

Peninsula Agricultural Commission

YEAR 2012 - ANNUAL REPORT

Membership

The Peninsula Agricultural Commission was initially formed during 1997/98 with the completion of the **Agricultural Strategy Report for the Saanich Peninsula** in 1977. PAC has ten volunteer members, as well as Councillors or representatives from the six member municipalities and a growing number of 'associate' non-voting members from various farming-related groups, past members, or other individuals who have expressed an interest in the sustainability of farming. Together, they accomplish a great deal to support agriculture not only on the Peninsula but also expanding into the Western Communities with the addition of Metchosin (2008) and Juan de Fuca Electoral Area (2011). PAC greatly appreciates the many volunteer hours, hard work and dedication of these people in their endeavours to achieve sustainable agriculture.

Commission members are either farmers or work in agriculture-related fields. We have representation from large commercial farms to smaller scale farms; poultry, pigs and sheep to flowers, grains, and organic vegetables; equestrian, and pest management. We attempt to ensure all municipalities are equally represented; however, due to the higher percentage of farms in North and Central Saanich, we are aware this fact tends to be reflected in our current membership.

We have present and past PAC members sitting on various working committees with other organizations, from the CRD Deer and Geese Management Committees, to the Saanich Peninsula Water Commission and the Water Advisory Commission.

Administrative and Technical Support Services

- The Commission is again very grateful for the funding support it receives from the six sponsoring municipalities of Saanich, Central Saanich, North Saanich, Sidney, Metchosin and Juan de Fuca, as well as the ongoing administrative support provided by Isobel Hoffmann, who has now retired from the District of Saanich.
- We would also like to thank the Council who despite busy schedules regularly attend the PAC meetings and continue to liaise with their respective Councils on our behalf.
- In particular, the Commission greatly appreciates the attendance, guidance and expert technical assistance from our District Agrologist, Rob Kline, with the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands.

- Community, technical and professional advisers who are always ready to assist PAC in its research include CR-Fair, The Land Conservancy, the Direct Farm Marketing Association, and the Agricultural Land Commission, as well as individual experts who have attended PAC meetings from time to time (see list of speakers on page 5 of this report).
- Professional assistance and information is also provided when requested from senior planning staff of the member municipalities, and this is greatly appreciated. Last year in particular Bruce Greig from Central Saanich attended PAC meetings to discuss Farm Worker Housing and Composting issues.

Finally, PAC would like to again thank the many community groups in Greater Victoria who do excellent work in helping local agriculture:






- Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CR-FAIR) and the CRD Roundtable on the Environment Healthy Communities Subcommittees
- The Land Conservancy, Nathalie Chambers
- Environment – Farmland/farming Strategic Group
- Lifecycles; BC Association of Farmers Markets; and the local farm pocket markets.
- South Island Direct Farm Marketing Association
- The Wine and Grape Growers Associations
- The North Saanich Agricultural Advisory Commission
- Central Saanich Agricultural Advisory Commission

Without this community of dedication and support, PAC would not function and agriculture would not have the support it deserves.

Strategic Objectives (see Appendices for individual reports)

Note: most of the original objectives in the 1997 report have now been met.

The **1997 Agricultural Strategy Report for the Saanich Peninsula** set forth a number of recommendations designed to promote the sustainability of agriculture on the Peninsula. One update based on new Census information has been completed. Consistent with the recommendations of the Strategy Report, the Commission has five working committees focused on implementing strategic objectives for:

-  Farm Economics
-  Agricultural Land Base
-  Resource Stewardship
-  Education, and Outreach
-  Water

A voting member of the Commission is a chair of a strategic committee, and membership on the committees includes Commission, non voting-Commission representatives and associates.

Finance

The Commission is funded by the six participating Municipalities based on a formula decided in 1998, modified in 2008 with the addition of Metchosin and again in 2012 with the addition of Juan de Fuca. This final modification may be changed next year if all municipalities do not find the funding allocations acceptable. A full explanation of this issue was sent with the 2012 invoice.

Each municipality contributes to the general administration costs (including postage, photocopying and stationery) carried out by a recording secretary. Meetings are held at the Saanich Municipal Hall.

The total administrative budget for 2012 was \$7,618.85, an increase of \$1,051.75 over 2011. The costs do vary from year to year depending on the workload for that particular year. By comparison, the total budget for 2009 was \$9,162.89 and for 2010 it was \$6,912.42. For 2012, costs were apportioned as follows:

▪ District of Saanich (39.19%)	\$2,985.83
▪ District of Central Saanich (29.06%)	\$2,214.04
▪ District of North Saanich (15.25%)	\$1,161.87
▪ District of Metchosin(10.29%)	\$ 783.98
▪ Juan de Fuca Electoral Area (3.18%)	\$ 242.28
▪ Town of Sidney (3.03%)	\$ 230.85

Issues discussed at PAC meetings during 2012:

PAC discusses a wide range of issues at its monthly meetings; these issues can be requests from our member municipalities and individual citizens, or issues raised by PAC members. Occasionally we engage professionals to make presentations, or senior staff members from member municipalities may attend to provide information.

Last year was extremely busy and productive, and listed below are the topics discussed:

- ◆ **Geese Management Strategy:** PAC provided some financial assistance towards this strategy, and two members sit on the CRD committee. Hours of discussion have taken place at PAC meetings, including presentations from Janette Loveys of the CRD. Geese Management has been an on-going issue for PAC since 2004 – and an issue for the farmers long before that. Finally, some good, but slow, progress has been made, thanks in part to the Capital Regional District Parks Department and the Ministry of Agriculture, and their assistance to attempt to bring this growing problem under control. Our farmers cannot continue to suffer the crop losses and subsequent monetary losses year after year.

- ◆ **Deer Management Strategy:** PAC representatives also sit on the CRD committee and have taken part in regional workshops. Also, PAC paid travel expenses for Ray Demarchi, a Regional Wildlife Biologist living in the Cowichan Valley, who is very knowledgeable about deer management and attended CRD meetings on PAC's behalf.

As with the geese, thousands of dollars are lost in crop production each year by our local farmers, some of whom are at the point of reducing the acres they plant due to severe losses. Progress is being made, however, with possible changes by the Canadian Wildlife Services and perhaps reinstatement of financial assistance for deer fencing.

- ◆ **GMO Foods:** Dr. Andrew Riesman, a Professor at UBC, was invited to make a presentation to PAC on this topical issue; PAC also heard from organic farmer Robin Tunnecliff on the same issue. In response to a request for input from the Healthy Saanich Advisory Committee, PAC prepared a detailed response, with copies sent to local municipalities, CRD, MLA's, MP's, IOPA, DFMA, COABC.
- ◆ **Farm Worker Housing:** Central Saanich requested PAC provide input. A special meeting was held on February 28, 2012, with PAC members, local farmers and Bruce Greig, Planner from Central Saanich, in attendance. After the meeting a detailed report was submitted to Central Saanich as requested. The status of this issue is not certain, but PAC is an advocate for the programme, as it would greatly assist our farmers.
- ◆ **Composting & Anaerobic Digestors:** This was a very sensitive topic with the community and our local farmers in Central Saanich. Bruce Greig, Central Saanich Planner, made a presentation and PAC provided input to the municipality as requested.

Other issues considered by PAC included:

- ◆ Support for farmers with farmlands in low-lying areas in the event of an earthquake.
- ◆ Municipal Support for Municipal Engaged Agriculture (MESA) - CR-Fair
- ◆ Foreign ownership of farmland in BC – referral from North Saanich
- ◆ CRD Ban of Food Scraps: Despite letters sent to municipal, regional and provincial government bodies, PAC was disappointed that a regional organic matter programme could not be established and the organics returned to the peninsula farmlands, where it is needed.

Guest Speakers & Presentations at PAC meetings during 2012:

- Roger Tinney re proposed ALR exclusion and subdivision – 1516 Mt. Douglas X Road
- Brock Hensen, Saanich Fire Department - Earthquake and Food Security
- Bill Hartenberger – Crop Protection from a Bow Hunter's perspective
- Andrew Riesman, UBC – GMO/GE Foods
- Dean Rebneris – Expansion of local farmers markets
- Kathleen Gibson – Meat Processing Plants
- Harald Wolfe, SCAN – Islands West Produce, Dieppe Road
- Ray Demarchi – CRD Deer Strategy
- Bruce Greig, C. Saanich Planner – Composting and Anaerobic Digestors
- Janette Loveys, CRD, Goose Management Strategy
- Fernando Morrell – Organoponics in Cuba
- Gord Stuart, CR-Fair – Redistribution of non-saleable produce to the hungry

Workshops

In addition to numerous workshops and meetings on geese and deer, PAC members also attended and/or participated in the following:

- Soil Relocation Workshop – CRD, March 6, 2012
- North Saanich Economic Development Strategy – March 13, 2012
- Farmer2Farmer workshops – Linking land to farmers

Saanich Fair 2012

In keeping with our “Education and Outreach” strategy, three workshops were organized by PAC for the Saanich Fair in 2012 and were well received by the attendees. Honorariums were provided to the presenters.

- Gardening for Small Spaces – Linda Gilkensen
- Backyard Chickens – Nikcy Wylie
- Growing Grains for Sourdough and Suds – Michael Doehnel

Review of Terms of Reference, Mandate and Mission Statement:

In the fall of 2012, an issue regarding a possible conflict of issue arose during a meeting when discussing compositing. This led to the formation of an ad-hoc committee to review the current Terms of Reference, the mandate and the mission statement, originally formed in 1997.

Very few changes have been made to the Terms of Reference over the years, other than to include additional members. To assist PAC with this task, which turned out to be more complex than originally thought, we hired the expert assistance of a consultant, Ann Moskow.

This review is still ongoing. Once the new draft has been completed, it will be sent to the member municipalities for review and input, and eventually adoption.

Summary:

PAC would like to continue to work with the member municipalities and provide input on Agricultural Area Plans, Official Community Plans, and other land use issues related to agriculture, such as Edge Planning. We will also continue to work with the CRD to implement the Goose and Deer Management Strategies. We would encourage the municipalities to avail themselves of the expertise available on the Commission.

We will continue to work for the farmers and with the farmers, consulting with experts, professionals, regional and community agricultural interest groups to promote the sustainability of farming, food security and improve farm economics on southern Vancouver Island.

Respectfully submitted,

Flora Wood, Chair
Peninsula Agricultural Commission

March, 2013

Attachment: Economic Farm Report for 2012