
TO: Jeremy Holm
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DATE: April 23, 2012

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SUBJECT: Draft Agricultural Area Plan

PURPOSE

To provide information about the completion of the draft Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) Agricultural Area Plan, and a proposed workshop for the Regional Board to discuss the draft Plan.

BACKGROUND

In February 2012, staff provided an update to the Board on Phase 1 of the RDN Agricultural Area Plan (AAP), the completion of a technical background report. The report provided the results of a preliminary Agricultural Land Use Inventory, a statistical profile of agriculture and aquaculture in the region, and an examination of the biophysical, socio-economic, and regulatory context for food production in the RDN.

In March 2012, the project Consultant, Upland Consulting, submitted Phase 2 of the AAP, the draft Plan entitled, "Regional District of Nanaimo Agricultural Area Plan - Draft". This draft was subsequently reviewed by staff and the AAP Steering Committee (the Agricultural Advisory Committee), and amended further, as circulated to the Board. The draft Plan builds on the results of the background report (Phase 1), and includes the following information:

- A review of local land use policies and regulations;
- Discussion about the public engagement process;
- A vision statement for agriculture in the RDN;
- Goals and objectives to achieve the vision;
- Recommendations for implementation actions;
- An implementation strategy;
- A monitoring and evaluation plan;
- Additional resources.

DISCUSSION

The objectives of the AAP were to provide clear and implementable recommended actions towards the goal of enhancing local food production in the RDN. Based on extensive public input and background research, the draft Plan identifies seven broad goals:

1. Protect and enhance the agricultural land base in the RDN.
2. Strengthen the local agriculture and aquaculture economy.
3. Improve training, skills, labour opportunities in the RDN.
4. Improve opportunities for on-farm water resource management.

5. Address environmental sustainability, wildlife, and climate change challenges in the RDN.
6. Promote agriculture and aquaculture through education and celebration.
7. Support agriculture and aquaculture in land use regulations and policies.

For each goal, the draft Plan then identifies specific objectives and recommended actions to be taken with an indication of the priority, timeframe, key players, and level of resources required to achieve each objective. This information is presented in detail in the Recommended Actions for Implementation tables in the Plan. These recommendations also specify when the RDN's role as a key player would be to lead a particular action or support others taking action to implement the Plan objectives. In order to effectively discuss the draft Plan and these recommendations with the Board, staff recommends a Board workshop be held in May 2012.

ALTERNATIVES

1. To receive the "Regional District of Nanaimo Agricultural Area Plan - Draft" prepared by Upland Consulting, and to participate in a Board workshop on May 15, 2012 to discuss the draft Plan.
2. To provide staff with alternative direction.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

As discussed in this report, the draft Agricultural Area Plan includes a variety of recommendations and implementation actions for consideration by the Board. The resource implications of these recommendations will need to be reviewed by the Board as part of the Board's decision on implementation of the Plan. Further dialogue about the draft Plan and financial implications is proposed to occur in a Board workshop to be held in May 2012.

SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS

The project Consultant has completed Phase 2 of the RDN Agricultural Area Plan (AAP) with the completion of a draft Plan. The draft Plan outlines the existing regulatory framework affecting agriculture in the RDN; a community vision for agriculture; seven broad goals and supporting objectives and actions for implementation; as well as implementation and evaluation strategies. The draft Plan recommends several actions in which the RDN would participate in either a leading or supportive role in implementing the Plan objectives. In order to effectively discuss the draft Plan and these recommendations with the Board, staff recommends a Board workshop be held in May 2012.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board receive the "Regional District of Nanaimo Agricultural Area Plan - Draft" prepared by Upland Consulting, and participate in a Board workshop on May 15, 2012 to discuss the draft Plan.

Report Writer

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