



Regional District of Nanaimo
Agricultural Area Plan Implementation
2014-2016 Action Plan



November 2013



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Background

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) Agricultural Area Plan (AAP) was adopted in October 2012. The AAP includes 128 recommended Action Items that originated through extensive public and stakeholder consultation with the local farming community, AAC input, and Board review.

In the months following the AAP adoption, the AAC reviewed the AAP's 128 recommended Action Items with the intent of identifying those which were of highest priority to consider within the first work plan. The result of the AAC review was a list of 68 priority Action Items to be considered within the first work plan. The priority Action Items represent a broad range of topics related to agriculture and aquaculture in the region. Staff was tasked with organizing the priority Action Items into projects and tasks which could be included within the first work plan. This document represents an Implementation Action Plan for the first three-year work period from 2013 to 2016.

The AAC identified Action Items that are intended to support and remove barriers to agriculture/aquaculture in the region. The AAC provided a high level overview of recommended actions and relevant stakeholder information at the time the Plan was prepared. Upon further analysis, it was determined that for many of the priority Action Items it is not clear about the status of the project or the role of the RDN. Therefore, the initial step for some of the Action Items is to gather information about their current status to better determine an appropriate role for the RDN.

Implementation of the Action Items requires a coordinated effort by a number of RDN departments. In addition, the proposed Implementation Action Plan must be considered amongst other ongoing resource priorities and other competing projects and policy direction. Completion of the proposed work plan requires allocation of staff, funding, or other resources.

Strategic Direction

The AAP is a regional plan that contains a number of recommended actions intended to encourage and facilitate positive change and investment within the agricultural and aquaculture industries across the region. This Plan outlines the actions necessary to implement the AAP which is in keeping with the Board's Strategic Plan which supports implementation of regional plans with action on-the-ground. Implementation of the AAP is consistent with the Strategic Plan Economic Viability Objective which states *"to strengthen the local agricultural economy so that local food systems are productive and viable, and contribute to the cultural identity of the region"*. Taking action on the Agricultural Area Plan would also help the Board seek out opportunities to advance sustainable approaches to the agriculture and aquaculture industries.

The proposed AAP Implementation Action Plan is well aligned with the direction provided by the Board's Strategic Plan.

Methodology

Staff analyzed the 68 prioritized Action Items with intent to identify achievable projects to include in the first work plan. In the analysis, staff considered which Action Items clearly fell within the RDN's core business area, which Action Items could be considered at a later date should the Board wish to include new activities within work plans, which Action Items may require the RDN to consider expanding its current service levels, and which Action Items are most appropriately addressed by other agencies and organizations.

Staff categorized the Action Items into three general project types Study, Public Outreach, and Bylaws and Policies. Action Items were then reviewed based on the cost, impact on RDN staff and resources, and available in-house expertise. RDN Resource Requirements were ranked between 1 and 4 as follows:

Table 1.0 RDN Resource Requirements

RDN Resource Requirements	Description
1	Action Item could be completed with existing staff and resource levels (already part of day to day operations).
2	Could be completed if resources are allocated. (If deemed a priority by the Board could be completed with existing staff and resources).
3	Action Item requires significant additional staff and/or resources.
4	Action item is most appropriately addressed by another agency or organization.

The Action Items were then grouped into six projects based on similar characteristics and what could reasonably be considered within the first work plan. As a result of staff’s analysis, the 68 Action Items were narrowed down to 40 for consideration during the first work plan.

The proposed projects address a number of Action Items with a range of RDN Resource Requirements and AAC priority levels. Those Action Items that did not fit into a specific project were categorized into ‘Studies’ and ‘Other’ Action Items which represent projects that can be considered in future work plans as time and resources become available or opportunities arise.

Refer to Attachments 1 and 2 for more detailed information on each Action Item.

AAP Promotion

Now that an AAP is in place, it is important to raise awareness of the Plan especially since many of the Action Items included in the Plan require participation by other agencies or organizations. One of the first steps required to implement the AAP is to arrange to meet with member municipalities, the Ministry of Agriculture, local agriculture/aquaculture organizations, and farmers to make them aware of the Plan and initiate discussions about implementation Actions that fall within each group or organizations’ area of responsibility.

Projects

Prior to initiating many of the Action Items identified in this Action Plan, it will be necessary to raise awareness of the priorities in the Agricultural Area Plan with relevant organizations and stakeholders to discuss roles and responsibilities and what the next steps may be.

Following a thorough evaluation, staff have grouped the AAC’s top 68 actions into the following six projects and sub-projects to be considered during the first work plan (2014-2016):

1. Bylaw and Policy Updates
2. AAC Terms of Reference

3. Agricultural Promotion and Economic Development
 - a. Local Food Guide
 - b. Advocate for Changes in Farm Tax Assessment
 - c. Website
 - d. Agricultural Development Committee
 - e. Farmers’ Market
 - f. Right to Farm Education
 - g. Consider the Creation of an Agricultural Support Officer
4. On-farm water-related infrastructure
5. Invasive Species Management
6. Composting Facility

The evaluation was based on identifying similarities in action items, along with AAC priority, difficulty level, and resource commitment. The following provides a brief summary of each project.

Project 1: Bylaw and Policy Updates

This project addresses the following Action Items organized by RDN resource requirements.

Action Item	RDN Resource Requirements	Action Item	RDN Resource Requirements
1.1.b	3	7.2.c	2
1.1.e	2	7.2.d	1
2.2.c	2	7.3.c	2
4.2.a	2	7.3.d	1
7.1.d	2	7.3.f	2
7.1.g	1	7.4.a	2
7.2.a	1	7.4.d	1

For a description of RDN Resource Requirement rankings see Table 1.0. For a description of each Action Item see Appendix 1.

A central theme contained within many of the Action Items is the desire to review the existing Regional Growth Strategy (RGS), Official Community Plans (OCP), and regulatory bylaws to:

- i. ensure consistency between policies and regulations;
- ii. remove regulatory barriers and obstacles that hinder agriculture and aquaculture;
- iii. promote sustainable practices that support agricultural production and preserve farm land; and,
- iv. protect against the impacts of non-farm use.

Amendments to RDN policies and bylaws could have significant short term positive effects on agriculture and aquaculture in the region. In addition, this project represents Action Items that are completely within the RDN’s control and could result in action on the ground in the near future. Changes to policies and bylaws could directly benefit the agricultural and aquacultural industries.

A comprehensive review of existing policy and regulatory documents is required. Staff will prepare an in-depth proposal outlining all of the projects components for the Board’s consideration. This project will require a comprehensive public engagement process. Amendments to bylaws such as the RGS, OCPs, Zoning Bylaws, and Sign Bylaws are contemplated within the scope of this project.

It should be noted that some of the Action Items that are included within this project overlap and can be considered concurrently.

This is a significant project which incorporates 14 Action Items (for more information see Attachment 1).

Resource Requirements

This project requires a significant amount of staff time to complete. To lessen the impact on existing staff time, it is proposed that this project be undertaken over a three year period starting in 2014 with existing staff resources. Budgetary considerations must include advertising, meeting expenses, and additional staff time as needed for public meetings, etc.

Project 2: AAC Terms of Reference

This project addresses the following Action Items organized by RDN resource requirements.

Action Item	RDN Resource Requirements
1.1.a	1
7.2.b	1

For a description of RDN Resource Requirement rankings see Table 1.0. For a description of each Action Item see Appendix 1.

The highest priority Action Item that was identified by the AAC was to amend the AAC Terms of Reference to allow the AAC to make comments on applications to the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC). The prioritized list (Attachment 1) also includes a similar Action Item that supports consideration of adopting the ALC recommendation of rejecting Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) applications that are not consistent with OCPs and zoning in combination with a revised AAC Terms of Reference.

This project was recently supported by a motion of the Board at its June 25th, 2013 meeting:

“MOVED Director Johnstone, SECONDED Director McPherson, that the Agricultural Area Plan Recommended Implementation Action 1.1A, “consider updating the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) Terms of Reference to allow the AAC to make comments on every application (exclusion, non-farm use, subdivision) that is forwarded to the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC)”, be referred to staff for a report on options to proceed; including in those options, the opportunity for optional Area Director comment to be incorporated into the process.”

Staff are in the process of proceeding with the Board's direction and a report will be prepared for the Board's consideration.

Resource Requirements

This project involves conducting research and preparing a report and amended AAC Terms of Reference for the Board's consideration. This project can be completed with minimal impact to existing staff resources and no additional budgetary requirements need to be considered. Should the Board wish to amend its approach to handling application to the ALC, it is anticipated that additional staff time will be required for preparing information and a report on each application for the Board and/or AAC. In addition, it is expected that application processing time would be extended to allow for additional work required to refer applications to the AAC and/or Board.

Project 3: Agricultural Promotion and Economic Development

The purpose of this project is to raise awareness and general knowledge of agriculture and aquaculture in the region and promote development and investment opportunities in agriculture and aquaculture. This project can be accomplished through a range of different actions and includes the following sub-projects that together form a single larger project.

- Sub-project 1: Creation of a Local Food Guide and Annual Food Tour
- Sub-project 2: Advocate for Changes in Farm Tax Assessment
- Sub-project 3: Creation of an Agricultural Website
- Sub-project 4: Creation of an Agricultural Support Officer
- Sub-project 5: Consider Establishing an Agricultural Development Committee
- Sub-project 6: Year Round Farmers' Market
- Sub-project 7: Right to Farm Education

Many of the Action Items included within this project require the RDN to investigate the current status of the issue to better understand who is involved, what is already being done, and what information already exists to determine what role the RDN could play in addressing the Action item.

It is intended that this is an ongoing project with no definite end date. However, it is proposed that during the first work plan most of the staff time allocated to this project be primarily focused on getting a better understanding of each of the identified sub-projects in preparation for the next work plan. At that time the Board can provide direction on work plan priorities when more information is available.

The following is a brief description of each project.

Sub-project 1: Creation of a Local Food Guide and Annual Food Tour

This project addresses the following Action Items organized by RDN resource requirements.

Action Item	RDN Resource Requirements
2.2.a	2
2.2.d	4

For a description of RDN Resource Requirement rankings see Table 1.0. For a description of each Action Item see Appendix 1.

Producing a food guide would require the RDN to research what other organizations are already doing with respect to local food guides and annual food tours. Once information is gathered, staff would need to arrange to meet with stakeholders to raise awareness about the AAP Action Items and to discuss what role the RDN might play in supporting/creating a local food guide and annual tour. Based on the outcome of the above, a strategy could be developed for the Board’s consideration.

Resource Requirements

RDN resource requirements are dependent on the outcome of the discussions with other organizations. The exploration of the Action Items associated with this project would not have a significant impact on staff resources. If it is found that the RDN could/should play a lead role in this project, it could be done with existing staff time. However, an amount would have to be budgeted to hire a consultant and for printing and promotion. Staff would seek funding from a number of different sources (See Appendix 1 of the AAP) to assist with the project.

Sub-project 2: Advocate for Changes in Farm Tax Assessment

This project addresses the following Action Item organized by RDN resource requirements.

Action Item	RDN Resource Requirements
1.1.f	2

For a description of RDN Resource Requirement rankings see Table 1.0. For a description of each Action Item see Appendix 1.

The purpose of this project is to advocate for changes in farm tax assessment to include the sale of value-added and agri-tourism products in determining primary production gross income.

This project requires the RDN to conduct research into farm tax assessment and further define what the issues to be addressed are. This approach may also include preparing a motion for consideration by the Union of British Columbia Municipalities requesting changes to the BCAA farm tax requirements.

Resource Requirements

This project can be completed with minimal impact on existing staff and resources and no additional budgetary requirements need to be considered.

Sub-project 3: Creation of an Agricultural Website

This project addresses the following Action Items organized by RDN resource requirements.

Action Item	RDN Resource Requirements	Action Item	RDN Resource Requirements
1.2.a	2	3.2.a	3
1.2.c	2	4.1.a	2
1.2.f	1	5.1.b	2
1.3.a	2	6.1.b	2
1.3.c	2	6.2.a	3
1.3.e	2		

For a description of RDN Resource Requirement rankings see Table 1.0. For a description of each Action Item see Appendix 1.

Of the 68 Action Items, 11 propose to share and distribute information in a way which is conducive to the use of a website. Therefore, the creation of an agricultural information website would address the intent of the AAP. The creation of a website involves both sourcing and creating information from a number of different sources. The initial step in this project is to contact senior governments and agricultural organizations to see what information is already available online and to discuss what role the RDN could play.

Resource Requirements

RDN Resource requirements are dependent on the outcome of the initial research which is required. Should it be found that there is a role for the RDN to play in creating or assisting with the creation of a website, additional staff time will be required along with an amount to be considered in future budget years, depending on the RDN’s role, for graphic design, advertising, staff time, meeting expenses, and web support.

Sub-project 4: Creation of an Agricultural Support Officer

This project addresses the following Action Item organized by RDN resource requirements.

Action Item	RDN Resource Requirements
2.1.a	3

For a description of RDN Resource Requirement rankings see Table 1.0. For a description of each Action Item see Appendix 1.

This project involves meeting with member municipalities and/or Economic Development Corporations to discuss the need and benefit of the creation of a new regional position titled Agricultural Support Officer.

The position's role could generally be to provide one-on-one support to businesses, to provide responsive and focused assistance to the agricultural sector, and to develop promotional and marketing opportunities. This position may also be well suited to coordinate initiating AAP Action Items in which the RDN is not the lead, but plays an active role. Other duties may also include being responsible for coordination of all AAC activities and processing applications to the Agricultural Land Commission.

The creation of an Agricultural Support Officer Position would ultimately increase service levels to the Agricultural Community and those interested in investing in the agricultural industry in the region.

Resource Requirements

If it is deemed desirable to create this new position, additional funding is required. The position may be considered as part time during an initial evaluation period and then extended to full time in future years if work load demands.

Sub-project 5: Consider Establishing an Agricultural Development Committee

This project addresses the following Action Item organized by RDN resource requirements.

Action Item	RDN Resource Requirements
2.1.b	3

For a description of RDN Resource Requirement rankings see Table 1.0. For a description of each Action Item see Appendix 1.

This project seeks to establish an Agricultural Development Committee (ADC) possibly as an extension of the City of Nanaimo's Economic Development Corporation (EDC) to improve communication, promote agriculture business development and initiatives, and identify and access funding opportunities. A similar approach may be considered for the Regional District of Nanaimo's northern communities with a preference given to a shared approach between the northern and southern communities.

Resource Requirements

The project would be initiated by Regional District of Nanaimo Staff. Discussions with the City of Nanaimo EDC would be required and further action would be dependent on the outcome of those discussions. If supported by Nanaimo EDC, it is anticipated that some staff time and resources would be required to obtain Board Approval and assist with the project.

Sub-project 6: Year Round Farmers Market

This project addresses the following Action Item organized by RDN resource requirements.

Action Item	RDN Resource Requirements
2.2.b	2

For a description of RDN Resource Requirement rankings see Table 1.0. For a description of each Action Item see Appendix 1.

Action Item 2.2.b supports the idea of having a year-round indoor farmer’s market, possibly at the VIEX Grounds. In response to this Action Item, this project involves meeting with the City of Nanaimo and other stakeholders to discuss this possibility. Future follow up may be required depending on the outcome of the discussions with the City.

Resource Requirements

Minimal staff time is required to initiate the discussions with the City of Nanaimo and other interested parties. Should support grow for the project, additional staff time and resources may be required.

Sub-project 7: Right to Farm Act Education

This project addresses the following Action Item organized by RDN resource requirements.

Action Item	RDN Resource Requirements
6.1.a	2

For a description of RDN Resource Requirement rankings see Table 1.0. For a description of each Action Item see Appendix 1.

This project involves meeting the Ministry of Agriculture and Agricultural Land Commission to determine what is already being done with respect to raising awareness about the *Right to Farm* Act and what role the RDN could play.

Resource Requirements

This project can be completed with existing staff and resources.

Project 4: On-farm water-related Infrastructure

This project addresses the following Action Item organized by RDN resource requirements.

Action Item	RDN Resource Requirements
4.2.a	2
4.2.c	2

Resource Requirement rankings see Table 1.0. For a description of each Action Item see Appendix 1.

This project, in response to Action Items 4.2.a and 4.2.c, was rated the highest priority within the large study category. This initial step in this project is to meet with the AAC and other stakeholders to find out more information about what the concern is and what role the RDN may play in addressing it.

Resource requirements

Resource requirements are unknown at this time and will be evaluated through the initial review. Should it be found that the RDN can play a role, a proposal will be included in future work plans and budgets.

Project 5: Invasive Species Management

This project addresses the following Action Item organized by RDN resource requirements.

Action Item	RDN Resource Requirements
5.2.a	4

Resource Requirement rankings see Table 1.0. For a description of each Action Item see Appendix 1.

This project in response to Action Item 5.2.A, involves researching what senior governments and other organizations are already doing and providing assistance where appropriate.

Resource Requirements

The initial step associated with this project could be handled with existing staff time should the Board wish to make this a priority. It should be noted that Invasive Species Management has been identified as an Action Item that is most appropriately addressed by another agency or organization. Therefore, the RDN would likely play a limited role.

Project 6: Composting Facility

This project addresses the following Action Item organized by RDN resource requirements.

Action Item	RDN Resource Requirements
1.2.d	2
5.3.a	3
5.3.b	3

Resource Requirement rankings see Table 1.0. For a description of each Action Item see Appendix 1.

The AAC identified three Action Items related to composting initiatives. The initial phase of the project, that would be the primary focus for this work plan, would be to hold meetings with relevant stakeholders across the region to gauge the need and support for composting facilities. Should there be a need and general support the project could be considered in more detail in future work plans and budgets.

If it is found to be in demand and generally supported, future phases of this project may include a feasibility study looking at the possibility of connecting the existing regional organics composting program with the current composting needs of the agriculture and aquaculture communities. The intent could be to explore the establishment of a shared regional composting facility where agricultural wastes could be incorporated into the existing organic feedstock and be processed into nutrient-rich compost, which could be made available for application to farm land to increase nutrient levels. The project could also include the identification of potential composting facility sites and promotion of local composting.

Budget

The RDN Board will consider undertaking one or more action items each year, starting in 2013 with actions that can be completed in a short timeframe with existing staff resources. In subsequent years implementation will require both existing staff and additional resources to be considered as a part of the budgetary process for each year. Please refer to the attached work plan for more information on future budgetary considerations related to AAP implementation.

Remaining Action Items

The 2013 – 2016 Action Plan represents Actions to be considered during the first work plan period. If this work plan were implemented steps will have been taken to address 40 out of the 68 prioritized Action. There would continue to be a number of other Action Items that do not fit within one of the identified projects and will remain outstanding at the end of the first work plan. These items may be reconsidered in subsequent AAP Implementation Work Plans. The remaining Action Items are grouped into two categories: Large Studies and Other Actions, which will be considered in future work plans as implementation of the AAP will be on-going (See Attachment 2).

Large Studies

There are a number of Action Items which require the RDN to undertake a research study. Further investigation into each of these Action Items is required prior to committing funds or staff time to ensure that the information does not already exist and that it would result in a new benefit to agriculture and/or aquaculture in the region. These items generally require consideration in future budget years to hire consultant and/or cover other associated expenses. The AAC may want to make a recommendation on these items for inclusion in future work plans.

Other Actions

A number of Action Items were grouped into an ‘Other Actions’ category. These are Action Items which do not fit within one of the identified projects or are Action Items where the RDN is not the lead organization. The AAC may want to reconsider these items for future work plans.

Flexibility

It is anticipated that during the first work plan period opportunities may arise to address Action Items not included within this Work Plan. Staff time and resources will be the primary determining factors in deciding whether to pursue any additional Action Items that may arise. Priority shall be given to those Action Items identified in this Work Plan.

Proposed Work Plan

The following represents a proposed Work Plan for 2013-2016. Please note where additional staff time and other resources are required, consideration would be given to these Action Items in future budget years. Reallocation of staff time and resources as well as reprioritization is required to implement the proposed work plan.

Agricultural Area Plan Implementation Proposed 2013 – 2016 Work Plan						
			2013 Actions	2014 Actions	2015 Actions	2016 Actions
Project Name						
1	Bylaw and Policy Updates	No net loss policy <i>(Item 1.1.b)</i>				
		Notes				
		Residential Siting Guidelines <i>(Item 1.1.e)</i>				
		Notes				
		Agri-tourism Review <i>(Item 2.2.c)</i>				
		Notes				
		Water-related infrastructure zoning review <i>(Item 4.2.a)</i>				
		Notes				
		Aquifer				

Agricultural Area Plan Implementation 2014 – 2016 Action Plan

Agricultural Area Plan Implementation Proposed 2013 – 2016 Work Plan						
			2013 Actions	2014 Actions	2015 Actions	2016 Actions
Project Name						
		Protection Review <i>(Item 7.1.d)</i>	Notes			
		Monitor ALC Policy <i>(Item 7.1.g)</i>	Notes	Ongoing		
		Agricultural Policy Review <i>(Item 7.2.a)</i>	Notes			
		Farmland Protection DPAs <i>(Item 7.2.d)</i>	Notes			
		RGS, OCP, Zoning Consistency <i>(Item 7.2.c)</i>	Notes			
		Sign Bylaw Review <i>(Item 7.3.f)</i>	Notes			
		Barriers to Agricultural product processing <i>(Item 7.3.c)</i>	Notes			
		Review policies to ensure agriculture is encouraged <i>(Item 7.3.d)</i>	Notes			
		Consider Agricultural Land Use Designation <i>(Item 7.4.a)</i>	Notes			
		Reduce Regulatory Barriers for Holding Tanks <i>(Item 7.4.d)</i>	Notes			
2	Amend the AAC Terms of Reference		Notes:	This Action Item is already in progress.		

Agricultural Area Plan Implementation 2014 – 2016 Action Plan

3	Agricultural Promotion and Economic Development		
		Notes:	This is an ongoing project.
4	On-farm water-related infrastructure		
		Notes	Determine current status and RDN role.
5	Invasive Species Management		
		Notes:	Determine current status and RDN role.
6	Exploration of Composting		
		Notes:	Determine current status and RDN role.

Attachment 1 – Action Item Description

Project 1: Bylaw and Policy Updates

Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
1.1.b	3	Consider adopting a “no net loss to agriculture within the same bioregion” criterion when evaluating land development proposals, whether they are within the ALR or adjacent to it. Ensure that any farmland removed is replaced with equivalent Agricultural Capability soils or better. Use the same criterion to plan transportation, drainage and utility corridors.	Research and develop options. Liaise with the ALC and Province to ensure they would consider the policy in making decisions. Likely would go into OCPs within Agriculture Land Use Designation or as general agricultural policies.	Planning	High

Agricultural Area Plan Implementation 2014 – 2016 Action Plan

Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
1.1.e	2	Develop guidelines for siting and size of residential uses in the ALR.	Research BMP's and review zoning bylaws. Develop a discussion paper with options, hold a series of Public Meetings or other means of obtaining community input. Draft amendment bylaws and proceed with adoption process.	Planning	High
2.2.c	2	Link agri-tourism activities to farm stays, Willing Workers on Organic Farms (WWOOFing), and working holiday programmes and coordinate with the Economic Development Strategy and with other tourism promotion activities and include aquaculture.	Review OCPs and Zoning Bylaws for anything that would prevent or discourage agri-tourism. If necessary make amendments.	Planning	High
4.2.a	2	Support efforts to allow farmers to develop on-farm water-related infrastructure to help with farm operations (such as storage,	Review current zoning bylaws for barriers to water-related infrastructure. If necessary make amendments.	Planning	High

Agricultural Area Plan Implementation 2014 – 2016 Action Plan

Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
		holding tanks, ponds, winter water surplus storage).			
7.1.d	2	Strengthen the RDN development approval process to better consider the potential water-related impacts of new development on agriculture and aquaculture (e.g. runoff and rain water management) and ensure that agricultural water supply is not negatively impacted. Establish processes to address water management issues and impacts if they do occur.	Conduct a thorough review of all water/aquifer protection policies and regulations. Look for inconsistencies and opportunities to increase protection. Develop a proposal and present it to the various communities. Initiate bylaw amendments if required.	Planning	Medium
7.1.g	1	Monitor Agricultural Land Commission/ALR policy changes and update policies and bylaws as needed.	Periodic check and tracking of changes to ALC policy.	Planning	Low

Agricultural Area Plan Implementation 2014 – 2016 Action Plan

Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
7.2.a	1	Continue to provide support for agriculture and aquaculture as legitimate activities that increase the RDN's long-term sustainability and resilience as outlined in the RGS and OCPs.	Internal review of the RGS, and Official Community Plans to ensure that these Plans support agriculture.	Planning	High
7.2.d	1	Consider adopting a Development Permit Area (DPA) for Farmland Protection in the OCPs for Electoral Areas C, F, and H to ensure consistency throughout the RDN for requirements of development (e.g. vegetative buffers, consideration of road endings) within properties adjacent to ALR land for development permit and subdivision applications on properties adjacent to ALR land. Request member municipalities to adopt similar DPA guidelines	Review existing OCPs and develop a draft Farm Land Protection Development Permit Area. Hold public information meetings in affected areas prior to initiating amendments.	Planning	High

Agricultural Area Plan Implementation 2014 – 2016 Action Plan

Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
		for Farmland Protection.			
7.2.c	2	Strive for greater consistency between land use designations in the RGS and OCPs and zoning in the Zoning Bylaws for ALR land. This may involve creating an Agriculture Land Use Designation at the RGS and OCP levels, as is supported by Electoral Area 'A's OCP. That way, if land is removed from the ALR, but is still designated and zoned locally for agriculture, use of that land will be limited to activities outlined in the Agriculture designation and associated zone, such as farming and silviculture.	Review and compare the RGS, OCPS, and zoning bylaw to ensure consistency. Write a report and include a potential Agricultural Land Use Designation. Look at minimum parcel sizes for ALR land. Provide opportunities for public input.	Planning	High

Agricultural Area Plan Implementation 2014 – 2016 Action Plan

Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
7.3.f	2	Update regional and local sign bylaw(s) to allow farm businesses to: Advertise farms on farm properties and along roadsides; Identify agricultural and aquaculture areas, similar to groundwater or watershed signs; Engage the public in respecting farm traffic; Provide directions to local farmers markets; Develop themed signs such as a "Wine Route" or "Circle Farm Tour" or "Entering a Farm Fresh Area."	Review sign bylaws and determine what the Province is already doing and what the RDN's role could be. If necessary prepare a bylaw and report to the board. Meet with agriculture/aquiculture organizations and the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure to discuss what role the RDN could play in supporting agricultural signage.	Planning	High
7.3.c	2	Encourage the development of processing, warehousing, distribution facilities, and retail/sales (including signage) for local food products by ensuring that these activities are recognized as permitted uses in local zoning bylaws (e.g. allow	Review OCPs and zoning Bylaws to ensure that there are no barriers to the establishment of agricultural product processing or warehousing. Develop draft policy/regulations and seek community input, and if generally supported proceed with potential amendments.	Planning	Medium

Agricultural Area Plan Implementation 2014 – 2016 Action Plan

Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
		opportunities for combined or cooperative on-farm processing and sales).			
7.3.d	1	Ensure all local policies and guidelines encourage Agriculture and Aquaculture	Review existing RGS and OCPs and note any inconsistencies for future amendment.	Planning	Medium
7.4.a	1	Ensure that all policy documents make it clear that neither a subdivision approving officer nor the ALC is obliged to approve subdivision applications that meet minimum lot sizes in the ALR.	Review OCPs and zoning bylaws and consider adding new policies.	Planning	High
7.4.d	1	Reduce regulatory restrictions for farmers who wish to create water holding tanks, detention ponds, or other water-related infrastructure on ALR land.	Meet with AAC to define the issues and the barriers. If necessary review OCPs and zoning bylaws and make any necessary, changes to remove regulatory barriers.	Planning and GIS	High

Project 2: AAC Terms of Reference

Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
1.1.a	1	Consider updating the AAC Terms of Reference to allow the AAC to make comments on every application (exclusion, non-farm use, subdivision) that is forwarded to the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC). Precedence for the Terms of Reference and protocols exist in many other jurisdictions.	Amend TOR to allow AAC to comment to Board on applications.	Planning	High
7.2.b	1	Consider adopting the ALC recommendation of rejecting ALR exclusion and non-farm use applications if they do not align with Electoral Area OCP land use designations and/or zoning, rather than forwarding applications directly to the ALC for decision-making.; or consider adopting a policy to comment on ALR applications, perhaps in combination with a revised Terms of Reference for the AAC (see Recommendation 1.1 A in this Plan).	Conduct research and write a report to the Board.	Planning	High

Attachment 1 – Action Item Description

Project 3: Agricultural Promotion and Economic Development

Sub-Project: Local Food Guide					
Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What’s Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
2.2.a	2	Create and distribute a local food guide or directory, similar to what is produced in the Cowichan Valley and Southern Vancouver Island, and include aquaculture. Ensure that it is available online. This would assist not only the public, but also farmers to know what types of activities are occurring in their area and potentially create opportunities for collaboration and cooperation. Promote those farms that participate in the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) to build consumer awareness of the stewardship efforts by farmers. Work with the tourism industry to develop ‘taste of RDN’ tours, guidebooks, cookbooks and promotions at local and regional restaurants, convention/hotel facilities and other venues.	Meet with farmers, producers, etc. to find out what is currently being done and what role the RDN could play.	Planning	High
2.2.d	4	Develop a Circle Farm Tour, Slow Food Cycle Tour, and other events for the RDN that take members of the public to different farms and highlight farming activities.	Meet with Agricultural and Economic Development Organizations to gauge interest for a Farm Tour. Provide assistance where necessary. For Example, advertising within the Recreation Activity Guides.	Parks and Recreation	High

Sub-project: Write a Letter to BCAA					
Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
1.1.f	2	Advocate BC Assessment Authority (BCAA) for changes in farm tax assessment to include the sale of value-added and agri-tourism products in determining primary production gross income. Currently only the sale of raw farm products are included in the calculation of income, and this threshold is often too high for small farms to achieve farm status for tax purposes.	Research the issue, which may include meeting with farmers and BCAA. Consider writing a letter to BCAA and/or preparing a resolution for UBCM.	Planning	High

Sub-Project: Website					
Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
1.2.a	2	Create a webpage for agricultural information and related issues that extends from the RDN website. Use the webpage to promote local farm directory, including an 'operation/farmer of the month' feature, seasonal local food recipes, 'fact sheets' and videos created for the AAP. The directory could also be included as an insert in local newspapers.	Investigate what information is currently available online. Based on this investigation consider if an additional web page is necessary. If so. work with a graphic designer and Web Master to develop a layout. Prepare content. Collect a range of useful information from various Ministries and Agricultural Organizations. Oversee the construction of a website.	Planning	High
1.2.c	2	Conduct/undertake the uploading of all provincial soil capability and soil series map data so that farmers can investigate and identify agronomic opportunities and constraints.	The first step for the remaining Action Items within this sub-project are dependent on the outcome of Action Item 1.2.a.	GIS	Medium
1.2.f	1	Assist farmers in accessing other sources of information and funding that result in the implementation of environmental farm management practices.		Planning	Medium

Sub-Project: Website					
Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
1.3.a	2	Coordinate a farmland clearinghouse or land-linking database to connect potential farmers with voluntary landowners and link it to a regional agriculture website. Include a database maintenance strategy.		Planning	High
1.3.c	2	Provide information to both farmers and non-farming ALR landowners about different types of land use agreements (licences, leases, profit-a-prendres, and memorandums of understanding) to ensure that the maximum amount of farmland is in its most productive use regardless of ownership.		Planning	High
1.3.e	2	Provide access to research and information regarding alternative farm business arrangements such as strata's, cooperatives, and corporations and alternative land ownership/tenure models.		Planning	High

Sub-Project: Website					
Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
3.2.a	3	Improve the identification of local agricultural and aquaculture job opportunities for youth, especially seasonal opportunities for increased labour. This could be a simple internet-based local labour posting service or pool that better connects food industry workers and employers on a regional basis. The Canadian Agri-Labour Pool could be used as a template to create a similar regional or Vancouver Island-based system.		Planning	High
4.1.a	2	Widely advertise and share the in-depth online map data available on RDN watersheds (WaterMap) and through the BC Water Resources Atlas to regional water users.		Water Services	High
5.1.b	2	Encourage farmers to enroll in the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) to expand agricultural best practices throughout farm operations in the RDN.		Planning	Medium

Sub-Project: Website					
Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
6.2.a	3	Assist with the promotion of agricultural and aquaculture events and festivals in the RDN with other Vancouver Island events. Encourage agriculture/aquaculture-focused public education activities, events and celebrations. Identify existing activities and events that could feature local agriculture and aquaculture.		Planning	Medium
6.1.b	2	Use mainstream and social media in promoting local agriculture and aquaculture business to raise awareness of local agriculture.		Planning	High

Sub-Project: Agricultural Development Committee					
Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
2.1.b	3	Consider establishing an Agricultural Development Committee (ADC), possibly as an extension of the City of Nanaimo's Economic Development Corporation (EDC) or through the rural economic development office, with a mandate to improve communication, promote agricultural and aquaculture business development and initiatives, and identify and access funding opportunities. As first order of business, have the ADC pursue an Economic Development Strategy for agriculture in the region.	Meet with member Municipalities, Economic Development Corporation, and other stakeholders to gauge interest in establishing an Agricultural Development Committee.	Planning	High

Sub-Project: Farmers' Market					
Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
2.2.b	2	Support a year-round indoor farmers' market, possibly at the VIEx grounds.	Investigate what is currently being considered region-wide. Determine what role the RDN could play.	Planning	High

Sub-Project: Right to Farm Education					
Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
6.1.a	3	Partner with realtors and the Real Estate Board to: Encourage the real estate industry to provide education for realtors to market farmland for farming; Educate the real estate and development industry regarding the <i>Right to Farm Act</i> . This could involve producing a brochure and communicating with realtors, and lobbying for disclosure statements to be included for property sales adjacent to farms; Develop information materials that could be provided to new or future residents who have purchased or are considering purchasing ALR property or property adjacent to or nearby farmland or aquaculture operations.	Determine what information is currently available and what is currently being done. Meet with the Real Estate Board to gauge interest in public education and what role the RDN could play.	Planning	High

Sub-Project: Consider the creation of an Agricultural Support Officer					
Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
2.1.a	3	Secure funding for and create the position of Agricultural Support Officer either through the RDN in collaboration with member municipalities or through an Economic Development Corporation. The role would involve one-on-one support to businesses; responsive and focused assistance to the agriculture sector; and development of promotional and marketing opportunities.	Work with other agencies to consider need and benefit of an Agricultural Support Officer. Research options and if necessary prepare a Board report. Implement recommendations as approved by the Board.	Unknown	High

Attachment 1 – Action Item Description

Project 4: On-farm water-related infrastructure

Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
4.2.a & c	2	Support efforts to allow farmers to develop on-farm water-related infrastructure to help with farm operations (such as storage, holding tanks, ponds, winter water surplus storage). And Encourage farmers to use provincial and/or	Determine what the issues and concerns are, what information is currently available, and what role the RDN could play.	Planning	High/Medium

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Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
		federal programs to develop shared facilities and infrastructure (e.g., water storage, distribution). Access any available funding sources such as infrastructure programs to support shared storage facilities and water distribution systems among individual farms.			

Attachment 1 – Action Item Description

Project 5: Alien and Invasive Species Management

Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
5 .2.a	4	Develop a management strategy for over-abundant, alien, and invasive species on agricultural lands. This management strategy could include recommendations for management of invasive species within non-agricultural lands.	Research what senior governments and other organizations are already doing. Provide support where appropriate.	Planning	High

Attachment 1 – Action Item Description

Project 6: Exploration of Composting

Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
1.2.d	2	Distribute information regarding farm waste composting and the availability of local compost to farms that need to improve soil structure.	Compile information on nutrient needs and the rationale for shared composting facilities.	Planning/Solid Waste Services	Low
5.3.a	3	Work with member municipalities to identify a location for a composting facility that would accept compostable wastes (plant material, manure, fish wastes) from farms and aquaculture operations.	Meet with the farmers and aquaculture operators to determine needs. Based on findings proceed with next steps.	Solid Waste Services	High
5.3.b	3	Investigate opportunities to connect regional composting and zero waste initiatives with the current nutrient cycling (composting) needs of farmers and aquaculture operators so that excess waste can be made available to those in need of extra nutrients. Identify any regulatory	Write an RFP and Hire a consultant to conduct a study. Coordinate the project and present the results to the Board and Member Municipalities.	Solid Waste Services	High

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Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
		impediments that may exist in achieving this goal.			

Attachment 2 – Remaining Action Items

Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
1.1.c	2	Work with the province to create financial deterrents, profit recapture taxes, or penalties applied to ALR that is for sale for non-agricultural land use.	Meet with the Provincial Government to explore how the two levels of government can address this issue.	n/a	High
1.1.d	2	Encourage Member municipalities to form AACs and appoint liaison staff to sit on the RDN AAC.	Write a letter to Member Municipalities requesting a presentation to Council. Make a presentation to council regarding the AAP and desire to have AACs formed.	n/a	High
1.2.e	2	Promote and encourage research into small and medium-sized farming strategies.	Provide in-kind support where needed.	n/a	Medium
1.3.b	2	Ease efforts of aquaculture operators in securing licence tenure by hosting consultation sessions with First Nations and other government agencies.	Meet with the Provincial Government, Aquaculture operators, and First Nations to determine the extent of the concerns. If needed organize a meeting between the parties.	n/a	High

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Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
1.3.d	2	Assist farm families dealing with the challenge of farm succession and financial assistance by connecting them with professional support services and information.	Research the available services. Determine the role for the RDN.	n/a	High
2.2.f	4	Assist the agricultural and aquaculture community with the development of a common local identity, logo, or brand that can be used to highlight RDN farms and their farm products and differentiate them from other Island farms and farming areas.	Meet with agriculture and aquaculture community to determine what role the RDN could play.	n/a	Medium
2.3.a	4	Support and improve linkages to Vancouver Island Produce and other farmer-owned brokerage firms or co-ops to: Co-ordinate production and on-stream timing, Provide a central order desk for local retailers, Provide information about sources of supply and on-farm markets, Co-ordinate transportation of inputs and goods for sale.	Provide in-kind support where needed.	n/a	High
2.3.e	4	Set up a system of coordinated distribution for local food products to reach retailers and restaurants. Further develop relationships between RDN farmers, aquaculture operators, and hotels and	Provide assistance on an as needed basis.	n/a	Low

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Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
		restaurants on the island. Some food distributors, such as Sysco and Gordon Food Services (Neptune), are assisting by developing contracts with local producers for restaurants who want to profile local foods.			
2.4.a	4	Meet with the Comox Valley Farmers Institute, who operates a similar equipment sharing endeavour, to discuss opportunities and challenges.	Provide in-kind support where needed.	n/a	High
2.5.a	4	Develop a database of local on-farm, aquaculture, and commercial processing facilities in the region. Investigate the feasibility of pursuing community kitchen/other shared processing initiatives to encourage local value-added opportunities.	Provide in-kind support where needed.	n/a	High
3.1.b	4	Support apprenticeships, mentoring, incubator farms, and other farm-based or aquaculture-based employment programs. This could include: industry-based training programs (e.g. for dairy technicians, shellfish operators); Step-Up - a federal mentoring program; Willing Workers on Organic Farms; and VIU's Culinary Arts Program. This will assist	Provide in-kind support where needed.	Planning	Medium

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Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
		new/emerging farmers to gain experience prior to renting or purchasing land. Investigate opportunities for farmers to be reimbursed for time spent working with apprentices.			
4.1.b	2	Communicate the progress of the RDN's upcoming Agriculture Water Demand Model project with Farmer Institutes, the aquaculture industry, and other agricultural stakeholders once it is launched and as it progresses.	Develop a Consultation Plan in conjunction with the agricultural industry.	Water Services/Planning	High
5.2.d	3	Advocate to the Ministry of Environment to develop carrying capacity parameters and population management strategies for wildlife in the RDN that are a nuisance to farmers, including consideration of strategies used in other jurisdictions. AND Develop a public communications tool to inform both farmers and the community about how wildlife is affecting farming, discussing issues and possible solutions such as greenbelts and	Meet with farmers to find out what the concerns are. Meet with the Ministry of Environment or whoever has responsibility to find out what is currently happening. Find out what role the RDN could play.	Planning	Medium

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Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
		wildlife corridors (possibly web-site based).			
5.2.e	4	Investigate the feasibility of establishing a farmland-wildlife stewardship organization that delivers programs to recognize valued habitat preservation for wildlife.	Provide in-kind support where needed.	n/a	Medium
5.3.c	3	Discourage large-scale slash burns and encourage efforts to reduce CO2 emissions from farming activities by promoting green composting, wood re-use, agroforestry techniques, shelterbelts, and alley cropping.	Research options on what role the RDN could play. Consider implementing best option.	Unknown	High
6.1.g	4	Partner with School Districts to add agriculture and aquaculture into the District school curriculum and extend this up to the University and College level by supporting the provincial Agriculture in the Classroom program;	Provide in-kind support where necessary.	Planning	Medium

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Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
		<p>encouraging schools to grow food on school grounds; developing farm-based learning opportunities for credit for high school students; reviving/enhancing 4H programs through the school system; encouraging school policies that provide and promote local food choices for lunch and snack programs; and supporting the creation of scholarships in agriculture/aquaculture to a Grade 12 student interested in pursuing agricultural studies.</p>			
7.1.c	1	<p>Continue to provide pre-application assistance to farmers requiring approvals for farm related structures and other works that fall under regional authority where applicable (i.e. farm buildings are exempt from building permit process).</p>	<p>Find out in what instances RDN approvals are required. Meet with applicants prior to making an application.</p>	Planning	High

Large Studies					
Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
1.3.f	3	Work with the province to set up an agricultural land bank to purchase farmland from retiring farmers and sell to new farmers.	Meet with farmers and member municipalities to determine interest in developing an agricultural land bank. Determine what role the RDN, senior government, farmers, and member municipalities could play.	Planning	Low
2.1.c	4	Initiate a regional market research project to identify: Current consumer perceptions, Competitive advantages (e.g., organic, quality, freshness), Market gaps, new product niches and opportunities, Trends and opportunities for processed and value-added products, Potential for expansion of alternative marketing channels.	Support the research on an as needed basis by assisting with information.	Planning	Medium
4.1.d	2	Review current groundwater inventory and mapping and assess potential opportunities for irrigation from aquifer sources.	Review available information and assess opportunities for irrigation. Meet with Vancouver Island University to gauge interest in the project. Create a document that can be used by	Water Services	High

Large Studies					
Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
			others.		
4.1.e	2	Review the feasibility of reusing wastewater from municipal waste treatment systems, rainwater discharge, or other large water-using activities for use as irrigation water.	Host a meeting with farmers, the province, and other potential stakeholders to determine what the RDN's role could be.	Wastewater Services	High
4.2.e	3	Use the Ministry of Agriculture Watercourse Classification in Agricultural Areas, and Agricultural Ditch Maintenance Guidelines to help determine drainage priorities and options.	Identify farm areas where drainage is an issue. Work with farmers and agricultural agencies to address concerns.	Water Services	Low

Large Studies					
Action #	RDN Resource Requirements	Brief Description	What's Involved	Lead Department	AAP Priority
5.4.b	3	Explore the role of agriculture in supplying carbon credits and supporting carbon storage techniques. Develop a pilot carbon sequestration incentive program that helps the RDN reduce its carbon footprint and meet Bill 27 requirements. Reinvest carbon credits back into agriculture.	Hire a consultant to conduct a study. Coordinate the project.	Energy and Sustainability	Medium
5.5.b	3	Encourage the development of on-farm energy production programs, which give producers the power to assess and plan renewable energy options for their farms.	Investigate what information currently exists. If there is a need, write an RFP and Hire a consultant to prepare a renewable on farm energy guidebook.	Energy and Sustainability	High
7.4.e	3	Consider developing Integrated Storm water Management Plans (ISMPs) in watersheds that drain agricultural areas.	Meet with the Ministry of Agriculture and Agricultural Land Commission to determine what information already exists and what role the RDN could play.	Water Services	High
8.1.c	3	Investigate the feasibility of implementing flood control strategies for farmland located in flood areas.	Gather information and research the issue and develop potential options. Further action depends on what is determined through initial investigation.	Planning	Medium

