



Peninsula & Area Agricultural Commission

2018 Annual Report

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Attachments:

- Appendix A – Ministry of Agriculture Initiatives introduced 2018*
- Appendix B – New ALR Regulations: Introduced November 2018*

Peninsula & Area Agricultural Commission

2018 - ANNUAL REPORT

Background:

Initiated in 1997/98 with the completion of the **Agricultural Strategy Report for the Saanich Peninsula**, the Peninsula & Area Agricultural Commission (PAAC) is now entering its 22nd year of operation. PAAC is financially supported by the Districts of Saanich, Central Saanich, North Saanich and Metchosin (the “member municipalities”).

Mandate:

To act as a resource, provide advice, information and assistance - upon request or proactively - to the member municipalities on matters involving agriculture in the areas served by the member municipalities and the region as a whole, and to facilitate the development of programmes for implementation of the **Saanich Peninsula Agricultural Strategic Objectives** (see page 7).

Highlights from 2018:

The Honourable Lana Popham, Minister of Agriculture, attended our February 8, 2018 meeting to review a list of topics and issues that are important to the farming community and the future of agriculture. It was a very positive meeting and the Minister advised of her intention to:

- Provide more extension services across the province to support farming*
- Reinstate “Grow BC” and initiate a pilot project “Feed BC” *
- Initiate full review of the ALR with recommendations by the end of the summer*
- Strike an independent committee to look at concerns about the cannabis industry and facilities on ALR Land (see page 5)*
- A possible food processing centre (UBC perhaps) *

PAAC advised the Minister of other concerns that need to be addressed, including:

- ✓ Increased support for emerging areas (eg: grains)

- ✓ Geese and Deer Control Programmes *
- ✓ Expansion of the farming base on Vancouver Island
- ✓ Support for Farm Worker Housing *
- ✓ Support for Farm Water Supply and Subsidies *
- ✓ Health benefits of locally grown fruits and vegetables
- ✓ Rebuild and fund a full agricultural programme at UBC

**See Appendix A for information on the progress of the aforementioned initiatives.*

The issues above were fully discussed at the meeting, with the Minister providing positive remarks and agreeing to review the issues. Since February, a representative from the Minister's office has attended our meetings, for which PAAC is grateful and optimistic about future progress of agriculture on Southern Vancouver Island and throughout the province.

And the Battles continue...

As has been the case for many years, several topics dominated PAAC's discussions, and these issues (noted below) still remain "under review" by some or all levels of government.

Goose and Deer Management: Our farmers continue to suffer severe financial losses from crop damage. Jeff Weightman at the CRD has shown persistence in trying to get this serious issue under control by once again organizing egg addling workshops and recruiting volunteers. While addling has a small impact in controlling the geese populations (now estimated at well over 6,000) it does not reduce the numbers. A cull is the only effective way and before this happens public perception has to be altered. Municipalities differ in their hunting regulations and discharge of firearms. We cannot expect our farmers to continue to absorb the costs associated with crop damage and loss. Resources and intervention from all government levels are required to address the increasing populations of both geese and deer.

Farm Worker Housing (FWH): PAAC has been discussing this for over a decade with limited progress. Local and provincial governments are very much aware of the issue, partly due to the letters and requests for action from PAAC. Lack of FWH is a common problem throughout the Province. At PAAC's June 14, 2018 meeting, **Adam Olsen, MLA** for Saanich North and the Islands and **Lori Hrycuik** from the Ministry of Agriculture participated in the discussions.

Often legitimate applications for FWH are viewed by municipalities as simply an excuse for more housing on the farm property. Larger farms, like Longview, Michell's and Galey's have a definite need for foreign workers – which increases each year – and need temporary accommodations on site. It is inconvenient, inefficient and expensive to house workers off site and bus them to work each day.

Each of the member municipalities address the issue within their Zoning Bylaws, but the guidelines differ. Central Saanich is more progressive and has identified FWH as a priority, recently referring an application from Longview Farms to the Agricultural Land Commission for consideration. As of year-end, no response has been received. North Saanich permits FWH at Ruby Red Farms. Metchosin permits mobile homes, but only on parcels of 10 acres or more. Saanich, to date, has no policies in place. A standardized, streamlined and sensible approach is necessary. Temporary Use Permits may be an easy solution – but they are temporary and don't provide security to the farmer or the worker.

Over the years, PAAC has considered the following reports and discussion papers, which clearly identify the issues (copies can be made available):

- Farm Worker Housing Policy Review: Community Social Planning Council (Paula Hesje) (2010)
- Regulating Temporary Farm Worker Housing in the ALR: Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, Sustainable Agriculture Management Branch (2012)
- Regulating Siting and Size of Residential Uses in the ALR: Ministry of Agriculture, Sustainable Agriculture Branch (2012)
- Saanich Draft Food and Agriculture Strategy, with a recommendation to support FWH (2018)
- Guidelines for Seasonal Housing for Temporary Farm Workers in BC (updated October 2016)

The ALR was created to protect farmland but not necessarily the farm economy. The Minister of Agriculture has indicated FWH is a top priority and has established a committee to review not only temporary housing but also the issue of mega homes on ALR lands. * The number of foreign workers coming to BC is expected to double within the next few years and they will need somewhere to live. Hopefully workable solutions will be available soon.

**** See Appendix B***

Vision Sandown: This property is now officially owned by the District of North Saanich. Platform Properties has the contract to develop the commercial area (Canadian Tire was completed in December 2018) as well as demolish the existing buildings and structures – including the grandstand.

PAAC members have provided recommendations to the District dealing with soil and drainage conditions as well as the remediation work required to bring the property back to a farmable status. PAAC also recommended a professional agrologist be hired to assist the District.

A large volume of limestone was recovered, in some areas deposits were over 2' deep. Regrettably this valuable resource was not made available to local farmers. It is also unfortunate that all the existing buildings were demolished – including the grandstand; safety was cited as the reason. Discussions between North Saanich Council, staff and other stakeholders continue on the proposed use of the 85 acre parcel.

PAAC continues to express concerns that this valuable farmland be brought into production as soon as possible. Some Council members also voiced their concerns that this publicly owned land not be used to compete unfairly with local farmers who have bought their own land with private funds and are having to pay mortgages.

Other issues discussed by PAAC during 2018 . . .

Livestock on BC Ferries: As there are no abattoirs on the lower Island, farmers have to rely on BC Ferries to transport livestock to the mainland (Abbotsford) for processing. Regulations have changed causing difficulties.

Firbank Poultry Farms has up to 85 truckloads a year using the ferry system – considered part of the highway. Other farms use Duke Point. This is not only a costly venture but requires loading the livestock during the early hours in order to catch the first ferry. It is not just poultry – all livestock is affected – horses, cattle, swine. Refrigerated fruit and vegetable trucks can also be affected by BC Ferries policies.

The past practice of arriving 30 minutes before a sailing with guaranteed boarding was discontinued with no rationale provided. Reservations now have to be made well in advance – but this is a difficult process as well. Minister Popham intervened last year when a truck load of newly hatched chicks from Abbotsford would have been waiting until the 1:00 pm ferry, not arriving at their destination till after 3:00 pm, and being all that time without water. It is inhumane. It is understood that part of the reason for denying livestock trucks access is lack of space due to an increase in tour bus traffic.

PAAC was prepared to address the issue with BC Ferries, requesting the reservation process be simplified and to reinstate the practice of permitting trucks to load if they arrive at least 30

minutes before departure. However, the Regional Agrologist intervened, a mutual understanding was reached and all seemed well.

Woodwyn Farms: This controversial 197-acre farm was recently purchased by BC Housing to provide a therapeutic environment for people in need. No housing is planned for the site and the farm will be maintained for agricultural purposes.

Two representatives from BC Housing – Tara Schmidt and Amanda Purnham, attended PAAC's November meeting. They indicated the primary focus at this time is to learn about the state of the farm to ensure the property is in good working order. Bob Maxwell, past Chair of PAAC and an agrologist, is working with BC Housing in this regard.

Still in the preliminary stages, no decisions have been made about crops, although it is anticipated some of the land may be leased during 2019 for hay production. It is expected that eventually a farm manager will be hired. PAAC was concerned about possible market competition with established farmers; however, the Commission was assured Woodwyn Farms will be a not-for-profit partnership and produce will be provided to organizations such as Our Place.

PAAC looks forward to working with BC Housing on this venture and providing advice and expertise when requested.

Medical Marijuana and the Cannabis Production on ALR Lands: This issue was discussed by PAAC on a number of occasions throughout the year. The main concern cited by PAAC is that valuable agricultural land not be compromised by the construction of concrete based structures – although it was recognized that other non-food crops such as flowers are grown in greenhouses, and large barns for poultry and cattle are built on ALR lands.

Anticipating applications coming forward, Central Saanich asked PAAC to comment on proposed amendments to its Land Use Bylaw regarding cannabis production. A lengthy discussion took place at PAAC's April meeting and the following concerns were identified:

- light pollution from the greenhouses and security lights; noxious odors
- lack of infrastructure to process the cannabis
- possible fill deposits that could impact neighbouring properties, affecting drainage; acknowledged that minimal fill is required to construct a greenhouse if the land is level

- higher classed soils should not be used for greenhouses; the lower class 4 and 5 soils are adequate for this purpose; perhaps areas zoned for light industrial would be preferable
- possibility of traffic issues given the number of employees required and delivery trucks
- the impermeable base of a greenhouse could cause severe drainage and run-off issues
- size of structures was a concern; however, local councils do have control over permitted site coverage
- siting could also be an issue if larger setbacks were imposed; this could leave a large “buffer” of farmland that is out of production; siting should be closer to the road or parking areas

Saanich Agriculture and Food Security Plan: After many months of hard work by Saanich staff, task force meetings and input from PAAC, the draft plan was submitted to Saanich Council in September and a part-time food systems planner for a 2-year period was approved by Council. There are many key topics to be addressed; one of the top priorities noted was developing an implementation concept plan for Panama Flats. PAAC is encouraged by the adoption of this Plan by Saanich Council and appreciates the commitment from Saanich Staff in completing the task.

CRD Food and Land Improvement Study: This study has been on-going for some time. Linda Geggie, PAAC member and Executive Director of CR-Fair, together with Jeff Weightman from the CRD, keep the Commission apprised of the progress. PAAC Co-Chairs Phil Christie and Jack Mar provided comments on the study. The study has gone through a number of amendments and is expected to be presented to the CRD Board in early 2019.

Island Pollinator Initiative (IPI): This initiative was established in 2017 after the successful workshop PAAC hosted on bees and other pollinators. IPI has been very successful and held many workshops and seminars throughout the past year. They were an integral part of PAAC's booth at the Saanich Fair this year and generated a lot of interest from the general public. In the fall, IPI was presented with a Pollinator Advocate award by Farmland Trust (Greater Victoria). Municipalities have adjusted maintenance in parks around hedgerows to preserve bee habitats. We are seeing more plantings of sunflowers, buckwheat, and phacelia which are all important to pollinators.

Guest Speakers & Presentations at PAC meetings during 2018

- ✓ April: Susan Tychie, Farm Focus Group with CR-Fair “Closing the Gap”
- ✓ April: Ty James, CEO & President of Westcoast Micro Greens
- ✓ May: Neil Findlow, Saanich Planner:
 - ALR Exclusion, Marsett Place (previously Royal Oak Golf Course)
 - 618 Hunt Road, Development Variance Permit & Heritage Designation
- ✓ June: Paul Nursey, President & CEO of Tourism Victoria
- ✓ June: Adam Olsen, MLA Saanich North & the Islands & Lori Hrycuik, Executive Director of Corporate Services, Ministry of Agriculture regarding Farm Worker Housing.
- ✓ November: Tara Schmidt and Amanda Purnham, BC Housing re Woodwyn Farms
- ✓ November: Stuart Bassett, Potential Kiwi Production on the Peninsula

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES (Sub-Committee 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, and was the basis for the formation of PAAC. Consistent with the recommendations of the Strategy Report, the Commission has four working sub-committees focused on implementing strategic objectives for:

- > **Farm Economics - Terry Michell**
- > **Agricultural Land Base - Phil Christie**
- > **Education and Outreach - Linda Geggie**
- > **Water - Michael Doehnel**

Although a voting member of the Commission chairs a strategic sub-committee, membership may include other Commission members, non-voting Commission representatives and associates. From time to time, outside expert and/or professional opinions are sought.

FARM ECONOMICS – Terry Michell

Weather and water: Some early season planting occurred mid-march then rain slowed things down. Planting commenced again mid-April as conditions were dry but not immediately scorching. Pollination in general this year was significantly improved over 2017.

Hay: Solid first cut harvested in a timely fashion resulted in good prices. Second and third cuts are very dependent on irrigation. If no timely water then stands tended towards dormancy and did not get back up to anticipated volumes which effected profitability.

Grain: Overall prices for wheat delivered to local bakery were good and sustainable to warrant continued seeding of wheat. Malting barley prices, although higher than worldwide commodity prices, are still too low for sustainability especially if the straw is removed. Straw sales are necessary to break even and grain prices should reflect returning straw to the land for improved organic matter and irrigation resilience.

Berries: There has been a gradual shift towards improved varieties of everbearing strawberries. This extends the growing season significantly from six weeks of sales up to 5 months. Quality and flavour is high for both June-bearing and everbearing, beating out the California option in most cases. Raspberries had a slight period of sun scald but overall a very good harvest.

Fruit Trees: Pollination was much improved over 2017 with apples, cherries, pears and plums producing well.

Lettuce and greens: Strong year and good demand for these crops with the season extending well into September and early October.

Brassicas: Overall good crops needing sufficient irrigation during the hot summer. This was tempered somewhat by the smoky cloud cover perhaps reducing evaporation and sunlight intensity. Overwintering brassicas grew well into the fall with timely and appropriate amounts of precipitation and milder overall temperatures. There is a good demand for high quality kale, cabbages and Brussels sprouts.

Leeks, Onion, Garlic: This vegetable family grew well and was harvested in good condition. Some of the garlic producers had record yields and head sizing while prices were generally good. Rotation and high quality seed is critical to keep white mold at bay. Leeks did their usual and continue to be an excellent crop in this climate, both for summer and overwinter harvests.

Root crops, Carrots, Parsnips and Beets: All these crops continue to perform well, there were strong local sales and harvesting was able to continue into October and November due to moderate rainfall and less deluge of mid and upper lands.

Cucurbits: Squash and pumpkins are strong performers in this climate and sales to both local and the rest of BC have continued to gain traction.

Sweet corn: Some very early planting occurred but due to weather fluctuations these crops did not do very well with low plant populations. Subsequent planting went very well as the weather turned around. Volume and prices were on track for a very successful harvest

AGRICULTURAL LAND BASE: Phil Christie

The Agricultural Land Base sub-committee continues to review and monitor agricultural land use and opportunities with a view to enhancing the agricultural land base and improving farming sustainability. Several important issues and opportunities were identified by PAAC in 2018:

1. Expansion of the farming base on Vancouver Island by increasing the amount of land farmed within the existing ALR:

This issue was raised with the Minister of Agriculture when she attended PAAC on February 8, 2018. PAAC's proposal was to have the Ministry support or introduce new programs that would help increase the amount of land that is actively farmed within the existing ALR. It was noted that there are expansive areas of arable land on the east coast of Vancouver Island and that with the right provincial programs much more of it would be farmed and that this could help to compensate for the land lost to the Site C Dam located on the Peace River. She indicated that they would take this suggestion under advisement.

2. Increased Support for new crops

PAAC was given a presentation by local kiwi grower Stuart Bassett. He has a strong interest in reviving kiwi production in the Saanich Peninsula and is confident that there are now varieties that will thrive in our area. PAAC asked the presenter to keep us updated as he progresses with development of his kiwi farm business. The tonnage of grains being harvested is rapidly increasing with several additional fields under cultivation this past season.

3. Applications for deposit of fill within the ALR

The placement of fill (mostly as "fills of convenience") within the ALR were seriously compromising both the hydrology as well as agricultural production within the ALR.

This issue has now been addressed by the Agricultural Land Commission with the introduction of a new requirement, namely, the adoption by the Full Commission on April 26th, 2018 of Bylaw No.2-Placement of Fill in the ALR.

This by law establishes thresholds for when fill is considered necessary and outlines the process for notification and application to the ALC for the placement of fill. It also provides definitions for what constitutes fill and what are appropriate uses of fill.

4. The development of cannabis farms

The development of new greenhouse-based cannabis farms in addition to raising concerns about the potential to affect the availability of farmlands has raised many concerns about taking quality agricultural land out of production permanently by creating cement foundation greenhouses. This was addressed by the Province when they amended the ALR Regulation on July 13, 2018 to say that the lawful production of cannabis is designated as a farm use for the purposes of the Agricultural Land Commission if produced outdoors in a field or inside a structure that has a base consisting entirely of soil. The new regulation includes exceptions for existing and approved structures under construction.

5. Establishment of Farmland Trusts

Due to the rapidly increasing cost of farmland on southern Vancouver Island the CRD has been working diligently to learn more about public interest in farmland trusts and the amount of support that exists for creating them. For many years now various levels of government, NGO's and individuals have shown a strong interest in establishing more farmland trust held land. While PAAC Commission members support the existing farmland trusts, there remain many questions about the need for these trusts including:

- a. What is the current rate of utilization of the land with existing farmland trusts on Southern Vancouver Island?
- b. What policies can be established to ensure that allocation of the use of these farmland trust lands will be fair?
- c. How will farmers that pay market value for their land be able to compete if Farmland Trust lands are leased at cheap rates?
- d. What data is there to show that if the public donates or public agencies use taxpayer dollars toward the purchase of farmland trust lands that the public will benefit through for example an increase agricultural productivity or quality?

PAAC will continue to explore this issue and provide further advice during 2019.

6. Drainage concerns

PAAC did not receive updates from either Central Saanich or Saanich regarding the efforts being carried out to resolve drainage concerns on Maber Flats and Martindale Flats. It is our understanding that there is on-going work being undertaken by the engineering departments in both municipalities to help resolve these longstanding local drainage concerns and that considerable progress is being made.

OUTREACH & EDUCATION: Linda Geggie

PAAC enjoyed many speakers over the course of the year to increase our understanding of key issues and learn about new topics. These are listed above in the report but include topics like Farmworker Housing, the efforts to increase local production beyond the farm gate, farmland trusts, processing needs and growing kiwis. PAAC also worked to support broader public and farmer education and training efforts. The Education Committee worked with partner organizations to undertake a number of activities including the Farmer2Farmer Conference and the Saanich Fair.

■ Information / Mentorship Session on Planting and Growing

PAAC Co-Chair Jack Mar presented a session for new growers offering mentorship to those interested. The presentation included the history of farming in the Saanich Peninsula, planting and growing. Jack outlined the costs of planting and what could be expected for returns on several specific crops such as strawberries, squash, cabbage & rhubarb. He spoke about not starting transplants too early and the best methods of propagation. There was a good discussion session that followed the presentation including important issues for farming on southern Vancouver Island such as best drainage, irrigation, fertilizer and soil amelioration practices. The session also included an excellent power point presentation by Bob Maxwell, P.Ag. as well as input from Phil Christie on Saanich Peninsula soils and their surficial geology origins.

■ Farmer2Farmer

PAAC members participated in the Farmer2Farmer Advisory team that developed the Farmer2Farmer programme. Farmer2Farmer (F2F) 2018 was held on March 1 at the Saanich Fairgrounds. The Farmer2Farmer Conference is a farm networking event and was attended by 60

farmers from the region. The conference brings together regional farmers from Vancouver Island and the Mainland in a day that inspires, educates and connects farmers in ways that help our sector grow together.

The main features of Farmer2Farmer include a Trade Show, workshops, and networking breaks. This year's event had three workshop streams. The hands-on stream tackled issues of equipment repair, small-lot growing, and water management strategies. The best practices stream offered encouragement for farmers looking to increase their success at farmers' markets, growing organic, and co-op options.

Finally, the supply gap stream focused on the Closing the Supply Gap project: how farmers can be involved, where the project is at, and how Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) can be applied. Feedback on the evaluation forms about how the day went showed that attendees were pleased with the event, especially with the diversity of workshops, the wealth of knowledge shared by presenters providing important information and with the networking opportunities they encountered. A big thank you goes out to Chris Hammer of the Island Chef Collaborative for another great lunch provided to the farm community.

■ **Saanich Fair-Celebrating 150 years**

This year PAAC teamed up with CRFAIR and a host of organizations working to celebrate 150 years of farming and the anniversary of the Saanich Fair. Our focus this year was area farmers and we had information and photo displays at the booth. As well, we teamed up with Black Press Media to create a newspaper insert and handout that featured local farmers both new and old in celebration of 150 years of the Saanich Fair. This insert was co-sponsored by Buckerfields and PAAC, and was included with all of the Black Press papers across the region.

At the fair we had a bountiful display of Squash and other vegetables grown at Mar and Mitchell Farms and provided information on PAAC and the ever popular recipes for the local harvest handout created by PAAC members Diane Williamson and Beverly Marley. Free pheclilca and sunflower seeds were given to passersby to plant in order to support the bee and pollinator populations. The CRFAIR team held the Zucchini Races again this year which are always a big hit with the kids. We even had a few kids bring their own zucchinis that they had grown from the seeds distributed last year.

WATER REPORT for 2018 Growing Season: Michael Doehnel

Things started off dry in late March and early April as farmers were able to get onto fields to fertilize forage crops. The rains returned and field work was halted for three weeks. Planting resumed with full force and unlike 2017 drought stress was not an immediate factor. The weather remained moderate and precipitation was average. A dryish May was good for silage operations while the nice moisture top up in June ensured good seed to soil contact and nutrient uptake during and after seeding.

Having just received the CRD water usage reports from 2017 it did come as a bit of a surprise that even though 2017 was extremely dry during the usual months, the fact that it started late with saturated soils may have resulted in a decline of total agricultural water usage from 2016 and on par with 2015. I expect that 2018 will be similar to 2017 with the smoke from wildfires perhaps contributing to decreased levels of evapotranspiration.

The summer saw its usual amount of irrigation with crops performing well while sub irrigated areas such as Maber flats doing exceptionally well. There is a lot to be said for high levels of organic matter and its relationship to water deficits and plant stress. Another reminder of the importance of getting every last shred of yard/garden waste and food waste back onto the land here in the region, and not just feeding the eagles in Delta. All efforts should be made by Municipalities and the CRD to ensure that any proposed composting program includes farming as a significant recipient of these materials. The record shows that we keep fiddling while Rome burns.

Overall wells and dugouts in the area were not as stressed as in previous years which bodes well for both consolidated and fractured rock aquifers getting the required recharge from winter precipitation.

Watering stopped abruptly around labour day and the irrigation reels were put away for the winter.

As many will have noted there were some extreme rain events this winter and fields which were not cover cropped suffered serious soil loss. I feel that this may be the new norm(for now) and we must all do better to keep precious top soil in place.

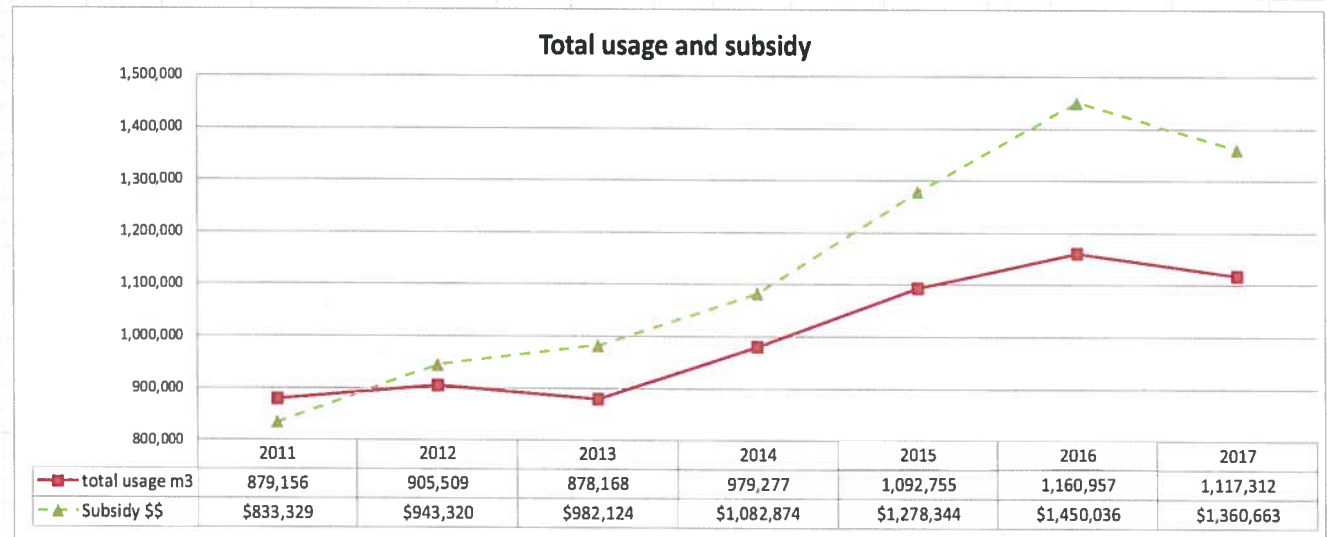
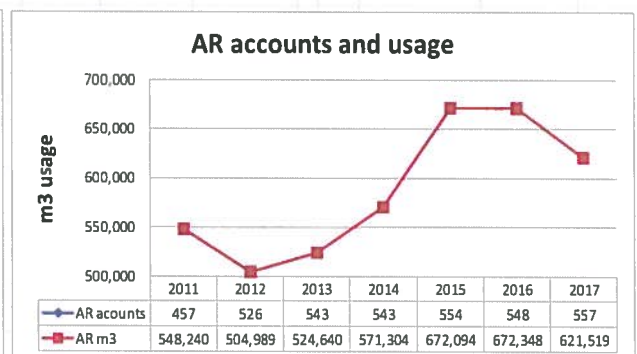
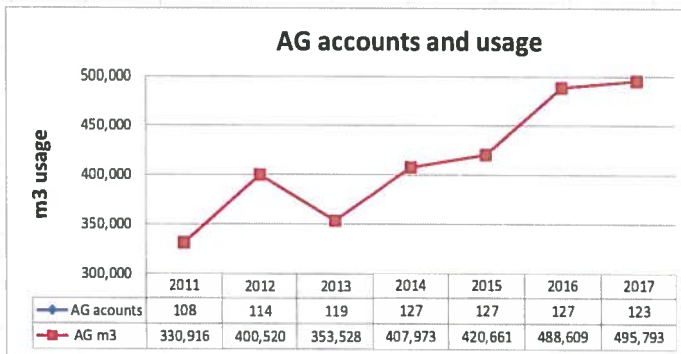
Agricultural water usage remained steady at 2.4% of total usage in 2017 and I expect that 2018 will be similar. By the way of comparison 8% is lost due to leakage, water main breaks, and line flushing. Overall I would like to see agricultural water usage increase as a sign that more food is being grown, and at the same time is being used in a timely and responsible manner.

I have also recently completed the review of the various ways Districts administer their agricultural water and have found that generally there could be ways of streamlining these procedures and make it less onerous for the CRD to deal with.

Lastly, and not on radar for those of us who have the resources and income to source nutrient dense food, all too often many of our fellow citizens can only afford processed junk at the same time our medical system strains from poor health outcomes. We should and must do more to rejuvenate our regional food producing lands.

AR = agricultural and residential use, ag rate over 455 m3 usage
 AG = dedicated agricultural meter

Total CRD Volume m3 2017 46,515,340 Ag usage % 2.4%
 Total CRD wholesale revenue \$29,563,529 Ag usage subsidy % 4.6%



MEMBERSHIP

Voting Membership for 2018 was as follows:

- Robert Maxwell, Co-Chair (Fieldstone Farm: berries & tree fruits) (resigned in April)
- Jack Mar, Co-Chair (The Pumpkin Patch Farm - vegetables)
- Terry Michell (Michell Farms – fruits, vegetables, hay, grain)
- Linda Geggie (CR-Fair)
- Dianne Williamson (Firbank Farms – poultry, some vegetables)
- Bev Marley (The Tiny Farm – garlic, bees (honey), poultry)
- Phil Christie (Agrologist – hay, rhubarb and honey farmer)
- Larry Sluggett (Sluggett Farms – corn and vegetables)
- Carol Davidson (Sheep Farmer)
- Satnam Dheenshaw (Gobind Farms – mostly Berries)
- Larry Kimmett (BC Farms & Foods) (Official member in September 2018)

PAAC appreciates the input and continued support from its Council liaisons. We recognize their busy schedules and thank them for taking the time to attend our monthly meetings.

The Councillors (**non-voting members**) appointed to PAAC for 2018 were:

- Councillor Fred Haynes, Saanich
- Councillor Murray Weisenberger – North Saanich
- Councillor Chris Graham – Central Saanich
- Anne Richmond and Robin Tunnicliffe – Representing Metchosin Council

Derek Masselink, Regional Agrologist, has taken a temporary position with the BC Public Agency for 2018. Thankfully, **Doug Pepper** was appointed as the new Regional Agrologist, and like Derek, has been very supportive to the Commission, attending most meetings in spite of his busy schedule and the fact that he does not reside in the immediate area. He is able to provide insight, knowledge, contacts and assistance on many of the issues discussed at PAAC meetings. The Commission requested an increase of extension staff within the Ministry of Agriculture, including forage, soils and horticultural specialists; progress is slow but we remain optimistic.

The official provincial liaison to PAAC is the **Agricultural Land Commission**; it is unfortunate that a representative from the ALC was unable to attend a meeting last year. They continue to receive copies of all minutes. However, regular attendance by the Minister of Agriculture's executive assistant, Gregory Atkinson at the start of the year, and later Chris Wieczorek, is gratifying. They are able to report to the Minister directly on the challenges faced by the Commission and the region's farmers.

In addition to our voting members, non-voting municipal and provincial liaisons, PAAC has an ever-growing number of "associate" members from various farm-related groups, past members, and other individuals who have expressed an interest in the sustainability of farming in our region. We welcome their attendance at meetings and input they provide.

PAAC appreciates the countless volunteer hours, hard work, commitment and dedication of all its members as we endeavour to achieve sustainable agriculture and food security for our region. In addition, some of our members sit on other working groups, such as the CRD Deer and Geese Management Committees, municipal agricultural advisory committees, and take part in agricultural-based workshops and meetings throughout the year (eg: Farmer2Farmer, Island Pollinator Initiative) and provide advice to Councils when requested (eg: Vision Sandown).

In particular, past member, **Michael Doehnel**, continues to competently represent PAAC and our local farmers on the Saanich Peninsula Water Commission and the Saanich Peninsula Waste Water Commission. He attends PAAC meetings from time to time to provide detailed updates on the water issues as they pertain to agriculture. His annual report is included in this document (*see pages 13/14*). His volunteer time and valued insight are very much appreciated.

Administrative and Technical Support Services

The Commission is very grateful for the continued funding support it receives from the sponsoring municipalities as well as the ongoing administrative support provided by **Isobel Hoffmann**, who retired from the District of Saanich in 2012 and has been the recording secretary for PAAC since 1998.

Professional assistance and information is provided when requested from senior planning and engineering staff of the member municipalities and the CRD, and this is greatly appreciated.

In particular, we would like to thank Planning staff members:

- ◆ Ivo van der Kemp (Central Saanich)
- ◆ Jane Evans, Cameron Scott & Neil Findlow (Saanich)
- ◆ Jeff Weightman – CRD

Finally, PAAC would like to again thank the many community groups in Greater Victoria who continue to do excellent work in helping local agriculture and assist PAAC from time to time:

- ◆ Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CR-FAIR)
- ◆ CRD Roundtable on the Environment, Healthy Communities Subcommittees
- ◆ Environment – Farmland/farming Strategic Group
- ◆ LifeCycles; BC Assoc. of Farmers Markets; local farm pocket markets.
- ◆ South Island Direct Farm Marketing Association
- ◆ Wine and Grape Growers' Associations
- ◆ North Saanich Agricultural Advisory Commission
- ◆ Central Saanich Agricultural Advisory Commission
- ◆ North and South Saanich Agricultural Society
- ◆ Island Pollinator Initiative (IPI)
- ◆ Capital Region Beekeepers Association
- ◆ Farmlands Trust (Greater Victoria)
- ◆ BC Farms & Foods
- ◆ Saanich Native Plants
- ◆ Victoria Horticultural Society
- ◆ Victoria Natural History Society
- ◆ Habitat Acquisition Trust



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

FINANCE

In 2018, the Commission was funded by the four participating Municipalities based on a formula established in 1998, modified on two occasions to accommodate the inclusion of the District of Metchosin and the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area. With the withdrawal of JDF in July 2013, the funding formula reverted back to the one used in 2012, and in 2017 with the withdrawal of Sidney, their 3% share of the costs was reallocated between the remaining sponsors.

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

The costs vary depending on the workload for that particular year, although it seems that the Commission's workload continues to expand each year. Nine regular meetings were held in 2018 (no meetings in July, August or December). 2018 administrative expenses were \$10,111.92 - a slight increase from 2017. The costs are apportioned as follows:

	\$ 2018	\$ 2017
District of Saanich (41%)	4,145.89	4,046.71
District of Central Saanich (31%)	3,134.70	3,059.71
District of North Saanich (17%)	1,719.03	1,677.90
District of Metchosin (11%)	1,112.31	1,085.70
Total:	10,111.92	9,870.02

Comparison budgets for previous years:

2016	\$9,731.12
2015	\$8,782.59
2014	\$8,621.13
2013	\$8,267.67

SUMMARY:

PAAC would like to continue to work with the member municipalities to provide input on agricultural issues such as Agricultural Area Plans, Official Community Plans, and other land use and bylaw issues related to agriculture, such as drainage and the potential cannabis industry.

Hopefully, we will also continue to work with the CRD to implement the Goose and Deer Management Strategies if the programmes and the funding are extended through 2019. Two other projects for 2019 will be a seminar on Farm Succession presented by Elaine Froese in April, and the popular farm tour in June for Mayors, Councillors, and municipal staff.

We would encourage the municipalities to utilize the expertise available on the Commission.

Most importantly, we hope to continue to work both for the farmers and with the farmers. Where appropriate, consult with experts, professionals, municipal staff, regional and community agricultural interest groups to continue to promote the sustainability of farming, encourage and support young and emerging farmers, promote pollinator initiatives and improve food security and farm economics on southern Vancouver Island.

Respectfully submitted,

Phil Christie & Jack Mar, Co-Chairs
Peninsula & Area Agricultural Commission
March 2018

Sunflowers at Newman Farm (farmlandstrust.org)



APPENDIX A – 2018 ANNUAL REPORT

Updates provided by the Ministry of Agriculture re
agricultural initiatives introduced in 2018

The issues listed below were discussed at length when Minister Lana Popham attended PAAC's February 2018 meeting:

Reinstate Grow BC

Significant progress on this pillar has been made, including initiatives to encourage young farmers to enter the industry, and land matching programmes across the province, financial support for 4-H and other educational resources, and more. A selection of announcements noted below:

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases.2018AGRR10001-000005>

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases.2018AGR10068-001890>

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases.2018AGR10061-001792>

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases.2018AGR10063-001798>

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases.2018AGR10062-001797>

Independent Committee to Review Cannabis Regulations on ALR land....

Public Engagement Process:

The provincial government allowed local and First Nations governments to prohibit cannabis production in the ALR within their communities unless it was grown in a way that preserved the productive capacity of the agricultural land. The federal Cannabis Act (effective October 2018) allows cannabis producers to grow cannabis in open fields, greenhouses and industrial bunkers.

Provide Extension Services across BC to support farming and its landbase:

Extension services have ranged from funding to help farmers adapt to the longterm impacts of climate change to services and grants available to assist with the adoption of new technologies and products, as well as the hiring of more Ministry staff. On a recent trip to Williams Lake, many of the farmers that Minister Popham spoke with noticed that the Ministry is more present and easily accessible than it had been previously thanks to these changes. This is a positive trend, and we're working to ensure it continues. A selection of related announcements are included below:

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018AGR10032-000974>

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018AGR10040-001198>

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018AGR10052-001408>

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018AGR10057-001581>

Feed BC: Pilot Project

The Ministry is excited that this project will be launched early in the New Year.

Food Processing Centre

The first processing hub in downtown Vancouver will be announced early in the New Year. It will be a unique and exciting model, one that will expanded to other regions.

Reinstate Buy BC Programme

This programme is back with a vengeance! Small-scale farmers, medium sized food producers and even restaurants have all jumped on board and are using the Buy BC brand and logo to signal the quality of their products. Also of note was the successful “Every Chef Needs a Farmer. Every Farmer Needs a Chef” event that connected over 300 farmers and chefs across BC for the first time. Buy BC has been a success so far and the Ministry is continuing its work to make it even better.

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018AGR10048-001274>

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018AGR10051-001402>

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018AGR10072-001931>

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018AGR10088-002187>

Farm Worker Housing

The Ministry of Agriculture has taken the lead to form a provincial working group with stakeholders and other ministries to address housing and safety issues for agricultural employers in the temporary foreign workers' programme. The working group has met regularly to move forward on several fronts, including provincial coordination , housing standards, housing inspections, and industry engagement. The expectation is that significant progress will have to be made for the upcoming growing season.

The working group is continuing to engage stakeholders and ministries to make sure there is good communication and coordination – as well as an understanding of the issues and potential solutions.

Goose and Deer Culls

A limited amount of egg addling was completed on the Saanich Peninsula in the spring of 2018, in addition to a 3-day harvest as well. The Ministry has also contributed funds towards, and assisted in the writing of a proposal being submitted to the federal government for additional funding support to a sustained mitigation strategy – undertaken by the Guardians of the Mid-Island Estuaries Society. A response from the federal government should be received by April 2019.



New Agricultural Land Reserve regulations take effect

Legislation bans mega-mansions and penalizes illegal dumping

CBC News · Posted: Feb 23, 2019 3:51 PM PT | Last Updated: February 23



Homes like this one — upwards of 20,000 square feet in size and built on several acres of farmland — are scattered across Richmond. (Tina Lovgreen/CBC)

New legislation concerning British Columbia's Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) has officially kicked in.

The provincial government introduced Bill 52 on Nov. 5, 2018 and the changes officially took effect on Feb. 22. According to the government, the regulations will enhance food security and encourage farming on ALR land.

APPENDIX "B"

A key change includes reducing the size of homes built on ALR land. Primary residences are now restricted to less than 500 square metres — or roughly 5,400 square feet — under the new law.

In Richmond, homes have been built on ALR land that exceed 20,000 square feet. In one case, the city rejected a bid to build a 40,000-square-foot-home - big enough for 21 bedrooms.

Banning mega-mansions on ALR has been a source of contention for Lower Mainland residents, with some farming families in B.C. saying limiting the size of homes on agricultural land will impact their quality of life.

- **Big families raise concerns over provincial plan to limit size of ALR houses**

Minister of Agriculture Lana Popham said in a statement the province will support larger families who need extra living space if it is to support their farming operations. Those families can work with the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC), the administrative body that oversees the ALR.

"Multigenerational farming families are the backbone of agriculture throughout B.C.," said Popham.

People who had permits in place to build a larger home before Feb. 22 can still go ahead as long as construction begins by Nov. 5, 2019.

No more dumping

Bill 52 also increases penalties for illegal dumping and for removing fill and soil from the ALR.

In May, 2018, the ALC investigated 93 properties on protected farmland in Metro Vancouver where it believed illegal dumping was taking place.

According to Popham, it is primarily construction waste and the problem is not isolated to the Lower Mainland, but is happening in Kelowna, on southern Vancouver Island and anywhere else construction is booming.



Lana Popham MLA

@lanapopham

This is what ended up on farmland, with no penalty, under the BC Liberals watch. Regulations came into force Friday bringing our governments Agricultural Land Commission Amendment Act 2018 into effect. Finally there are strong penalties 4 dumping waste on farmland. [#bcpoli](#) [#alr](#)

38 11:33 AM - Feb 23, 2019 · Burnaby, British Columbia

[19 people are talking about this](#)

Anyone caught taking fill and soil will now face a maximum penalty of \$1 million or six months in prison.

The ALR was established in 1973 to protect land with prime agricultural conditions for farming and ranching. It currently protects approximately 4.7 million hectares of arable land in B.C.

- **Limit housing development, return all protected land to farm-use only, ALR report recommends**
- **B.C. says local governments can regulate pot growth on agricultural land**

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