DISTRICT OF METCHOSIN

AGENDA

AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING

May 15, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.
Council Chambers
Metchosin Municipal Hall

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1. Agenda, Additions, Approval

2. Presentations

3. Public Participation

4. Adoption of Minutes
a) Agricultural Advisory Select Committee, March 25, 2024 1

5. Receipt of Minutes
a) Finance Committee Meeting, April 8, 2024 5
b) Finance Committee Meeting, May 6, 2024 9

6. Business Arising from the Minutes
a) Capital Regional District, Regional Canada Goose Working Group
b) Addressing Human Wildlife Conflict
c) Night Market

7. Reports

8. Correspondence
a) Peninsula & Area Agricultural Commission, 2023 Annual Report 13

9. Other Business

10. Adjournment and Next Meeting Date

District of Metchosin

Minutes
Agricultural Advisory Select Committee Meeting
Wednesday, March 25, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.
Council Chamber
Metchosin Municipal Hall

Present: Councillor Shelly Donaldson, Robin Tunnicliffe (Chair), Brent Donaldson, Peter Chettleburgh, Alex Fletcher, Matt Ashton, Sasha Kubicek, Candace Lecompte (recorder)

Regrets: Andrew Penn

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

1. Agenda, Additions and Approval

Additions:

- Alex – Update about agricultural land use who is meeting next month (new business)
- Robin – Regional goose working group and CRD response update
- Mountain lion issues – public participation

Moved and Seconded by Brent and Peter that the agenda be approved as amended.

Carried

2. Welcome to New Members and Introductions

3. Presentations

No presentations.

4. Public Participation

John Buchanan – reported that three farms with large flocks have been devastated by cougar kills, total 30 reported at this meeting. Conservation Officers are not always available to arrive in time to set traps or hunt with dogs to dispatch. Farmers are challenged by these predators and may seize farming which has an impact on the local economy and workforce.

5. Adoption of Minutes

Moved and Seconded by Candace and Sasha that the Committee approve the minutes of the September 3/23 AASC.

Carried

6. Receipt of Minutes

Moved and Seconded by Brent and Peter that the Committee receive the minutes of the Finance Committee held on July 17, September 11, October 23, November 20, and December 4.

Carried

7. Business Arising from the Minutes

None.

8. Reports

None.

9. Correspondence

a) Glenn Harris, Senior Manager, Environmental Protection, Capital Regional District: Establishing a Regional Canada Goose Working Group

Robin stated that at a recent PAAC meeting the Guardians of our Salish Estuaries (GooSE), a volunteer group that controls geese explained their mandate to manage predatory geese. GooSE shakes the eggs or spray them with an oil then place back in the nest which interferes with hatching and therefore reduces reproduction. GooSE did not apply for permits this past year therefore there is an increase in the goose population.

The Capital Regional District (CRD) has an annual budget of $250,000 specific to Goose Control however there seems to be a gap in applying these funds into actions that would control geese reproduction. Geese habitats thrive in the CRD due to the dry, warm climate however geese have become a liability to farmers as well as hindering salmon habitat and grazing recreational properties.
Robin suggested writing a letter to Council expressing farmers concerns of geese ruining vegetable crops, wheat, barley and other forage crops. A second letter can be sent to CRD to take action on controlling the geese population in the region before further destruction occurs.

C. Donaldson stated CRD has requested that an AASC member attend the Canada Goose Working Group that meets quarterly to collaborate with others to manage the geese population. Sasha expressed interest in attending these meetings. Shelly will forward the ToR to Sasha. representative sent a letter asking for a member of AASC attend the goose predication meetings,

Moved and Seconded by Alex and Peter that Robin draft a letter to send to Council to forward to the CRD.

10. Other Business

a) Debrief from the February 16, 2024 Open House

Uplands Consulting reviewed the draft Ag Plan with Metchosin farmers followed by a comprehensive series of questions during the breakout sessions. Each group had a representative from the consulting team guiding and documenting the discussions. Uplands affirmed there is a great deal of potential for agriculture based on our close proximity to urban towns. Much gratitude from AASC and Uplands Consulting for Bilston Farm sponsoring the venue for the Open House. The subcommittee met the next day to review the practical information from the farmers.

b) Map – Funding, Sponsors, Content – who/what/where/why

In 2023 AASC invested in a Farm Map applying funds from the district for the setup of the artwork and private funds from local farmers to print numerous copies for display at businesses, farms stands, farmers market and the District office.

- C. Donaldson suggested seeking sponsorship to help offset the reproduction costs. Metchosin Farmers Institute (MFI), Tractor Time, Willow Wind might be approached to sponsor the farm map.
- Alex reported that MFI may have grant funds available to help offset promoting Metchosin Grown map and other initiatives. Peter and Alex can explore interest from MFI.
- Alex would like to include other organizations from bordering communities to help promote agriculture regionally with Metchosin Grown farming being a destination.
- Adding a printed date helps keep tract of information, listings, changes for referencing.
- Farms coordinating the times of sale supports increased customer base.
- Adding Farm Stands in the future is a consideration.
- Collecting maps from other areas helps the Metchosin Grown map evolve.

c) Metchosin Farmers Institute Report

See above.

d) Review Advisory Select Committee Bylaw No. 493

Staff circulated the bylaw to AASC members which provided background on parameters for becoming a member of an advisory committee, i.e. – members need to live within the district.

e) Review Agricultural Advisory Committee Terms of Reference

C. Donaldson read the Terms of Reference aloud so that the committee and residents in the gallery understood the expectations of the role of AASC members by the Council they report to. Alex identified that upon completion of the Ag Plan, the ToR and Bylaw #493 will need to be updated.

f) Environment and Natural Areas Committee Recommendation, February 12, 2024

- **Addressing Human Wildlife Conflict**

Brent reported that MEASC had a presentation about human/wildlife conflict. C. Gray suggested a subcommittee of MEASC/AASC be established to seek solutions which was passed by the Council. Brent further explained that in 2023 61 sheep and goats were killed by cougars, previous kills were from bears, already 30+ kills for 2024.
Brent, Matt and Sasha are interested in the subcommittee if deemed useful.
Further discussion points:

- Wild animals are well protected by law.
- Farmers believe livestock needs protection as well.
- Farmers protect their animals using guardian dogs, donkeys, electric fencing and on a smaller scale, housing.
- Conservation Officers response time is broad and sometimes none.
- CO responsibilities, trapping, dogs, dispatch, records.
- BC regulations – what is the law, dispatching, responsibilities, etc.

- Cougar control – a realistic, workable solution is needed – harm reduction mechanism.
- Tracking collars for predators
- Best practices of other farming communities, proactive goals.

Spring is upon us and sheep will be turned out on spring grass and potentially in a vulnerable state as they graze the large pastures of Metchosin.

Moved and Seconded Alex and Sasha that Brent write a letter to Council regarding cougar management, include documented livestock deaths, solutions as discussed above.

g) Night Market

C. Donaldson indicated there is an interest for a Night Market in Royal Bay.

- Town of Colwood is supportive.
- Convenient to bring a market closer to residential neighborhoods.
- Weeknight – similar to Sooke and Esquimalt markets.
- Promotes local food growers – viable economy.

Robin suggested the MPA become members of the BC Association of Farmers Markets.

- $500 membership fee
- Government assistance coupons – nutrition coupons.
- Tourism maps, group insurance, etc.

Moved and Seconded by Alex and Robin to draft a letter proposing that Council review lease with Metchosin Producers Association as multiple documented requests from local producers to join MPA for market season have been denied.

h) 2024 Goals

- Wildlife, livestock and human conflict – solutions
- Metchosin Producers Association and AASC – meet to collaborate agriculture representation supporting viable outcomes.
- Community Garden (future farmers) – digging brambles is the biggest hold up as "call before you dig" is required, wet weather and school training activities preempted access to excavate roots and move gravel, fence quotes and grant funding being sought.

i) Final Review of Draft Agricultural Plan

- Draft Plan
- Background Report
- Engagement Summary

Alex stated that there have been multiple rounds of engagement with the Agricultural Plan. Reviewed edits in document. Action item to set up mechanisms for people wanting to receive or donate farmland for farming.

11. Adjournment and Next Meeting Date

Moved and Seconded by Sasha and Candace that the Committee adjourn the meeting at 9:36 p.m.

Carried

The next meeting May 15, 2024

District of Metchosin

Minutes
Finance Committee Meeting
April 8, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.

Metchosin Municipal Hall
Council Chambers

PLEASE NOTE: The meeting has been recorded.

Present: Councillor Donaldson in the Chair, Mayor Little, Councillors Epp, Gray and Shukin. Also present was Bob Payette, Chief Administrative Officer, Stephanie Dunlop, Fire Chief and Jennifer Miller, Legislative Services Assistant.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

The Chair provided a Territorial Acknowledgement.

1. Agenda, Additions and Approval

Moved and Seconded by Councillor Shukin and Mayor Little that the Committee approve the agenda as amended with the following changes:

- New Business - Cougar Predation on Sheep in Metchosin, Correspondence from the Agricultural Advisory Select Committee
- Amend adoption of minutes (Agenda Item 4a) to specify Finance Committee Meeting, November 20, 2023 only (and remove reference to the Environment Committee).

Carried

2. Presentations

a) Maureen Sawa, CEO and Shahiri Khair, Board Vice-Chair, Greater Victoria Public Library Board

Maureen Sawa and Shahiri Khair, provided a PowerPoint presentation and overview of the Greater Victoria Public Library (GVPL) 2024 Budget including:

- GVPL Service area
- Services to the community
- Services to Metchosin (Juan de Fuca Branch)
- "Fine Free" Farewell to overdue fines
- Building a bridge to a better future
- 2024 Budget overview
- District of Metchosin 2024 Contribution

Council discussed:

- Library use trends
- Library spaces and uses
- Physical and digital materials management, demand, costs, and licensing
- Collection policy and criteria for selection of materials
- Municipalities served by the GVPL

b) Judith Cullington, President, Juan de Fuca Performing Arts Center Society, Accessibility & Inclusion Study

Judith Cullington provided a PowerPoint presentation and overview of the Juan de Fuca Performing Arts Centre Society's Accessibility & Inclusion Study including:

- Partnership with West Shore Arts Council
- Preliminary Feasibility Study
- Accessibility and Inclusion Study
- Key Findings
- Recommendations
- "Aha" moments
- Intermunicipal Committee
- Next Steps

Council discussed:

- Funding model
- Accessibility and inclusion

3. Adoption of Minutes

Moved and Seconded by Councillor Epp and Mayor Little that the Committee adopt the minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held November 20, 2023.

Carried

Moved and Seconded by Councillors Shukin and Gray that the Committee adopt the minutes of the Special Finance Committee – Budget Meetings held January 25, February 8, February 22, March 7, and March 21, 2024.

Carried

4. Receipt of Minutes

Moved and Seconded by Councillor Epp and Mayor Little that the Committee receive the minutes of the Agricultural Advisory Select Committee meeting held March 21, 2024.

Carried

5. Reports

a) Councillor's Update

Councillor Donaldson provided an overview of her Councillor's Update including:

- Budget deliberations are now complete
- Agricultural Plan presentation to Council will take place in May
- Wildlife and Human conflict, community concerns
- Community garden site preparation underway
- Water presentations
- West Shore Parks and Recreation Society (WSPRS) - Tennis Club of Canada update
- WSPRS tennis courts resurfacing
- WSPRS updates to Tree policy
- Accessibility access tour of Metchosin museum and school sites
- Capital West Accessibility Advisory Committee survey

6. Other Business

a) New Business - Cougar Predation on Sheep in Metchosin, Correspondence from the Agricultural Advisory Select Committee (AASC)

Councillor Donaldson provided an overview of the correspondence received from the AASC regarding Cougar Predation.

Committee discussion:

- Advice from the Agricultural and Environmental Advisory Select Committees
- District responsibilities
- Potential solutions and resources
- Conservation Officer Service response times
- Provincial regulations and policy
- Suggestion for a joint meeting with Council and the AASC
- Potential to receive staff report/background in advance

Moved and Seconded by Councillors Shukin and Epp to direct staff to expeditiously schedule a joint meeting of the Finance Committee and the Agricultural Advisory Select Committee (AASC);
And That staff invite Conservation Officers from the BC Conservation Officer Service (COS) and retired conservation officer Peter Pauwels to the joint meeting of the Finance Committee and AASC.

Carried

7. Adjournment

Moved and Seconded by Councillors Shukin and Epp that the Committee adjourn the meeting at 8:02 p.m.

Carried

Certified Correct

_____ _____

Chair **Corporate Officer**

District of Metchosin

Minutes
Finance Committee Meeting
May 6, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.

Metchosin Municipal Hall
Council Chambers

PLEASE NOTE: The meeting has been recorded.

Present: Councillor Donaldson in the Chair, Mayor Little, Councillors Epp, Gray and Shukin. Also present was Bob Payette, Chief Administrative Officer, Stephanie Dunlop, Fire Chief, and Jennifer Miller, Legislative Services Assistant.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

The Chair provided a Territorial Acknowledgement.

1. Agenda, Additions and Approval

Moved and Seconded by Councillor Gray and Mayor Little that the Committee approve the agenda as amended with the following changes to Agenda Item 2.c, 2024 Grant in Aid Presentations:

- Correspondence received from Marnie Essery, President, Access West Shore Society as supplemental information to the written submissions
- Royal Canadian Legion Prince Edward Branch 91 presentation cancelled
- South Island Farmers Institute presentation added

Carried

2. Presentations

a) Ione Smith, Upland Agricultural Consulting Ltd., Introduction of the Metchosin Agricultural Area Plan

- **Alex Fletcher, Metchosin Agricultural Advisory Select Committee**

Ione Smith provided a PowerPoint presentation and overview of the Metchosin Agricultural Area Plan including:

- Upland Agricultural Consulting team
- Purpose and context: guiding document to strengthen agricultural sector for long-term sustainability, collaboration with the District of Metchosin and the Agricultural Advisory Select Committee, identification of strengths, opportunities, recommendations and actions.
- Process: background report, engagement, draft Agricultural Area Plan, open house and external feedback, and final Agricultural Area Plan
- Statistics
- Engagement activities and key findings
- Vision Statement
- Goals
    1. Protect Metchosin Farmland for Farming
    2. Support the Economic Viability of Metchosin's Farming Community in a Collaborative Manner
    3. Create a Sustainable and Climate Resilient Farming Sector in Metchosin

- Monitoring and Evaluation – Progress and Process Indicators

Committee discussion:

- Post-production processing
- Emphasis on farming community
- Monitoring and progress indicators
- Access opportunities for Foodland production for new entrants
- Young Agrarians
- Action items
- Vision Statement
- Potential grants
- Accountability for implementing and monitoring the plan

b) Lenora Lee, Auditor, KPMG, Draft Consolidated Financial Statements

Lenora Lee provided an overview of the KPMG Draft Consolidated Financial Statements including:

- Management's Responsibility for the Consolidated Financial Statements
- Independent Auditor's Report
- Consolidated Statement of Financial Position
- Consolidated Statement of Operations
- Consolidated Statement of Change in Net Financial Assets
- Consolidated Statement of Cash Flows
- Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements

Committee discussion:

- Audit opinion
- Reserves
- Financial planning process
- Accounting policies and practices

c) 2024 Grants-in-Aid Presentations

The following Grants-in-Aid Presentations were made:

- Juan de Fuca Lacrosse Association
- Juan de Fuca Performing Arts Centre Society
- South Island Farmers Institute
- Wild Wise

Written submissions were received from:

- ReImagine West Shore
- NEED2
- Mental Health Society of Greater Victoria
- Access West Shore Society

d) 2024 Grants-in-Aid Program Applications

The full Grants-in-Aid application package was provided to the Committee in a separate package. There was discussion regarding criteria and the review process.

Action: That Committee members send their Grant-in-Aid Program Application selections to the Chair to collate and average for the Committee's consideration at a Finance Committee meeting in June.

3. Public Participation

Pattie Whitehouse, resident, spoke in favour of Council providing a Grant-in-Aid to the Crisis Intervention and Public Information Society of Greater Victoria dba. NEED2: Suicide Prevention, Education, and Support.

Brent Donaldson, resident, also supports a Grant-in-Aid for the NEED2: Suicide Prevention, Education, and Support as well as grass roots organizations, youth organizations, and those applicants presenting worthy cases.

4. Adoption of Minutes

Moved and Seconded by Councillor Shukin and Mayor Little that the Committee adopt the minutes of the Special Finance Committee, Budget held April 4, 2024.

Carried

Moved and Seconded by Councillors Shukin and Gray that the Committee adopt the minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held April 8, 2024.

Carried

5. Reports

a) Metchosin Agricultural Area Plan

The Committee discussed the Metchosin Agricultural Area Plan 2024:

- Review of the final plan
- Adoption and endorsement of the plan
- Staff involvement
- Request for Proposal
- Consultation with staff and the Agricultural Advisory Select Committee (AASC)
- Recommendations outlined in the plan
- Managing implementation and monitoring
- Council's role versus the farming community
- Key findings
- Council's Strategic Plan

Moved and Seconded by Councillors Shukin and Gray that the Committee submit any edits, corrections, and comments to the Chair for a subsequent draft of the Metchosin Agricultural Area Plan to be provided to the Finance Committee.

Carried

b) Councillor's Update

Councillor Donaldson provided an overview of her Councillor's Update including:

- Council approved the 2024-2028 Five-Year Financial Plan and the 2024 Tax Rate on April 22, 2024.
- Greater Victoria Library Board (GVPL)
    - Elected Vice Chair of the GVPL Finance Committee
    - Finance, Policy and Planning Committees are in session through the summer working through the Strategic Plan

- Agriculture
    - Members of the Agricultural Advisory Select Committee and the Metchosin Producers' Association met to discuss farming activity and mapping inventory
- Juan de Fuca Water Commission, Well Water and Alternatives – CRD presentation
- West Shore Parks & Recreation (WSPRS)
    - Langford Tennis Club Presentation
    - 2023 Financial Statements
- Access Westshore, Access Awareness Week May 26-June 1, 2024

6. Adjournment

Moved and Seconded by Councillor Gray and Mayor Little that Committee adjourn the meeting at 8:40 p.m.

Carried

Certified Correct

_____ _____

Chair **Corporate Officer**

PENINSULA & AREA AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



Robin Tunnicliffe
Chair

March 2023

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Peninsula & Area Agricultural Commission
2023 ANNUAL REPORT

1. 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. Our basic objective is to support and promote the sustainability of farming.

2. HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2023

2.1 South Island Farmers' Institute (SIFI)

The following report was submitted by Katie Underwood, founder of SIFI.

In April 2023, PAAC sponsored a Farmers' Institute introduction day at the Saanich Fairgrounds. Over 50 attendees engaged in a panel presentation and discussion of BC Farmers' Institutes.

Twenty-three (23) farmers and agricultural sector organizations emerged as founding members of the South Island Farmers' Institute (SIFI), showing interest and enthusiasm in ongoing community education, networking, advocacy, and services such as tool sharing, bulk buying, a labour pool, and the revival of Farmer-to-Farmer education.

Officially recognized by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food in July 2023, SIFI formed partnerships with 3 non-profit organizations. These collaborations facilitated various services, including cover crop provisions for 18 small-scale farms through SPEC-BC, ongoing access to FarmFolk-CityFolk's mobile seed cleaning trailer, and operational supports from Haliburton Farm.

During the fall of 2023, SIFI organized two events:

1. Seed Saving Resiliency workshop in Metchosin at Sea Bluff Farm

2. Sustainers Series, showcasing farmers who have shown long term farm sustainability and resilience in food production on the South Island.

The sustainer speaker is paired with a presentation highlighting an area of regional concern to farmers. Larry Sluggett of Sluggett Farm and Mike Doehnel from the CRD Water Advisory Committee launched the inaugural Sustainers Series showcasing farmers.

By year's end, forty-six (46) farm and farmer members, and fifteen (15) non-voting "Friends of Farmers", actively shaped SIFI's mandate. SIFI brought the voice of its members to various forums, including Provincial, Regional and Municipal governments.

In celebration, SIFI instituted an Annual Certificate of Appreciation, honouring Billy Metcalfe for over two-decades of contribution to capacity building in the Agricultural Sector.

The South Island Farmers Institute appreciates PAAC for its continued support in fulfilling our farmer-led mandate and advancing mutual strategic objectives.

2.2 Ministry of Agriculture and Food Initiatives

Megan Halstead, Regional Agrologist with the Ministry submitted the following report:

- The Province is delivering a new 5-year producer-focused research and extension program that started in April 2023. This new Regional Extension Program builds on past work completed under the Ministry's Climate Change Adaptation Program (CCAP)

- Provincial programs, resources and services for agricultural producers are available through AgriService BC. News is available through the new AgriService BC Facebook page and e-newsletters: AgriService BC e-Bulletin for province-wide news, and the Vancouver Island Edition for regional news, including updates on Regional Extension Program activities.

- Key focus for the Ministry of Agriculture & Food is drought management. events and resources.

  (https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/agricultural-land-and-environment/water/drought-in-agriculture)

3. KEY ISSUES DISCUSSED BY PAAC

3.1 Golden Nematode – Central Saanich & other areas

Although there was no formal discussion this topic during 2023, the issue is still unresolved from a farmer's perspective. The link below will provide up to date information.

https://inspection.canada.ca/plant-health/invasive-species/nematodes-snails-and-others/eng/1321563900456/1321564231938.

3.2 Maber Flats Flooding – Central Saanich

Dale Puskas, Central Saanich Engineer, spoke to PAAC at its January meeting about the Integrated Storm Water Management Plan completed in 2009 which incorporated the site as a flood plain. The District acquired the property in 2009 and nothing was done until 2019 when a water control valve was installed on the northern boundary. As of 2023, the District was waiting to hear if a grant from the federal government was successful to enable the District to manage the water control issues.

The property continues to sit underwater for many months of the year.

It was noted that the dikes on the property create challenges as they prevent water escaping to the south. The property continues to sit underwater for many months of the year; crops do not grow because no air has been able to get to the soils and even if the land is drained, there will be considerable remediation work required.

3.3 Central Saanich Food Hub

Darren Stott gave a power-point presentation on the findings and recommendations for a food hub in Central Saanich, and noted that he also did a similar study for the District of Saanich. There are food hubs in Esquimalt, the Gulf Islands, Sooke and Metchosin.

An assessment on the feasibility of establishing a larger-use processing facility encompassed considerations for food and beverage producers, as well as restaurants. Identified service and resource needs include food safety measures, enhanced production



Harvest bounty at Sea Bluff Farm

infrastructure, shared storage and processing spaces, specialized equipment, mentorship programs, and a dedicated retail market for local food.

The proposed hub is expected to yield community benefits such as increased access to local food, improved food security, economic growth, reduced food waste, and enhanced education on the importance of local food. With 28 interested enterprises, emphasis lies on food processing, storage facilities, e-commerce services, and wholesale distribution.

Challenges and interests of stakeholders, including the need for an abattoir, were discussed, along with ongoing efforts to secure a suitable location and funding. PAAC suggested local municipalities combine resources; a joint application to Investment Agriculture was suggested.

Concerns over high labour and land costs were voiced, prompting interest in grant funding. The potential inclusion of an abattoir in the hub was discussed, though its feasibility requires further examination. Previous studies on the abattoir and meat processing facility were acknowledged.

3.4 Vancouver Island Agriculture Adaptation Group

Past Chair Bob Maxwell is a member of the Vancouver Island Agriculture Adaption Group and reports regularly to PAAC. Several focus areas have been selected within the CRD, from the Peninsula to the Gulf Islands. Funding is provided by the province.

Water deficits on the Gulf Islands is a point of discussion. The group received $50,000 to hire a consultant to study the agricultural water capacity from Courtenay to the Saanich Peninsula.

3.5 Foodlands Trust Access Program

Noah Brotman from the CRD introduced PAAC to the Foodlands Access Program at its May meeting. The CRD has been working on the initiative to support access to farmland for about 10 years, along with municipalities and community stakeholders. Just over 7% of the land within the CRD is in the ALR. With a 27% expected population growth over the next 15 years there will be significant pressure on our food lands. The 2018 Regional Growth Strategy recommends productive food lands increase by 5,000 hectares by 2038.

Properties being actively considered include Newman Farm in Central Saanich, Panama Flats in Saanich, and Bear Hill Farm in Saanich/Central Saanich. The best option appears to be Bear Hill Farm as it is already owned by the CRD; once the land is cleared, there will be approximately 3.5 acres of fenced, but not irrigated, land, with a healthy forest on the west border.

As well, this program will be established as a CRD Service; the service establishment process is currently underway, with the goal of having the service in place by 2025. A quotation was issued in 2023 to see if there are qualified farm operators interested in managing the site. Once the program is operational, the first steps will be to improve the site with soil amendments and capital investments. This is intended as a pilot program to prove the viability of converting surplus lands to productive farm use. The pilot will run for 5 years, with the option to continue operations at Bear Hill in the long term.

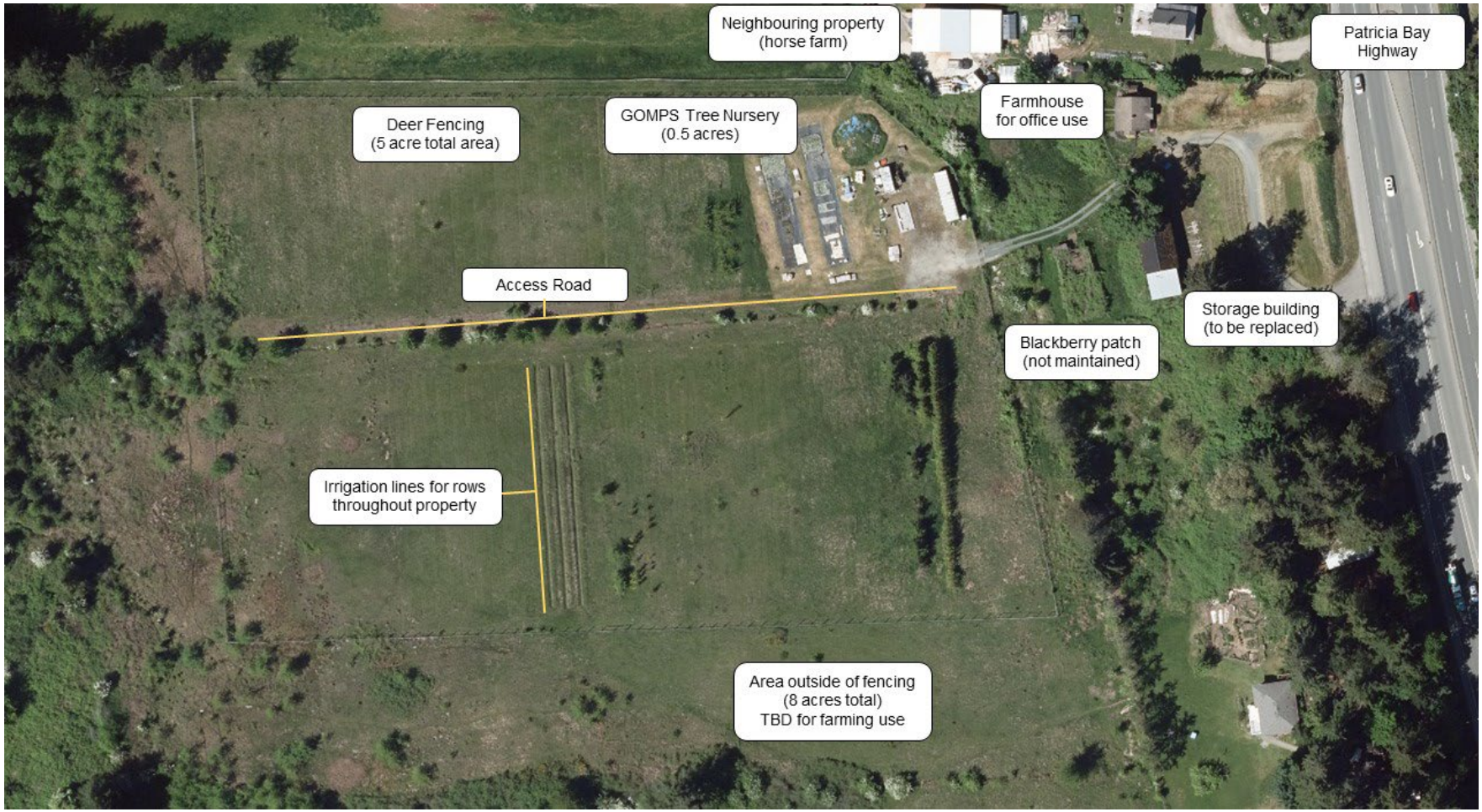
With a 27% expected population growth over the next 15 years there will be significant pressure on our food lands. The 2018 Regional Growth Strategy recommends productive food lands increase by 5,000 hectares by 2038.

Noah continues to provide updates to PAAC on the progress of this much needed initiative, and it seems the plan is on target.

See the next page for an annotated photo of Bear Hill.



Annotated photo of Bear Hill.



Arial view of Bear Hill with annotations

4. UPDATES ON CONTINUING ISSUES

4.1 Temporary Farmer Worker Housing

Farm Worker Housing has been a major discussion issue at PAAC meetings for almost 20 years. Both Saanich and Central Saanich have now adopted Farm Worker Housing Policies. Application information is posted on the websites at www.saanich.ca and www.centralsaanich.ca.

4.2 Goose Management Strategy

After all these years, our farmers are still struggling with crop loss from the ever-increasing goose population. Thousands of birds have been seen on farms on Island View Road as well as the West Saanich Road area.

We are aware that the CRD is working on implementing the Goose Management Strategy as a Service, but progress is slow. The public seems to be unaware of the devastation facing farmers and the struggles from losing thousands of dollars every year. A letter from the Chair was published in the Times Colonist explaining the dire situation and media interviews with Terry Michell, Dan Ponchett, Ann Knightingale and Guardians of our Mid-Island Estuaries (GOMIES), brought the situation to the public's attention.



A group of Canada Geese in a field.

PAAC provided a $3,000 grant to GOMIES in 2023, as well as $4,000 in 2022, to assist with egg addling programs. In 2023, 237 nests were located, and addling prevented 1,200 eggs from hatching.

In 2023, 237 nests were located, and addling prevented 1,200 eggs from hatching.

In April, PAAC heard a presentation from Jody Watson from the CRD who advised that the Goose Management Strategy has been approved as a service. An on-line survey to determine public support received thousands of comments, but only 174 objections. A budget was approved; a coordinator will be hired to work with community groups such as GOOSE and First Nations; and egg addling training programs will be initiated.

It was noted that estuary habitats are in poor condition and the CRD will be coordinating with First Nations and stewardship groups on restoration work. Addling programs will be established, although noted that this just controls the population: culls are the only way to reduce the number of geese and there is still some public resistance to this methodology. The CRD intends to be upfront with the community to ensure they understand the overwhelming impacts of allowing the number of geese to continually increase.

The CRD wants PAAC to be involved in a steering committee along with other stakeholders which will be established by the fall. A regional conference is also proposed to bring all municipalities to the table to establish programs for future years.

While PAAC was grateful that a Goose Management Strategy had finally been adopted by the CRD, it is disappointing that minimal action took place for the remainder of 2023, other than the continued egg addling by GOMIES, which is now referred to as the Guardians of our Salish Estuaries – GOOSE.

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Addling goose eggs.

5. REFERRALS FROM MUNICIPALITIES

5.1 Saanich Referrals

(a) Non-Farm use on ALR Lands

Three applications were received for non-farm use on ALR lands. PAAC did not support the applications because part of its mandate to protect agricultural lands and food security, although each case was considered on its own merit. Approval was seen as precedent setting and the start of a slippery slope, eradicating ALR lands piece by piece. Unused indoor spaces, such as the barns in the Blenkinsop applications, could be used for container or vertical farming for small crops such as strawberries, microgreens, herbs, lettuces, and other vegetables. (see 5.2(a) on Vertical Farming).

The three applications are:

1. 4251 Blenkinsop Rd – rental of existing barns for RV storage (February)
2. 4400 Blenkinsop Rd – rental of existing barns for heavy vehicle storage (February)
3. 536 Brookleigh Rd – fill removal for pool & accessory building (February)

(b) Size and location of homes on A-zoned lands (February)

PAAC was asked to provide advice on regulating the size and location of homes to align with recent changes to ALR and ALC regulations. Topography and sun angles were an important consideration to retain the maximum agricultural production. Maximum building size would depend on the lot area.

5.2 Central Saanich Referrals

(a) Vertical Farming – Andrea Pickard, Central Saanich Planner

Council had considered this topic at its November 14, 2022, meeting and asked PAAC for direction to address vertical farming structures in its Land Use Bylaw in response to provincial legislation changes that allow local governments to regulate certain structures within the ALR.



Vertical farming example

Andrea Pickard noted that vertical farming systems can intensify food production in a

controlled environment regulated through the ALC; less land and resources are required; local food security is improved; the process is adaptive to climate change; structures can be on agricultural or industrial zoned lands.

PAAC cited a few concerns: use of valuable farmland for structures; using sites where flooding is an issue and would require large amounts of fill; visual appearance, aesthetics and height are a consideration for permanent structures.

However, the pros outweigh the cons, noting that having controlled areas to grow food year-round was ideal, especially as the Island's population continues to grow while the number of farms continues to decline; fewer resources are required (e.g. Water); no evaporation; protection from climate and adverse weather conditions as well as from wildlife; and reduced labour requirements.

(b) 7701 East Saanich Road – Rezoning & Development Permit

A Council report was considered at PAAC's April meeting on a proposed redevelopment of the property which abuts 50 acres of agricultural land on the east side and requires a variance from 15.5 meters to 5 meters. Council was concerned about the size of the variance and the interface with agriculture. The proposal is for a 4-storey building with 61 market rental apartments and 9 ground floor townhouses. Tenants will be required to sign a covenant acknowledging they are adjacent to working farm and all that this entails.

While the plans were well developed, complete with shadow reports, the variance was significant and PAAC noted that an 8 meter minimum setback is required to get and retain organic certification. It was acknowledged there is a lack of rental housing in Central Saanich. PAAC suggested that the best practice for setbacks be followed, which is 30 meters from agricultural lands, with screening and buffering if possible.

(c) 7081 Central Saanich Road – Proposed Cat Sanctuary

This property used to be a golf course and driving range and is still within the ALR. The applicant has an agreement with the property owner to operate a cat sanctuary within the existing buildings, which are temporarily vacant. A Temporary Use Permit would have to be issued for the non-conforming use and public input will be sought. ALC approval is also required. Because this is proposed as a temporary use, no rezoning is required.

This is another example of a non-farm use on ALR land and would set a precedent of using valuable lands that could be used for food production. PAAC has not supported other applications for non-farm use, and we need to be consistent and true to our mandate of protecting ALR land and food security for the future.

6. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

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

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

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



Lavendar field at sunset

6.1 Sub-Committee Reports

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

- Farm Economics – Terry and Jenni Michell
- Agricultural Land Base – (no representative for 2023)
- 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.

6.2 Farm Economics – Terry and Jenni Michell

Spring 2023 arrived with seasonal temperature norms in March allowing farmers to seed green onions, corn, carrots, and beets etc. by mid month. Throughout April cauliflower and broccoli were planted along with many varieties of lettuce.

In early May a heat wave swept over Vancouver Island creating dry growing conditions, great for the continued planting and kicking off the aggressive irrigation schedule that would continue throughout the summer. Crops required a lot of water early on and while there were occasional spring rains, the overall 2022 winter precipitation accumulation was unusually low leaving many farmers concerned with the low water table and summer drought conditions. Many farmers observed farm wells depleting earlier than anticipated leading many to use municipal water to supplement their own water supplies earlier than usual.



Michells Farms – from flooded field to harvest of Savoy cabbages.

Unlike 2022 where the cool spring temperatures resulted in a late strawberry harvest, the warmer than usual May temperatures in 2023 lead to a booming strawberry season. The dry conditions allowed berries to thrive on the vine and farmers across the CRD were picking sweet berries in early June.

An unexpected full day of rain came June 9th, and while welcomed by many thirsty crops - relieving the vigorous irrigation schedule up to this point it, caused flooding for some farmers. Some saw several acres of squash under water and select plantings had to be reseeded once the land dried out. Although this day of rain came with mixed results, good and bad, this would be the last day of accumulated moisture farmers would see until mid September. After the initial shock from the heavy rain to the crops the overall growing season and production was good.

There was no heat dome in July and August, which was a welcome blessing considering the local water table. Fall was exceptionally good, not too wet, which allowed late season corn and a bounty of squash. The harvest season continued right into early winter with farms picking from the fields into late November/early December.

Consumers are still experiencing the continuation of rising food costs.

Demand For Local Product

The demand for local, Vancouver Island, products continue to be strong within the CRD on the retail, roadside stand and market, and farmer market levels. Producers have noticed an increase in wholesaler's efforts to handle more island products, which is good to see. Island grocery stores are promoting locally grown items with weekly specials and flyers, keeping residents aware of what is available and produced regionally.

Consumers are still experiencing the continuation of rising food costs. With many factors contributing to the inflation prices; extreme weather, supply chain issues, high input costs, etc. it is unfortunate to see that typically very little of those increases in dollars are making it back to the growers. This seems to be prevalent across Canada, but also all North America. That said, despite the increase in cost at the retail level, it is evident people within the various communities of the CRD want to have access to locally grown food items.

Local farm labour continues to be a struggle for many producers.

Farm Labour

Local farm labour continues to be a struggle for many producers. We now hear of many smaller scale producers enquiring to utilize The Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) to hire temporary foreign workers. This labour crisis is across the board for all positions

within agricultural related industries from field work, harvesting, washing, and retail. Without SAWP many large-scale producers would struggle to continue their operations because there simply isn't a local work force interested in this type of work. The workers that come to Canada are vital to the agriculture industry and allow many large-scale farms to continue to do what they do.

Hay

The 2023 hay harvest was good. The early heat allowed for a great first cut, which was used by livestock farmers on Vancouver Island. Farms that had plenty of access to water managed second and third cuts. The quality of these cuts was excellent; however, the yield was slightly down from the year before. Many south island producers were shipping up island to farms in the Cowichan and Comox Valley's that had been more severely affected by drought conditions.

Geese

Geese continue to be an ongoing, year-round, nuisance. Costing farmers across the CRD hundreds of thousands of dollars annually, this issue is of the utmost importance to local growers. Farmers have lost a variety of crops such as over-wintered broccoli, freshly planted cauliflower starts, carrot tops and cover crops to name a few. The CRD has acknowledged this loss and has been working on a bylaw authorizing a goose management plan for the districts. This plan was expected to roll out for the 2024 season, however at the time of this report nothing has gone into effect to support the farmers or to address the uncontrolled goose population.

Costing farmers across the CRD hundreds of thousands of dollars annually, this issue is of the utmost importance to local growers.

Climate

We can see the results of climate change in many ways across the agriculture industry in Canada. One prevalent issue that has come up for local farmers is drought and prolonged dry seasons.

Farmers want to ensure that local agriculture is supported and that the water rates reflect that.

Having an adaptable approach will be required along with a secure water supply. As climate change is expected to create shifts in the timing of rain and snow across Canada, the intensity of floods and drought will increase. Having access to water and affordable water rates is an additional stress farmers face when considering climate change, this is something we will see more of in the upcoming years.

Farmers worry that an increase in water rates could be detrimental to production. The agriculture community needs to secure a water supply and rates that are consistent with the expected production. Farmers want to ensure that local agriculture is supported and that the water rates reflect that.

Update from Firbank Farms re the Egg and Poultry Industry

Good news from the BC Egg Marketing Board - egg prices are holding their own and farms can keep up with the cost of production.

However, we are still waiting to hear back from FIRB (Farm Industry Review Board) on a pricing increase from the BC Chicken Marketing Board. We have been told as a growers' association that there might be a decision in September; this has been on-going for 4 years. There could be appeals if the decision doesn't go the right way, and that could take a long time. The delay is starting to affect the industry. As the cost of production increases, farms are going up for sale. That is a sad sign for food security.

To give an example for poultry costs:

- Producer's price is $2.20 per kg.
- Grocery store price is $9.70kg and more for segments.
- A Producer raises a 2kg bird and they get $4.40 per bird.

Out of that comes your costs:

  - chicks, feed, heat, hydro, water, taxes, insurance, bedding, and any repairs that are needed. Some people have a mortgage as well.
  - After all the costs, poultry farmers are working for approximately 50 cents a bird, based on an 8-week cycle.

6.3 Agricultural Land Base – no representative for 2023

The following information was provided by Terry and Jenni Michell.

Land Availability/Farmland

Land availability is once again an ongoing concern. Many young farmers hoping to establish themselves in the industry struggle to find affordable land to start on. Established small scale farmers face uncertainty when their current leases end, and yet there are still many acres of designated farmlands not producing within the CRD. The fight to conserve unused farmland becomes increasingly difficult with the pressure of urbanization and a nationwide housing crisis. Some municipalities are considering rezoning ALR land to allow for more housing to address the housing crisis. This is

concerning for new farmers especially as it increases land value and can put many properties out of reach pricewise.

Hopefully with the continued support of residents within the CRD for local products we will see more emphasis on protecting farmlands. Programs like the Young Agrarians that facilitate land matching are vital to supporting the continuation of agriculture in our area. Perhaps more awareness to the various municipalities and their residents would help foster these relationships and opportunities between landowners and growers.



A field of pumpkins

6.4 Outreach and Education – Linda Geggie

Part of the PAAC mandate is to undertake education to advance agriculture interests. We have several ways of doing this work; the first is ensuring that there are regular educational opportunities for the PAAC members. This ensures that we stay up to date and enhance our learning about the sector. The second area is to promote broader agriculture focused training and experiences to build sector wide capacity. A final area of our work is to provide education for decision makers and the public.

...mentorship networks play a crucial role in the knowledge sharing among farmers.

A key development this year was the reinstatement of a South Island Farmers' Institute. PAAC financially supported the start-up phase for the inaugural meeting in February 2023, where a mandate was set by the farming community. While Katie Underwood and Shellie MacDonald did the heavy lifting and organization, CR-Fair (Linda Geggie) and the Ministry of Agriculture & Food's Regional Agrologist, Megan Halstead, also provided support and contributed to the success of the initial meeting. The Institute was formed and proceeded to hold regular meetings. The SIFI is a great new addition to the South Island Agriculture Sector.

Regarding education and training opportunities for new farmers, mentorship networks play a crucial role in knowledge sharing among farmers. Young Agrarians actively supports new growers and facilitates land matches for access. Additionally, various community farms in the region offer diverse training and learning opportunities. Examples include Burgoyne Farm, Lohbrunner Farm, Haliburton Farm, Newman Farm, and the Sandown Centre for Regenerative Agriculture. Sandown recently concluded its third season. Sandown successfully hosted the North Saanich Flavour Trails Festival in 2023.

The Saanich Fair was held again and is one of the most important agriculture events 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. PAAC did not have a booth this year due to a shortage of volunteers.

2023 Spring Farm Tour: Important in supporting new councillors and decision makers in gaining a better understanding of agriculture and related issues, PAAC organized a spring Farm Tour. This involved visiting three Metchosin farms, including Sea Bluff Farm, Bilston Creek Lavender Farm and Still Meadow Farm. Invitations were extended to Councillors and staff of the sponsoring municipalities of PAAC, the CRD and the Water board. We had farmers speak about their operations at each of the farms.



On the bus to the Spring farm tour

On the bus there were presentations from Linda Geggie, Michael Doehnel, Shellie MacDonald, and Jody Watson who spoke on topics of local food security, agricultural water, provincial, regional, and municipal supports for farming, and Goose Management. The commission acknowledges the support from Saanich, Central Saanich, North Saanich, and Metchosin municipalities.





Presentations

Month	Topic	Speaker
January	Mabel Flats Flooding	Dale Puskas, Engineer, Central Saanich
January	Vertical Farming	Andrea Pickard, Planner, Central Saanich
January	Saanich Farm Worker Housing Policy Update	Cassidy Daskalchuck & Cam Scott, Saanich Planning
February	GV Acting Together	Jane Welton & Gertie Josh
February	Proposed Food Hub in Central Saanich	Darren Stott, Greenchain Consulting
April	CRD Goose Management Strategy Service	Jody Watson, CRD
April	Bio-Regional Framework	Bob Peart, Peninsula Environmental Coalition
May	Foodlands Access Program	Noah Brotman, CRD

This year PAAC heard presentations from numerous experts to support the learning of our members. In addition, referrals & presentations from our member municipalities and the CRD (see Section 3) other topics included:

Jane Welton & Gertie Josh: Greater Victoria Acting Together (GVAT)

The GVAT group is focused on raising awareness of local food consumption, as it's common for people to mistakenly believe they are supporting local agriculture when they only buy a small percentage of products from the region. To address this, there's a need for clearer labelling, increased support for land access and young growers, as acquiring farmland poses significant challenges.

GVAT's emphasis on plant-based foods is driven by their low greenhouse gas emissions, aligning with their climate-oriented mission. Approximately 30% of the Island's population actively seeks out local products. Further exploration into providing local foods to hospitals and school lunch programs is warranted, recognizing the variability in purchasing agreements across districts.

Farmers must obtain GAP certification and specialized insurance to sell to government institutions, highlighting bureaucratic hurdles.

Farmers must obtain GAP certification and specialized insurance to sell to government institutions, highlighting bureaucratic hurdles. Capacity among farmers to increase production varies, with some specializing in non-food crops. Establishing a comprehensive inventory of farmers and their produce quantities could facilitate better planning and support initiatives.

Bob Peart: Bio-regional Framework for the Saanich Peninsula

Before the meeting, members received a report on the Bio-regional Framework. Bob, from the Saanich Peninsula Environmental Coalition, outlined the development process, emphasizing collaboration with First Nations and municipalities to ensure ecological sustainability.

The framework prioritizes ecosystem integrity, jurisdictional collaboration, and community perspectives. Twelve environmental groups and local councils are involved, aligning with official community plans and bylaws. Establishing an environmental baseline and communicating progress to the public are planned.

Agricultural aspects include preserving ALR lands, enhancing farm sustainability, and supporting food security. Bob stressed the importance of public engagement and offered Coalition assistance for projects. Discussions highlighted the need for improved communication among stakeholders and suggested exploring environmental benefits of hedgerows.

Further information is available: www.PlaceSpeak.com/bioregionalframework.

Linda Geggie: Kitchen Connect Facilities

Linda Geggie provided an update on the Esquimalt Food Hub's recent Grand Opening. The Hub centres the Mustard Seed Food Recovery efforts, the South Island Farm Hub, Kitchen Connect Processing Kitchen, and Flourish School Food Society.

The Mustard Seed warehouse, operational since 2017, has rescued over two million pounds of food worth $9 million. Additional space is available for perishable food storage. The South Island Farm Hub, with over 90 producers, supports charitable organizations and school programs to access locally farmed foods by offering subsidies to offset costs and ensure fair market prices for farmers.

The Mustard Seed warehouse, operational since 2017, has rescued over two million pounds of food worth $9 million.

The Kitchen Connect HAACP ready processing kitchen is now open to support small business incubation with a commercial kitchen for processing, available for hourly rental as well as large scale processing local produce in seasonal abundance.

The Flourish School Food Society is also located at the food hub and is currently serving SD #61, providing over 400 meals to the Sooke School District. The cluster of organizations in one warehouse is creating strong integration between local food system infrastructure and promoting greater food security.

David Listhaegne, Stage Restaurant & Wine Bar in Fernwood

The restaurant owner faces challenges in sourcing locally raised meat due to limited availability and processing issues and is hoping PAAC can assist.

Problems with abattoirs are noted, with some mobile units available for chickens. Purchasing from stores presents limitations, such as inability to acquire whole chickens due to regulatory constraints.

- Still Meadow Farm partners with Parry Bay Sheep Farm, offering locally raised meat, and certain bakeries in Metchosin sell meat on Saturdays.
- Terry Michell sells locally raised beef at his retail farm market.
- The Regional Agrologist mentioned the Ministry of Agriculture and Food's interactive map of abattoirs, highlighting recent licensing changes that have increased accessibility.

6.5 Water Report for 2023 Growing Season – Michael Doehnel

It was again a novel year for water usage after the heat domes and epic rain of past years. The 2022/23 winter proved to be below average in terms of monthly precipitation and the Sooke Lake Dam did not overflow until late March, while the previous year 2021/22 it was full by early December. That is within our normal range of lake filling precipitation but shows the difference in scenarios that can be further expected in the coming years of uncertainty.

Prices of hay skyrocketed due to the lower yields, Often discussed is the need for more soil and compost so that the effects of water shortages can be mitigated.

In April 2023 the sky taps shut off and farmers were left with increasing soil moisture deficits depending on the extent of evaporation caused by various tillage techniques and other practices used to mitigate this soil moisture loss. It was a bit frightening to assume that that would be the end of rain until September but overall, it was not as scary as predicted because the general rates of evapotranspiration were moderate due to the lower summer temperature highs throughout the growing season.

Hay crops again were lower yielding but stellar in quality due to great harvesting weather which allowed first cut to be done early without intermittent showers to reduce quality Recovery of grass/hay crops for second and third cut was slower as expected and therefore also a reduction in the yields of these cuts. Prices of hay skyrocketed due to the lower yields and the demand from up-Island farmers who are continuing to face reductions in crops due to acute water shortages in the mainly dairy producing areas. Some of these farmers are now realizing that water guzzling silage corn may no longer be an option for some without significant water storage and will have to switch back to growing more conservative water use cereal grain crops of both silage and dry grains for their contribution to the starch component of their ration requirements.



Tractor in field at Michells Farm

Grain crops were affected in both yield and kernel plumpness when fields with hard pans did not allow roots to penetrate more deeply to access that stored water. This highlights the use of subsoiling in the Spring, as demonstrated in the photo, thereby facilitating deeper access of plant tap roots to mitigate drought stress.

CRD farm water usage was average with no major increases, while efforts of the PAAC (letter from 2019) and the Water Advisory Commission continue to address the re-evaluation of farm water rates by the mainly panned first report from Stantec. A second report is underway and will hopefully address the severe shortcomings of the first one. We are holding our breath that it will be comprehensive and meaningful.



Market stall of local produce

Often discussed is the need for more soil and compost so that the effects of water shortages can be mitigated as the reality is that much of our food waste compost is still shipped off the Island in an incomprehensible fashion that would go miles to ensuring more food security and less stress for farmers in the CRD. It highlights the trend of elected officials, assisted by bureaucrats, in chasing down the latest fashionable shiny baubles - instead of making their communities whole and functioning societies while staying in their lane when it comes to local and regional responsibilities.

Farming is still the low hanging fruit to ignore because there is little push back due to the low number of farmers and societies' strange perception that food comes from a store. Ranting aside, it is very refreshing to see the uptick of younger farmers organizing themselves (the newly formed South Island Farmers Institute) and the invigorated youthful gang at the BC Ministry of Agriculture & Foods. If you want to grow more food, the answer is always compost and water.

7. MEMBERSHIP, ADMIN. & PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

7.1 Membership for 2023 (Voting Members)

Name	Representing
Robin Tunnicliffe	Sea Bluff Farm & Farm Market – vegetables and fruits
Terry Michell	Michell Farms – fruits, vegetables, hay, grains, pasture beef
Linda Geggie	CR-Fair – flowers and foliage
Dianne Williamson	Firbank Farms – poultry and vegetables
Larry Sluggett	Sluggett Farms – corn and vegetables
Anita Bull	Squash grower
Jenni Michell	Michell Farms – fruits, vegetables, and Harvest Road Food Truck
Katie Underwood	Peas 'n' Carrots Farm – vegetables and fruits

7.2 Council Representatives (Non-Voting Members)

Name	Representing
Councillor Brett Smyth	District of North Saanich (until March)
Kristine Marshall	District of North Saanich (from September)
Councillor Niall Paltiel	District of Central Saanich
Councillor Zac De Vries	District of Saanich
Robin Tunnicliffe	Representing District of Metchosin

We understand that Councillors are often unable to attend PAAC meetings due to other Council commitments. However, their attendance and input are very much appreciated.

7.3 Professional Support

PAAC is grateful for the regular attendance and professional support of Meghan Halstead 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. Although requests have been made, no replacement has been appointed to date.

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.

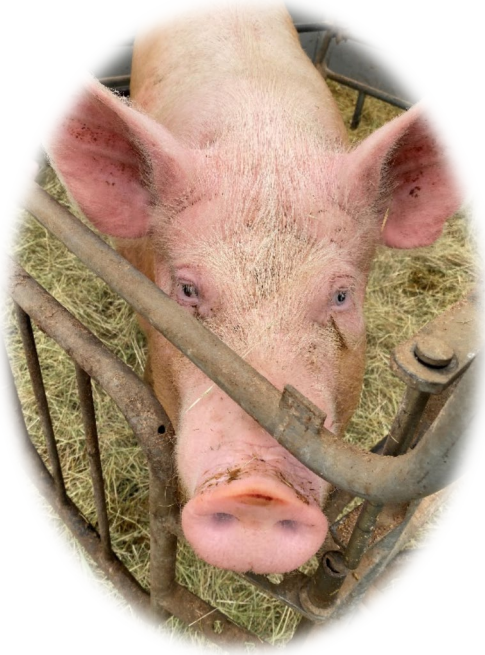
PAAC appreciates the countless volunteer hours, hard work, commitment, and dedication of all its members as we endeavour to achieve sustainable agriculture and food security for our region. Now that COVID seems to be contained somewhat, activities and workshops such as the Island Agriculture Show, Farmer to Farmer and the Saanich Fair have resumed to almost pre-COVID levels. Such activities are vital to the promotion of agriculture, networking among the farming community and maintaining public awareness.



Bilston Creek Farm

PAAC would like to acknowledge two past Commission members 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. See his report on page 22.



Piglet at Still Meadow Farm

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 his dedication to agriculture, volunteering his time and providing knowledgeable support and input on many 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 attend PAAC meetings to provide additional information on a particular application or issue involving agriculture. Saanich Planner Cassidy Daskalchuck regularly attends.

- Noah Brotman from the CRD Planning Department regularly attends PAAC meetings and provides updates on the Farmland Access Program.

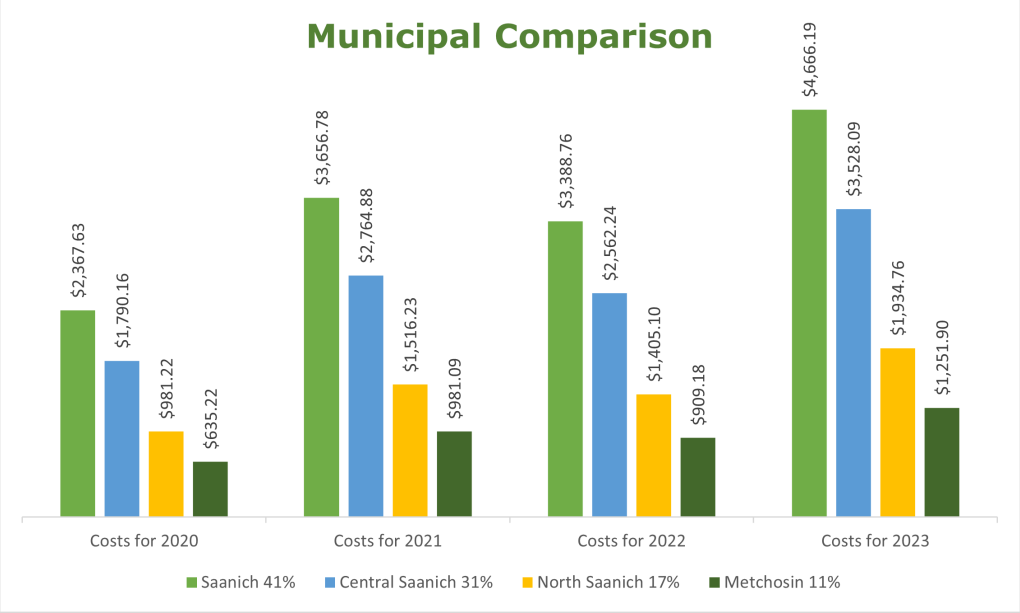
8. FINANCES

PAAC is grateful to its member municipalities for their continued financial support, not only for the administrative duties but also for providing an additional $2,000 grant each year which the Commission uses to fund items such as the Saanich Fair, workshops, farm tours, and honorariums.

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 and we are now almost back to pre pandemic activity levels. In 2023, PAAC hosted a farm tour in Metchosin and therefore the administration costs are higher than 2022.

Below is a summary of the costs for the past four years, with 2020 and 2021 being pandemic years.

Municipality	2020	2021	2022	2023
District of Saanich - 41%	$2,367.63	$3,656.78	$3,388.76	$4,666.19
District of Central Saanich – 31%	$1,790.16	$2,764.88	$2,562.24	$3,528.09
District of North Saanich – 17%	$981.22	$1,516.23	$1,405.10	$1,934.76
District of Metchosin – 11%	$635.22	$981.09	$909.18	$1,251.90
TOTAL	**$5,774.71**	**$8,918.98**	**$8,265.28**	**$11,380.94**



9. REFLECTIONS FROM PAST CHAIRS

As PAAC enters its 27th year, three past Chairs reflected on their time on PAAC:

Bob Maxwell: Chair from 2004 - 2011 and 2015

I have very much enjoyed working with PAAC over many years as chair and as a member. Notable was our dedicated and supportive Secretary Isobel Hoffmann (now 27 years) who had everything organized and has prepared tens of thousands of words into reliable minutes for officials and the public; along with the committed farmers and Agrologists who provided constant dependable information - not to mention their good company.

The CRD-PAAC comprehensive water study of 2005 was and still is an excellent report on farmer use of CRD and other water sources.

The CRD-PAAC comprehensive water study of 2005 was and still is an excellent report on farmer use of CRD and other water sources. It was very interesting and rewarding to be a part of this topical study which is still on the CRD web site, it showed farmers were careful and efficient users of water.

The Resident Canada Geese study over many years was pushed and promoted by PAAC, we generated funding and methods to tackle this very costly impact to farmers - and to the Municipalities. Finally, after many years the CRD wrote a strategy report and now we, the CRD, has funding and a strategy to manage the Canada Geese problem. This project was grinding but interesting as to the regional complexities and willingness to come together.



Pollinator hedge at Sea Bluff farm

The Help Save the Bees initiative was uplifting and enjoyable as we joined with local nature groups, Pollinator Partners, the public and farmers to promote the creating and conserving of habitat for local bees (particularly Bumble Bees). One happy result was a member Sea Bluff Farm in Metchosin, who created a wonderful pollinator hedge which stands as a regional example of farmer driven bee conservation.

Frank Edgell: Chair from 2001 - 2003

I served two terms as chair before recruiting Bob Maxell to take on the duties. I then spent 6 years on the CRD Water Advisory committee as the agricultural representative. I think the standout accomplishment during my term as chair was the Hagan Creek habitat restoration project. I recall going before Central Saanich Council, hat in hand and receiving $90,000 of funding for the project (which I think had been earmarked for storm drainage purposes).

Phil Christie, Chair from 2019 - 2021

I recall there were a lot of late nights talking about water issues. We worked hard to ensure that water rates for farmers be maintained at reasonable levels so they could continue to produce irrigated crops. I also recall encouraging our farmers to apply to license their wells. Under the groundwater legislation and regulations that were adopted in 2016, farmers were provided with a *"first in time first in right"* application process.

...the local farming community is not taking this need to license their wells seriously and will suffer the consequences as we head into worse drought.

Unfortunately, even after bringing in speakers and drafting articles to remind farmers to apply to license their existing wells this proved to be a challenging task with less than 30% registering their wells by the March 1st, 2022, cutoff date. I worry that the local farming community is not taking this need to license their wells seriously and will suffer the consequences as we head into worse drought.

I also recall our commissioners working hard to encourage local governments to adopt appropriate policies for farm worker accommodations that would allow our larger commercial farmers to be successful in a difficult farm labour market. Again, only a few local farmers have applied for, and obtained formal approval for farm worker accommodations and this lack of farm labour will continue to hold back farm production.



Farmers of the future

I was delighted when so many local farm families participated in our succession planning sessions. We had positive feedback on these sessions and some of those who attended have now developed processes whereby their successors will be able to continue farming.

I also think of the many years that our commissioners pushed for Resident Canada Geese management. We tried hard to get the Regional District to do more to prevent the devastation of our crops, but we did not make much progress. Finally, we wrote a letter of support for the "Guardians of our Island Estuaries," and they then implemented a more effective program due to the elevated level of support for environmental related issues, especially protection of our Vancouver Island estuaries. The lesson learned was that it is much easier to get support for environmental issues than for growing food.

I have been saddened to see the active farm base shrink....

We also worked hard to encourage local governments to adopt appropriate housing policies that reflect what the ALC legislation and regulations allow. Some local governments complied, unfortunately, several of the local governments have not yet updated their policies to match those implemented by the ALC. This lag is contributing to our housing shortage. It would be nice to see more action on this front as a small cottage or barn loft can, in addition to helping with affordable housing, also help small local farmers pay the bills.

During my time at PAAC and looking at the longer run, I have been saddened to see the active farm base shrink due to several factors including the loss of quota for dairies, the increasing costs of getting crops to market, designation of agricultural land for park or ecological protection, increases in labour costs and a general increase in regulations, making it difficult for some of our long-term farmers to stay in business. Example of this are the local government tree protection bylaws. The judge in a recent case commented "you can't farm in a forest" yet it seems that local governments are determined to try and control tree cutting in the ALR and in land zoned for agriculture.

Finally, although it sometimes proved to be a challenge to get a very politically diverse group of commissioners to work together to encourage all types of farming, it was nevertheless extremely rewarding.

10. REFLECTIONS FROM 2023 CHAIR

Robin Tunnicliffe, Sea Bluff Farm, Metchosin

With everything we do at PAAC, we closely adhere to our mandate, which was developed at our inception in 1997. It includes monitoring farm economics, protecting our agricultural land base, stewarding our resources, and providing education and outreach. This mandate is more important than ever as we see food prices rising, and increased pressure on our agricultural lands. We also see new and innovative farming enterprises succeeding in our region and we continue to feel very relevant as we work to support the new and the existing farmers.

PAAC's mandate is more important than ever as we see food prices rising, and increased pressure on our agricultural lands.

2023 was another highly engaging year for PAAC members. The issues that municipalities brought to us required the Commission to use our combined years of experience, to network across the sectors, and to "group think" about the best possible outcomes for agricultural land use and opportunities for farming and local marketing. Our focus this year was on education. PAAC members consulted with Central Saanich on major drainage issues, we partnered with the CRD on the Regional Canada Goose Management Strategy, and we funded the start-up of the South Island Farmers Institute. As always, we monitor municipal water rates and ensure that the farming sector is represented in water rate decisions.



Farmer Sasha – Sea Bluff Farm

A central initiative this year was the educational farm tour in June that we hosted for incoming municipal council members. This year we took the bus to Metchosin where we met with an Agritourism and value-added operator, a Certified Organic and direct marketing fruit and vegetable producer and a medium-scale heritage pork producer who also runs the local

abattoir. Delegates were toured around the operations by the farmers and were able to ask questions and engage in in-depth discussions about the issues facing producers. To top it off we had a celebratory lunch on the farm made from Metchosin grown ingredients. This is an event not to be missed in future.

In the fall, we attended council meetings in North Saanich, Saanich and Metchosin to report to councils about our work and to remind everyone that PAAC is ready and willing to serve. We want councils to use our expertise when issues around farming arise, and we endeavor to provide a quick turnaround time as we meet monthly most of the year.

Looking forward to more collaboration in 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Tunnicliffe, Chair
March 2024



Heading home … See you next Year
Parry Bay Sheep Farm