmental considerations;
- cross-boundary planning exercises;
- the preparation and adoption of more agriculturally focused OCPs and AAPs;
- edge planning exercises; and
- the review of the agricultural components of zoning and rural land use bylaws and development of farm bylaws.

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In the spirit of the regional context statement and to provide consistent linkages, an AAP should consider providing an OCP context statement that would outline relationships between the OCP and AAP, and acknowledge the OCP regional context statement.

Regardless of the appropriateness and availability of current grant programmes, it is clear that enhanced planning studies and inventory work alone will demand a strong local and Provincial commitment accompanied by appropriate resources.

### Plan Content<sup>17</sup> (Chapter 7, page 29)

Some key considerations when developing the content of an Agricultural Area Plan.

#### a) Legislative Backdrop (Chapter 7, page 29)

- Under the *Growth Strategies Statutes Amendment Act (1994)* agriculture and urban containment policies can be stated in a regional growth strategy, which will provide a regional context for OCPs.
- Official community planning provisions in the *Municipal Act* apply to the preparation of the AAPs. If the resulting OCP amendments involve an electoral area of a regional district, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing approval is required.
- The *Agricultural Land Commission Act* requires referral to the ALC where OCP amendments involve the ALR.

#### b) Background (Chapter 7, page 31)

An executive summary of the planning study and inventory should form the basis of the AAP background section and may include:

- Historical overview of human settlement.
- A general description of the plan area.
- The state of agriculture—challenges and opportunities, strengths and weaknesses.
- A summary of the rural/agricultural economy.
- Historical overview of the ALR.
- Environmental and other resource values identified.
- Community profile.
- Other attributes of the plan area.
- Summary of key issues.

#### c) Goals and Objectives (Chapter 7, page 32)

In an AAP, the goals and objectives should provide a strong sense of the plan's vision, centred on the protection of the agricultural land base and sustaining a commercially viable farm industry. Important also will be the interrelationships between agriculture and other land uses, the protection of other resource values and overriding environmental considerations.

#### d) Plan Policies (Chapter 7, page 32)

Plan policies should be particularly responsive to the critical issues identified in the planning and inventory work. Possible plan policies may include:

- Context statements related to the OCP, other sub-area plans and the regional growth strategy.
- General agricultural policies related to the ALR, agricultural infrastructure and agricultural impact assessments.
- Identification of critical portions of agriculture's interface.
- Land use designations and policy.
- Issue identification.<sup>18</sup>
- Environmental considerations, resource management and relationship to environmentally-sensitive area policies and hazard conditions.

- Policies respecting hydrology—flood prevention, drainage and the quality and quantity of water available for irrigation.
- Economic policies in the rural/agricultural area.<sup>19</sup>
- Transportation and servicing.
- Development Permit Areas and associated guidelines.
- Special after-plan studies, if required.
- Policies related to the land uses of adjoining jurisdictions.<sup>20</sup>
- Other external jurisdictional issues (e.g., other Provincial policy matters).
- Other policies.<sup>21</sup>
- Plan implementation and regulatory instructions.<sup>22</sup>
- Plan updating and monitoring.

e) Mapping (*Chapter 7, page 34*)

There will be a number of factors that lend themselves to map format within an AAP. These may include:

- The planning area juxtaposed on a map outlining the jurisdictional area of the municipality or region.
- The ALR boundary.
- Land status: private vs. public.
- Current land use.
- Floodplain and areas of hazardous conditions.
- Features related to the area's hydrology.
- Key resources.
- Future study areas.
- Depiction of Development Permit Areas.
- Zoning designations overlaying planning area.
- Land Use Designation Map.
- Transportation Network Map.

*Agricultural Land Commission Act:*

Consistency with Plans and Bylaws

"Every municipality and regional district must ensure that its bylaws are consistent with this Act, the regulations and the orders of the Commission.

A bylaw that is inconsistent with this Act, the regulations or an order of the Commission is, to the extent of the inconsistency, of no force or effect."

—*Agricultural Land Commission Act*  
Sec. 47(2 and 4)

Policy Inconsistency (*Chapter 7, page 35*)

Central to the development of a planning process founded upon partnerships and shared responsibilities is the building of consensus and avoidance of policy inconsistencies. It is important that potential inconsistency be understood and the means be found to resolve these differences. Besides inconsistencies with Provincial legislation, effort should be made to avoid inconsistency during plan development between:

- plans and bylaws within a single jurisdiction;
- neighbouring jurisdictions.

Plan Adoption/Implementation (*Chapter 7, page 35*)

Plan adoption procedures are the same as those for an OCP. Referral of the plan to the ALC (assuming ALR lands are involved), other agencies as necessary and adjoining jurisdictions if the plan affects these jurisdictions are part of the adoption procedures. For a summary of key steps in plan adoption and implementation of an Agricultural Area Plan see *Planning for Agriculture —Resource Materials*, Chapter 7, pages 35 to 37.

## Plan Monitoring (Chapter 7, page 37)

Monitoring plan performance can form the basis of gradual plan amendment to meet changing circumstances.

*“Another conclusion from sub-regional planning was that continuous monitoring and adjustments to policy were better than the preparation of new plans every five years or so. Some of us tried this out...with considerable benefit.”*

—Andrew Thorburn  
Past-President,  
Royal Town Planning Institute  
Planning Week, September 19, 1997

Recording and understanding the dynamics of change in an agricultural setting is an important basis for considering policy adjustments to deal with issues affecting the farm community. Key indicators to monitor may include:

- Population (farm/non-farm).
- Agricultural employment.
- Residential land uses (farm/non-farm).
- Set asides for wildlife or other environmental purposes.
- Location and amount of land base consumed by transportation facilities (including undeveloped road rights-of-way).
- Other non-farm land uses (type/area/location/change).
- Number of farms/type.
- Structural (agricultural) development.
- Land in farm use.
- Land previously in farm use/additional land in farm use (relative to previous monitoring).
- Land in crops/type.
- Land in the ALR and changes to the ALR (quantitative/qualitative).
- Agricultural interface and other farm-related complaints (location/type).
- ALC decision-making process (subdivision/non-farm land uses/utilities).
- Parcelization change.
- Capital (farm) value.
- Total gross farm income.
- Farm expenses.
- Amount of land rented or leased/owner operated.
- Farm units—location/size.
- Agricultural infrastructure (drainage/irrigation, etc.).
- Agricultural service and industrial support facilities (type/location).
- Location of organic farm operations.

- 14 The joint agency meeting(s) could be modeled after, or draw upon, the membership of Inter-Governmental Advisory Committees associated with regional growth strategies, where available.
- 15 For example: the lead role of local government staff, the role and need for outside consultant assistance and Provincial agency/ministry support products.
- 16 A series of informative guides are available from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs on each of the grant programmes.
- 17 The discussion of plan content primarily relates to the development of AAP.
- 18 It will be important to provide focus on the key issues identified during the plan study and inventory process. This should provide a core focus of policy development. For example, if the provision and management of water for irrigation is of critical importance in achieving a sustainable agricultural industry, this should be identified accordingly and be reflected in the policy section dealing with agricultural infrastructure.
- 19 The policies related to the rural economy within the *Langley Rural Plan* are worth specific attention.
- 20 Where a plan may affect an adjoining jurisdiction, the *Municipal Act* (Sec. 882 and 883 Plan Adoption Procedures) requires the referral of draft plans to adjoining jurisdictions.
- 21 Within any plan there may be specific policies that are difficult to categorize under an existing heading. Such policies could be simply grouped under other policies.
- 22 There are a number of techniques that can assist the implementation of a plan. However, given that plans and bylaws are inexplicably linked (the plan providing the policy foundation upon which detailed regulatory bylaws are built), it is important that the plan provide clear direction for the updating of zoning bylaws as key instruments of implementation.





## PLANNING ALONG AGRICULTURE'S EDGE

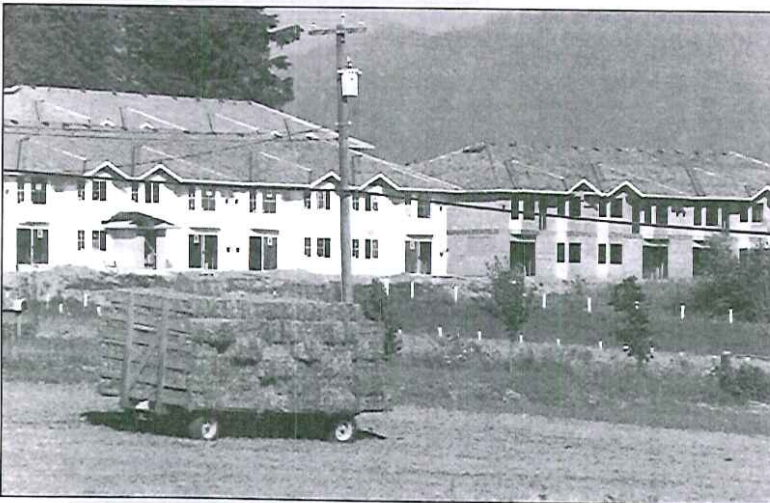
*For full text of this section see Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials, Chapter 8, pages 1–40.*

Agriculture is particularly vulnerable at its point of interface with other land uses. Despite this, there has been a woeful lack of attention paid to the development of policies directed at enhancing land use compatibility and the security of agriculture at the interface.

While an Agricultural Area Plan represents a policy vehicle to examine an area largely in farm use or with agricultural potential, an edge planning process should intentionally straddle the interface. The end product of edge planning should reflect the basic principle of shared responsibility for ensuring improved land use harmony.

In any effort to preserve agricultural land, the boundary of the ALR has consistently been the hot spot for applications as efforts are made to extend urban uses onto farmland. A fundamental task of the Provincial agricultural land preservation programme has been to reverse the historic assumption that it is natural and inevitable that the urban/rural edge will be breached and our foodlands will continually be compromised to accommodate urbanization. The only thing inevitable about this course of action is the ultimate destruction of the agricultural resource base and the industry that depends on it. Failing to establish definitive urban/agricultural boundaries tends only to support, if not serve, the outdated presumption that farmland is simply urban land in waiting.

### Conflicts Come in Different Forms *(Chapter 8, page 4)*



Any juxtaposing of differing land uses can lead to conflict. For persons living next to farms, complaints often centre on the periodic odour of manure spreading, background noise, slow moving farm vehicles on local roads, pesticide spraying and early morning or late evening operation of machinery.<sup>23</sup>

For agriculture, conflicts can take two broad forms and both are equally problematic.

The first is what might be referred to as one-on-one conflicts. For the farmer this will express itself in neighbour harassment, vandalism of machinery, fence damage, theft and damage to crops, harassment of livestock and trespassing.

The second form of conflict can be more widespread. Examples include the effects of flooding from urban developments, runoff of road pollutants entering ditch systems used as a water source for farm purposes and the passing of restrictive bylaws directed at curtailing specific farm practices.

“When glass from a broken bottle is discovered in a load of harvested peas the entire load must be rejected, resulting in a loss for the farmer of thousands of dollars.”

—Delta Agricultural Study, page 89

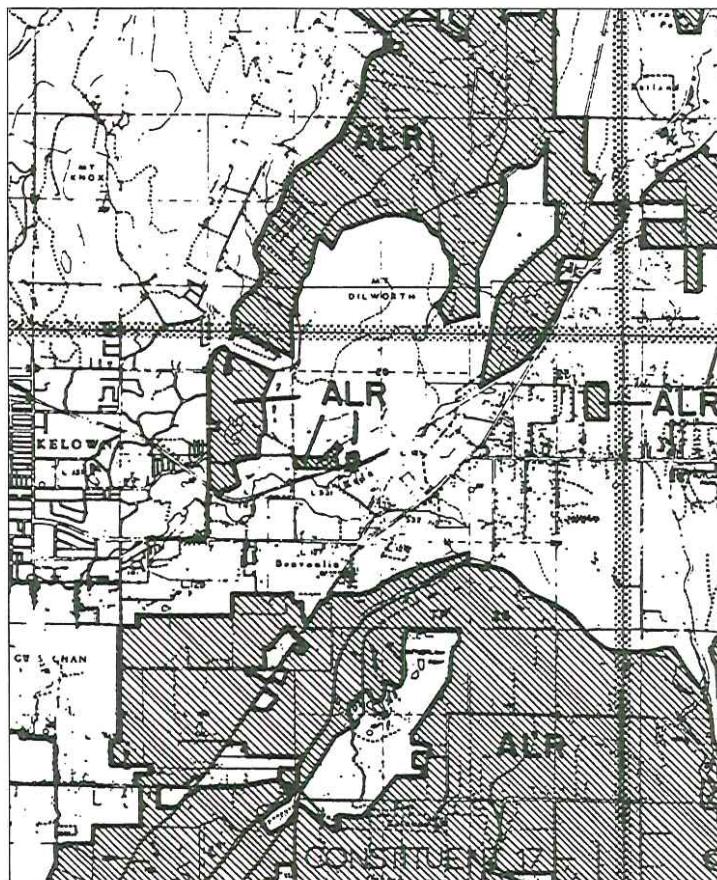
Edge conflicts are not inconsequential. The rural/urban edge can be one of the most difficult, least favoured and highly challenging areas to farm due to the potential for people conflicts. If conflict persists and remedies are not found, a sense of giving up can emerge along the edge, resulting in a clear impression that an inevitable agriculture-to-urban land use transition is under way.

There is clearly a need for different and better approaches. One alternative is to define the interface as a separate focus of policy development. In doing so, existing and potential points of conflict can be identified and practical solutions implemented to avoid conflict and enhance the potential for greater land use harmony.

### Objectives of Planning along the Interface (Chapter 8, page 6)

- *To enhance the compatibility between land uses.*  
In doing so, existing conflicts can be reduced or alleviated and future ones avoided. Consequently, the living and working environment for persons on both sides of the interface will be enhanced.
- *To ensure the permanency of the “edge”.*  
This is important for real and psychological reasons. It will add stability within the farm community and in doing so, make a direct contribution to securing a key part of the economic fabric of communities throughout British Columbia.

Planning the edge is planning for compatibility and permanence.



*Kelowna is one of several agricultural communities with an extremely convoluted and lengthy agricultural interface. Kelowna is about 14 km wide and 26 km north-south but has an ALR “coastline” of over 260 km—the distance from Vancouver to Merrit.*

## Edge Planning (Chapter 8, page 7)

While the interface may geographically represent an area not commonly considered for the application of detailed land management policy, it should be viewed as a distinct area for planning purposes.

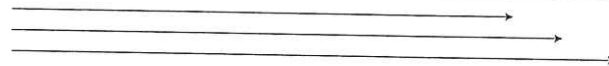
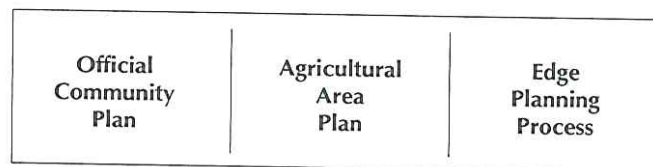
### RECOMMENDATION:

To find and implement practical solutions to edge concerns, focused and comprehensive land use planning efforts are needed at the interface between farm and non-farm land uses.

Treating the interface as an explicit planning area and focal point for policy development provides an opportunity to express policy at a level of detail that is normally not afforded in an OCP. Basically the package of edge policies will have an overriding character when dealing with interface/buffering issues by acting as the base for amending plans and bylaws and providing the impetus for other actions. The edge planning process, then, will serve to guide more detailed land use decisions associated with rezoning, development permits, subdivision layouts, densities, road patterns and the provision of other services as well as decisions related to land use change along the non-farm side of the edge.

### The Concept of Edge Planning

- Edge planning is viewed as a planning process directed at all or portions of the agriculture interface in a given jurisdiction, most often focused on the ALR boundary and identified through an OCP, Agricultural Area Plan or separate study.
- The purpose of edge planning is to become familiar with existing and potential land use conflicts and identify practical means to heighten land use compatibility.
- The edge planning exercise is seen as a process and not the creation of an actual plan document. The planning process should lead to the development of a package of policies and recommendations that can be adopted by a local government and implemented through OCPs, sub-area plans, bylaws and other means.
- The edge planning process should focus on both sides of the interface with recommendations based on the principle of shared responsibility for the application of solutions. Consultation with landowners and groups that may be affected by edge policies is a critical part of the process.
- Local governments should design and manage the edge planning process. The actual planning exercise could be overseen by an agricultural advisory committee or a single purpose group appointed for this purpose. To the greatest extent possible, MAF and the ALC should provide technical assistance as requested.



AN INCREASING LEVEL OF DETAIL

## Planning The Edge—An Approach (Chapter 8, page 8)

Edge planning must be approached from the perspective that nuisance and conflict can flow in two directions. In turn, resolution will demand recognition of dual responsibility, require consultation, enhanced awareness and the building of partnerships.

There are several basic principles that provide context for planning along agriculture's interface.

### Basic Principles (Chapter 8, page 8)

- The ALR boundary is fixed and should form the focal point of edge planning.
- Both sides of the interface must be considered simultaneously.
- An edge plan must anticipate land use change.
- Solutions must come from observations and an understanding gained in the field.
- There is no single right way to buffer. Innovation may be the source of the best solution.
- Agricultural land should not be compromised in applying buffering solutions.
- Consultation and the eventual buy-in of landowners along the interface is critical.

### Defining the Edge Planning Area (Chapter 8, page 10)

Edge policies should be focused on both today's as well as tomorrow's concerns. A key to a successful edge plan will be in its ability to anticipate land use change.

To achieve the objectives of compatibility and permanence in the context of the basic principles, a suggested approach in defining the edge planning area is outlined below:

- Focus on the ALR boundary.
- Undertake a Stage One (overview) land use inventory. Determine areas that clearly have no current or future interface conflict. This may eliminate considerable portions of the edge from the need for any further detailed consideration.
- Based upon the overview inventory a generalized edge planning area will emerge through the elimination of those areas considered of low or no conflict. This will define the remaining area that should be subject to a more detailed inventory.
- Undertake a Stage Two (detailed) land use inventory within the defined edge planning area. The inventory work at this stage will have subsequent value in determining appropriate buffering and the application of setback, design, density and other policies.
- Consult with individuals and groups as part of the inventory, to gain insights into both existing and potential conflicts and solutions.
- Through the inventory and consultation process, develop a conflict hierarchy identifying and documenting:
  - existing land use conflicts;
  - potential conflict areas.
- Make any appropriate modifications to the defined edge planning area.

For suggestions concerning inventory work at the interface see *Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials*, Chapter 8, pages 10–13.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

Some jurisdictions have very lengthy agricultural interfaces. Once the generalized edge planning area is defined it may be useful to divide the interface into sections and possibly prioritize according to the degree of potential conflict.

Many planning areas are largely predetermined by, for example, a jurisdictional boundary. Once the planning area is defined, planning studies and inventory work lead to policy development. In the case of an edge planning process, it is suggested that inventory work and consultation perform a dual function of helping to define the planning areas as well as being the basis of policy development.

For greater detail concerning edge policies see "Sample Policies of an Edge Plan along an Existing and Developing Urban Interface", *Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials*, Chapter 8, pages 14–18.

## Developing Edge Planning Policies (*Chapter 8, page 14*)

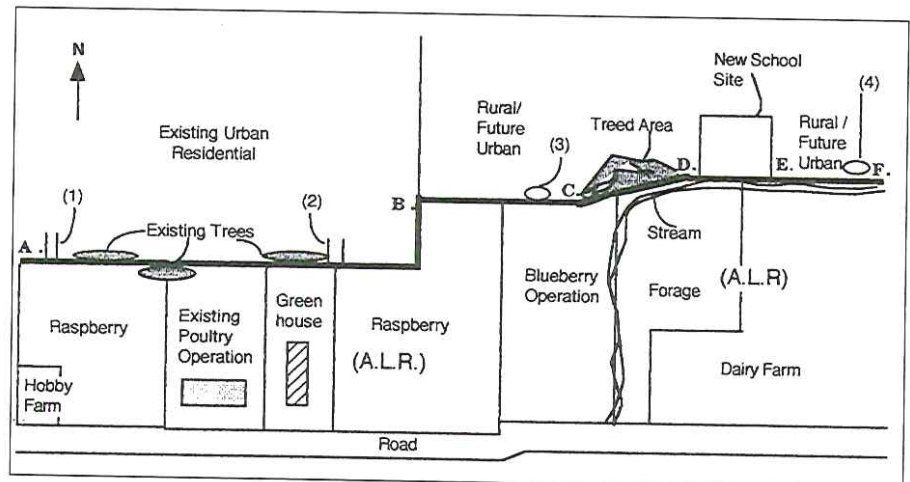
With the edge planning area defined, consideration can be given to the application of appropriate land management policies and effective mitigation measures where needed.

Edge planning should address two basic levels of concern:

1. Identifying situations that currently exist in which a future conflict has a moderate to high potential of arising.
2. Putting in place the necessary policy package required to lessen or avoid future conflicts where land use changes are anticipated.

In either case, an important part of the task is to identify or recognize potential problems. This is a key product of undertaking a land use inventory along the edge.

Figure 4: Edge Planning Sample Map



## Edge Planning's Relationship to Plans and Bylaws

(*Chapter 8, page 19*)

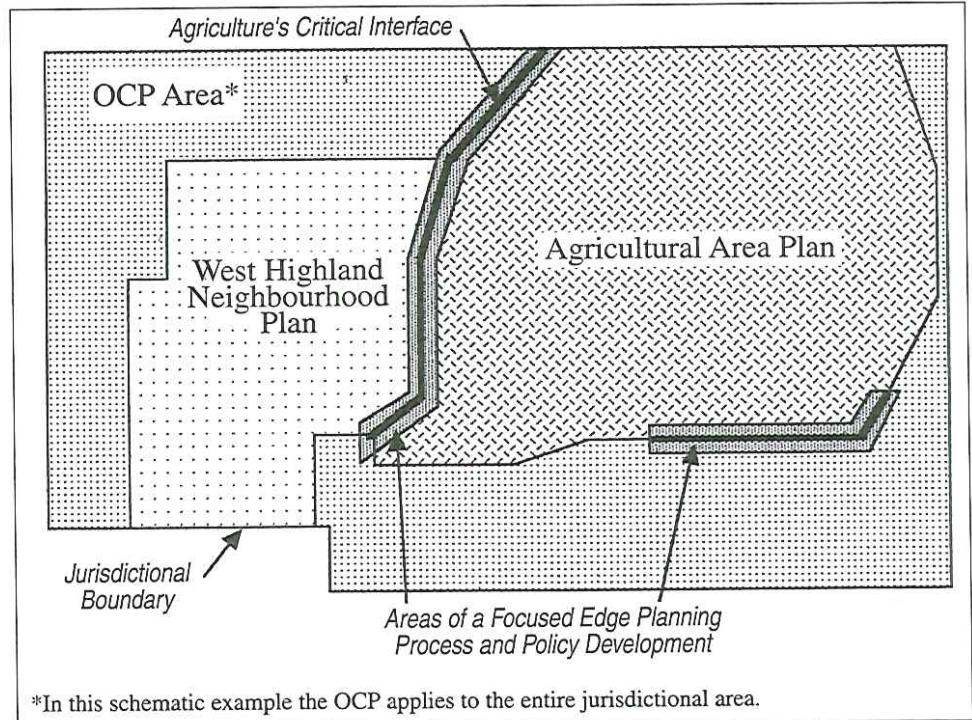
### Official Community Plans (*Chapter 8, page 19*)

An edge planning process may be initiated as a standalone directive of a Council or a Regional Board. However, undertaking an edge planning process could be articulated as OCP policy. This OCP/edge planning relationship is also important given that recommendations flowing from the edge planning process will, in all likelihood, be implemented in part through amendments to the OCP including development permits for the protection of farming.

### Sub-Area Plans and Implementing Bylaws (*Chapter 8, page 19*)

As depicted on the following schematic (*Figure 5*), where an edge planning process has taken place and a package of recommended policies developed, they will influence overlapping plans and bylaws. The intent is to take the recommendations developed through the edge planning process and implement them by appropriate amendments to adjoining neighbourhood or sub-area plans (including an AAP) and implementation bylaws.

Figure 5: Relationship of Edge Planning Policies to OCPs and Sub-Area Plans



### Implementing Edge Policies—New Tools/New Opportunities

(Chapter 8, page 21)

Despite the ALR becoming ever more stable, there may be continued expectations that the agricultural boundary is going to be in a continuous state of flux. This reflects old thinking. It represents a philosophical position that adheres to the principle that the outward expansion of urbanization onto farmland is a natural phenomenon.

While local governments have always had land management powers to undertake focused planning along agriculture's edge, until recently there were few legislative instruments available to deal with interface issues. However, with the adoption of the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act* (FPPA) in 1995, new legislative tools are now available to more effectively plan for greater land use harmony along agriculture's interface.

The FPPA forms part of the Strengthening Farming Initiative which is strongly based on building better relationships between farmers and farm neighbours and the enhancement of partnerships between farming and local governments. Several of the new legislative components contained within the FPPA and new support products that will assist planning along agriculture's interface, are highlighted below.

#### Plan Content—A Stronger Focus on Agriculture (Chapter 8, page 22)

A consequential amendment to the *Municipal Act* (Sec. 878(1)(c)) provided by the FPPA emphasizes that a plan may include policies respecting the maintenance and enhancement of farming. While intended to broadly encourage more focused planning efforts related to agriculture, policies specifically dealing with the interface may prove to be the most effective of all planning initiatives aimed at maintaining and enhancing farming.

Development Permit Areas for the Protection of Farming  
(Chapter 8, page 23)

See *Planning for Agriculture*  
—Resource Materials, Appendix 6,  
City of Surrey Development Permit  
Area for the Protection of Farming.

The FPPA included a further consequential amendment to the *Municipal Act* (Sec. 879(1)(c)) to provide the opportunity to designate, within a community plan, development permit areas (DPAs) for the protection of farming. This subsection of the *Municipal Act* is complemented by the amendment of Section 920 by expressly linking the DPA designation to the application of buffering techniques. Designating DPAs for the protection of farming can also complement the work of approving officers under new provisions of the *Land Title Act*.

*Land Title Act Amendments (Chapter 8, page 23)*

Historically there has not been a concerted effort to ensure greater land use harmony at the time of urban subdivision next to farming. To begin to address this concern the FPPA included two consequential amendments to the *Land Title Act* (LTA) (Sec. 86(1)(c)(x) and (xi)) by expanding the powers of approving officers to refuse subdivision if, in summary, the amendments:

- First, provide an opportunity to assess the need and provide for adequate buffering of development from farm operations at the time of subdivision.
- Secondly, unnecessary road endings abutting the ALR are avoided at the time of subdivision.

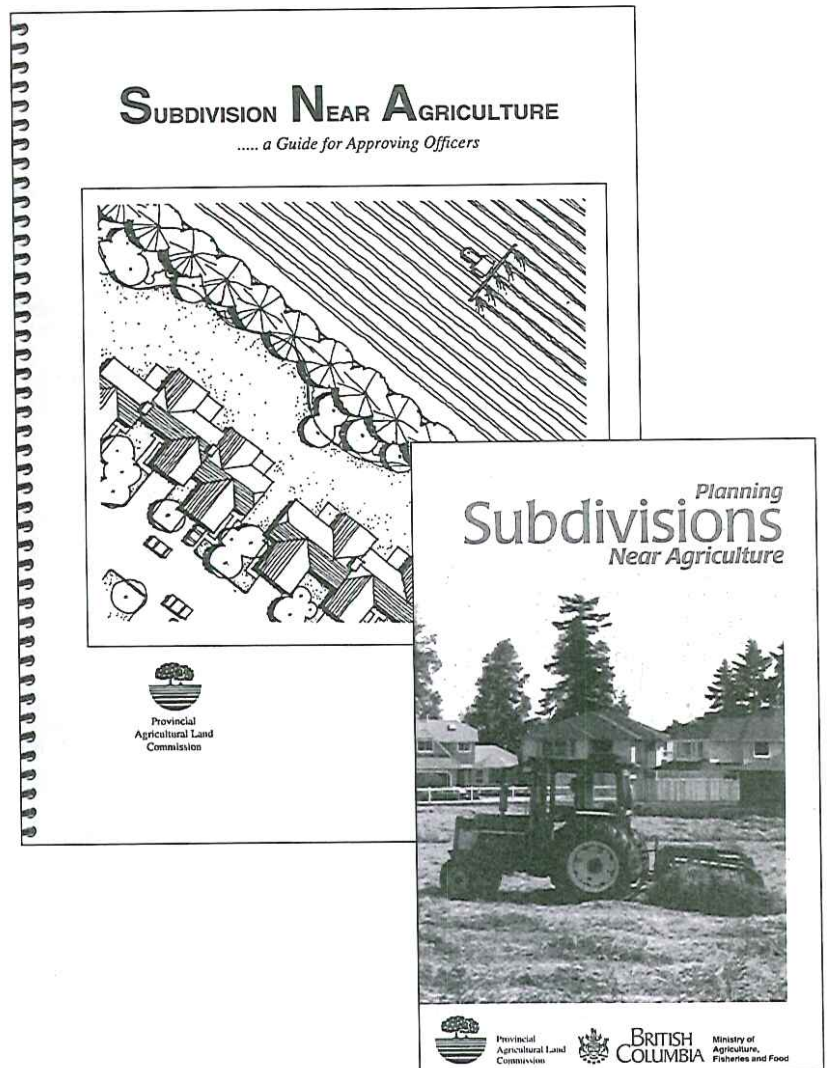
*No buffering, minimal fencing,  
no provisions for additional  
residential separation distances  
and road endings pointing into the  
ALR—an urban/agricultural edge  
awaiting conflict.*



## Guide Material and Support for *Land Title Act* Amendments

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

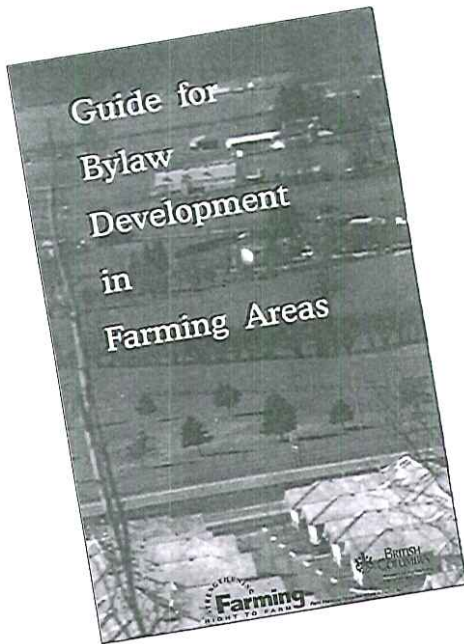
- When considering applications along the interface under the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, the Commission should continue to fully consider appropriate buffering measures in cases where applications may be approved.
  - Where land is excluded from the ALR, the Commission should consider retaining an interest through such means as performance bonds, restrictive covenants and/or phased exclusions to ensure the appropriate conditions concerning buffering, the future development of the land and subdivision design are met.
  - To assist approving officers in undertaking their duties under Sec. 86 of the *Land Title Act*, the Commission should ensure that any conditions associated with subdivision and road design, land development and buffering are clearly enunciated.
  - Where a local government has adopted edge policies, the Commission should make every effort to support these policies through its decision-making powers involving applications along the interface.
- *Fencing Specifications*—Agricultural Land Commission.
  - *Landscaped Buffer Specifications*—Agricultural Land Commission.
  - “*Subdivision Near Agriculture...A Guide for Approving Officers*”, produced by MAF and the ALC, is specifically related to the Section 86 LTA amendments and was developed in consultation with approving officers.
  - *Planning Subdivisions Near Agriculture*, produced by MAF and the ALC, is an information booklet outlining the Section 86 LTA amendments. The booklet is designed specifically for persons planning to subdivide land near or adjacent to farmland and will assist approving officers.
  - Ongoing support by MAF and the ALC to provide comment to approving officers, upon request, to discuss the potential impacts on farms and farmland of specific subdivision proposals and to suggest the application of appropriate buffering techniques.





## Bylaw Standards (Chapter 8, page 27)

The *Municipal Act* (Part 26, Div. 8) provides for the development of Provincial standards to guide the review and updating of the agricultural components of zoning and rural land use bylaws and the creation of farm bylaws by local governments. The standards are housed in the MAF document *Guide for Bylaw Development in Farming Areas*.



In some cases bylaw standards will represent farm side counterparts to the designation of development permit areas for the purpose of ensuring the application of buffering techniques on the urban side of the interface. The standards include many, if not most, bylaw elements related to farming such as setbacks, siting and similar provisions.

The process of updating existing bylaws and creating new farm bylaws, while eventually requiring the approval of the Minister of Agriculture and Food, will require local and Provincial authorities to work closely together.

In recognition of the diversity of B.C.'s agricultural land base, the potential for flexibility has been built into both the development of the bylaw standards and their application. This is intended to ensure sensitivity to local conditions. While applicable throughout the ALR, bylaw standards will have a particularly important function in the implementing of edge policies.

When undertaking the development, updating or amendments to a zoning or rural land use bylaw involving the ALR or licensed aquaculture areas, reference should be made to the *Guide for Bylaw Development in Farming Areas*.

## Right to Farm and a New Complaint Process (Chapter 8, page 28)

One of the key components of the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act* (FPPA) is the right to farm provisions and the establishment of new processes for considering concerns and complaints involving farming operations. Long sought after by the farm community, the primary objective is to protect farm businesses from unwarranted complaints when operated in a manner consistent with proper and accepted standards and in compliance with the *Health Act*, *Pesticide Control Act*, *Waste Management Act* and any land use regulations.

To complement the FPPA a new informal process involving MAF staff and possibly local Peer Advisors has been established to help resolve concerns about farm operations. In addition a new formal complaint process has been established through the Farm Practices Board. To assist both processes a reference guide of *Farm Practices in British Columbia* has been distributed to local governments.



### RECOMMENDATION:

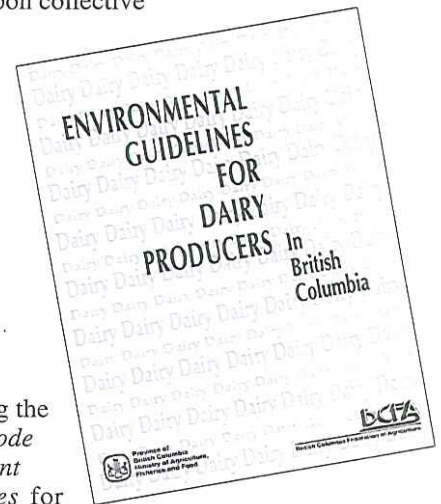
MAF should continue to monitor and report on the nature, location and general circumstances of the concerns and complaints related to farm practices. This information will be of value to local governments and Agri-Team members to assist in the development of edge policies, the application of appropriate buffering and the improvement of awareness programmes to lessen the potential for future complaints.



### Buffering Guidelines (Chapter 8, page 31)

The strength of edge policies will be in their ability to respond effectively to local circumstances. Despite the need for flexibility and creativity that this implies, having a body of work available that draws upon collective experiences and acts as a guide to assist in developing practical land management policies at the agricultural edge is important.

The completion of the Commission's *Landscaped Buffer Specifications* document was an important effort aimed at outlining landscape features that can assist in buffering farm and non-farm land uses. There are, however, several other sources to draw upon, such as the work of the former District of Matsqui (*Urban Rural Conflict Mitigation Techniques*), the Commission's *Fencing Specifications* and the work of MAF including the *Agricultural Waste Control Regulation*, the *Code of Agricultural Practice for Waste Management* and the series of *Environmental Guidelines* for various commodities.



To assist in this effort MAF and the ALC have identified, as a long-term objective, the need to develop a comprehensive buffering guide. MAF is also developing a GIS model to inventory land uses at the interface and use this information as a basis for developing edge policies and applying buffering techniques (see page 36).

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

MAF and the ALC, with input from local governments, the agricultural sector and others, should develop a comprehensive policy document that will act as a practical guide for the application of buffering techniques along the agricultural interface.

Consideration should be given to the establishment of an Agricultural Interface Joint Mitigation Fund by the Province, to be administered by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

Where a local government or the Ministry has interface concerns drawn to its attention that may require the installation of mitigating buffering measures, the matter would be jointly investigated, all parties consulted and a report prepared. The report would set out the nature of the needed mitigation, priority, and costs involved. If the project was accepted by both parties and funds were available, the Provincial mitigation fund would be equally matched by the local government to complete the project with appropriate commitments by adjoining affected landowners to ensure ongoing maintenance of the works as required.

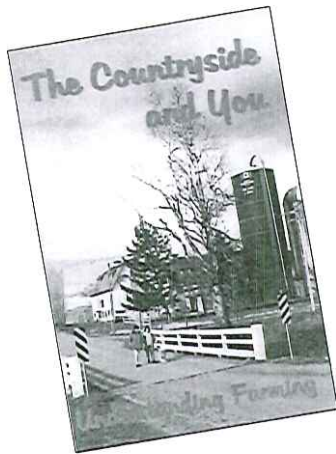
### Dealing With Existing Conflicts (Chapter 8, page 32)

Edge planning and the application of buffering techniques represent efforts to anticipate potential impacts and points of conflict before they happen. However, past land use decisions often expose farmers and their neighbours to situations that have heightened the potential for friction between land users. In simple terms these represent existing situations that are going to be difficult to plan our way out of.

In some cases the only solution in these hard edged situations may be to retrofit the interface by introducing buffering features after the fact. Although this can be difficult to achieve, a long-term commitment to agriculture and a desire to enhance the livability for all concerned may demand a minimum level of buffering be put in place. This could, for example, require ditching to avoid storm water runoff; fencing and a programme of fence maintenance; the planting of hedging materials, modifications to farm practices at the interface, or a combination of these types of actions.

Retrofitting of the edge, however, comes at a cost. For this reason it is suggested that Provincial agricultural authorities pursue approaches with local governments that provide means to effectively deal with the existing hot spots along the interface.





Making a strong contribution to enhancing awareness of farm activities, MAF and the ALC have developed a booklet, *The Countryside and You* that should be considered for inclusion in information packages aimed at persons living or planning to purchase property in or near farm areas.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

The efforts of MAF and the ALC to develop a comprehensive buffering guide should include consideration of further practical means that would enhance good neighbour relationships within the farm community.

MAF and the ALC, in consultation with farm organizations and others, consider the development of information for the farm community to enhance awareness and understanding between the farm and non-farm interests in the ALR.

## Good Neighbours/Aware Neighbours (*Chapter. 8, page 34*)

While buffering and other edge treatments are important, many disagreements between neighbours could be avoided by a fuller understanding of normal farm practices and an enhanced awareness of the concerns of those living on both sides of the interface. Steps that can be taken to promote good neighbour policies and relations include:

### a) Increasing Awareness at the Interface

A possible approach would be to directly target households along or close to the farm edge by mailing out, at regular intervals, an informative package that would have as its focus a brochure, possibly entitled *Agriculture is Your Neighbour*. Other material could be included about the types and contribution of local agriculture, normal farm practices, the *Buy BC* programme and agricultural events in the area like farm tours.

### b) Increasing Awareness in the ALR

A second group that should receive a somewhat different information package is new landowners in the ALR. As an information piece it would have similar objectives as the *Agriculture is Your Neighbour* package, but would have an additional objective of addressing the implications of the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* and its relationship to local planning and zoning regulations and other Provincial legislation. The major objective of the package is to inform new ALR landowners:

- of the concept of normal farm practices;
- that they have purchased property within a farming area that either is currently used or could be actively used for agricultural purposes; and
- that the land is preserved for the long-term for agricultural purposes.

### c) Farm Side Good Neighbour Programmes

Several endeavours have been ongoing to encourage improved relationships between farmers and their neighbours which is an explicit objective of the *Strengthening Farming Initiative*. This is particularly the case with respect to agriculture and the environment. These efforts include the *Agricultural Waste Control Regulation* and *Code of Agricultural Practice for Waste Management*, the *Burning Code*, and commodity-oriented Environmental Guidelines. Farmers and ranchers have been actively involved in programmes to enhance the awareness of agriculture through the efforts of commodity organizations and farmers' institutes, support for the Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation and farm tours.

It would be of value if further means were explored to enhance farm/farm neighbour relationships for the purpose of contributing to greater land use harmony. One means, which could act as a counterpart to information developed for non-farm residents living near or in the ALR, is to develop similar material for members of the farm community. The purpose would be to outline the concerns of non-farmers living in the ALR. Being aware of these concerns—real or perceived—could be a positive step towards avoiding possible conflicts.

23 See *Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials*, Appendix 20, A Checklist of Common Urban/Agricultural Conflicts.



## AGRICULTURAL ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

*For full text of this section see Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials, Chapter 9, pages 1–87.*

In previous sections of *Planning for Agriculture* topics have ranged from agriculture taking its place in the planning process to new tools available to plan for agriculture and the need for more focused planning in farm areas and along agriculture's interface. Following is a review of several important issues and suggested opportunities that should assist in their resolution.

Issues affecting agriculture often arise as a result of a real or perceived conflict between urban and agricultural land uses. As Gary Runka has remarked, "The relationship between adjacent urban and agricultural communities is a complex one," but, "...the negative impacts are predominantly borne by the agricultural community."<sup>24</sup> Although not included in this document but providing context to much of the following material, the reader is directed to Appendix 20 of *Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials* for a "Checklist of Common Urban/Agricultural Conflicts".

While numerous topics are considered, the list is far from all inclusive. In fact, several additional subjects affecting agriculture have been identified for future attention. Following is a list of topics that have been considered to date.

### Agricultural Issues And Opportunities

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*For full text see  
Planning for Agriculture  
—Resource Materials,  
Chapter 9, pages 3–7.*

## Improving Agricultural Awareness

Today 82% of British Columbians reside in urban centres. In addition, 92% of the remaining rural population are not farmers. In searching for ways to improve awareness of agriculture, education is a key. It is important that current efforts to heighten an awareness of agriculture are supported and communicated to other farm groups throughout the Province.

### Opportunities and Suggestions:

- The Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation should be strongly supported.
- Farm tours—taking teachers and students out of the classroom and onto operating farms—should be encouraged.
- Farmers should be invited to join students in the classroom to enhance their understanding of agriculture.
- School gardens can give students a first-hand appreciation of plant cultivation and the importance of the soil resource.
- Tours of grocery stores and food processing plants can broaden a student's understanding of the agri-food industry.
- Arrange tours of agricultural research facilities to provide insights into agriculture.
- The future of Colony Farm in the GVRD should include facilities that would provide for a variety of agricultural educational pursuits.
- Led by the UBC Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, post secondary facilities offering agricultural courses add to the public's understanding of agriculture by the very nature of their educational focus.
- Community plans and local bylaws supportive of agriculture can be important assets in enhancing an understanding of agriculture.
- Elected officials make decisions critical to agriculture. It is important that our MPs, MLAs, Council and Board members maintain a first-hand understanding of agriculture.
- Linkages between agricultural interests and the media, particularly local media, should be encouraged. The local media, in particular, can promote local events such as farm tours and farmers' markets.
- Economic development offices and chambers of commerce within agricultural communities can do much to ensure the business community and public are aware of agriculture's economic contributions.
- There are over 50 agricultural fairs and festivals each year representing one of the longest standing and most successful means to highlight agriculture to thousands of British Columbians.
- Farm tours, often organized by local farm groups, are growing in popularity and offer opportunities to make food consumers more aware of their local agricultural industry.
- There are a host of different farm organizations in the Province. Each should be encouraged to continue its widespread efforts to enhance the awareness of agriculture.
- Farmers engaged in direct farm marketing represent front-line ambassadors. Direct farm sales can occur in many ways. The growth of community shared agriculture is one example of engaging the public's interest in food production.
- Guest ranches, farm vacations and B&B accommodation in farm settings all afford opportunities to enhance an understanding of agriculture among the travelling public.
- Museums, heritage sites and library programmes offer the potential for highlighting agriculture's past and present importance to a broad, largely urban audience.
- Local governments should be encouraged to develop, with local agricultural groups, information material for distribution to urban residents living outside a farm area but in close proximity to farming.

- The Agricultural Land Commission and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food should jointly develop informational material for persons living in the ALR. The material should be purposefully designed for prospective purchasers of land in the ALR.
- Ongoing efforts to improve the relationship between farmers and their neighbours should continue as an important means to promote a greater understanding of agriculture.

## Agricultural Impact Assessments

*For full text see  
Planning for Agriculture  
—Resource Materials,  
Chapter 9, pages 8–13.*

The agricultural industry can be affected by a variety of non-agricultural activities such as urban and industrial development, transportation and utility corridors and recreational and wildlife uses. One of the measures that municipalities, regional districts and other levels of government can take to reduce potential impacts on agriculture is to develop an *Agricultural Impact Assessment* review process for major developments.

When a local government receives a request for an amendment to an OCP or sub-area plan, a zoning bylaw or a proposal involving a major development or capital expenditure, this should trigger an initial assessment of agricultural impact. The key function of this assessment is to determine if there is an identifiable or potential impact on agriculture as a result of a proposed land use change or development. If the answer is yes, then a second phase or detailed assessment of impact should be undertaken.

The comprehensive impact assessment should be conducted by an independent agricultural expert. It should provide a determination of the types and level of potential impacts on agriculture, consideration of alternative locations for the proposal and mitigative measures that would be required if the proposal were to proceed and there were no alternative locations.

### Opportunities and Recommendation:

- Local governments are encouraged to develop procedures to require the completion of Agricultural Impact Assessments when considering proposals that prompt amendments to an OCP or sub-area plan or a zoning bylaw, or which involve a major development or a capital investment.
- When the Agricultural Land Commission is considering non-farm proposals within the ALR, consideration should be given to the need for an Agricultural Impact Assessment (if not otherwise completed) to assist in decision-making.

*For full text see  
Planning for Agriculture  
—Resource Materials,  
Chapter 9, pages 14–16.*

## Housing in the ALR: the ALR Basics

Within the ALR, the provision of housing is considered a necessary accessory use to the agricultural use of the property. The following provides a summary of key provisions concerning housing associated with the Reserve:

- One home per legal parcel ..... outright use in the ALR
- Additional home(s) for farm help ..... possible
- Temporary placement of a mobile home for a relative ..... possible
- Must observe other local and Provincial regulations associated with housing ..... yes

### Opportunities and Recommendations:

- To the greatest extent possible, local government policy and regulations concerning the provision of housing in the ALR should be consistent with the ALC Act, regulations and policies.
- Ensure local government policies and regulations limit the number of permanent dwellings per land registry parcel to one unless additional permanent dwellings are necessary for farm help.

## Housing in the ALR: Additional Dwellings for Farm Help

The ALC Act and regulations set a limit of one single family dwelling and accessory buildings and structures per land registry parcel. However, the Act does provide for, and does not restrict, the number of additional dwellings if they are necessary for farm help. The legislative effect is to allow municipalities and regional districts to issue permits for additional residences necessary for farm use, without application to the Commission. Because approving authorities often have limited agricultural experience, determining the necessity for farm help can be difficult. In practical terms, the need for on-site farm help will vary depending upon the size and type of operation. Where agricultural operations are large and located many miles from population centres, several homes may be required for farm help. In other parts of the Province, the close proximity of urban centres, with a range of housing options, may provide a reasonable alternative for farm workers to commute to the farm work site.

### Opportunities and Recommendations:

- The Agricultural Land Commission and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food jointly undertake a review and develop policy direction to provide greater clarity for the provision of additional homes for farm help in the ALR based on the underlying principles of:
  - providing for the legitimate needs of the farm community; and
  - not encouraging, unnecessarily, additional dwellings in agricultural areas.
- The Province develop more detailed policies for additional dwellings for farm help either through:
  - the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, regulations or the Commission's general order provisions; or
  - Bylaw Standards developed under Section 916 of the *Municipal Act* for adoption within local government zoning or rural land use bylaws.
- The agricultural industry and local governments should be fully consulted during policy development and the consideration of administrative techniques.

*For full text see  
Planning for Agriculture  
—Resource Materials,  
Chapter 9, pages 17–21.*

## Housing in the ALR: Siting and Size

For full text see  
*Planning for Agriculture*  
—Resource Materials,  
Chapter 9, pages 22–27.

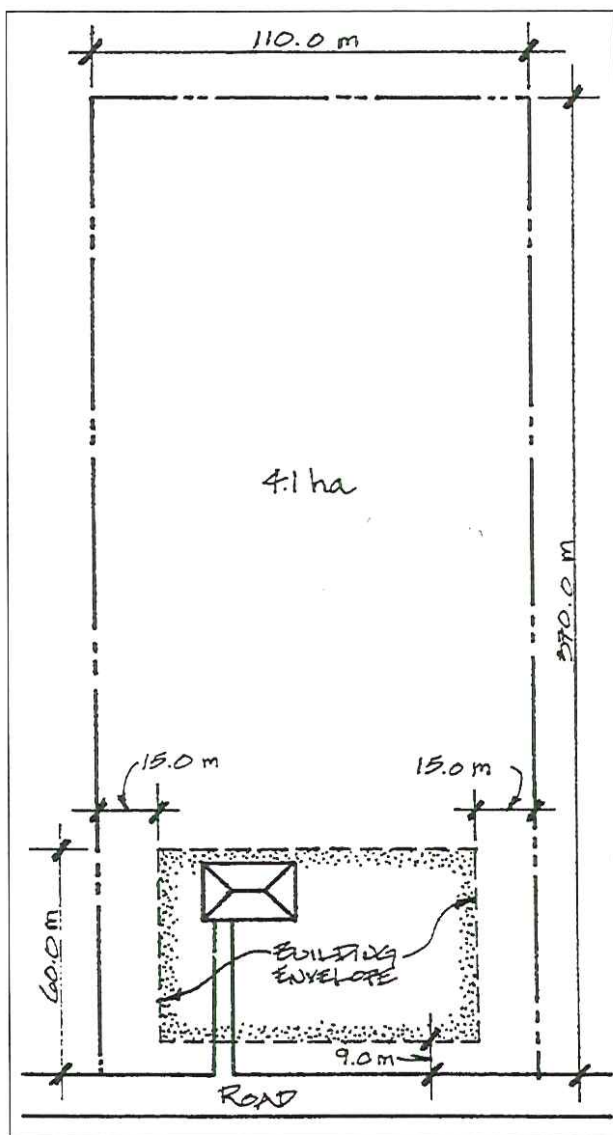
In British Columbia land designated in the ALR may be owned by farmers and non-farmers. As a result, a growing phenomenon, particularly in close proximity to urban centres, is the use of agricultural land for “country living” for urban or expatriate urban residents. Characteristically, the residential unit is large and there is only modest or no agricultural use of the land. The result is a strong potential for destabilizing farm communities.

### Siting of Residences (Chapter 9, page 22)

An increasing concern within the farm community has been the long-term harm to the agricultural usefulness of the land base through insensitive residential siting. Homes placed in the middle of agricultural properties require lengthy driveways, consuming even more agricultural land, and make farm management difficult.

### Opportunities and Recommendations:

Illustration of 60 m setback.



- To reduce the impact of the siting of residential buildings in the ALR, it is suggested that siting criteria be established within local government zoning and rural land use bylaws to require residences to be located within the front portion of a legal parcel based on the following:
  - a) maximum setbacks: from front lot line 60 metres;
  - b) minimum setbacks: from front lot line 6 to 9 metres; from side lot lines 7.5 to 15 metres.
- That the basic setback provisions form part of the Bylaw Standards developed under Sec. 916 of the *Municipal Act* for adoption within local government zoning or rural land use bylaws.
- In the case where topography or other physical features clearly limit the usable building envelope, variances to the siting criteria could be considered by the Board of Variance based upon the principle of limiting the impact on agricultural land, particularly land with high agricultural capability, through appropriate siting of residential structures and ancillary uses.

### Size of Residences (Chapter 9, page 25)

Besides the siting of residential buildings, a second concern is the actual size of residences in agricultural areas. Large homes, combined with poor siting, create a building footprint that is land consumptive. Often the rural resident has no interest in agriculture or no understanding of farming. The building of large homes also represents a considerable capital investment which moves property values well beyond farmland prices. It is not enough to simply secure the agricultural land base for farm use—it must remain financially accessible to farm families with as few as possible operational encumbrances. The mega home works at cross purposes to this objective.



## Opportunities and Recommendations:

- To address the concern over mega homes in the ALR, the Province should assume a greater leadership role by considering the establishment of a base maximum footprint for single family dwellings in the ALR.
- The ALC and MAF, in consultation with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and local government and farm industry representatives, should consider two options for implementing a limit on the size of residences in the ALR:
  - an amendment to the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, regulations or a general order of the Commission, establishing a base maximum; or
  - the base maximum form part of the Bylaw Standards developed under Sec. 916 of the *Municipal Act* for adoption within local government zoning or rural land use bylaws.

## Subdivision of Agricultural Land

Compared with other provinces, British Columbia is considered to have the most heavily parcelized agricultural land base in Canada and on average the smallest farms. Minimum lot size (MLS) provisions of a zoning bylaw send a powerful message and acts as a form of subdivision guide for landowners. An MLS may also serve as an indicator of how serious a local government may be about a particular agricultural area.

With few exceptions, all subdivision of land in the ALR must be approved by the Agricultural Land Commission. Unlike most of its local government counterparts, the Commission has never established a standard minimum lot size policy. In contrast to local governments, the Commission has the luxury of dealing with applications for subdivision on a case by case basis.

Until a better method is implemented to deal with the subdivision of agricultural land, it can be assumed that zoning bylaws will continue to prescribe MLS provisions. Trying to determine an appropriate minimum lot size for agriculture is not easy. Indeed it can be argued that the very concept of applying MLS provisions to agricultural areas is an ill-suited regulatory technique. As a rule, minimum lot size provisions should be set relatively high to ensure the maintenance of parcels that promote, rather than deter, agricultural use and to discourage expectations of future subdivision.

## Opportunities and Recommendations:

- In applying subdivision policy to agricultural areas the MLS should consciously attempt to lessen expectations of subdivision and be grounded on an agricultural perspective based upon information concerning the land base and agricultural activities specific to the local area.
- The following plan or bylaw language is suggested to describe minimum lot size provisions for ALR land.

Where land is in the Agricultural (or other) zone and in an ALR, the minimum lot size of \_\_\_ hectares shall apply when the land is:

- a) excluded from the ALR; or
- b) approved for subdivision within the ALR pursuant to the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, Regulations thereto, or Orders of the Commission; or
- c) exempted by the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, Regulations thereto, or Orders of the Commission.

*For full text see  
Planning for Agriculture  
—Resource Materials,  
Chapter 9, pages 28-40.*

Trying to find an appropriate minimum lot size for agricultural areas is an elusive business at best.

For information on Minimum Lot Size Provisions: Proposed Bylaw Language see *Planning for Agriculture* —*Resource Materials*, Appendix 9.

Note:

It is important to consult with local governments through the UBCM in the spirit of cooperation under the *Protocol of Recognition (1996)* which commits the Province and the UBCM to work together on matters of interest.

The further parcelization of farmland should be discouraged unless there is a clear benefit to agriculture.

- The ALC, in conjunction with UBCM and the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture and Food, should consider different approaches to applying subdivision policy to the ALR as an alternative to the traditional minimum parcel size provisions within zoning bylaws.
- In conjunction with UBCM and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs as well as other Ministries as necessary, the ALC and MAF should examine the appropriateness of different means, legislative and otherwise, to eliminate the break up of farm units through the sale of individual lots and the encouragement of parcel consolidation in areas where the agricultural land base is heavily parcelized.



- A methodology should be developed and implemented by the ALC to enhance the qualitative analysis and understanding of subdivision activity and decision-making in the ALR as a first step to an improved understanding of the activity of subdivision, how it relates to local government regulation and its impact on agriculture.
- The ALC continue its comprehensive, site specific method of reviewing subdivision applications but increasingly base decisions on a proposal's benefit to agriculture.

- Amend the ALR application form related to subdivision proposals to require applicants to outline in detail the benefits to agriculture of their proposals to subdivide land in the ALR.
- MAF, the ALC, local governments and farm organizations consider means to help support and promote small lot agriculture.

### Small Parcel Exceptions from the ALC Act

The *Agricultural Land Commission Act* specifies that “restrictions on the use of agricultural land do not apply to land that, on December 21, 1972, was, by separate certificate of title issued under the *Land Registry Act*, less than two acres in area”. It is estimated that Province-wide, there may be in excess of 20,000 lots less than 2 acres in the ALR affected by this provision in the Act. In most cases, small lots are the result of historic subdivision patterns.

The actual amount of land consumed by these small parcels is not the primary concern. Free of the regulatory provisions of the ALC Act, these less than 2 acre parcels could be subdivided into even smaller lots or be the subject of non-farm use proposals that could be in direct conflict with surrounding agricultural land uses. As a result these small lots have been described as potential timebombs in the agricultural landscape. It is important that local governments recognize this potential and utilize their planning and zoning powers to enact regulations that are sensitive to the overall farm community.

*For full text see  
Planning for Agriculture  
—Resource Materials,  
Chapter 9, pages 41–43.*

### An exception to the ALC Act:

Just because a legal parcel is less than 2 acres in size does not automatically mean it is exempt from the provisions of the Act. There are three tests to determine an exception of the ALC Act and all three must be satisfied simultaneously:

1. The parcel must be less than 2 acres (0.8 hectares).
2. The parcel must be on a separate Certificate of Title.
3. Conditions 1 and 2 had to be in place on December 21, 1972.

## Opportunities and Recommendations:

- Local governments should gradually identify lots within their jurisdiction in the ALR that are less than 2 acres in size and are exceptions to the provisions of the ALC Act.
- In the development of policy and regulations applied to lots that form exceptions to the ALC Act, spot zoning should be avoided. Additionally, plan policies, zoning designations and subdivision regulations should strive for consistency with the surrounding agricultural area within which these small lots are found in order to avoid further subdivision and land uses that may generate land use conflicts, demand the extension of services, escalate land prices or set off expectations of further non-farm land use change and/or subdivision.
- In any future efforts to encourage the consolidation of small parcels within farm areas, lots that are an exception from the ALC Act should be given specific attention, particularly when they form part of larger farm units.
- The Agricultural Land Commission should consider the possibility of suggesting legislative amendments to the ALC Act to eliminate the Sec. 21(1) exceptions for the purpose of ensuring greater regulatory equality among parcels in the ALR and to ensure that further subdivision and conflicting non-farm land uses are avoided.

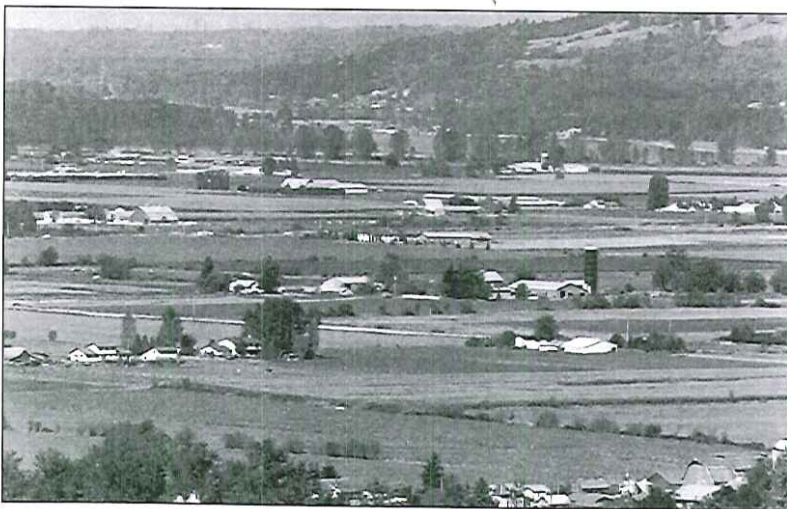
## Non-Farm Uses in an Agricultural Area

*For full text see  
Planning for Agriculture  
—Resource Materials,  
Chapter 9, pages 44–47.*

There are normally several non-farm uses found in the ALR such as schools, mobile home parks, cemeteries, auto-wrecking yards, gravel pits, golf courses, driving ranges, parks and other recreational facilities as well as a variety of scattered institutional, industrial and commercial uses. Non-farm uses of this type often have little or no agricultural basis or rationale and, in many cases, predate official plans and zoning bylaws and the ALR.

Besides the direct impact on the resource of the non-farm use footprint, these uses often create pressure for subdivision, increase property values and conflict with farming. More important, however, is the psychological impact of engendering a feeling that land use transition is inevitable, thus undermining the stability of the broader farm community.

Actions can be taken to scrutinize existing non-farm uses to determine their long-term suitability and appropriateness in the agricultural landscape.



*Matsqui Prairie: One of B.C.'s clearly defined agricultural landscapes.*

## Opportunities and Recommendations:

- Local governments and the Agricultural Land Commission, through their land use regulatory functions, should incorporate policies and effect decision-making that continue to discourage and prevent the intrusion of new, inappropriate, non-farm uses into the ALR.
- All existing non-farm uses in the ALR should be identified through standalone or official plan land use inventories, followed by an impact assessment process.
- MAF and the ALC, when working with local governments in the review and updating of zoning and rural land use bylaws, should encourage local governments to undertake an inventory of non-farm uses and encourage a policy of applying non-conforming status to appropriately defined non-farm land uses in the ALR.

*For full text see  
Planning for Agriculture  
—Resource Materials,  
Chapter 9, pages 48–60.*

## Transportation and Utility Corridors

Transportation and utility corridors can pose major problems for agriculture. Loss of productive land, severing of farm units, access problems for producers and harvesters, safety concerns, and disruption of drainage patterns are just some of the problems that linear corridors can pose for farmers. In addition to disruption at an operational level, transportation facilities will normally cause a direct depletion of the agricultural resource, taking land out of current or potential production forever. While every effort should be made to avoid agricultural land, the impact of transportation and utility corridors can be lessened through consultation and careful planning.

### Agricultural Checklist for Transportation and Utility Corridors

1. What is the basic reason or need for the proposal?
2. What other options exist or have been examined?
3. What is the area of ALR land that is affected and are there other non-ALR lands involved that support or are used for agriculture?
4. What is the agricultural capability of the affected lands?
5. Identify each legal parcel and provide names and addresses of affected owners.
6. How have the agricultural community and farm organizations been consulted?
7. What are the comments of the local government and advisory committees?
8. Has funding been provided to improve the agricultural infrastructure in the area?
9. Describe the current use of the land and existing farm operations involved.
10. Describe how each legal parcel and farm operation is affected.
11. Is there opportunity for consolidation of lots?
12. How will the current movement of farm vehicles be affected?
13. Is there opportunity to provide buffering to enhance compatibility between land uses?
14. What agricultural mitigation measures are planned?
15. What downstream impacts are anticipated?

#### Opportunities and Recommendations:

- Where agricultural areas are affected significantly by transportation and utility facilities, consideration should be given to developing focused *Agricultural Transportation Plans*.
- Where a transportation facility is being planned through farmland, an agrologist should be employed as part of the facility planning team, with involvement maintained until the completion of construction if the proposal is approved.

## Legislative Summary

For a legislative summary of those portions of the ALC Act, regulations, general orders and policies of the Commission and the new provision of Sec. 86 of the *Land Title Act* affecting transportation see *Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials*, Chapter 9, pages 59–60.

- When a transportation or utility facility through an agricultural area is being planned, consultation with the agricultural community and in particular operators who are directly affected, is of basic importance. One option is to appoint a transportation review committee with agricultural representatives to advise on route options and mitigation.
- Once a route has been selected and all necessary approvals are in place, affected agricultural operators should be consulted directly on an ongoing basis from the detailed planning phase to the end of project construction.
- Consideration should be given to establishing a Province-wide signage programme to promote respect for slow moving farm vehicles and improve road safety.



- Where there are existing road endings directed into the ALR, consideration should be given to converting the road endings in a manner that will end false expectations that the road (and hence future urbanization) will eventually continue into the ALR.
- Half-roads running parallel along the ALR boundary should be avoided in the design of subdivisions and road networks.
- When railway or other transportation land within the ALR is determined to be redundant, the process of disposal should sensitively consider impacts, and try to benefit agriculture by selling the lands to adjoining landowners/farm operators wherever possible.

*For full text see  
Planning for Agriculture  
—Resource Materials,  
Chapter 9, pages 61–63.*

## Agricultural Service Areas

As is the case with all industries, agriculture requires a vast array of support services. Providing for agri-industry serves the day-to-day and seasonal needs of the farm community and can also be an important source of employment beyond the farm gate.

Within the farming communities of the Province, it is important that provision be made within official plans and zoning bylaws for agriculture service uses.

### Example:

See *Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials*, Chapter 9, page 63 for an example of plan provisions for an Agri-Service area drawn from the Langley Rural Plan.

### Opportunities and Recommendations:

- Provide for agricultural service and industrial uses in official plans and zoning bylaws within industrial areas or by creating agri-service areas.
- Determine agri-servicing needs and changing trends through consultation with local farm groups and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food.
- Discourage the use of land in the Agricultural Land Reserve for agri-service and industrial uses.

## Economic Development Commissions (EDCs)

*For full text see  
Planning for Agriculture  
—Resource Materials,  
Chapter 9, pages 64–66.*

Agriculture plays an important economic role in many areas of the Province. In 1996, \$1.8 billion in farm gate receipts were generated by B.C.'s nearly 22,000 farms.<sup>25</sup> Each farm is part of the Province's agri-business that extends well beyond the farm gate to 600 processors and a growing export industry.

Where agriculture is a significant resource, creating an awareness of the economic significance of local agriculture should not be overlooked in economic growth strategies. Economic development should also be assessed in terms of potential positive impacts on this resource. Initiatives ranging from ensuring a seat for an agricultural representative on the EDC to participation in official community plans to promoting agriculture through conferences, publications and agricultural fairs are just a few of the activities that economic development commissions might undertake.

### Opportunities and Recommendations:

- Where there is a significant agricultural community, it is recommended that agriculture be represented on EDCs.
- Where needed, linkages between EDCs, MAF and the ALC should be strengthened to provide mutual support and the sharing of information and promotional material.
- Consideration should be given by the ALC and MAF to outlining the geographic areas of EDCs, identifying those with significant agricultural activity or potential throughout the Province, and ensuring that agricultural data and profiles are as consistent as possible with these geographic areas to reduce duplication in data collection and assist in the provision of information to EDCs.

## Agricultural Advisory Committees (AACs)

*For full text see  
Planning for Agriculture  
—Resource Materials,  
Chapter 9, pages 67–70.*

A number of municipalities and regional districts are finding it beneficial to establish Agricultural Advisory Committees to ensure that there is an appreciation of agriculture and an understanding of important issues affecting farming. AACs can advise on matters such as applications, community plans and bylaws, transportation and park plans, irrigation management and weed control programmes. Some AACs have also been given a more proactive role to address issues such as competition for the agricultural land base, examining legislation affecting agriculture, improving opportunities for joint funding of drainage and irrigation works and advise on programmes to enhance agricultural awareness.

Where the level of agricultural activity may not warrant the formation of an AAC, some local governments have opted to seek agricultural input through local farmers' institutes, non-governmental groups involved in agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture and Food staff, or the appointment of agricultural representatives on economic development commissions and advisory planning commissions. Regardless of the structure, it is important that Councils and Regional Boards ensure that there are ongoing links with agriculture.

For Agricultural Advisory Committee "Model Terms of Reference" see *Planning for Agriculture—Resource Materials*, Chapter 9, pages 69–70.

## Opportunities and Recommendations:

- Local governments are encouraged to establish formal linkages with their farm community to provide advice on agricultural issues and concerns.
- If an AAC is formed, it is suggested that a reactive role in terms of applications and review of plans and bylaws be combined with a proactive role in addressing agricultural concerns and raising the profile of agriculture in the area.

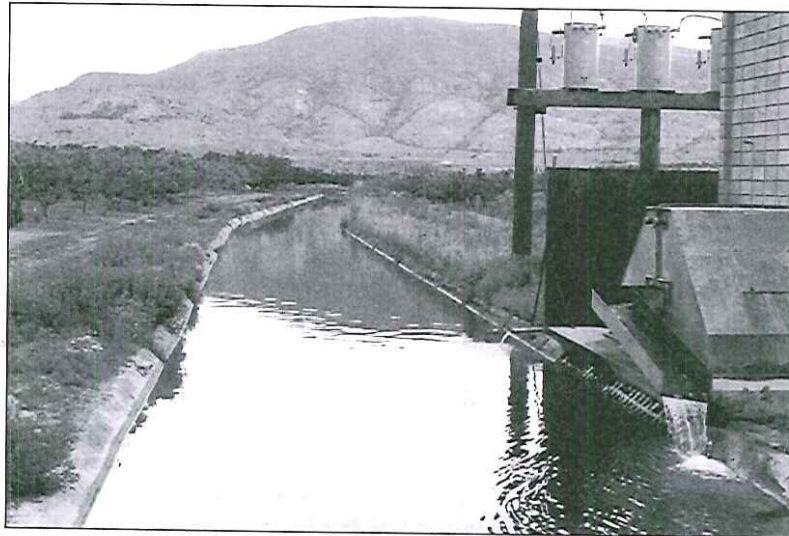
## Water Management

*For full text see  
Planning for Agriculture  
—Resource Materials,  
Chapter 9, pages 71–78.*

Agricultural water management issues in British Columbia are many, varied and often cross-jurisdictional in nature. The importance of farmland drainage and an assured water supply for irrigation is often not recognized by the general public and more particularly by decision-makers. It is increasingly important that water supply and drainage for agriculture be elevated as an issue of priority and the impact of competing uses be clearly understood before, rather than after, urbanization occurs.

### *Irrigation (Chapter 9, page 71)*

Water quality and quantity are of paramount importance to agriculture. Water authorities are very much locally based, and include improvement districts, water works districts, irrigation districts and regional and municipal governments. Local authorities can be expected to continue to play a central role in water management.



*Rockcliffe Irrigation—Oliver Water Works.  
Water for irrigation is critical in the Okanagan.*

### Opportunities and Recommendations:

- Where appropriate, consideration should be given to regional water management planning, policy development and system development based on one or several watersheds.
- Growth management plans should include a careful analysis of the location, capacity and characteristics of all surface water sources and groundwater recharge areas, how the resource should be protected and how it should be developed for the benefit of all interest groups.
- It is important that water management planning be linked to broader land use policy as expressed in official plans, zoning bylaws and day-to-day land use decisions. It is also important that the management of ground and surface water be integrated.
- Consideration should be given to a possible role by local government and other water authorities in maintaining basic information on groundwater procurement and use.
- Local water authorities that are involved in the supply of water for irrigation should take steps to ensure agricultural representation is maintained in advisory and decision-making roles.
- The pricing of water should be established through stakeholder consultation, provide for multiple farmstead use of the same water source and not place water for agricultural use at a competitive disadvantage.
- Where water systems are put in place to provide irrigation, the use of water availability as a rationale for the rural residential or urban use of agricultural land should be thwarted.
- Where road and highway works are being considered and the installation of culverts or other improvements may result in the flooding of farmland or the interruption or damage to drainage systems, the affected farmer(s) should be consulted to ensure that harm is avoided, minimized or mitigated.

### Drainage (*Chapter 9, page 75*)

Where needed, farmland drainage systems are a critical part of agriculture's infrastructure. Local governments can play a central role in identifying regional drainage needs, influencing programme development, assisting with agricultural drainage improvements and ensuring continued maintenance. The following represents possible local initiatives.

### Opportunities and Recommendations:

- Support the development of regional agricultural drainage improvements.
- Support the renewal of joint Provincial/Federal programmes to fund regional drainage improvements and participate in any newly developed Provincial/Federal funding programmes as appropriate.
- Local governments and farm organizations should jointly work toward the establishment of practical drainage planning areas and develop effective drainage maintenance programmes.
- Where required, local governments should dedicate necessary staff resources to respond to day-to-day drainage needs.
- Works associated with roads and highways, including the installation of culverts and small diversions, often use agricultural land as an outlet causing localized drainage problems. A full assessment of these potential impacts should be undertaken before construction including consultation with affected farmers and landowners.



*For full text see  
Planning for Agriculture  
—Resource Materials,  
Chapter 9, pages 79–84.*

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

To support the *Soil Conservation Act*, the ALC should enhance liaison with local enforcement officers, recognize local contributions in administering the Act and with the possible assistance of the Resource Management Branch of MAF, establish an ongoing workshop programme for local enforcement officers.

*For full text see  
Planning for Agriculture  
—Resource Materials,  
Chapter 9, pages 85–87.*

## **Soil Conservation**

Soil degradation is caused in a number of ways. Erosion by water and wind, alienation of agricultural land for urban and related uses, loss of organic matter, salinization, acidification, contamination, compaction and soil mixing and disturbance represent the major forms of soil degradation. In British Columbia, alienation of agricultural land for urban, industrial or residential use was a dominant form of land degradation until the passage of the *Land Commission Act* in 1973.

While the Federal and Provincial governments have historically taken a leadership role in tackling problems associated with soil degradation, there are a number of local opportunities for possible action.

### **Opportunities and Recommendations:**

- Local governments should ensure long-term land use certainty and the priority of agricultural use of agricultural land.
- Heighten awareness of the importance of soil conservation through the school system at all levels, through local demonstration projects and through recognition and award programmes.
- The adoption by local governments, of effective design standards to retain storm water runoff from urban areas.
- Where local governments own farmland, “lead by example” standards should be developed with respect to the application of soil conservation techniques.
- Promote the establishment of local conservation districts.
- Ensure local government regulations permit livestock operations and the use of manure as a soil amendment, do not promote farmland parcelization and allow for agricultural diversity.
- Adjust taxation policy to take into account non-productive portions of agricultural operations.
- Care must be taken in the design and location of public works and other non-farm land uses that may lead to soil contamination.
- Adequate staff resources should be provided by local governments and the ALC to ensure effective administration of the *Soil Conservation Act*.
- Where required, local governments should support the provision of regional drainage works and the appointment of local drainage officers as positive means to lessen soil degradation.

## **Municipal Incorporations and Boundary Extensions**

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing plays a central role in the consideration of municipal incorporations and boundary extensions. On a number of recent boundary extension proposals, impacts on the ALR and longer-term land use objectives were explored as part of the boundary extension process.

It is important that the long-term land use vision of any land subject to a boundary restructuring process be clearly enunciated during—not after—the process. Agricultural concerns and considerations related to boundary restructuring include: creating expectations of land use change and development which can increase property values making it difficult for the farm community to acquire land, extension of urban services adjacent to or through farmland, assessment and taxation implications and the general extension of an urban perspective where jurisdictions currently have little or no farmland.

### Opportunities and Recommendations:

- While proposals for boundary extensions should try to avoid the Reserve if at all possible, when ALR lands are considered for incorporation into a municipality, the Agricultural Land Commission should be consulted at an early stage in the process.
- When substantial agricultural land is being considered for incorporation, local farm groups, farmers' institutes and local agricultural advisory committees should be consulted.
- Land use planning issues should be considered as part of the process of considering incorporation. In particular, the land's current status with respect to zoning, OCP and ALR designations should be highlighted.
- For those lands being considered for incorporation, the recipient jurisdiction should develop a draft land use plan that would form the basis for OCP amendments following incorporation. Or at the very least, adopt this as a statement of intent prior to incorporation.

As noted above, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has been encouraging careful consideration of ALR issues and impacts on farm communities as part of boundary extension processes.

- 24 Runka G., Tree Fruit Industry Land and Water Issues Discussion Paper, Okanagan Valley Tree Fruit Authority, October, 1992, page 9.
- 25 Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Agriculture, as supplied by BCMAFF Statistical Services: Census of Agriculture 1996: And Historical Comparisons—B.C. Summary: pages 3 and 4.

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## Barry E. Smith

In developing the concepts of *Planning for Agriculture* Barry Smith drew upon nearly 25 years of planning experience, mostly associated with rural issues. Graduating from the University of Waterloo's School of Urban and Regional Planning and subsequently the University of British Columbia's School of Community and Regional Planning, his early interest in agriculture began with work in 1974 on his Master's thesis—a study of the implementation of B.C.'s *Land Commission Act*.

For several years Barry worked for the Dewdney–Alouette Regional District gaining a strong understanding of regional and community planning and the world of land use zoning. He has drawn extensively on this experience in recognizing the need to build strong partnerships between Provincial and local government interests and involving the farm community in planning processes.

In 1981 Barry started working for the Agricultural Land Commission. He continued his involvement with local governments in the review of plans and bylaws and the development of Commission policy. He has also worked closely with the Ministry of Agriculture, representing the Commission for many years on the Ministry's Greenzone Committee, an early sounding board for several of the concepts contained in this document. In the last number of years he has been involved with the implementation of the Strengthening Farming Initiative and *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act*. For this work, the British Columbia Institute of Agrologists recognized Barry, in 1996, as Agriculturist of the Year.

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