



REGIONAL DISTRICT OF CENTRAL KOOTENAY

BOARD REPORT

DATE OF REPORT: May 21, 2015
DATE & TYPE OF MEETING: May 21, 2015 Open Regular Board Meeting
AUTHOR: Sangita Sudan, General Manager of Development Services
SUBJECT: REVIEW OF RDCK AGRICULTURAL AREA PLAN
FILE:

SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide the RDCK Board with a summary of recommendations and staff comments put forward in the Regional Agricultural Area Plan (RAAP) which was adopted in principal by the Board in 2011.

SECTION 2: BACKGROUND / ANALYSIS

Background

The Regional Agricultural Area Plan (RAAP) was developed over a year and was initiated in June of 2010. The Plan was co-funded by Investment Agriculture Fund and the RDCK Community Sustainability Service. The recommendations put forward were based on extensive consultation via an online survey. Meetings were held with farmers, food distributors, consumers and farm/food advocates throughout the region. A Steering Committee was formed to inform the Plan, with representatives from the farming community, RDCK Directors in Area C and K and the General Manager of Development Services. The RAAP was "adopted in Principal" by the RDCK Board in 2011. Since its adoption the RDCK has undertaken review of 3 Official Community Plan and Zoning bylaws in the Creston Valley, developed an OCP for Area E and are currently reviewing community plans and zoning for Area G (rural Salmo) and the Townsite of Ainsworth in Area D. In all of these processes the RAAP was brought forward as a reference to guide advisory planning commissions on developing agriculture policies for their community (e.g. development permit areas and zoning regulation).

Most recently on April 26th RDCK staff and area Directors were invited to participate in a food systems workshop hosted by Interior Health Authority, and facilitated by various local and provincial food systems organizations and funders. The objective of the workshop was to bring together regional funders and key partners to discuss the advancement of strategic collaboration around food security efforts. The premise is that in order to have food security you need a health food system. Foods systems include: production, distribution and aggregation, processing, marketing, markets and purchasing, preparation and consumption and resource and waste recovery. One idea that received a high level of interest and discussion was around a regional/municipal food policy council.

Analysis of RAAP

The 4 main goals of the RAAP are:

Goal 1 - To identify priority actions to support the viability of farming in the District

Goal 2 - To ensure that the agricultural capability of the area is realized; and

Goal 3 - To create a secure food supply for the region

Goal 4 - To implement the Agriculture Plan.

Each goal references several recommendations. For ease of presentation the table below lists the recommendations based on key themes identified by staff and includes staff comments. Some recommendations were already in place at the time the RAAP was adopted in principle while others are directed at advocacy or are the responsibility of a specified Ministry or organization.

Regional Agricultural Area Plan Recommendations by Themes

Updates made on January 15, 2016 - noted in Bold Italics

THEMES		RECOMMENDATIONS	
Review Land Use Policies, Regulations and Resources			
Zoning			
Staff Comment	Allow on farm processing of livestock and/or other agricultural crops.	Enabled in AG zones in EA A, B, C, I, J, K; and where there is no zoning and on ALR land.	
Staff Comment	Review restrictions on livestock numbers in rural non-agricultural zones.	Keeping of Farm Animals is noted in Division 6, section 613 and is permitted in all residential zones with restrictions based on lot size and type of livestock.	
Staff Comment	Incorporate a maximum setback for residential buildings on agricultural lands.	Setbacks are based on the varied topography in region in addition to ALR guidelines, zoning where applicable, Floodplain Bylaw.	
Staff Comment	Discourage subdivision of agricultural land (consolidate, contiguous lots).	All AG zones restrict subdivision based on soil types, Agricultural use and Community Values.	
Staff Comment	Create zoning for farmers markets and street vending of local foods in specific zones.	Sale of on site grown horticultural produce is enabled in all zones; commercial zones permit markets.	
OCPs			
Staff Comment	Encourage protection of agricultural land.	OCPs and zoning where applicable encourage agriculture where it is viable.	
Staff Comment	Incorporate agriculture and food systems into community plans.	OCPs have incorporated agriculture policy.	
Staff Comment	Develop educational materials to promote and support no build clauses on agricultural land.	RDCK does not have "no build" clause on agricultural land.	
Building			
Staff Comment	Exemptions for building permit fees on structures that meet national building code definition of farm buildings with low occupancy.	Building permits are not required for structures less than 100 square feet and those of temporary nature.	
GIS			
Staff Comment	Create and maintain a database from the Creston Valley Agricultural Inventory.	Data was incorporated into OCPs and Zoning; It is maintained weekly by GIS with the BC Assessment Roll updates.	<i>The RDCK in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture will be undertaking a agricultural land use inventory and water demand model for the whole</i>

	regional district.
Utilities	
Staff Comment	<p>Review Water Smart Program to apply in other RDCK Communities. Yes would be a benefit for Region; currently program shared with Erickson & Creston <i>Pending Board approval the water smart program will be expanded in 2016 to include RDCK water systems located in the rural areas in vicinity of Castlegar and Nelson</i></p>
Staff Comment	<p>Water conservation in agricultural sector and providing resources. This is part of the water smart program in Erickson for Agricultural lands; the Ministry of Agricultural Water Demand Model was proposed in 2013 and 2014. The premise of the model is to determine water demand based on crop type. <i>The RDCK will be undertaking this work in 2016 in partnership with Ministry of Agriculture to develop water demand models for watershed with high agricultural use.</i></p>
Staff Comment	<p>Review RDCK water management plan(s) to incorporate agricultural water needs. The RDCK Water Management Plan was adopted in 2010 and implemented in policy development for water systems acquisition and sewerage.</p>
Other	
Staff Comment	<p>Investigate a region wide pest control program and partners, and develop agricultural pest bylaw and invasive plant management plan. The Noxious Insect & Pest Infestation Control Bylaw # 2375 was enabled in Area B in 2014.</p>
Staff Comment	<p>Fill a position on APCs for individuals with Agricultural backgrounds. Some Directors have appointed APC members with agriculture experience.</p>
Staff Comment	<p>Establish agreement with the Creston Valley Agricultural Society to operate as an advisory commission. The limitation of this recommendation in a regional plan is that it is for Creston Valley. <i>At the January 2016 Board meeting a new Agricultural Advisory Committee for the Creston Valley is being proposed. If approved an AAC will be reinstated.</i></p>
Staff Comment	<p>Develop and distribute an information sheet on tax exemptions for landowners that meet income threshold for production. This information is available through BC Assessment Authority on their website.</p>
Staff Comment	<p>Designate staff in Development Services for farmers seeking information and support on regulations and requirements related to farming. Staff is knowledgeable but when expertise is required inquiries are directed to the Ministry of Agriculture and Agriculture Land Commission.</p>
	<p>Investigate cooperative approaches to agricultural lands within the urban/rural interface to mitigate for loss of agricultural land to urban boundary expansions (build up, not out).</p>

Staff Comment	Boundary expansions are rare but decisions to remove lands from ALR rest with the ALC. Any development on ALR lands is also controlled by zoning where it applies and by ALC guidelines.
Strengthen Agricultural Partnerships	
Staff Comment	Incorporate policies and programs supportive of urban agriculture, food production and food systems. See Policy and Objectives with respect to Agriculture in Official Community Plans.
Staff Comment	At AKBLG champion for a Kootenay based bee inspector for apiarists in region. Bee Inspector for the Kootenay is Axel Krause with Ministry of Agriculture.
Municipal/Regional	
Staff Comment	Assess and enact mechanisms to expand local market options for regional food. Several zones enable this activity including those electoral areas without zoning.
Columbia Basin Trust	
Staff Comment	Establish a pilot project to provide an agricultural extension service to farmers and other food producers in RDCK. This was a service that was previously provided by the Provincial government. Any consideration of a regional/basin wide extension services program would require a business case analysis to determine the cost for service including the staffing required. A food council as proposed at the April 26 th meeting may want to undertake this task. <i>In October 2015 the RDEK, RDKB and RDCK are partnering with the CBT to develop a work plan for an Agricultural Liaison Officer to provide extension services.</i>
Staff Comment	Expand the Water Smart initiative to encourage household conservation and practices. Yes program would be a benefit specifically in Balfour. <i>New water smart ambassadors are being considered by the Board in January 2016.</i>
Staff Comment	With Creston Valley Diking Districts negotiate compensation for the damage and maintenance costs resulting from the Libby Dam water level management. Advocacy
Educational	
Staff Comment	Establish and incorporate working school gardens into curricula and food supply in partnership with Edible School Grounds Network and SD 8, 10, 93. Advocacy
Staff Comment	Support public libraries to expand their agricultural resource offering. Advocacy
Staff Comment	Collaborate with Selkirk, College of the Rockies and IHA to develop a research project to determine core dietary needs for current and projected populations versus the carrying capacity of the land base and water systems of the region. Advocacy

Provincial	
Staff Comment	Encourage the ALC to update ALR decision making guidelines to incorporate the unique characteristics and the productive capabilities of smaller parcels. The ALC is the decision maker and refers to RDCK plans in addition to RDCK recommendation to guide decisions.
Staff Comment	Ensure there is a Central Kootenay representative on the ALC. Ian Knudsen from Creston is the representative for Central Kootenay
Staff Comment	With Ministry of Agriculture promote the Environmental Farm Plan program to farmers in region. Advocacy
Staff Comment	Re-establish the ALC agricultural training programs at UBCM AGM. Advocacy
Staff Comment	Encourage Ministry of Agriculture and the ALC to update and disseminate "The Countryside and You" booklet in print and electronic format. Available on line http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/publist/800Series/800300-1Countryside.pdf . This document is from 1998 and may require updating.
Other	
Staff Comment	Continue to work with and support food security organizations in the region to expand and become more effective in their work. Advocacy/Economic Development <i>The RDCK in partnership with BC Food Systems Network and Community Futures are currently seeking funding to establish a food policy council within the geographic boundaries of the RDCK.</i>
Staff Comment	With farm and food security organizations provide information on use of water conservation practices in food production. Advocacy
Staff Comment	Encourage regionally based farm organizations, colleges and employment/career development service agencies to establish and administer farmer training and mentoring programs. Economic Development
Staff Comment	Encourage the creation of a regional food and farm marketing program that includes regional food and seasonality guides. Economic Development
Plan Implementation	
Staff Comment	Establish a regional Agricultural Advisory Committee to oversee the implementation of the RAAP. Most of the RAAP recommendations were already implemented within OCPs and Zoning. Those items not implemented require community buy in during planning reviews and or political support.

SECTION 3: DETAILED ANALYSIS

a. Financial Considerations – Cost and Resource Allocations:

Included in Financial Plan: <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	Financial Plan Amendment: <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
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Debt Bylaw Required: <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	Public/Gov't Approvals req'd: <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
<p>Although the intent of this report is for information, several recommendations in the Regional Agricultural Area Plan have staffing and servicing implications.</p>	
<p>b. Legislative Considerations (Applicable Policies and/or Bylaws):</p> <p>As noted in the staff comments several of the recommendations in the RAAP were already in place in policies, community plans and zoning bylaws at the time the RAAP was adopted in principle.</p>	
<p>c. Environmental Considerations:</p> <p>No apparent impact expected</p>	
<p>d. Social Considerations:</p> <p>Food systems and security have social implications at a local level but at this time the intent of the report is for information with no apparent implication.</p>	
<p>e. Economic Considerations:</p> <p>Agriculture and food systems have an economic component that is apparent in several of the recommendations but with no apparent implication at this time.</p>	
<p>f. Communication Considerations:</p> <p>No apparent impact expected</p>	
<p>g. Staffing/Departmental Workplan Considerations:</p> <p>If the Board directs staff to proceed with any of these recommendations or to participate in a regional food council, consideration to department work plans will be needed.</p>	
<p>SECTION 4: OPTIONS & PROS / CONS</p> <p>As noted several recommendations in the RAAP were already in place within zoned and un-zoned areas of the RDCK. During the planning review process community input determines if a recommendation is put into policy or regulation for agricultural lands. However several of the recommendations are of a political nature and require more long term consideration by the Board as they propose new services and staff resources.</p> <p>Short Term</p> <p>Option 1: Direct staff to consider the Regional Agriculture Area Plan when developing official community plans and zoning as well as issues that may impact rural areas and municipalities.</p> <p>Long Term</p> <p>Option 2: The RDCK Board discusses what level of interest there is to further implement recommendations in the RAAP that have not been actioned, such as the proposed pilot project with CBT to create agricultural extension services for the region.</p> <p>Option 3: Continue to politically collaborate with food security and systems organizations to develop a regional food policy council.</p>	
<p>SECTION 5: RECOMMENDATION(S)</p> <p>That the RDCK Board directs staff to consider the Regional Agriculture Area Plan when developing official</p>	

community plans and zoning as well as issues that may impact rural areas and municipalities.

Respectfully submitted,

Signature:

Name: **Sangita Sudan, General Manager of Development Services**

CONCURRENCE

Initials:

Chief Administrative Officer