

**PENINSULA & AREA
AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION
2021 ANNUAL REPORT**



Phil Christie, Chair
March 2022

National Flower of the Ukraine

Farm Photos



Rhubarb at Sea Bluff Farm



Sunflower Seed Patterns



Tom Tom the turkey



Future Farmers?

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PENINSULA & AREA AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION.....	1
2021 ANNUAL REPORT.....	1
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	3
1.0 BACKGROUND.....	4
2.0 HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2021.....	4
2.1 Effects of Covid-19 on Agriculture.....	4
2.2 Effects of Climate Change.....	5
2.3 Woodwyn Farms.....	6
2.4 Pest Control using Natural & Biological Methods – Farm Tour July 2021.....	6
3.0 KEY ISSUES DISCUSSED BY PAAC.....	7
3.1 Carbon Sequestration: adding organic matter to soil.....	7
3.2 Grape & Fruit Atlas for Vancouver Island.....	7
3.3 50 th Anniversary of the Agricultural Land Reserve.....	7
3.4 Preserving and developing Hedgerows & New Farm Practices.....	7
3.5 South Vancouver Island Farm Hub.....	8
3.6 Vancouver Island Agriculture Adaptation Group.....	8
3.7 Well Water Licensing – Water Sustainability Act.....	9
3.8 Broad Leaf Herbicides in Hay.....	9
3.9 Golden Nematode Restrictions in Central Saanich.....	10
3.10 Joint Drainage Committee with Saanich, Central Saanich & PAAC.....	11
4.0 UPDATES ON CONTINUING ISSUES.....	11
4.1 Farmer Worker Accommodations.....	11
4.2 Geese and Deer Management Plans.....	12
5.0 REFERRALS FROM MUNICIPALITIES.....	12
5.1 804/812/820 McKenzie & 4007 Rainbow – Saanich ALR exclusion.....	12
5.2 Central Saanich OCP Review.....	13
5.3 1741 Verling Road – Rezoning & Non-Farm Use – Central Saanich.....	13
5.4 Housing and Agricultural Zones – Central Saanich.....	13
5.5 443 Hector Road – Non-Farm Use on ALR Land – Saanich.....	14
6.0 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES.....	14
6.1 Sub-Committees.....	14
6.1(a) Farm Economics – Terry Michell.....	15
6.1(b) Agricultural Land Base – Phil Christie.....	17
6.1(c) Outreach and Education – Linda Geggie.....	18
6.1(d) Water Report for 2021 Growing Season – Michael Doehnel.....	20
7.0 MEMBERSHIP, ADMINISTRATIVE & PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT.....	22
7.1 Membership for 2021 (Voting Members).....	22
7.2 Council Representatives (Non-Voting Members).....	22
7.3 Professional Support.....	22
7.4 Community Membership & Support.....	23
7.5 Administrative & Technical Support.....	24
8.0 FINANCE.....	25
9.0 LOOKING FORWARD.....	26

2021 Peninsula & Area Agricultural Commission's Annual Report

1.0 BACKGROUND

Initiated in 1997/98 with the completion of the *Agricultural Strategy Report for the Saanich Peninsula, the Peninsula & Area Agricultural Advisory Commission* (PAAC) is financially supported by the Districts of Saanich, Central Saanich, North Saanich and Metchosin (the “member municipalities”).

PAAC's Mandate is to act as a resource, provide advice, information, and assistance - upon request or proactively - to the member municipalities on matters involving agriculture in the areas served by the member municipalities and the region, and to facilitate the development of initiatives for implementation of the Saanich Peninsula Agricultural [Strategic Objectives](#) (Page 13).

2.0 HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2021

2.1 Effects of Covid-19 on Agriculture

The Pandemic continued to have a strong effect on the agricultural community. There were pros and cons, however:

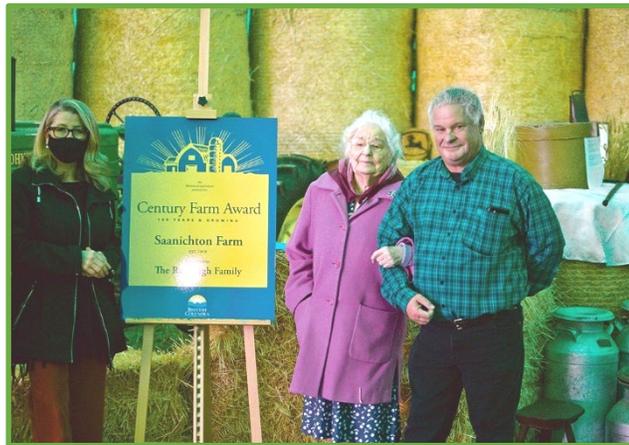
- On the positive side, farm gate and farm market sales continued to increase as the public became more aware of the value and variety of fresh fruits and vegetables provided direct from the farm.
- However, farmers had trouble finding farm labour, both foreign and domestic. Some local workers decided to stay home and collect CERB, and there were many difficulties getting foreign workers into the country.
- However, the province did assist farmers in 2021 by helping with the foreign workers' travel costs and hotels required for the isolation period.
- The relocation of Thrifty Food Suppliers (Sobeys) from Victoria to eastern Canada is a problem. Conducting business with local representatives was far less complex than dealing with time zones and warehouse on the other side of the country.

Farm insurance costs increased substantially – 30% or more

- While this move may be fiscally responsible for Sobey's, it is difficult for farmers when selling large quantities. Orders have been reduced by over \$300,000 annually. Pricing is also an issue: if local farmers don't follow the minimum pricing set by Sobey's, the company will source from other provinces.
- Farm insurance costs increased substantially – 30% or more, and it was applied to farms even if they had no previous claims. Finding an insurance underwriter was difficult. In part, the rationale cited for the increase was replacement costs for infrastructure and livestock. Inquiries to the provincial government went unanswered.

2.2 Effects of Climate Change

- In addition to COVID-related problems, farmers also had to face climate issues such as the heat dome, wildfires and drought in the summer that resulted in hay shortages in many parts of the province, particularly the interior.
- Local farmers used considerably more CRD water for irrigation than in past years.
- Local farmer **Bryce Rashleigh donated over 3,000 large bales hay** to the drought-ravaged interior. The bales were sold for the cost to produce them. Shipping cost between \$33 and \$40 per bale depending on location. Donations from local customers offset the transportation costs.



BC Agriculture Minister Lana Popham, (left), presents Bryce Rashleigh and his aunt, Betty Rashleigh, with the **Century Farm and Ranch Award** for their family operation, **Saanichton Farm**.

- In late November the heavy rains from a severe weather event called an 'atmospheric river' caused serious flooding with tremendous losses to crops and livestock. The effect on Island farms was not as disastrous as the farms on the lower mainland and Abbotsford areas. The province provided \$100 million in financial assistance to the affected farmers.

2.3 Woodwyn Farms

- The 78-acre farm was transferred from the province to the Tsartlip First Nations.
- Historically used by the Tsartlip for hunting, farming and traditional practices, the farm is adjacent to the First Nation's only reserve of 1,000 members. It is unclear what the Tsartlip's intentions are, whether the land will be farmed or used for additional housing. The Tsartlip have full control. Although recognized as good quality, productive farmland which would be tragic to lose, the First Nations' population on the Reserve is increasing and more housing is needed.



Garry Oak



Hedgerow in Fall

2.4 Pest Control using Natural & Biological Methods – Farm Tour July 2021

- Further to a presentation in May from Brian Spencer of Applied Bio-Nomics, a tour of two Peninsula farms – Michells Farms and Gobin Farms – was organized for PAAC members in early July.
- Applied Bio-Nomics is a world leader in biological pest control, with its products being used in North America, Costa Rica, Japan, Korea, and Holland.
- Pests such as spider mites, aphids, thrips, root weevils, whitefly and pathogenic nematodes can be controlled using biological methods, natural controls, and companion planting rather than undesirable pesticides.
- Lady bugs are a popular natural control method for aphids, but they can leave eggs behind.
- Participants of the farm tour found the information presented very beneficial; it was suggested future tours be arranged once COVID restrictions have been lifted, perhaps with local councillors and municipal parks departments.



Brian Spencer

3.0 KEY ISSUES DISCUSSED BY PAAC

3.1 Carbon Sequestration: adding organic matter to soil.

Our agricultural lands continue to be depleted in organic matter and there are better ways we can manage our organic material. Holding a workshop was suggested once COVID restrictions have been lifted, perhaps through the Farmer2Farmer workshops. (See January 2021 minutes)

3.2 Grape & Fruit Atlas for Vancouver Island

An idea to work with local wineries and cider producers to prepare a Grape and Fruit Atlas for Vancouver Island did not materialize. Considerable work has already completed on soil conditions and climate by other groups and would have been a good starting point. However, although PAAC was willing to contribute funding and time to the venture, the BC Wine & Grape Council, the BC Grape Growers Association, and various local establishments were not supportive currently. It is still something that PAAC feels is worthwhile pursuing as it would be a useful tool to farmers and vintners.

3.3 50th Anniversary of the Agricultural Land Reserve

The ALC and the Ministry of Agriculture are intending to celebrate the introduction of the Agricultural Land Reserve. It was initiated in 1972 and officially enacted in 1973. PAAC will provide input to the celebrations in 1973.

3.4 Preserving and developing Hedgerows & New Farm Practices

- Initiated by discussions about forests, wetlands, climate change, new farm practices and providing guidelines for farmers to make farming ecologically friendly, the outcome was to pursue a hedgerow programme for farms that would like to participate.



Example, early season hedgerows

Crop yields were much higher.

- Hedgerows have many benefits: attracting pollinators and birds by providing microclimates, food, and habitat; protecting crops by providing a wind breaker; helping to prevent soil and water erosion. Also, they can provide screening from the road and enhance the environment.

- Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT) assisted a PAAC member and Metchosin Farmer with a hedgerow her farm.

- PAAC agreed to work with HAT on a joint agreement and to aid farmers (financial, planning, planting, and maintenance). It is still a work in progress. It is hoped that 2022 will see some hedgerow projects completed.

3.5 South Vancouver Island Farm Hub

- There are three (3) Food Hubs on Vancouver Island. The local one is a 1,000 sq. ft warehouse on Viewfield Road in Esquimalt.
- Food Hubs work with farmers and charity organizations, using food that would often go to waste, and providing skills training.
- Much interest has been expressed about a proposed processing kitchen where an abundance of crops such as basil and tomatoes can be processed into pesto and salsa.
- A \$250,000 grant in 2020 from the Jawl and Victoria Foundations, allows farmers to receive full value for their produce. It is then distributed to the Mustard Seed, Songhees First Nations, School Districts, Our Place, and others. Using “Farm Bucks”, the charities can purchase goods at a 50% cost reduction.
- As of March 2021, **over \$260,000 of food has been distributed.**
- It is a work in progress and leaders Colleen Popyk and Susan Tychie (CR-Fair) are working to coordinate distribution and development of the warehouse and processing kitchens.

A \$250,000 grant in 2020 from the Jawl and Victoria Foundations, allows farmers to receive full value for their produce

3.6 Vancouver Island Agriculture Adaptation Group

- Past Chair Bob Maxwell is a member of the Vancouver Island Agriculture Adaption Group and reports regularly to PAAC.
- The Group received a government grant of \$300,000, which will be put to work over the next few years. Although independent from the Ministry of Agriculture, some staff members participate in the group meetings.
- The group consults with experts when required on various initiatives, such as identifying silage crops to determine the best types of grasses, rye and legumes to cultivate for cattle and livestock.
- Other projects include climate change and how this and lack of hedgerows can affect pollinators; integrated pest management; and crop diversity.

- A water study is being conducted in the Alberni Valley, which can see high water volumes. Water storage and distribution to farmers during the summer droughts – which could now be a regular occurrence – can be improved upon.

3.7 Well Water Licensing – Water Sustainability Act

- Mike Wei, a consultant who previously worked for the Ministry of Environment and helped to develop the Water Sustainability Act, and Andrew Peterson, Ministry of Agriculture, attended the PAAC meetings in September and November, respectively.
- The Act was adopted in 2016 and the regulations requiring the registration of groundwater wells will come into effect March 1, 2022.
- As of May 2021, only 2,400 people had registered – and there are 8,000 wells in this area. Throughout the province there are around 100,000 users – this includes municipalities, farms, hotels, fish hatcheries, bottling companies, etc., and they will all require a licence.
- Licences are only required for commercial or industrial use. Annual user fees are \$50.
- All farmers who use groundwater should apply. There is not an infinite water supply and monitoring is important to ensure the system is sustainable and not depleted.
- Licences are tied to the land – not the owner. Without a secure water supply land loses its value.
- There is concern about the lack of registrations and the fact that smaller operators may be unaware of the value of having a groundwater licence.
- If users don't register by the deadline date, they will be treated as a “new user” and could lose the historical rights to the well. PAAC felt that a better job could have been done promoting the licensing.

If users don't register by the deadline date, they will be treated as a “new user” and could lose the historical rights to the well.

3.8 Broad Leaf Herbicides in Hay

- Broad leaf herbicides get applied to hay on some of the bigger farms and can cause serious problems when using horse manure for gardens.
- When people buy imported hay, or horse manure from roadside stands, they are likely not checking for this herbicide.

- This is an issue PAAC intends to follow up on in 2022. Information can be found at www.tenacrefarm.com/manure-garden.

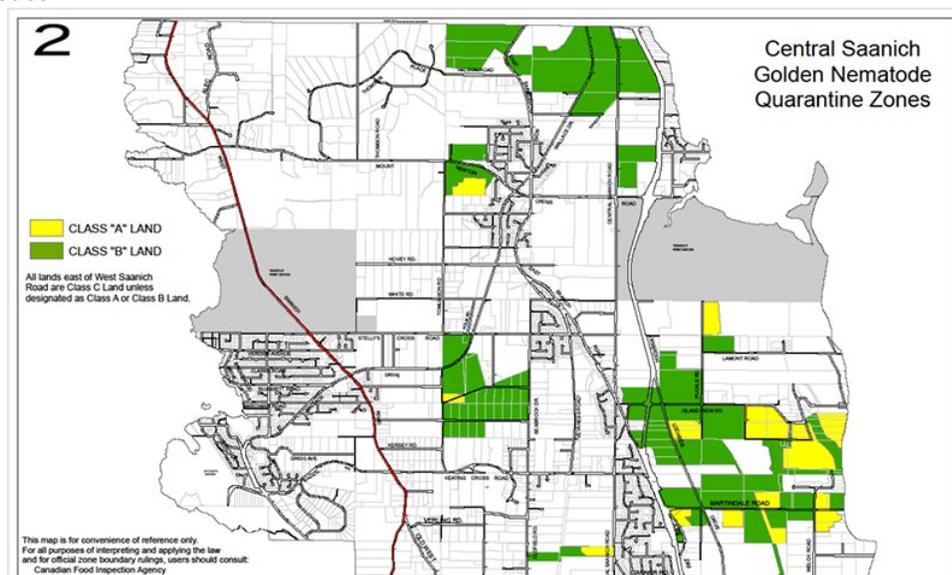
3.9 Golden Nematode Restrictions in Central Saanich

- Restrictions have been placed on Central Saanich farms for almost 30 years, preventing the production of potatoes and nightshade plants, such as tomatoes, eggplant, and peppers. At one time, thousands of acres of potatoes were planted each year.
- The Nematode is a serious risk to potato production and reduces yields of potatoes and other host crops such as tomatoes and eggplant by up to 80%.
- The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has the lead role in controlling the restrictions, and the Plant Protection Act also regulates the Golden Nematode.



Golden Nematode

- Farmers are questioning how long the restriction must remain in place and are asking for new soil testing.
- Recent survey results from CFIA have been difficult to obtain; it was noted that if results are not shared with the farming community it becomes a political issue.
- Farmers simply need to know if there is evidence of the Golden Nematode in the soils in Central Saanich.
- It was arranged for Brent Postlewhaite, CFIA, to attend the January 2022 meeting to discuss.



Map of Central Saanich, potato roots

3.10 Joint Drainage Committee with Saanich, Central Saanich & PAAC

- Since the Central Saanich Agricultural Advisory Committee was dissolved in 2020 due to modifications to the district’s committee structure, some farmers feel frustrated that certain issues are not being resolved – drainage and flooding in the Martindale Valley and Maber Flats, as well as many other areas.
- With the proposed overpass at the Keating Crossroads exit on the Pat Bay Highway, the flooding issues could be exacerbated. As well, the water run-off from the highway into the ditches is contaminated with oil from the road surface.
- After discussions at the October meeting, it was recommended that a drainage committee be formed on an ad hoc basis, with staff and council from Saanich and Central Saanich, as well as PAAC members and using other experts as and when required.
- PAAC hopes that some solutions can finally be found and put in place, as the flooding has been an issue for many years and continues to impact farming.

With proposed overpass at Keating Crossroads, flooding issues could be exacerbated

4.0 UPDATES ON CONTINUING ISSUES

4.1 Farmer Worker Accommodations

- Providing affordable, on-site housing for farm workers is a longstanding goal for PAAC and local farmers. Discussions started over 20 years ago – progress is very slow. Part of the issue is trying to get local governments and the ALC on the same page. Farmers have been very patient waiting for the go ahead to provide much needed accommodation for farm workers.
- In 2021, the District of Saanich prepared a draft policy for Farm Worker Housing, and PAAC provided input. The intent is to permit temporary farm worker accommodations on agricultural zones with Class 9 farm status, as defined by the BCAA. Applications would be deferred to the ALC with final decisions made by Council; accommodations will be controlled with Temporary Use Permits.
- The ALC's recently revised policies and regulations are viewed as cumbersome.

Providing affordable, on-site housing for farm workers is a longstanding goal for PAAC and local farmers

Saanich consulted with Central Saanich staff as they have now adopted a temporary farm worker accommodation policy. (See February 9, 2021 minutes).

- In November, the Saanich Planner noted that in response to the changes implemented by the ALC, the staff report was simplified and will be sent to Council in early January 2022. Feedback from PAAC, the ALC and the Ministry of Agriculture will be included.

4.2 Geese and Deer Management Plans

- **Geese:** The Capital Regional District has worked with the Guardians of the Mid-Island Estuaries Society on some Canadian Geese nest, egg, and molt surveys in 2020/2021. There were no updates from the CRD in 2021 as the PAAC representative moved to a new position with the province.



Geese in Oldfield Valley

- **Deer:** The direction from the CRD Board in 2021 was to maintain limited-service levels related to Deer Management. There have been no activities from a Deer Management perspective, other than responding to enquiries from the public and connecting them to the necessary resources.

5.0 REFERRALS FROM MUNICIPALITIES

5.1 804/812/820 McKenzie & 4007 Rainbow – Saanich ALR exclusion

- Although PAAC is dedicated to supporting and protecting farmland, most of the members had no objections to this project being forwarded to the ALC for consideration to exclude the parcels from the ALR.
- The land parcels are small and are interspersed with high density residential housing and rock outcroppings making much of it unsuitable for farming. It was also noted that the Garry Oaks could be removed if the land was retained in the ALR. Whereas removing the parcels from the ALR would ensure the trees are protected since the local bylaws regarding tree preservation would then apply. (See March 11, 2021 minutes.)

5.2 Central Saanich OCP Review

Central Saanich staff attended several meetings during 2021 to review the progress of the OCP review process, with PAAC providing input. Two of PAAC's members from two of the largest commercial farmers in the District, Terry Michell, and Larry Sluggett, as well as Phil Christie, PAAC Chair, were invited to participate in the review. The review will continue in 2022.

5.3 1741 Verling Road – Rezoning & Non-Farm Use – Central Saanich

- The application was to build a veterinary hospital for large farm animals (horses, cows, pigs, sheep, etc). There is shortage of such hospitals, which are vital for a healthy agricultural community.
- PAAC expressed concern that the use could change to a veterinary hospital to include domestic pets and suggested to Central Saanich that a covenant be explored to control the use. Central Saanich agreed to amend the bylaw accordingly and apply a covenant. The application requires ALC approval. (See discussions September, October, and November 2021.)

There is shortage of such hospitals, which are vital for a healthy agricultural community.

5.4 Housing and Agricultural Zones – Central Saanich

- Andrea Pickard, Central Saanich Planner attended the November meeting to elaborate on the objectives for the draft report on Housing and Agricultural Zones.
- Provincial legislation will come into effect in 2022 to allow local governments to permit a detached accessory building on ALR lands, subject to conditions, without requiring ALC approval.
- Local governments will determine how they want to amend its bylaws. Under the new regulations, occupancy of the accessory dwellings is not restricted to family members or farm workers. Dwelling size is determined by lot size and farm status.
- PAAC was supportive of the proposed amendments, which would provide flexibility for farm workers.
- Noted consideration should be given to the overall footprint of the accessory building(s) and location in terms of the main house, barns, greenhouses, etc. Development sites should be near the main road to retain as much crop production on the land as possible.

- It is anticipated final approvals will be made early 2022.

5.5 443 Hector Road – Non-Farm Use on ALR Land – Saanich

- In 2020, an application from Rainbow Valley Nursery for storage of topsoil on the property was considered by PAAC. While they had no objections as the land was likely unsuitable for agriculture, an agrologist's report was recommended.
- Staff recommended rejection and Council ultimately recommended not forwarding the application to the ALC.
- In June 2021, a subsequent application for temporary non-farm use was received from Corvidae Environmental Consulting to use the property as a staging and storage area for materials and equipment to pave Allen Road.
- Saanich staff was recommending rejection, and again PAAC noted the current condition of the property, recommending an agrologist's report be obtained. Even lower-class lands can be used for farming activities such as greenhouses.

6.0 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Note: most of the original objectives in the 1997 Report have been met.

The **1997 Agricultural Strategy Report for the Saanich Peninsula** set forth several recommendations designed to promote the sustainability of agriculture on the Peninsula and was the basis for the formation of PAAC. **The six objectives are to:**

- secure an adequate supply of water for farmers at a competitive cost.
- increase economic returns to farmers.
- enhance the sustainability of the agricultural land base.
- foster stewardship of farmers which embrace community values.
- increase public awareness, education, and support for a sustainable farming community.
- establish a focal point for farming issues and implementation of the Strategy.

6.1 Sub-Committees

Consistent with the recommendations of the **Strategy Report**, the Commission has four working sub-committees focused on implementing strategic objectives for:

- **Farm Economics - Terry Michell**
- **Agricultural Land Base - Phil Christie**
- **Education and Outreach - Linda Geggie**
- **Water - Michael Doehnel**

Although a voting member of the Commission chairs a strategic sub-committee, membership may include other Commission members, non-voting Commission representatives and associates. From time to time, expert and/or professional opinions are sought.

6.1(a) Farm Economics – Terry Michell



Winter Kale Harvest at Sea Bluff Farm

In the first week of May 2021 ideal spring conditions began and the warmer temperatures were consistent and ideal for planting starts and seed germination.

The weather was nearly perfect for agriculture through to the start of the heat dome in late June, lasting till mid-July.

Recorded as a *100-year event*, the heat dome affected nearly all produce. With heat stressed plants thirsty for water farmers faced challenges keeping up

with irrigation schedules.

Many farmers have been planning for slow, constant climate change; however, the ability to keep all crops watered as needed was challenging as the demand for irrigators and water was strained.

Some growers faced crop loss, notably berries, leaving sun scorched raspberries and soft strawberries on the vine. Even with daily early morning and night irrigation, plants were still wilted come afternoon, yet ultimately it did not seem to affect quality to a great extent.

Berries were nearly melting off the plants

The heat dome also had its effect on harvesting, and it was one of the most difficult years for picking crops. Berries were nearly melting off the plants and early morning pickings were needed, many workers starting before 5 a.m.

Worker health was of high importance. Workers were only able to work till 11 or 12 some days and then resume later in the afternoon. All the while demand for local product was still high and the ability to keep up was difficult. Continued support for local products was evident at the farm gate and commercial retail store levels.

One of the biggest challenges is the availability of land

Most farms were able to get the foreign workers they applied for, and the workers arrived on time for the season, unlike what some experienced in 2020 due to COVID. There was still a significant shortage of local workers, and many farms continue to work with and support the growth of the temporary foreign worker program.



*Harvesting Leeks,
Sea Bluff Farm*

Monsoon rains came in November, breaking monthly rainfall records in many parts of British Columbia. The rainfall did not significantly affect the lower Vancouver Island area, unlike other parts of BC. Still extremely wet for our area, some pumpkin and carrot crops were lost in low lying areas.

The demand for hay was – and continues to be - high. Per acre tonnage was down due to the summer heat wave and some fields were only cut once. First cut was heavy, but second and third cuts were very light in the area. Producers that were able to harvest more than once were those farmers that had an abundant ability to supply water and irrigate. Much of the hay on the Peninsula was harvested into round bails for the cattle and dairy industry. This resulted in a limited supply of hay to the local equestrians.

One of the biggest challenges is the availability of land to buy, rent or lease for food production. This is expected for the foreseeable future and is an ongoing problem on the Saanich Peninsula that will likely result in a shortage of local fruit and produce in the immediate area. Land continues to be purchased or acquired for uses other than food production and food security and farm sustainability in our region is challenged.

Bees play a part in every aspect of the ecosystem



Bev Marley's Tiny Farm

Our hives have done well through the winter, and we are delighted that we achieved a zero mite count 2 weeks ago!

We strategically plant pollinator favourites that feed the bees throughout the season – buckwheat is one of their favourites! And we are fortunate to be very close to Gobind Farms.

6.1(b) Agricultural Land Base – Phil Christie

Erosion of the farmland base in our municipalities continues, although not through exclusion from the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), but rather from the conversion within the ALR of high capability agriculture lands such as the 26 ha (64 acre) parcel owned by the Municipality of Saanich at Panama Flats which has been designated for park use and the 11ha (27 acre) parcel at Maber Flats in Central Saanich that has been withheld for several years from agricultural use pending decisions on use by the Council.



In addition, large portions of good capability farmland controlled by other agencies and NGO's purposefully sit idle as natural areas. This includes areas designated for recreation or with limited areas of farm development such as the Sandown farm owned by North Saanich of which only a small portion is currently being farmed.

While on an individual basis our commissioners often support these changes to public land use when proposed by the local governments, as members of the farm community we regret the ongoing loss of our farmland base to recreation, environmental and other important land uses. This gradual erosion of the farmland base continues to reduce the overall viability of our industry especially given the trend of the last few decades towards higher concentration of production in the Lower Mainland. This has occurred in most areas including poultry, hogs, beef, and cattle production, resulting in more expensive inputs and lower returns on farm outputs.

On the policy front, most of the commission members agreed with the Agricultural Land Commission's new policy initiatives that were put into the regulations in 2021. We didn't think that having a suite above a barn or adding a small cottage (less than 90 sq. meters) erodes or in any way harms the farm base. Some of our members struggled with the concept of how allowing a young farmer to have a mortgage helper in the form of a suite or cottage would harm farming opportunities as many of our members believe that it helps the farmer pay the mortgage. In this way they can continue to farm or expand their farming operation. We also struggled with the efforts of some to make a big distinction between leasing and owning farmland. Both are important instruments that allow

A "one size fits all" policy does not work

individuals to farm and as such should be encouraged.

We discussed the idea that we should all take care to not label farmers, especially young farmers, who have purchased their land as 'big bad landlords'. In many cases these farmers have small farms and are struggling to pay their mortgages and that they often need to have a mortgage helper in the form of a suite or cottage. Thankfully the province has since changed the rules because our farm community, especially young farmers with mortgages, urgently requested this policy change in the first place.

With respect to farm planning and "clustering farm plates at the main road" we agreed to advise the policy makers and planners that a "one size fits all" policy does not work. Thinking about the heat dome and flooding conditions of these past few months, we should ask the planners to consider both fire smart principles and geographic



Ready for Spring Planting

constraints when setting out and agreeing to a "home plate" within a farm plan. For example, many farm parcels on Vancouver Island have lowlands that have high capability soils lying along the main road and often have forested high ground that is bedrock or stony in the back part of the parcel so sometimes it is best to locate the house at the back of the property with the buildings spread out in order not to create a fire hazard.

We note that farmland prices continued their steep climb in 2021 with a year over year increase in value of 6.3 % for Vancouver Island farms according to Farm Credit Canada's Farmland Values report.

In conclusion, while PAAC commissioners support environmental, recreational, and other land use changes that our community and province want, we continue to worry about the result of alienating existing farmland for these other purposes without adequate initiatives to develop any new farming areas on Vancouver Island.

6.1(c) Outreach and Education – Linda Geggie

- Due to the Covid 19 Public Health Orders, there were limited opportunities for external outreach and educational opportunities for the farm community.
- There was no Farmer2Farmer or Island Agriculture Show again this year. The Saanich Fair is one event that touches a wide variety of residents in the Capital Region and provides a broad range of opportunities for connecting with farmers and seeing

livestock, poultry, farm equipment etc., firsthand. This event was held with Covid Protocols; however, PAAC was unable to participate.

- In terms of *New Farmer* opportunities for education and training, we know that the farm networks and mentors are one way to share knowledge between farmers. Community farms in the region also all have different training and learning opportunities such as Burgoyne Farm, Lohbrunner Farm, Haliburton Farm, Newman Farm and Sandown Centre for Regenerative Agriculture.
- This year Sandown launched its “Farmpreneur” programme. The programme had 29 applications for 9 spots that provide applicants with land and a training programme. It completed its first season and is gearing up for the next intake.
- CRFAIR, a key PAAC partner, also provided two Canada Gap Workshops with partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture for Farmers and continued to support new and smaller growers through the SIFarmhub and the development of the new Kitchen Connect Processing facility.



Sandown: Soil Reclamation

Speakers & Presentations:

In terms of education of the PAAC Commission we had several speakers and municipal staff come to PAAC to speak on different topics including:

Month	Topic	Speaker
January	Carbon Sequestration & Adding Organics to Soil	Bob Maxwell
February	Resilient Saanich	Adriane Pollard, Saanich Environmental Services
April	New Regulatory Changes re Livestock	Lisa Levesque, BCAF
May	Pest Control Using Natural and Biological Controls	Brian Spencer, Applied Bio-Nomics
May	South Island Prosperity Project	Dallas Gilason & Ty James
September	Well Water Rights	Mike Wei, Consultant
September	Habitat Acquisition Trust (Hedgerows)	Paige Erikson
November	Water Well Rights	Andrew Peterson, Ministry of Agriculture
November	Housing & Agriculture Zones	Andrea Pickard, Central Saanich

PAAC members have expressed interest in learning more about environmental and climate adaptive farming as well as carbon sequestration. This will be a focus for 2022.

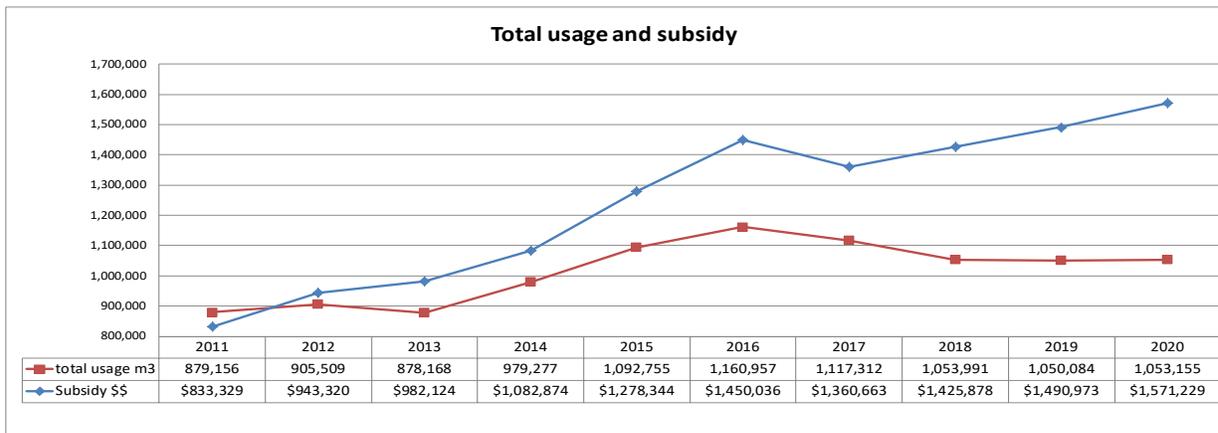
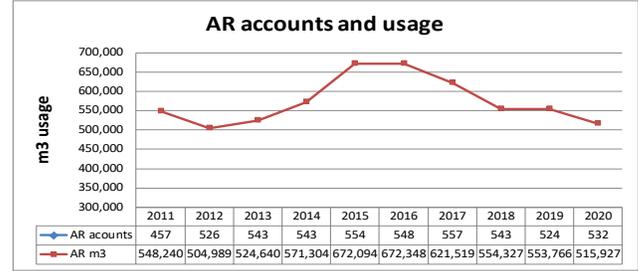
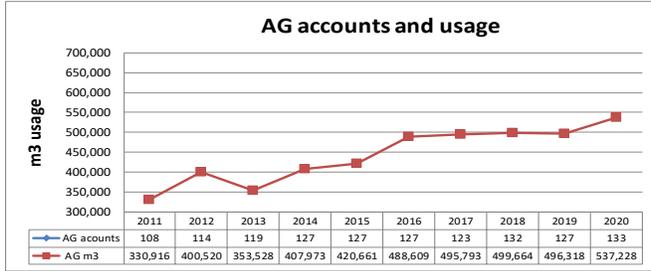
6.1(d) Water Report for 2021 Growing Season – Michael Doehnel

- What a difference a year makes, the heat dome and back to our seemingly normal Mediterranean climate with no rain in the summer. Compared to last year, there was stronger demand for both irrigated and dry land local forage due to a widespread shortage from around the pacific northwest and farther southeast to Alberta and Saskatchewan. Just wondering how the sugar sensitive made out.
- There is often a case made for keeping exhausted pH deficient pastures/hay fields intact because they contribute to carbon sequestration but is most often an excuse to do nothing productive with the land. The yields are poor, the compaction is extensive, and they are mostly mined to avoid paying taxes while the rest of the hardworking community and families in our area generously subsidize the tax avoiding astute, they thank you for your money.
- Effective carbon sequestration occurred hundreds and thousands of years ago when the roaming ruminants and ungulates were constantly eating, moving, and depositing. This is actual carbon sequestration and soil building. The local efforts have all manure and food waste just going to soil blending for domestic landscaping so not one drop is going back to farmland.
- Water was scarce at times in North Saanich as the Cloak Hill Reservoir was drawn down so much and unable to refill at night that BC Ferries was requested to not top up their ships which they graciously did and were able to fill up at the Tsawwassen terminal. According to staff at North Saanich and CRD, the likely culprits were automatic estate irrigation systems (where the homeowners may not even have been present to tone things down in an emergency), nurseries and general overwatering of non-native landscapes. This is not good folks; we need to get a grip on reality.
- Crops in June suffered with scorched berries but afterward's they seemed to recover and produce an amazing harvest if you were able to keep up with water demand. Many other vegetable and other field crops fared well, and disease incidences were lower due to the decreased humidity. Where farmers were not able to get water on in a timely fashion some crops were abandoned or only seeing half of their yield potential.

The local efforts have all manure and food waste just going to soil blending for domestic landscaping so not one drop is going back to farmland.

- This past heat dome and water demand further emphasizes the need for compost. How many more times must this be said to be believed or acted upon.

AR = agricultural and residential use, ag rate over 455 m3 usage
 AG = dedicated agricultural meter



This photo, post flooding, shows our lack of immunity and preparedness to this disappearing soil, which feeds our whole land and marine ecosystems.

Note the ugly mess in the Saanich inlet.



7.0 MEMBERSHIP, ADMINISTRATIVE & PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

7.1 Membership for 2021 (Voting Members)

Name	Specialty
Phil Christie - Chair	Agrologist; hay, rhubarb & honey farmer
Terry Michell	Michell Farms – fruits, vegetables, hay, grains, pasture beef
Linda Geggie	(CR-Fair) – grows flowers and foliage
Dianne Williamson	(Firbank Farms) – poultry & vegetable grower
Bev Marley	(The Tiny Farm) – garlic, honey & poultry
Larry Sluggett	(Sluggett Farms) – corn and vegetables
Carol Davidson	Sheep farmer
Robin Tunnicliffe	(Sea Bluff Farm, Metchosin) – fruit and vegetables
Satnam Dheenshaw	(Gobind Farms) – grows mostly berries
Larry Kimmett	(BC Farms & Food)

7.2 Council Representatives (Non-Voting Members)

Councillor Brett Smyth	District of North Saanich
Councillor Chris Graham	District of Central Saanich
Councillor Zac De Vries	District of Saanich
Robin Tunnicliffe	Representing the District of Metchosin

PAAC acknowledges that Councillors are often unable to attend PAAC meetings due to other Council commitments. However, their attendance and input are very much appreciated, including Councillor Thompson from Central Saanich who steps in when Councillor Graham is unavailable.

7.3 Professional Support

PAAC is grateful for the regular attendance and professional support of Emily Carmichael, an agrologist with the Ministry of Agriculture & Foods. At one time, a liaison from the Minister's office attended meetings on a regular basis. This provided a beneficial link between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Commission. There was no such representative for 2021, although a request was made. We hope a new appointee can be assigned for 2022.

7.4 Community Membership & Support

- In addition to our voting members, non-voting council and provincial liaisons, PAAC has an ever-growing number of “associate” members from various 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 the valuable input they provide.
- PAAC appreciates the countless volunteer hours, hard work, commitment, and dedication of all its members as we endeavour to achieve sustainable agriculture and food security for our region.
- In the past, members and associates have taken part in various workshops and meetings such as Farmer2Farmer, the CRD Deer and Geese Management Committees, CRD Food & Agriculture Strategy, municipal agricultural advisory committees, Vision Sandown, and the Saanich Fair.
- In 2021, mostly due to COVID-19 restrictions and/or changes in within the CRD and municipal structures, many of these groups either did not meet or met infrequently. It is hoped that 2022 will see a return to a regular schedule as these groups and the work they do are vital to agricultural sustainability and promoting the importance of agriculture to the public.

PAAC would like to acknowledge two past members of PAAC who continue to support agriculture by volunteering their time:

Mike Doehnel for many years has been the agriculture representative on the Saanich Peninsula Water Commission and the Saanich Peninsula Wastewater Commission. He also attends the Regional Water Commission meetings. He reports regularly to PAAC on various water issues and his report is included in this document. We sincerely appreciate Mike providing countless volunteer hours and his valuable insight on all agricultural issues.

Bob Maxwell has been a PAAC member for many years and served as Chair. His “retirement” from the Commission did not last long, as he now competently represents PAAC on the Vancouver Island Regional Agricultural Adaptation Strategy group. We thank Bob for volunteering his time and providing knowledgeable support and input on these other issues throughout the year.

7.5 Administrative & Technical Support

The Commission is very grateful for the continued funding and support it receives from the sponsoring municipalities, as well as the administrative and secretarial support provided by Isobel Hoffmann since 1998.

Technical support and information are provided upon request from senior planning and engineering staff from the member municipalities. Often staff attends PAAC meetings to provide additional information on a particular application or issue involving agriculture. We are hopeful a new CRD representative will be appointed shortly to replace Jeff Weightman who was a regular attendee, now working for the Ministry of Agriculture. It was very helpful to receive regular updates on the CRD's committees related to agriculture, such as the Geese and Deer Management Programmes.

PAAC would not function without this community of dedication and assistance, and agriculture would not have the support it needs. If the pandemic has taught us anything – it is how vital agriculture and food security is to everyone's health and well-being, and further, that our hard-working farmers need continued support from all levels of government.

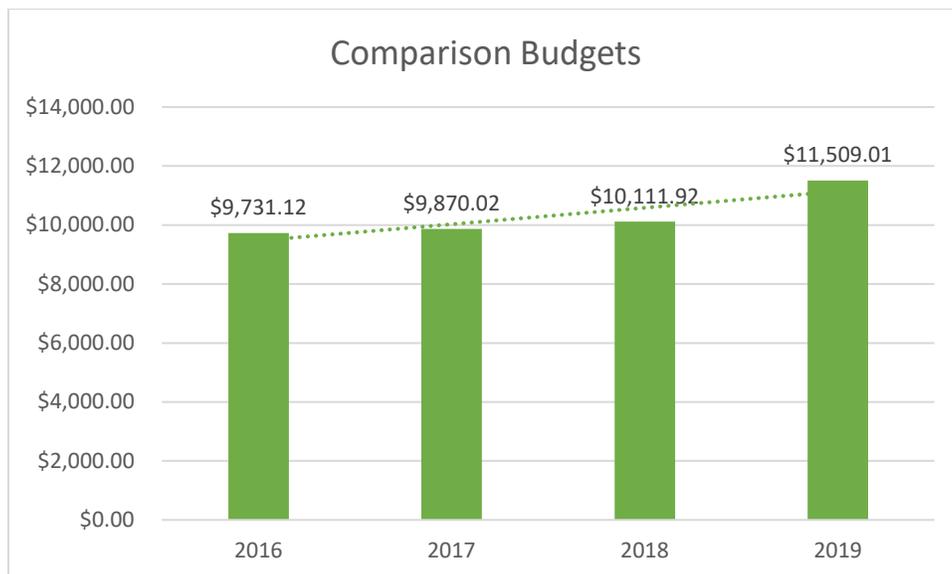
If the pandemic taught us anything – it is how vital agriculture and food security is to everyone's health and well-being, and further, that our hard-working farmers need continued support from all levels of government.

8.0 FINANCE

All regular meetings were held by ZOOM due to the pandemic and the overhead costs have been adjusted accordingly. There was less activity than in past years (other than 2020), as there was no workshops or seminars and PAAC did not participate in the scaled-down Saanich Fair. The exception was a small farm tour in July 2021 regarding pest control measures.

Each Municipality contributes to the general administration carried out by the recording secretary, and the cost formula is based on population. Expenditures vary from year to year depending on activity levels.

Municipality	Costs for 2020	Costs for 2021
District of Saanich - 41%	\$2367.63	\$3,656.78
District of Central Saanich – 31%	\$1790.16	\$2,764.88
District of North Saanich – 17%	\$981.22	\$1,516.23
District of Metchosin – 11%	\$635.22	\$981.09
TOTAL	\$5774.71	\$8,918.98



9.0 LOOKING FORWARD

PAAC will continue its work to provide input on Agricultural Area Plans, Official Community Plans and other land use concerns including labor issues, ownership issues, flooding and drought induced issues and increasing farm insurance costs.

In 2022, we will work with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agricultural Land Commission to help plan a celebration in 2023 to recognize the importance of the establishment of the Agricultural Land Reserve.

We will continue our work with the CRD to further develop Canada goose and deer management strategies, providing the programmes and the funding are extended through 2022. As well, we will encourage the municipalities and the CRD to utilize the expertise available on our agriculture advisory commission and continue to encourage those local governments who are not currently members to consider joining us.

The recent invasion of Ukraine by the Russian army will add additional stress to our agricultural systems and farmers, especially by adding to the increasing costs of fuel, fertilizers, and feeds.

We must, however, recognize that all these additional stresses for our local farmers are nothing when compared to what the farmers in the Ukraine are currently experiencing. Driving our farm tractors is dangerous enough without being shot at or having to use them to tow tanks away from the battlefield!

As our farm community adapts to the ongoing challenges, we are asking the non-farming community to continue to increase their support to local farmers by buying locally and getting behind the various agricultural initiatives that are so vital to a healthy farming community.



Summer Harvest

To quote Jack Knox:

“The broader question – As in much broader than the Island and the Fraser Valley – is whether we can have a safe, secure, locally controlled food supply, or will we depend on products from elsewhere? Do we want to be subject to grocery prices that fluctuate wildly with the American Dollar, or with our ability to transport them from afar? (Hands up if you’re sick of the words ‘Supply chain’? Support our farmers, or pay the consequences”

Respectfully submitted,

Phil Christie Chair
Peninsula & Area Agricultural Commission
March 2021