

# Peninsula & Area Agricultural Commission

## 2014 - 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.

With the newly adopted Terms of Reference in the fall of 2014, the Peninsula Agricultural Commission (PAC) changed its name to the Peninsula and Area Agricultural Commission (PAAC) to reflect the membership of the District of Metchosin, and also in anticipation of other municipalities joining PAAC in the future.

Voting Membership for 2014 was as follows, although we lost two members during the year – John Buchanan (July) and Ryan Vantreight (September):

- Mike Romaine, Chair (Healing Farm – eggs, chickens, fruits, nuts, honey)
- Robert Maxwell, Vice Chair (Fieldstone Farm – berries/tree fruits)
- Bev Marley, Treasurer (The Tiny Farm – eggs, fruits and vegetables)
- Ryan Vantreight (Vantreight Farms – fruit, vegetables, flowers)
- Terry Michell (Michell Farms – fruits, vegetables, hay, grain)
- Linda Geggie (CR-Fair)
- Dianne Williamson (Firbank Farms - poultry)
- Nikkie Tate-Straton (Dark Creek Farm – pork/poultry)
- Bernadette Greene (North Saanich Farm Market – fruits and vegetables)
- John Buchanan, (Sheep Farmer, Metchosin)

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

The Councillors (non-voting members) appointed to PAAC for 2014 were:

- Councillor Vic Derman – Saanich
- Councillor Cecila Stock – North Saanich
- Councillor Marilyn Loveless – Sidney
- Councillor Alicia Cormier – Central Saanich
- Jim MacPherson – representative from Metchosin\*

\*Jim MacPherson was replaced by Tom Henry as Metchosin's representative mid-way through 2014.

It should be noted here that in March, 2014, the Juan de Fuca (JDF) Electoral Area requested to rejoin PAAC and appoint Mary Alice Johnston as its representative. Ms. Johnston would be a welcome addition, and was instrumental in forming the Sooke Farmland Trust Society and a farm mentorship programme across Canada.

JDF withdrew from PAAC in 2013 as their representative resigned and a replacement could not be found. It was agreed that Ms. Johnston be appointed as an associate member at this time and the Electoral Area's request to rejoin PAAC be considered at a later date.

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

PAAC appreciates the volunteer hours, hard work, commitment and dedication of all its members as we endeavour to achieve sustainable agriculture and food security for our region. Some of our members sit on other working groups, such as the CRD Deer and Geese Management Committees, and take part in other agricultural-based workshops and meetings throughout the year.

In particular, past member, Michael Doehnel, continues to competently represent PAAC and our local farmers on the Saanich Peninsula Water Commission and the Water Advisory Commission. His volunteer time and valuable insight are very much appreciated.  
*(See his 2014 Water Report attached to this document).*

## **Administrative and Technical Support Services**

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

- The Commission greatly appreciates the attendance, guidance and expert technical assistance from our District Agrologist, Rob Kline, Ministry of Agriculture. He is a valuable asset to the Commission.
- Provincial government representation is provided by Agricultural Land Commission member Gordon Beddard, who attended a couple of PAAC meetings last year. Minutes are also sent regularly to the ALC.
- Professional assistance and information is provided when requested from senior planning staff of the member municipalities and the CRD, and this is greatly appreciated.
- In particular, we would like to thank Planning staff members:
  - Bruce Greig (Central Saanich)
  - Neil Findlow, Jane Evans and Adriane Pollard (Saanich)
  - Coralie Breen and Jamie Schile (North Saanich)
  - Jeff Weightman – CRD.
- Community, technical and professional advisers who are always ready to assist PAC in its research include CR-Fair, the Direct Farm Marketing Association (Bob Thompson), and the ALC, as well as individual experts who have attended PAC meetings throughout the year. *(see list of speakers on page 8 of this report).*
- 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)
  - CRD Roundtable on the Environment, Healthy Communities Subcommittees
  - The Land Conservancy, Nathalie Chambers
  - Environment – Farmland/farming Strategic Group
  - LifeCycles; BC Assoc. of Farmers Markets; local farm pocket markets.
  - South Island Direct Farm Marketing Association
  - Wine and Grape Growers' Associations
  - North Saanich Agricultural Advisory Commission
  - Central Saanich Agricultural Advisory Commission

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 established in 1998, and modified on two occasions to accommodate the inclusion of the District of Metchosin and the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area. With the withdrawal of JDF in July 2013, the funding formula reverted back to the one used in 2012.

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 costs vary from year to year, depending on the workload for that particular year. Although 2014 was one of the busiest yet for PAAC, resulting in eleven meetings instead of the usual nine, the costs were slightly lower than last year. The total 2014 administrative costs are \$7,488.32, apportioned as follows:

	\$
• District of Saanich (40%)	2,995.33
• District of Central Saanich (30%)	2,246.50
• District of North Saanich (16%)	1,198.32
• District of Metchosin (11%)	823.72
• Town of Sidney (3%)	224.65

Comparison budgets for previous years:

2013	\$8,267.67
2012	\$7,618.82
2011	\$6,567.10
2010	\$6,912.42
2009	\$9,162.09

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

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

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

- Farm Economics (*see separate report attached*)
- Agricultural Land Base (*see info below*)

- Resource Stewardship (*dormant for 2014*)
- Education and Outreach (*see info below*)
- Water (*see separate report attached*)

A voting member of the Commission chairs the strategic sub-committee. Unfortunately, positions on the Resource Stewardship and Agricultural Land Base were vacant in 2014 – although these topics were still discussed. Membership on the sub-committees may include Commission members, non-voting Commission representatives and associates.

Reports from the Chairs are noted below or attached separately as part of this report.

## ■ OUTREACH & EDUCATION:

### **Sub-Committee Report – Linda Geggie & Nikki Tate-Straton (including Saanich Fair, 2014)**

- While the PAAC 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**.
- PAAC members participated in the **Farmer2Farmer** Advisory team that developed the Farmer2Farmer program, and we had over 200 farmers participate from the region. PAAC contributed \$500 towards this annual event. The theme for 2014 was Farm Profitability. There were over a dozen workshops and a keynote opening included ten experienced regional farmers sharing their pearls of wisdom around what they believe contributes to their farms success.
- At the **Saanich Fair** PAAC worked closely with CR-FAIR 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.

This year we also included a “Politicians'Challenge” that saw MLA’s participate by racing their zucchinis down the track. It was a crowd-pleaser. We are looking to update a squash handout to accompany this event in the future.

Once again, the “*Farm Passport*” had many families participate in visiting sites around the Fair and answering farming related questions.

PAAC member Nikki Tate-Stratton organized the Education component – which has been very popular event with attendees at the Saanich Fair. This year's lectures were:

- ◆ What's in Your Box this week? Information about Community Sponsored Agriculture provided by Dani and Nikki Tate-Stratton.
- ◆ Amending Your Soil to Maximize Crop Health and Yield. Information provided by Dwight Pennell.
- ◆ Getting Started with Bees. Information provided by Travis Young.

*(see poster attached to this report for more details)*

#### ■ **AGRICULTURAL LAND BASE:**

- Although a vacant sub-committee position last year, lengthy discussions took place with respect to the changes proposed by the provincial government's core review regarding the ALC and the ALR, and the lack of public consultation.
- This is a significant change in legislation of both the *ALC Act* and supporting regulations.
- PAAC identified and provided written concerns to the Councils, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture and the Minister Responsible for the Core Review - not only on the proposed changes but also the process by which these changes were being reviewed.

Also with respect to the **Agricultural Land Base**, PAAC reviewed and commented on major projects at the request of the sponsoring municipalities and/or the CRD. This included:

- Proposed boundary changes to lands within the ALR (Beckwith Farm & Panama Flats, Saanich)
- Form and structure of proposed expanded farm-related buildings (The Roost, North Saanich)
- Proposed changes in land use and ownership of a significant sized parcel of ALR land (Glen Meadows Golf Course, North Saanich)
- Municipal and Regional government sustainability strategies
- Plans for assisting with agricultural economic development (North & Central Saanich)
- Regional food strategies (a component of the Regional Sustainability Strategy)

- Advisory mechanisms to assist municipalities in decisions affecting agricultural lands.

*See separate reports attached on Water & Farm Economics; and information re the 2014 Saanich Fair)*

## **Other Issues Discussed at PAAC Meetings During 2014**

In addition to the topics listed on the previous page, other matters discussed at PAAC meetings during 2014 – *either brought to our attention by the member municipalities, PAAC members or local farmers* - are noted below. Feedback was provided where appropriate and required.

### ■ **Regional Goose Management Strategy**

The Capital Regional District and District of Central Saanich have worked tirelessly with the BC Ministry of Environment and Canada Wildlife Service to ensure the various permitting procedures are in place.

The Commission thanks Jeff Weightman, CRD and Central Saanich staff for their commitment to this important task. PAAC volunteer Bev Marley, together with agrologist Rob Kline, continue to provide on-going leadership, liaison and coordination.

Although monthly meetings were held because of permitting roadblocks, egg-addling goals were unfortunately not accomplished in 2014. There is an on-going public information campaign led by the CRD Parks & Recreation program and the District of Central Saanich.

There is no “official” head count, but through observation it is estimated that the numbers continue to rise and that the geese are enjoying some of the crop diversification on the Peninsula.

The Regional Canada Goose Management Strategy Working Group will not have hard data until the egg addling and cull pilots take place. Hopefully, by the fall/winter of 2015 there will be a CRD summary report on the pilot programs with some estimates of costs, etc.

Farmers/landowners need to get involved with the addling program. It will take a cull to bring the numbers to manageable levels, but it will take ongoing egg addling to maintain population levels and it needs to start NOW. A pilot cull project is proposed for the spring and summer of 2015. Meanwhile, our farmers continue to lose money from severe crop damage.

## ■ **Regional Goose Management Strategy**

Local Peninsula farmers involved in trying to get the CRD to continue with the project include Ryan Vantreight, Terry Michell, Jack Mar and Larry Sluggett.

As with the geese, our farmers continue to experience crop loss amounting to thousands of dollars each year. Fencing is costly and not always effective.

The CRD has spent a considerable amount of money on this project, and an extension request from Oak Bay was granted, extending the programme to March 2015 and with a \$70,000 additional funding commitment. The Capital Regional District will proceed with a deer cull of approximately 25 deer in Oak Bay this year.

### **Other issues discussed during 2014 include:**

- Hagen Creek Detention Facility (September 2014)
- Medical Marijuana (February, March, May & June, 2014)
- Farmland Trust (March, April and May 2014)
- Panama Flats, Saanich ALR inclusion (May 2014)
- Municipal Strategic Plans (February & March 2014)
- Terms of Reference Review & Completion (February 2014)

### **Guest Speakers & Presentations at PAC meetings during 2014**

- Dan Morton, Renuable Resources Ltd. (Organic Fish Compost & Liquid Fish Fertilizers) – November 2014
- Jane Evans/Cam Scott, Saanich: Saanich Agricultural Strategy TOR (November 2014)
- Mark Johnson, consultant: Glen Meadows Rezoning, (October 2104)
- Jeff Weightman, CRD: Deer Management Strategy (September 2014)
- Adriane Pollard, Saanich: Noxious Weeds Bylaw (September 2014)
- Jamie Schille, N. Saanich: 1818 McTavish Road DP (July 2014)
- Jamie Schille, N. Saanich: Agricultural Economic Development Strategy (July 2014)
- Neil Findlow, Saanich: 1020 Beckwith Avenue, ALR subdivision (June 2014)
- Terry Crowe, Richmond: Medical Marijuana (Conference Call, May 2014)
- Dwayne Halldorson, Saanich: Durrell Creek (January 2014)

As a result of intense discussions on issues such as Farmland Trusts, local agricultural advisory councils and agricultural economic strategies, as well as the CRD's Regional Sustainability Strategy and Food Strategy, etc. PAAC Chair Mike Romaine produce a report on **Possible Approaches to Aid in Regional Coordination of Agricultural Matters** (*see discussion November 2014*).

This report (*attached for reference*) was respectfully submitted to the sponsoring councils in December 2014 for their review and consideration. The document outlines possible ways that PAAC could assist in streamlining input and coordination for decision-making on issues such as agricultural development, strategies and agricultural plans.

### **Summary:**

**PAAC** would like to continue to work with the member municipalities to provide input on agricultural issues such as Agricultural Area Plans, Official Community Plans, and other land use and bylaw issues related to agriculture, such as Edge Planning. Hopefully, we will also continue to work with the CRD to implement the Goose and Deer Management Strategies if the programmes and the funding is extended. We would encourage the municipalities to utilize the expertise available on the Commission.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Romaine, Chair  
Peninsula & Area Agricultural Commission  
February 2015

#### Attachments:

- Water & Farm Economics Sub-Committee Report (Michael Doehnel & Terry Michell)
- Saanich Fair 2014 Poster
- PAAC report on Possible Approaches to Aid in Regional Coordination of Agricultural Matters