

# Peninsula Agricultural Commission

## 2013 - ANNUAL REPORT

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### Membership

The Peninsula Agricultural Commission was initially formed during 1997/98 with the completion of the **Agricultural Strategy Report for the Saanich Peninsula** in 1977.

A number of changes took place during 2013 in terms of membership:

- The Electoral Area of Juan de Fuca joined PAC as the sixth member municipality at the end of 2011. Unfortunately, with the resignation of its representative mid-way through 2013, Juan de Fuca withdrew as a member municipality as they were unable to find a replacement.
- The member municipalities of Saanich, Central Saanich, North Saanich each appointed new Council representatives: Councillor Vic Derman, Councillor Alicia Cormier and Councillor Celia Stock, respectively. Councillor Marilyn Loveless continued to represent the Town of Sidney.
- Unfortunately, due to ill health, Jim MacPherson, the representative for Metchosin, had to resign; as of the time of writing this report, no replacement has been appointed by the municipality.
- Two voting members of PAC resigned: BeJay Mills, who moved to Salt Spring, and Flora Wood, the Chair for 2013. Flora hopes to return to PAC as an active member within a few years.
- PAC welcomed new member Nikki Tate-Straton in December; as of the time of writing this report, confirmation is pending for the appointment of Bernadette Greene, which will bring the PAC membership back to 10 volunteer voting members for 2014.
- Rob Kline, senior district agrologist with the Ministry of Agriculture continues to be a valuable resource for PAC.
- A new representative from the Agricultural Land Commission was appointed at the end of 2013, Elizabeth Sutton, to replace Roger Cheetham, who retired. Roger was part of the initial PAC group in 1997.
- In addition to our voting members and Council representatives, PAC has a growing number of “associate” non-voting members from various farm-related groups, past members, and other individuals who have expressed an interest in the sustainability of farming and attend PAC meetings from time to time.
- PAC greatly appreciates the many volunteer hours, hard work and dedication of all its members and their endeavours to achieve sustainable agriculture.
- Commission members are either farmers or work in agriculture-related fields. We have representation from large commercial farms to smaller scale farms; from poultry, pigs, horses and sheep to flowers, grains, and organic vegetables.

- We attempt to ensure all municipalities are equally represented; however, due to the higher percentage of farms in North and Central Saanich, we are aware this fact tends to be reflected in our current membership.
- We have present and past PAC members sitting on various working committees with other organizations, from the CRD Deer and Geese Management Committees, to the Saanich Peninsula Water Commission and the Water Advisory Commission.

## **Administrative and Technical Support Services**

- The Commission is again very grateful for the funding support it receives from the sponsoring municipalities as well as the ongoing administrative support provided by Isobel Hoffmann, who has now retired from the District of Saanich.
- We would also like to thank the Councillors who despite busy schedules regularly attend the PAC meetings and continue to liaise with their respective Councils on our behalf.
- In particular, the Commission greatly appreciates the attendance, guidance and expert technical assistance from our District Agrologist, Rob Kline, with the Ministry of Agriculture.
- Community, technical and professional advisers who are always ready to assist PAC in its research include CR-Fair, The Land Conservancy, the Direct Farm Marketing Association, and the Agricultural Land Commission, as well as individual experts who have attended PAC meetings from time to time (see list of speakers on page 5 of this report).
- Professional assistance and information is also provided when requested from senior planning staff of the member municipalities, and this is greatly appreciated.

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

- Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CR-FAIR) and the CRD Roundtable on the Environment Healthy Communities Subcommittees
- The Land Conservancy, Nathalie Chambers
- Environment – Farmland/farming Strategic Group
- LifeCycles; BC Assoc. of Farmers Markets; and 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

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

## Finance

The Commission is funded by the five\* participating Municipalities based on a formula decided in 1998, modified in 2008 with the addition of Metchosin and again in 2012 with the addition of Juan de Fuca.

*\*As noted at the beginning of this report, Juan de Fuca withdrew from PAC in June 2013. PAC has recommended that the Council's consider absorbing Juan de Fuca's costs for the first six months of the year, which would be approximately \$125.00.*

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

The total administrative budget for 2013 was \$8,267.67 – an increase of \$648.85 over 2012. The costs do vary from year to year, depending on the workload for that particular year. By comparison, the total budget for 2011 was \$6,567.10, \$6,912.42 for 2010 and \$9,162.09 for 2009. The 2013 costs are apportioned as follows:

	\$
• District of Saanich (40%)	3,307.07
• District of Central Saanich (30%)	2,480.30
• District of North Saanich (16%)	1,322.83
• District of Metchosin (11%)	909.44
• Town of Sidney (3%)	248.03

## Strategic Objectives (\*see individual reports)

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

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

- Farm Economics (*\*separate report attached*)
- Agricultural Land Base
- Resource Stewardship (*dormant for 2013*)
- Education and Outreach
- Water (*\*separate report attached*)

A voting member of the Commission chairs a strategic sub-committee. Membership on the committees may include Commission members, non voting-Commission representatives and associates. Reports from the Chairs are included as part of this report.

### **AGRICULTURAL LAND BASE: Sub-Committee Report**

The core review of the **ALR/ALC** was discussed by PAC. Concerns regarding the lack of public process and the need for broader consultation was identified in correspondence to the sponsoring municipalities, recommending that Councils ask for clarification from the Minister Responsible for the Core Review and the Minister of Agriculture and further that a resolution be sent to the UBCM to ensure there is no further weakening of ALR lands.

### **OUTREACH & EDUCATION: Sub-Committee Report (including Saanich Fair, 2013)**

- While the PAC enjoyed many speakers over the course of the year to increase our understanding of key issues or learn about new topics, we 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**.
- PAC members participated in the **Farmer2Farmer** Advisory team that developed the Farmer2Farmer program, and we had over 200 farmers participate from the region. PAC contributed \$400 towards this annual event.
- At the **Saanich Fair** PAC worked closely with CRFAIR and the Southern Vancouver Island Direct Farm Market Association to have an education tent that had a series of games and activities to engage the public, including the Zucchini Races, which were really popular with kids of all ages.
- Once again, the “Farm Passport” had many families participate in visiting sites around the Fair and answering farming related questions.

- PAC also hosted some great workshops at the Saanich Fair this year including:
  - Carolyn Herriot: 'The Future of Food -The Seasonally-appropriate Diet'
  - Marilyn Soames: Backyard Chickens 101 - It's easy when you know how!
  - Farming on the Peninsula Then and Now
  
- “Farming on the Peninsula Then and Now” featured long-time Saanich Peninsula farmer Barbara Brennan and Niki Stratinski, a young new farmer. Barbara talked about farming on the Saanich Peninsula “back in the day”, and the changes over the years. Then we heard from Niki about the new face of farming and what is different about farming on the Peninsula today.

***(see separate reports attached for Farm Economics & Water, and 2013 Agricultural Statistics)***

## **Issues discussed at PAC meetings during 2013:**

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

Once again, last year saw many important agricultural-related topics discussed, highlights of which are noted below.

- **Geese Management Strategy:** PAC again provided financial assistance (\$500) towards this strategy. PAC member Bev Marley and our District Agrologist, Rob Kline, participate in the CRD Geese Strategy Meetings. The CRD arranged for workshops to help farmers with the permitting process and other issues, such as egg addling. Progress continues to be slow and steady. A pilot cull is expected to occur in the spring of 2014. Farmers cannot continue to suffer the crop losses and subsequent monetary losses year after year.
  
- **Deer Management Strategy:** PAC member Ryan Vantreight and our District Agrologist, Rob Kline, participate in the CRD Geese Strategy Committee Meetings. As with the geese, our local farmers lose thousands of dollars in crop production each year; some farmers are at the point of reducing the acres they plant due to continual severe losses.

Progress is being made, however, with possible changes by the Canadian Wildlife Services and perhaps reinstatement of financial assistance for deer fencing. Central Saanich is looking at changing the permitting system for hunters and farmers. Everyone is waiting to find out how the cull in Oak Bay pans out.

Other topical issues discussed at meetings, either brought to our attention by the municipalities, PAC members, or local farmers are noted below. Feedback was provided to municipalities and/or the CRD where appropriate.

- Composting and Anaerobic Digestors – Central Saanich
- Municipal Support for Municipal Engaged Agriculture (MESA) – CR-Fair
- Panama Flats – Saanich
- North Saanich Flavour Trail
- Temporary Use Permits – Amendment to C. Saanich Land Use Bylaw
- ALC/ALR Core Review
- Graham Creek Oil Spill
- Saanich Noxious Weeds Bylaw
- Durrell Creek Flooding
- Terms of Reference Review & Conflict of Interest Guidelines \*

*\*see note below*

- **Guest Speakers & Presentations at PAC meetings during 2013**
- Bruce Greig, C. Saanich: Land Use Bylaw Amendment – Temporary Use Permits
- Bruce Greig, C. Saanich: Composting and Anaerobic Digestors
- Jeff Weightman, CRD: Food Systems Strategy
- Gary Darrah, Saanich Parks: Panama Flats
- Adrienne Pollard, Saanich Environment: Noxious Weeds Bylaw
- Neil Findlow, Saanich Planner: Rezoning on Alderley Road from A-1 to A-2
- Fernando Morrell: Organoponicos in Cuba

### **\*Terms of Reference Review and Conflict of Interest Guidelines**

- By far, this topic generated the most discussion at meetings last year and was spearheaded by a sub-committee comprised of PAC members Bob Maxwell, Ryan Vantreight and Jim Gowans (who has since resigned), together with the expert services of consultant Ann Moskow.
- The in-depth internal review helped clarify both the role that PAC has played over the years and the future role it was seeking to play, with approval from the sponsoring municipalities.

- In the fall, a draft document was sent to the sponsoring municipalities for consideration. Feedback has been received from 3 of the 5 municipalities and it seems that they require further revisions to parts of the draft Terms of Reference. Work is now underway to amend the document to meet both municipal and PAC member needs.
- At the same time, PAC has developed a working draft of **Conflict of Interest Guidelines**; this is still under review. The intent is to have internal guidelines which enable PAC members to continue to provide objective and informed opinions on difficult issues brought forward to PAC for advice and comment.

## Workshops

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

- Meet your Maker Conference & Workshop
- Farmer2Farmer workshops – Linking land to farmers

## Summary:

**PAC** would like to continue to work with the member municipalities and 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 Edge Planning. We will also continue to work with the CRD to implement the Goose and Deer Management Strategies. We would encourage the municipalities to avail themselves of the expertise available on the Commission.

We hope to continue to work for the farmers and with the farmers, and where appropriate consult with experts, professionals, municipal staff, regional and community agricultural interest groups to promote the sustainability of farming, food security and improve farm economics on southern Vancouver Island.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Romaine, Chair  
Peninsula Agricultural Commission

February 2014