

SCHEDULE E (BYLAW NO. 1508)

Background and Implementation District of Kent Agricultural Area Plan



Prepared by:
Don Cameron Associates
with support from the
Steering Committee for the
Agricultural Area Plan

April, 2010

“Agriculture likes it here”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Don Cameron Associates and the Steering Committee for the District of Kent Agricultural Area Plan are pleased to present the Agricultural Area Plan.

We wish to acknowledge the financial assistance of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC for making this project possible. Thanks are also extended to the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and Council of the District of Kent for their financial support for this work. To the members of the agricultural industry who opened their farms for tours, attended meetings or interviews, and gave willingly of their time and knowledge, thanks are given. Thanks are also extended to those citizens who may not be directly involved with the agricultural industry but who cared enough about it to participate in the Open House meetings and discussions. The suggestions in this plan are based on the knowledge and experience of producers involved in the industry and others who provided comments and input.

Don Cameron Associates and members of the Steering Committee express their appreciation to the late Corney Klop who contributed immensely to the development of the District of Kent Agricultural Area Plan. Corney Klop will be remembered for his dedication to the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee and Kent Agricultural Plan steering Committee as well as his numerous contributions to agriculture and to his community, the District of Kent.

Please direct comments and enquiries about this document to:

Darcey Kohuch, Director of Development
District of Kent
604.796.2235 DKohuch@district.kent.bc.ca

Steering Committee Members:

Peter Andres
Martin Dinn
Lorne Fisher
Laurens Van Vliet
Kim Sutherland

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) is pleased to participate in this project. AAFC is committed to working with our industry partners and the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC to increase public awareness of the importance of the agriculture and the agri-food industry to Canada. Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the organization and not necessarily AAFC's.

Funding provided by:

Canada



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	AGRICULTURAL AREA PLAN DEVELOPMENT	5
1.1	PURPOSE OF THE PLAN	5
1.2	THE IMPORTANT PLANNING QUESTIONS	5
1.3	RELATIONSHIP AMONG THE PLANNING TERMS	5
1.4	STEPS IN DEVELOPING THE PLAN	5
2	BACKGROUND AND CURRENT SITUATION.....	6
2.1	DISTRICT OF KENT AGRICULTURE IN PERSPECTIVE	6
2.1.1	Historical Background.....	6
2.1.2	The District of Kent in Profile.....	7
2.1.3	Land Status and Jurisdiction	8
2.1.4	Farms in the District of Kent.....	9
2.1.5	Soils.....	10
2.1.6	Climate.....	14
2.1.7	Flood Plain and Dykes.....	18
2.1.8	The Establishment of the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee	19
2.2	SWOT ANALYSIS FOR THE DISTRICT OF KENT	20
2.2.1	Strengths of the Industry.....	20
2.2.2	Weaknesses of the Industry	21
2.2.3	Opportunities for the Industry	21
2.2.4	Threats to the Survival of the Industry	22
2.3	POLICY CONTEXT.....	23
2.3.1	The National Agricultural Policy Framework	23
2.3.2	Fisheries and Oceans Canada	23
2.3.3	Provincial Agricultural Policy	24
2.3.4	Edge Planning for Agriculture.....	25
2.3.5	The Agricultural Land Commission Act.....	26
2.3.6	The BC Ministry of the Environment	26
2.3.7	Agricultural Waste Control Regulation	27
2.3.8	The Farm Practices Protection Act	27
2.3.9	The Land Title Act	28
2.3.10	The Local Government Act	28
2.3.11	The Fraser Valley Regional District	28
2.3.12	The Fraser Basin Council.....	29
2.3.13	The District of Kent Official Community Plan	29
2.3.14	Zoning Bylaw 1219, 2002.....	30
2.4	EDUCATION AND RESEARCH	31
2.4.1	The Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre.....	31
2.4.2	The UBC Dairy Education and Research Centre.....	31
2.4.3	The University of the Fraser Valley.....	32
2.5	PERSPECTIVES FROM OTHER JURISDICTIONS	33

3	IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY	35
3.1	ROLE OF THE AGRICULTURAL AREA PLAN	35
3.2	MONITORING AND REVIEW PROCESS	35
3.3	IMPLEMENTING THE SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS.....	37
3.3.1	Encourage Industry Profitability	37
3.3.2	Enhance Agricultural Capacity	39
3.3.3	Foster Partnerships and Collaboration	42
4	APPENDIX	43
4.1	KENT AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE.....	43
4.2	THE CONSULTANT TEAM	45

1 AGRICULTURAL AREA PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The Agricultural Area Plan was based on consultations and discussions with the agricultural community and other interested citizens. It was developed in consultation with a Steering Committee appointed by Council of the District of Kent. By applying the strategies of the Agricultural Area Plan, agriculture's historically important role in the District may be recognized and supported. This recognition and support will be manifested through the adoption of the Agricultural Area Plan as a sub-plan or schedule of the revised Official Community Plan.

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The purpose of the Agricultural Area Plan is to provide for the sustainability, enhancement, development and retention of viable farming and agricultural uses in the District while providing connection between agriculture and the community. The Agricultural Area Plan identifies ways the community and agricultural sector can realize the greatest economic benefit from their agricultural resource.

1.2 THE IMPORTANT PLANNING QUESTIONS

To develop the plan, the following questions were asked:

- Where has agriculture in the District been? Where is it now? (the history)
- Where does it want to go in the future? (the vision)
- How is it going to get there? (the goals, strategies, and recommendations)
- How will the industry know when it has arrived? (the implementation and monitoring strategy)

1.3 RELATIONSHIP AMONG THE PLANNING TERMS

The following relationship among the main planning terms was applied:

- The *guiding principles* for the plan, which relate to the terms of reference prepared by the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee, provide a broad framework and processes under which the plan was developed.
- The *vision* for the future identifies where the community wants agriculture to be over the long term.
- The *main goals* are the building blocks for the vision.
- The *strategies* are derived from the main goals and the recommendations within each strategy provide the means for achieving the plan's vision and goals.
- The *implementation strategy* provides detail on how the plan's recommendations might be implemented and the time lines for implementation.

1.4 STEPS IN DEVELOPING THE PLAN

The following steps were used to develop the Agricultural Area Plan:

- Meetings with the Steering Committee
- Review of background materials and relevant legislation
- Review of industry issues including the industry in other jurisdictions
- Tours of District farms
- Meetings and interviews with members of the agricultural community
- Meetings with District of Kent staff and others in the community
- Preparation of an initial overview Draft Report for review with the Steering Committee and the community in two open house public meetings
- Preparation of a Draft Agricultural Area Plan in consultation with the Steering Committee
- Review of the Draft Agricultural Area Plan with staff of the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and the Agricultural Land Commission
- Review of the Draft Agricultural Area Plan by members of the Steering Committee, the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee and members of Council
- Revision of the Plan and presentation to the community in two public meetings
- Further revision and addressing of more than 90 issues from the community
- Presentation to Council for approval of the plan
- Completion of the final plan and Background and Implementation report.

2 BACKGROUND AND CURRENT SITUATION

2.1 DISTRICT OF KENT AGRICULTURE IN PERSPECTIVE

2.1.1 Historical Background

In 1867, Lewis Nunn Agassiz, retired captain of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, settled in what is now known as the town of Agassiz. By 1892, a lively farming community was established, the main enterprises being potatoes, root crops, and dairy and beef cattle. The District of Kent was incorporated on January 1, 1895.

The District of Kent has some of BC's best land for farming. A moderate climate and fertile soil guaranteed early farmers good crops. Their agricultural products were sold to prospectors attracted to the area by the gold rushes in the 1850's and 1860's. Today, some local farmers still sell their products to area tourists and others visiting the District.

In the early 1900's, the Lower Mainland of BC had heavy population growth, which influenced the development of the District of Kent dairy industry. A special train picked up farmer's milk for Vancouver. Later, trucks replaced the train and production capacity increased. Today, the District dairy industry is progressive and extensive, boasting some of BC's largest and most successful producers.

Hop growing was also a feature of the early history of the District. In 1892, three hop yards were started in the District, one on the west side of Cameron road between Hunt Road and the Fraser River, one at the corner of Else and Hot Springs Road, and the largest at the base of Hopyard Mountain where three hundred acres of hops were grown. The hop harvest started in August, continued to October, and required about 1,000 pickers. From 1939 to 1945, the industry flourished, with marketing occurring across Canada and to England. In 1948 a major flood of the

Fraser River killed the plants. The hop yards were sold in 1952 and the fertile land they used was soon managed by dairy farmers growing hay and corn for cattle.

The Dominion Experimental Farm was established in Agassiz in 1889. Since its inception, several name changes have taken place: it was known as the Agassiz Research Station from 1959 to 1994, then became the Pacific Agriculture Research Centre, and in 1996, was re-named the Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre. The relationship between the District of Kent and this federal facility for agricultural research has been a close one. The District provided land, people and services and the facility provided employment attracting trained, professional residents as well as recognition for Agassiz and the District of Kent, particularly in agricultural circles. It has helped to make the District one of BC's most prominent and successful agricultural regions.

The Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre specialized in horticulture from its beginnings and numerous plant varieties have been under test at the facility. Also, an animal research program was initiated early in its history. Today, the Centre has a land base of 310 hectares and includes poultry research facilities, a feed mill, the Avian Research Centre, greenhouses, and a weather station that has been collecting weather data since 1889. Along with a heritage stone barn built in 1893, the Centre has a modern laboratory and office complex conducting research on a wide range of subjects. The University of British Columbia's Dairy Education and Research Centre is on site providing collaboration on dairy cattle research.

Agriculture has consistently been the main activity of the District of Kent and the importance of agriculture remains to this day.

2.1.2 The District of Kent in Profile

The District of Kent is located 120 km east of Vancouver and 260 km west of Kelowna. Agassiz is the residential hub of the District. There are about 5,000 people currently living in the District and most live in Agassiz. The population has grown slowly and growth rates have been less than for other areas of the Fraser Valley Regional District. Growth rate projections suggest an upward trend but current economic conditions have affected growth in the shorter term. Agassiz is close to the Trans Canada Highway and is served by rail. Air service is provided by Highland Helicopters and the Chilliwack and Abbotsford airports some 30 and 60 km away respectively. The District also includes the communities of Harrison Highlands, Harrison Mills, Ruby Creek and Rockwell Drive. The village of Harrison Hot Springs is not part of the District.

According to Environment Canada, the District of Kent has the warmest year-round climate in Canada with mean temperatures ranging from 3 to 5 degrees Celsius in the winter months and 16 to 19 in the summer. The District gets precipitation every month with the lowest amounts generally occurring in August and September.

Most of the labour force in the District is employed by the following employers: Corrections Canada, Harrison Hot Springs Resort and Spa, Fraser Cascade School District, Britco, Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre, Rimex, the District of Kent, and the RCMP. About 30% of the labour force works in Agassiz. Median family incomes in the District tend to be slightly lower than those in neighbouring areas but the cost of living in the District is also lower. The water supply to the District is plentiful and generally of high quality. Only Agassiz provides residents with sewage

service; all other residents use septic tanks. The Corporation of the District of Kent is governed by a Mayor and four Councilors.¹

2.1.3 Land Status and Jurisdiction

This Agricultural Area Plan deals with District land in the Agricultural Land Reserve. District boundaries include First Nations’ reserves, Sasquatch Provincial Park, and Provincial Crown land (including aquatic land) outside local government jurisdiction.

Table 1 presents the land status and regulatory authorities within the District of Kent. Where the ALR is in place, regulation of the use of private land is shared between the local government and the Agricultural Land Commission, an agency of the provincial government and the regulatory authority for the ALR. The shaded box indicates the focus of the Agricultural Area Plan, the private land within the District of Kent that is also within the Agricultural Land Reserve. The land uses on this land are regulated by both the District of Kent and the Agricultural Land Commission. Crown land in the District contains 52 hectares of land in the ALR. This land is regulated by the Agricultural Land Commission and the Integrated Land Management Bureau (ILMB).

Table 1. Land Status and Jurisdiction in the District of Kent

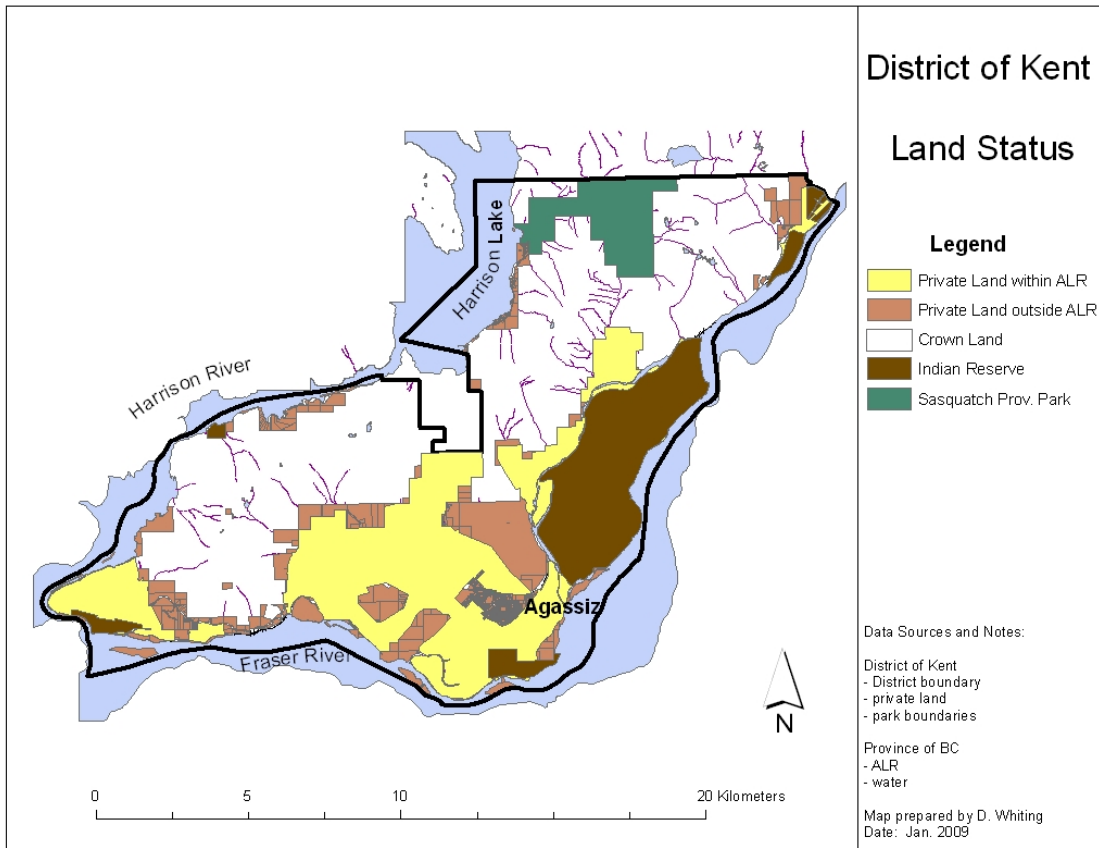
District of Kent (DoK), Total Area = 22,267 ha							
Water area = 5,578 ha Provincial and Federal agencies	Land area = 16,689 ha						
	First Nation reserve area = 1,199 ha Federal Agencies and First Nations	Private land area = 5,204 ha	Crown land area = 9,418 ha		Sasquatch Provincial Park area =868 ha		
		ALR area = 4,092 ha DoK ALC	Non-ALR area = 1,112 ha DoK	ALR area = 52 ha ILMB and ALC	Non-ALR area = 9,366 ha ILMB	ALR area = 0 ha	Non-ALR area = 868 ha MoE

The Agricultural Land Commission does not have jurisdiction within First Nations reserves but ALR maps and statistics for the District of Kent show portions of First Nations’ reserve lands within the ALR. There are six First Nations’ reserves located within the boundaries, or adjacent to, the District of Kent: Lukseetissum, Wahleach Island, Seabird Island, Tseatah, Scowlitz, and Chehalis.

As indicated in Figure 1, nearly all land within the ALR is private land. About 80% of the private land in the District is within the ALR.

¹ Much of the data in this section was obtained from District of Kent *Statistical Profile Package*, 2005.

Figure 1. District of Kent Land Status



2.1.4 Farms in the District of Kent

Farm numbers are in constant flux and statistical data compiled by provincial and national bodies is usually out of date. The 2006 Census of Agriculture provided the most recent statistical data for this Agricultural Area Plan, being completed in 2010. Two other sources provided data: an agricultural overview specific to the District of Kent prepared in 2008 by the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands² and a detailed survey of farms in Kent, completed in 2004 by the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee.³

Census data reported 119 farms in the District in 2006. Using the BC average of three persons per farm, the District’s farm population was estimated to be 357.⁴ Using these figures, the farm population in the District as a percentage of the total District population is estimated at about 7%, quite a bit higher than the farm population as a percentage of BC’s population in general which is about 1.5%.

² Sustainable Agriculture Management Branch, BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, District of Kent Agricultural Overview, July 2008.

³ Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee, *Small Lot Agriculture in the District of Kent, BC*, December 2004.

⁴ It should be noted that the KAAC study of small lot agriculture in the District, referred to above, counted 143 farms in 2004. Discrepancies in farm numbers likely relate to different definitions of a “farm”. Also, the KAAC study identified 23 farms that were not in production at the time of the survey.

As in most areas of BC and Canada, farm numbers in the District of Kent have been declining. In 1996, 133 farms were reported. Between 1996 and 2006, the District lost 14 farms. But, the number of hectares farmed in the District rose by some 44 hectares over the same 10-year period, leading to an increase in farm size. Most of the District land is in field crops, generally corn for silage or other hay and fodder crops used to feed livestock, primarily dairy cows.

The dairy industry has traditionally been the centrepiece of District agriculture and it remains the most prevalent today. The progressive dairy farmers in the District act in some ways as an anchor for District agriculture. District dairy farms are operated by BC leaders in the industry and their farms are well kept and highly efficient.

Considerable hazelnut production occurs in the District. Hazelnuts are the dominant commercial nut crop produced in BC and about 380 acres produce some 600,000 pounds of hazelnuts. The District has also seen an increase in the number of farms producing strawberries and blueberries. Increased acreage in blueberries has been noted throughout BC during the past decade.

District of Kent farms tend to report higher gross farm receipts than farms in the Fraser Valley Regional District or in BC overall. Forty-eight percent of District farms have total gross farm receipts exceeding \$100,000 compared with 39% in the FVRD and 18% in BC. Most of these high producing farms are dairy farms.

British Columbia has an expanding agricultural industry and growing conditions in the province make possible a wide variety of agricultural products. Such is the case in the District of Kent where a strong direct farm marketing and agri-tourism sector is evolving. Many farmers serve niche markets or produce unique products where demand often exceeds supply. For example,

- Local artisan cheese production has become an important attraction for the District, with sales generated from a retail outlet right on the farm.
- Farmed salmon and crayfish are produced from land-based tanks.
- A local farmer has identified a niche market for pea sprouts and produces more than 60,000 pounds annually.
- A local greenhouse provides specialty crops such as greenhouse peppers.
- There are farms growing wasabi and garlic, products often sold to restaurants or to consumers directly from the farm.
- District farms produce a wide range of other specialty crops, including floriculture, numerous fruits and vegetables and mushrooms, and raise various types of livestock including beef cattle, alpacas, sheep, goats, and pigs.

2.1.5 Soils

Detailed soil surveys of the District of Kent were completed in 1967 and 1981. Within the Agricultural Land Reserve, some 25 soil series were mapped. Table 2 and Figure 2 present the seven major soil series represented. These soils occupy 93% of the ALR within the District.

Table 2. Major Soil Series in the District of Kent

Soil Series	Area (ha)	Soil Moisture Characteristics	Agricultural Productivity
Fairfield	923.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imperfectly drained • High water holding capacity • Fluctuating groundwater table is present with height partially dependent on water level in Fraser River. Water table rises into upper soil layers during periods of heavy rain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Among the best soils in the Lower Fraser Valley • Suitable for most crops except those very sensitive to fluctuating water table and occasional “wet-feet”
Matsqui	838.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well to moderately well drained • Relatively low water holding capacity • Temporary groundwater tables often develop in the subsoil during the freshet period on the Fraser River or during heavy, prolonged rain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well suited to most agricultural crops • Irrigation is common during the latter stages of most growing seasons to maintain good production
Monroe	528.9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderately well to well drained • High water holding capacity • Temporary groundwater tables may develop in the subsoil during the freshet period on the Fraser River or during heavy, prolonged rain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well suited to most agricultural crops • Irrigation is beneficial during dry summers to maintain good production
Dewdney	457.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imperfectly drained • High water holding capacity in upper part of profile, low in the subsoil • Groundwater table fluctuates with the level of the Fraser River and also rises temporarily during periods of heavy rainfall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valuable agricultural soils. • Most crops can be grown productively although droughty conditions may develop during the latter part of most growing seasons unless irrigation is used
Hjorth	417.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poorly to moderately drained • Moderately pervious with a high water holding capacity and slow surface runoff • Water tables are near and sometimes at the surface during most of the winter and during the freshet stage of the Fraser River 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively fertile soils used for pasture, hay and some cereal grains • High water tables are the main limitation for these soils. They could be quite productive if water tables were controlled.
Page	316.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poorly to moderately poorly drained • Moderately pervious and has a high water holding capacity and slow surface runoff • Water tables are near the soil surface for most of the winter and during the freshet stage of the Fraser River but gradually recede after that 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page soils are limited by high water tables and poor drainage. Most perennial crops suffer substantially during the winter while high water tables interfere with crop growth during the spring freshet period
Kent	294.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderately poor drainage • Groundwater table fluctuates with the level of the Fraser River and also rises temporarily during periods of heavy rainfall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valuable agricultural soil • Water table is usually low enough in growing season to cause slight to moderate restriction to crop growth • During very dry summers, moisture deficiencies may occur

Figure 2. Principal Agricultural Soils in the District of Kent

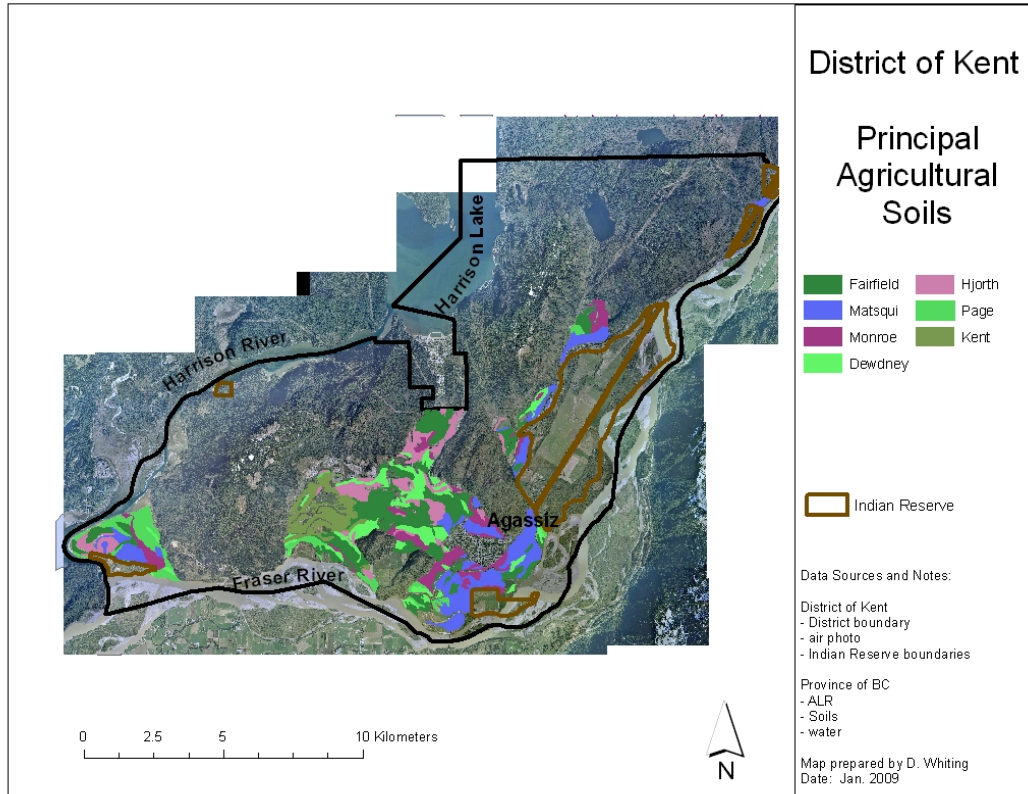
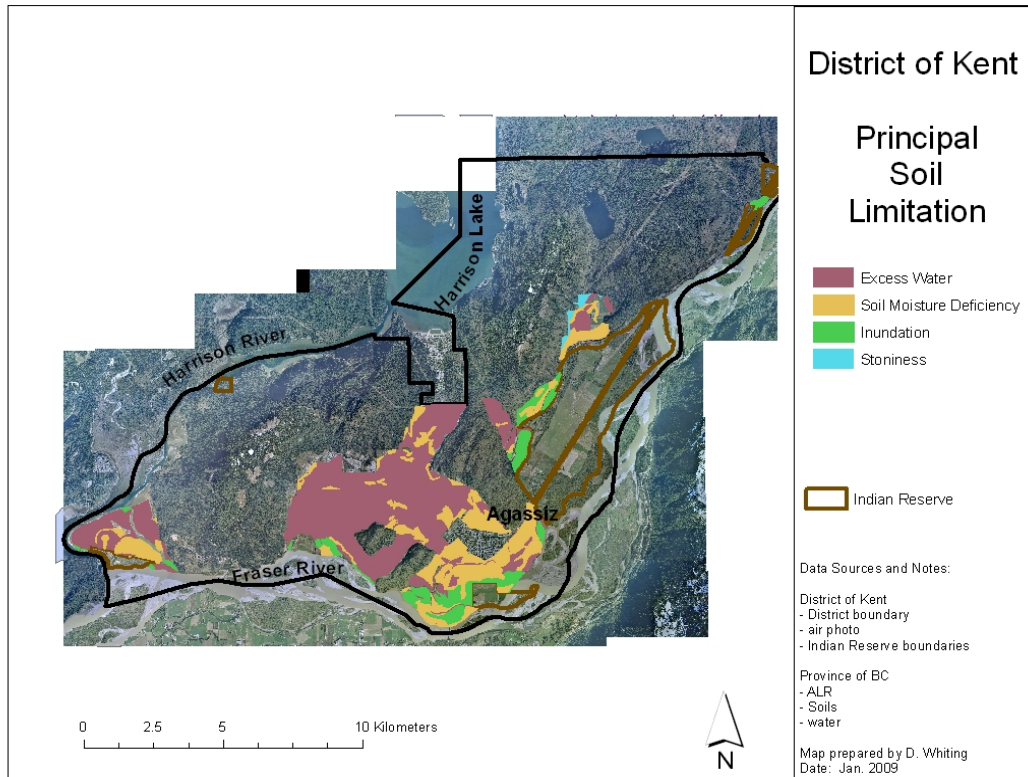


Figure 3. Principal Soil Limitations in the District of Kent



In their unimproved state, all agricultural soils have some limitations that affect agricultural capability. Figure 3 indicates the type and extent of the principal limitations affecting agricultural capability in the District of Kent. Excess water is the main limitation; others are soil moisture deficiency, inundation by the Fraser River, and stoniness.

Over 100 years of agricultural development has led to the improvement of agricultural soils by reducing limitations. This has been accomplished through better drainage (to reduce excess water), irrigation (to reduce soil moisture deficits), dykes (to reduce inundation by the Fraser River), and rock picking (to reduce stoniness). Through these efforts, the agricultural capability rating has increased for District soils. The Agricultural Capability (improved) rating is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Agricultural Capability (Improved) in the District of Kent

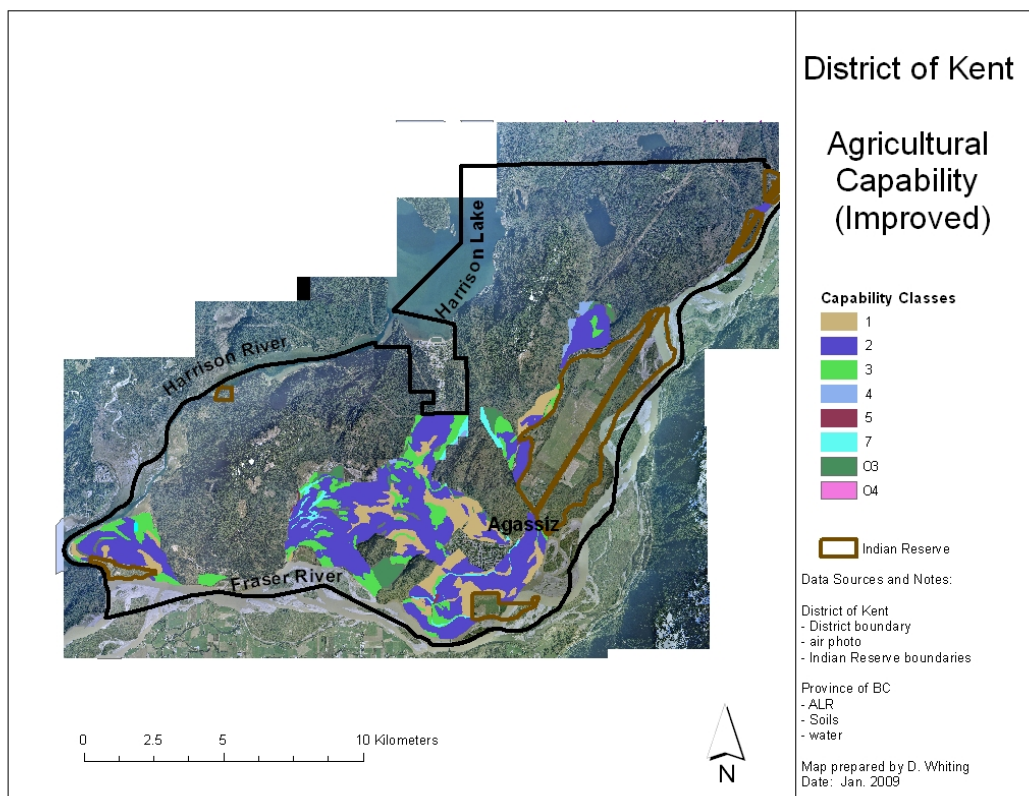


Table 3 outlines the land classes used to describe the improved capability of the land to grow agricultural products and the distribution of these classes within the ALR-land in the District of Kent. Virtually all of the agricultural land in the District (92%) is in Classes 1, 2, or 3.

Table 3. Agricultural Capability Classifications (Improved) in the District of Kent⁵

Class	Description of Capability Class	Distribution within ALR	
		Area (ha)	Percentage (%)
1	Land in this class has no or only slight limitations that restrict its use for the production of common agricultural crops	716 ha	17%
2	Land in this class has minor limitations that require good ongoing management practices or slightly restrict the range of crops, or both.	2445 ha	59%
3	Land in this class has limitations that require moderately intensive management practices or moderately restrict the range of crops, or both.	655 ha	16%
4	Land in this class has limitations that require special management practices or severely restrict the range of crops or both	51 ha	1%
5	Land in this class has limitations that restrict its capability to producing perennial forage crops or other specially adapted crops	9 ha	na
6	Land in this class is non-arable but is capable of producing native and/or uncultivated perennial forage crops	0 ha	na
7	Land in this class has no capability for arable culture or sustained natural grazing	7 ha	na
O3	Organic Soil - Land in this class has limitations that require moderately intensive management practices or moderately restrict the range of crops, or both.	227 ha	6%
O4	Organic Soil - Land in this class has limitations that require special management practices or severely restrict the range of crops or both	1 ha	na

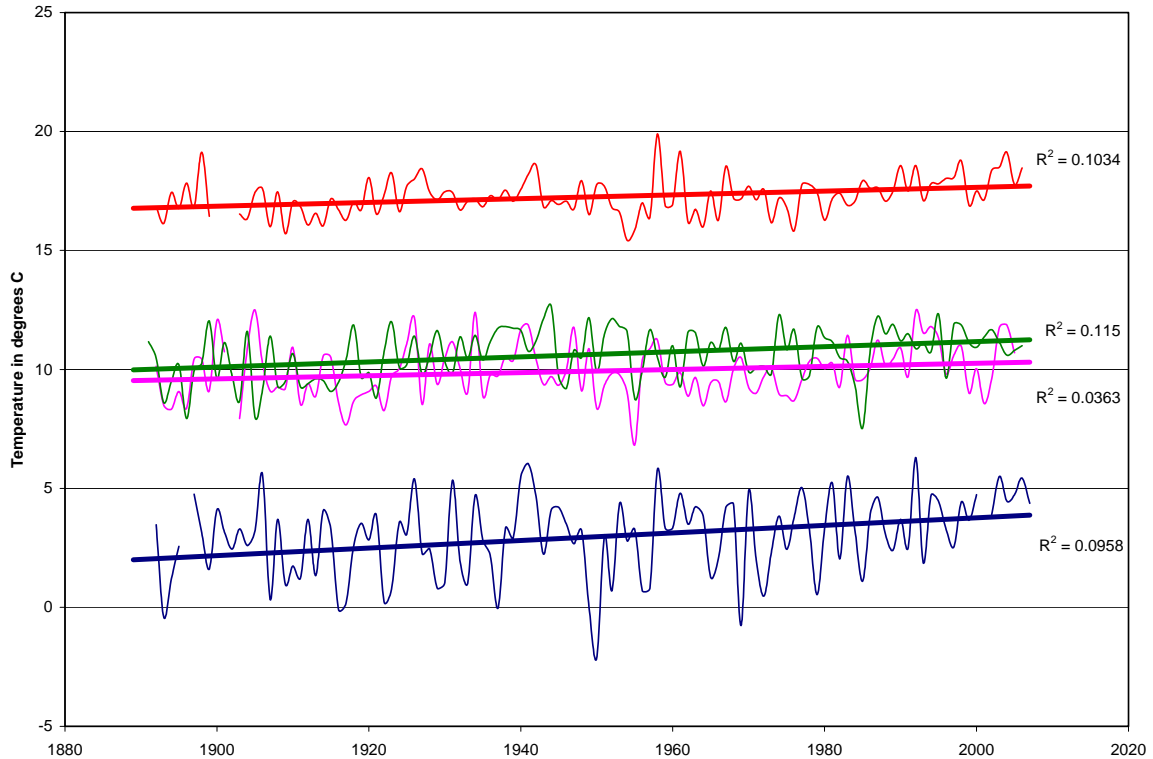
2.1.6 Climate

Considerable debate has been heard on the subject of global warming and its possible impact on our future. Recorded weather readings at the Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre provide over a century of temperature and precipitation records for analysis. Figures 5 to 9 can inform the agricultural industry of both opportunities and challenges that may result from longer term trends.

The climate of the District of Kent has been gradually changing over time but, as expected, there are year-to-year variations in amounts of moisture and temperature that exceed overall trends. Figure 5 indicates the District mean temperature is getting warmer. In each season, the mean temperature has been slowly rising, on average, during the past century. Figure 5 shows from top to bottom, summer in red (June, July, August), fall in green (September, October, November), spring in pink (March, April, May) and winter in blue (June, July, August). Each season has been getting warmer, particularly the winter.

⁵ The percentage of Land distribution within the ALR is based on 4,111 hectares.

Figure 5. Seasonal Mean Temperature at Agassiz (1890 – 2006)



For each of the four seasons, the mean maximum temperature and mean minimum temperature was plotted for each year over the past century. In each season, the mean minimum temperature has risen. In winter, the mean maximum temperature has also risen. In the other three seasons the mean maximum temperature is falling. The warming of all seasons, appears to be an outcome of warmer nights rather than warmer days. This is likely a result of greater cloud cover, day and night. Cloud cover reduces heating during the day providing insulation and reduced night time cooling.

Figure 6. Winter (Dec/Jan/Feb) Mean Temperature at Agassiz (1890 – 2006)

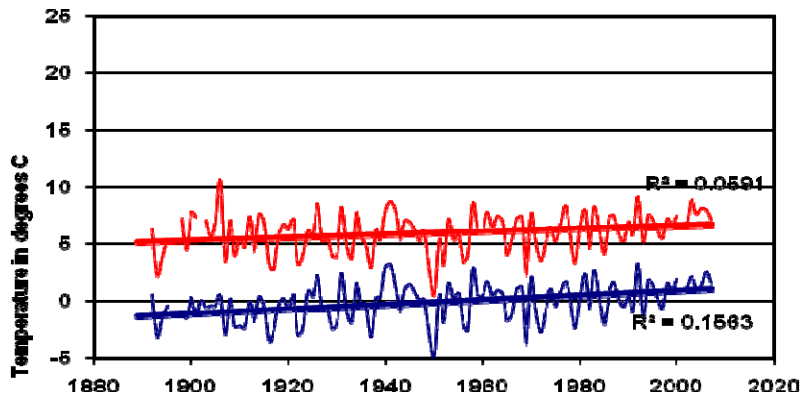


Figure 7. Spring (Mar/Apr/May) Mean Temperature at Agassiz (1890 – 2006)

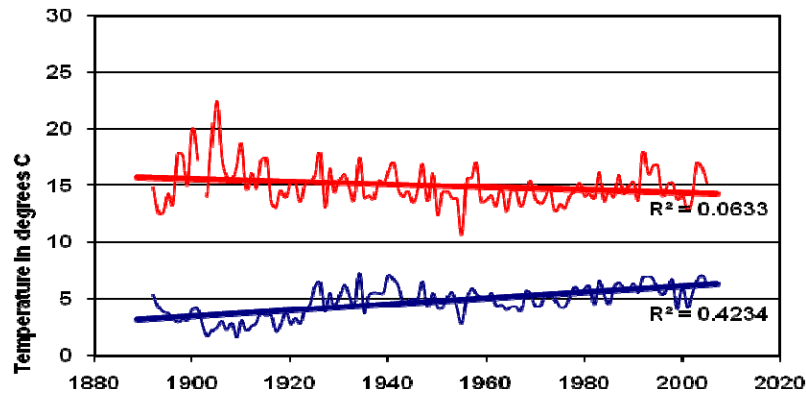


Figure 8. Summer (Jun/Jul/Aug) Mean Temperature at Agassiz (1890 – 2006)

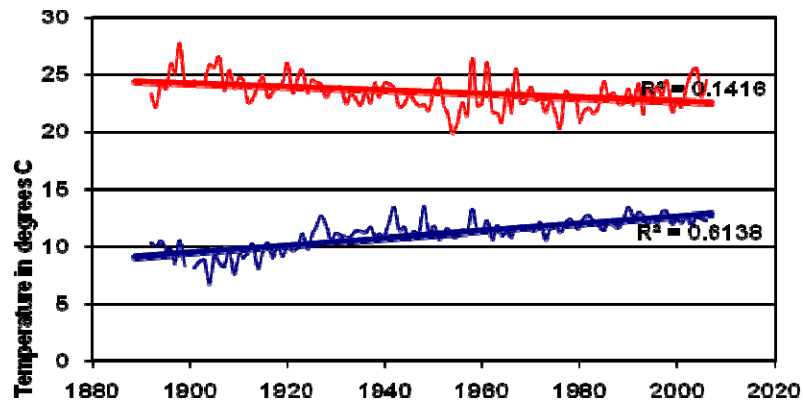
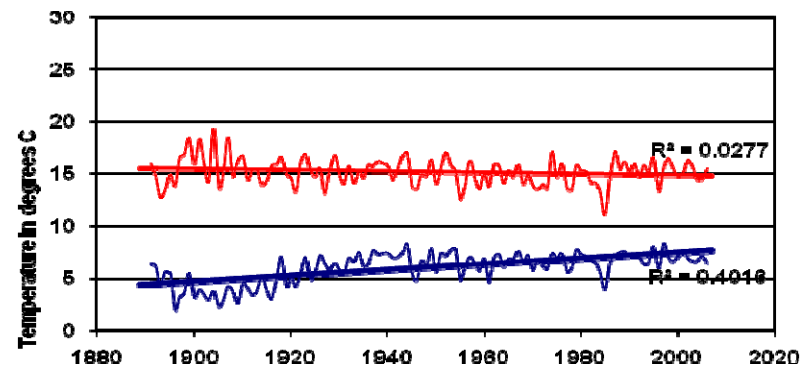
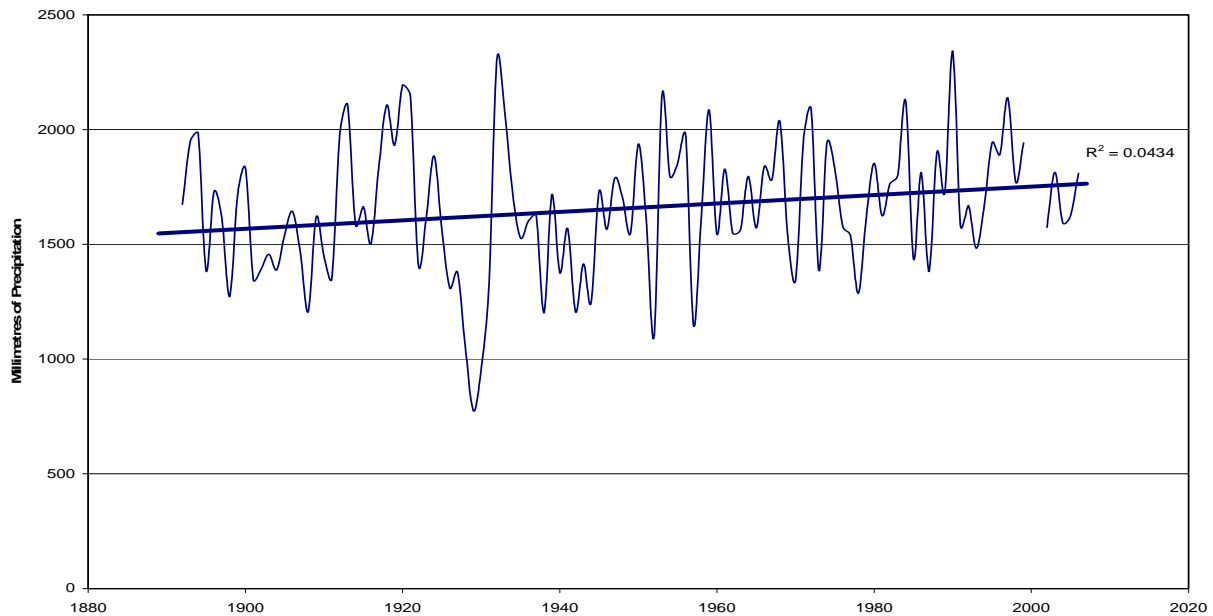


Figure 9. Fall (Sep/Oct/Nov) Mean Temperature at Agassiz (1890 – 2006)



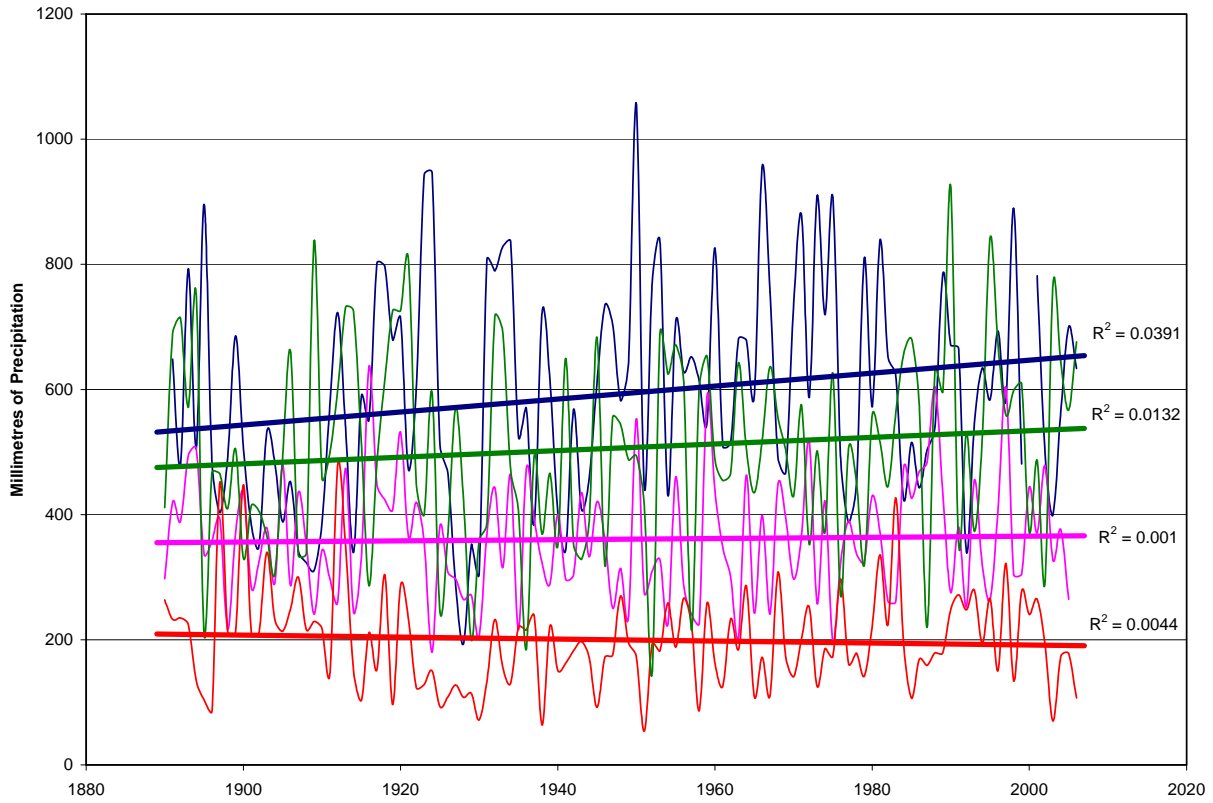
The District is also receiving more moisture but, in all cases, year-to-year variations can exceed changes in longer term trends. Figure 10 shows the annual precipitation at Agassiz for the past century. There is a trend toward higher annual precipitation. Higher precipitation is thought to be a result of higher temperatures resulting in higher rates of evaporation. Associated with the increased evaporation is increased cloud cover (with impacts on temperatures) and precipitation.

Figure 10. Annual Precipitation at Agassiz (1890 – 2006)



It is interesting to note that increasing precipitation is occurring in the fall and winter, not in spring and summer when many seasonal agricultural operations occur, as shown in Figure 11. The farming sector is often considered to be one of the most vulnerable to the impacts of weather but these impacts may be both positive and negative. A general trend to warmer temperatures, for example, could extend the range of crops capable of being grown in the District.

Figure 11. Seasonal Precipitation at Agassiz (1890 – 2006)



2.1.7 Flood Plain and Dykes

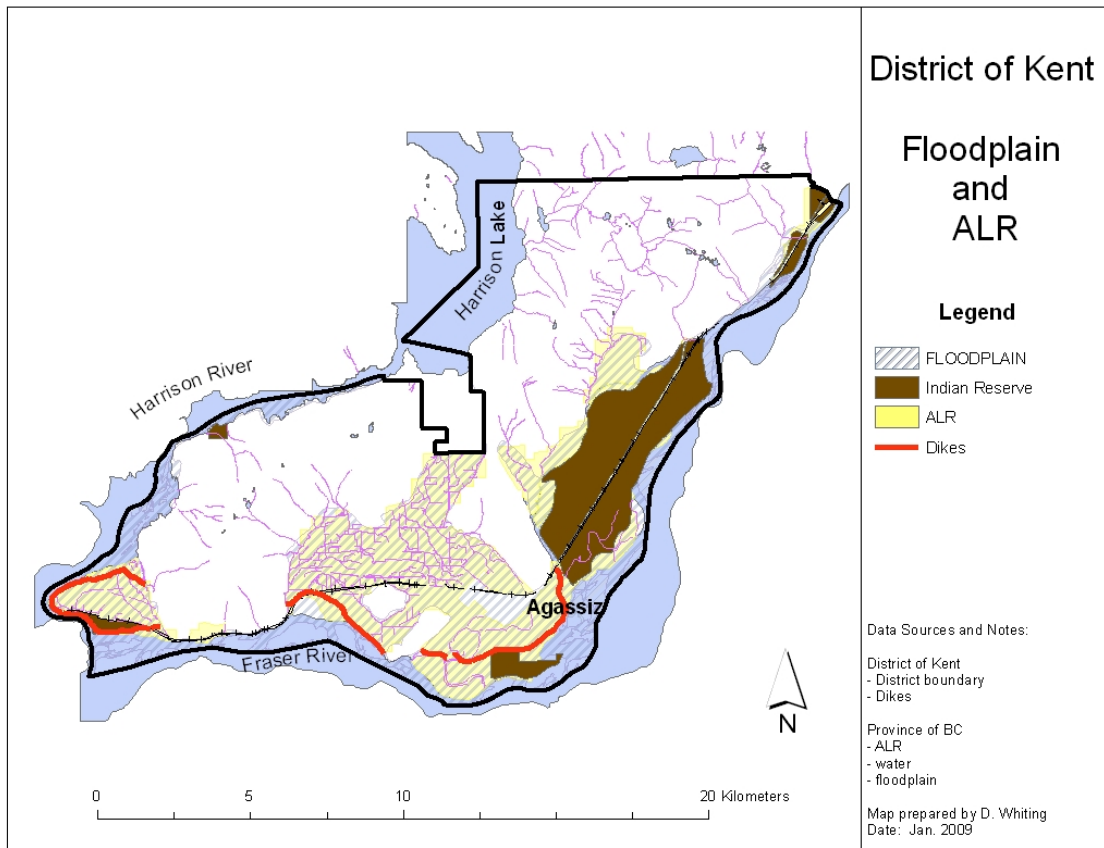
The District of Kent is heavily influenced by the Fraser River and its tributary, the Harrison River. These bodies of water form all but the northern boundary of the District. Most private land used for agriculture in the District is on the fertile agricultural soils that developed on alluvial deposits of the Fraser River during the past 10,000 years and since the retreat of the continental ice sheet.

Much of the District is located on the active floodplain of the Fraser River. The river transports and deposits large quantities of sediment, resulting in the braiding and movement of river channels. This is leading to the erosion of land in some areas and the deposition (or accretion) of land in others.

River levels are subject to significant fluctuation from season to season. Levels are also subject to extreme flood events. Devastating floods have affected the District of Kent in 1894 and 1948. It was the 1894 flood that stimulated the construction of dykes throughout the Fraser Valley.

Figure 12 presents the clear alignment between the Agricultural Land Reserve and the 200 year floodplain. The land with high agricultural value is coincident with low elevation areas susceptible to flooding. The map also shows the dykes.

Figure 12. The Flood Plain and the ALR in the District of Kent



2.1.8 The Establishment of the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee

The Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee began informally by recruiting members through personal contact and local newspaper solicitation. During the early meetings, terms of reference were developed. The first set of recorded minutes of the Committee were from November, 2002 and some 16 issues to be dealt with by the Committee were arranged into four categories – economic, planning, sustainability (pollution and environmental) and agricultural awareness. Many of these issues have been reviewed and addressed in the Agricultural Area Plan. The terms of reference for the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee were amended in 2009.⁶

The mandate of the Committee is two-fold:

- To identify and address agricultural issues important to the District of Kent and advise Council on those issues, and
- At Council’s request provide information on problems and concerns in the area of agriculture.

⁶ Updated terms of reference for the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee are provided in the appendix.

The Committee has been active in many aspects of agriculture and has taken its role seriously. For example, the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee combined with the Fraser Basin Council to complete a project on small lot agriculture development. Partially funded by the Investment Agriculture Foundation through the Small Lot Agriculture Initiative, the project resulted in development of the *Circle Farm Tour* program and *A Taste of Agassiz*, which featured local food products. The Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee was also the driving force behind the development of the Agricultural Area Plan.

2.2 SWOT ANALYSIS FOR THE DISTRICT OF KENT

Despite a strong commitment to the future of agriculture in the District of Kent, the District must ensure policies and strategies are in place to support a profitable industry. There is a need to encourage the agricultural community to make the necessary investments for future growth to maximize the value of the high quality agricultural land in the District.

2.2.1 Strengths of the Industry

As an important strength, the District of Kent has some of BC's highest quality and most productive farm land. Farmers can grow virtually anything in the District's fertile soil.

The District has historically been involved with agriculture and people who live in the area generally recognize the importance of agriculture to the community. The guiding principle for agricultural policy for the District is the promotion of the agricultural industry as a lifestyle choice and profitable economic activity. Over the years, successive Councils have been committed to these ends.

Operating since 2002, the District of Kent has an active Agricultural Advisory Committee with an aggressive mandate.

The dairy industry anchors the agricultural sector in the District. The District has a higher percentage of farms with total gross farm receipts of \$100,000 or more than either the Fraser Valley Regional District or the Province and most of these high-producing farms are dairy operations.

Serving an agricultural community, Agassiz provides some of the necessary infrastructure for the local industry. This infrastructure is expected to improve as more farmers are attracted to the District.

The District of Kent has numerous smaller acreage parcels of land that could be farmed. There is already an active, informal group of local producers, the Agassiz Producers Group, encouraging new farmers to start. Initiated in 2005 to find markets for local agricultural products, primarily through area chefs in higher-end restaurants, the APG provides coordination for product delivery and also offers a "grow to order" program to respond to specific needs of chefs. The APG has been active promoting local agricultural businesses that have been pursuing specialized markets. According to the APG, there are markets available for locally-produced agricultural products that are not being filled and, for some products already on the market, demand is exceeding supply.

The District has an energetic farm community. There is a passion for farming that is supported by an unusually large number (considering the relatively small population) of agricultural professionals living and working in the District. The presence of the Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre and the UBC Dairy Education and Research Centre, and the close proximity of the University of the Fraser Valley agricultural programs at the Chilliwack campus are considered areas of strength for the agricultural industry.

2.2.2 Weaknesses of the Industry

Narrow roads in the District may hamper the safe movement of farm equipment, particularly during times of increased tourist traffic or employee travel to other local businesses such as the federal Kent and Canada Mountain prisons located in the area.

Farmers are concerned about the lack of traffic controls on Lougheed highway and the bridge. Crossing the bridge with large farm equipment requires temporary bridge closing which can be problematic, particularly during times of higher traffic density.

Some parcels of land in the Agricultural Land Reserve are not being used for agricultural production and may be large rural estates. There is concern about the fractured land base, particularly among dairy farmers.

The relentless encroachment of the Fraser River, which gobbles up prime agricultural land as it works, is an issue. Getting rid of water is also a concern. Potential flooding and other water drainage issues are weaknesses for the agricultural industry.

The District, like other areas of BC and Canada, is not immune from rural resident versus urban resident conflict. Farmers report that odours from manure applications are the source of most of the complaints they receive. Some area urban residents are concerned that farmers can start businesses on agricultural land that are in direct competition with other town-based businesses where tax rates may be higher.

2.2.3 Opportunities for the Industry

There are markets for locally-produced agricultural products that are not being filled and there is considerable room for expansion with products that are already being well accepted, such as artisan cheeses, pea shoots, varieties of garlic, and farmed salmon. Local progressive dairy farmers may be in a favourable position to start additional specialty crop development on their larger farms.

Agri-tourism and culinary tourism are opportunities for local farmers who may wish to capitalize on the increasing consumer interest in local agricultural products. There are also opportunities for vertical integration (farmers control more of the steps involved in getting an agricultural product to market) within existing farm operations. There are opportunities for farmers to add more value to the products produced on local farms. There may be opportunities to increase the sales of local products by starting a local farmers' market in the area and some study of the potential for a market has been undertaken. Alternatively, there may be opportunities to retail locally-produced farm products through local retailers in Agassiz.

There are opportunities for farmers selling products directly from the farm gate as tourists visit the area to take advantage of the local tourist attractions such as the Kilby Historic Site, Minter Gardens, and Harrison Hot Springs.

Positive working relationships with First Nations present an opportunity to continue encouraging agricultural production, particularly on Seabird Island. The Island residents have traditionally supported their own agricultural enterprises and have also leased prime farm land to other farmers in the District.

2.2.4 Threats to the Survival of the Industry

The agricultural industry in BC is fluid. It is constantly changing and adjusting as farmers enter and leave. Climatic and other growing conditions in the province make it possible to grow a wide variety of crops – there are more than 200 different commodities being produced in the province. Competition and other market conditions may be opportunities or threats. Recently, BC’s large tree fruit industry (particularly apples) was significantly hurt by product dumping from other countries. The District of Kent’s dairy farmers keep a watchful eye on their own supply management system and worry about threats to its survival.

The trend to escalating land prices in the Lower Mainland of BC is being observed in the District of Kent. Although some farmers are locating in the District because land prices are relatively lower than other parts of the Lower Mainland, there are farmers leaving the District to take advantage of lower land prices in other parts of Canada. When land prices are too high, it may become commercially unattractive to start a farming operation. There are concerns among existing farmers that there will be no one to succeed them when it is time for them to retire.

Lack of access to land for possible expansion of existing farm operations presents a threat, particularly to the dairy industry. Additional land for expansion may simply not be available. There is a need to continually update and expand in order to remain viable and lack of available land to do so is a threat.

Farmers have had to deal with pests such as insects, birds, wild fowl, deer, squirrels, and bears since farming began. And, generally speaking, they have dealt effectively with these pests so that both the farmer and the animal can co-exist. Lately, farmers have had to deal with increasing levels of pressure from society to consider wildlife habitat and wildlife preservation as one of their responsibilities. Bearing the additional costs of wildlife management and other environmental issues presents a threat to agriculture.

Farmers complain about regulations that impact on their capacity to farm. But, as society evolves and more people come to the area, the volume of regulations is likely to increase. Canadians are concerned about food quality and the environment. But will farmers continue to absorb the growing costs of food production in a more tightly regulated environment? If the answer is “no”, then the application of more regulations on the sector is a threat to its survival.

Housing developments, urban growth, and other industrial growth – what is sometimes called “progress” - presents a threat to agriculture. As more people come to an area that is being farmed, there is usually more conflict as normal farm practices affect the lives of non-farmers.

The District is challenged to find a way to “balanced growth”. The failure to find the appropriate balance will be a threat to the survival of the agricultural industry in the District.

2.3 POLICY CONTEXT

2.3.1 The National Agricultural Policy Framework

Growing Forward, the most recent federal, provincial and territorial government agricultural policy agreement, offers strategies that are consistent with this Agricultural Area Plan. The agreement lays the groundwork for coordinated federal-provincial-territorial action over the next five years (2008 to 2012) to help the agricultural sector become more prosperous, competitive, and innovative. The current agreement also contains details of a renewed Business Risk Management program suite launched on April 1, 2008. The *Growing Forward* Framework Agreement will supersede the *Federal-Provincial-Territorial Framework Agreement on Agricultural and Agri-Food Policy for the Twenty-First Century* (also known as the *APF Framework Agreement*), which was signed in June 2002.

The *Growing Forward* agreement includes the following vision for the future of agriculture in Canada:

Our common vision is for a profitable and innovative agriculture, agri-food and agri-based products industry that seizes opportunities in responding to market demands and contributes to the health and well-being of Canadians.

Present programming to achieve this vision is contained in three strategic outcomes:

1. A competitive and innovative sector
2. A sector that contributes to society’s priorities
3. A sector that is proactive in managing risk.

The *Growing Forward* agreement is consistent with the strategies identified in this Agricultural Area Plan including the following main points:

- Placing additional emphasis on profitability in agriculture
- Expanding and encouraging innovation
- Improving government regulatory performance
- Supporting industry-led marketing strategies
- Enhancing food safety and food quality
- Improving environmental performance of the sector.

2.3.2 Fisheries and Oceans Canada

Over the years, Fisheries and Oceans Canada has become increasingly involved with activities on BC farms, namely through policy and legislation related to fish habitat management. Canada’s *Fisheries Act* provisions related to protecting fish and fish habitat apply to the whole of Canada, including private property in every province and territory. Another important piece of legislation administered and enforced by Fisheries and Oceans Canada is the *Species at Risk Act*. This Act

came into force in 2004 and it was primarily created to protect aquatic species, including fish, reptiles, marine mammals, and mollusks.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada operates from six regions across Canada. The Pacific Region includes British Columbia and the Yukon. There are 22 offices in the Region. Fisheries and Oceans Canada works closely with other agencies, including the BC Ministry of the Environment.

2.3.3 Provincial Agricultural Policy

In 2008, the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands released *Growing a Healthy Future for B.C. Families*, a new Agriculture Plan for the province. The Agriculture Plan contains 23 strategies articulated within five overarching themes. The five themes for the plan are:

1. Producing local food in a changing world
2. Meeting environmental and climate challenges
3. Building innovative and profitable family farm businesses
4. Building First Nations agricultural capacity
5. Bridging the urban/agriculture divide.

The Agricultural Area Plan for the District of Kent offers strategies that are consistent with the BC Agriculture Plan. The Agricultural Area Plan provides recommendations to encourage local food production and contribute to the strengthening of community food systems.

The Agricultural Area Plan also supports environmental management. There is a specific recommendation in the plan to encourage farmers to complete Environmental Farm Plans. Also, farmers are being encouraged to work with local agricultural professionals to find ways to meet, and to exceed, science-based regulations related to soil, water, and air quality.

The Agricultural Area Plan supports farm profitability. It is the position of the plan that having profitable farm businesses is the best way to ensure sustainable agriculture and future food security.

The District of Kent works with six First Nations reserves: Chehalis, Lukseetissum, Scowlitz, Seabird Island, Tseatah, and Wahleach Island. The District is in a favourable position to encourage First Nations agricultural capacity. The Agricultural Area Plan, under the strategy “foster partnerships and collaboration”, will support First Nations where ever it is practical and possible to utilize their excellent farm land for increased agricultural production.

The Agricultural Area Plan also contains recommendations to bridge the urban/agriculture divide. The Agricultural Area Plan supports partnerships and collaboration and other strategies designed to ensure agricultural development does not adversely affect others.

On a more local level, the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, with an office in Abbotsford, provides a wide range of programs and services to District of Kent farmers. Area staff provide expertise in agricultural renewal, strengthening farming, and various land planning initiatives. Ministry staff advocate for agriculture and for individual farmers. They liaise with other provincial Ministries and federal government staff on health and quarantine issues, slaughter

waste regulation, and meat inspection. Staff monitor application of the various pieces of provincial legislation that impact on farming such as the *Farm Practices Protection Act* (Right to Farm) and other acts affecting farming in BC. They also support farmers with various funding assistance programs.

Studies by the Ministry have addressed the contributions of the agricultural sector to local governments in terms of taxes. Often, non-farming taxpayers think farmland does not provide a fair share of money to the municipal tax base. But the studies demonstrated that rural residents pay the same house taxes whether they are located on farmland or in an urban setting. In addition, fairness in taxation may consider services provided. The cost of local government services to rural areas tend to be lower than services provided in the urban area. When these points are considered, the farming area pays more in taxes than it receives in services so farmland is actually a net contributor of tax revenue to the municipal area.⁷

2.3.4 Edge Planning for Agriculture

Agriculture is particularly vulnerable, and conflict may occur between farmers and others, where active farms interface with other land uses. Farmers are part of the community and they don't enjoy dealing with neighbour complaints. Having appropriate "edge planning" strategies, which often includes some form of buffering, is an important way the District can "protect and enhance" its valuable agricultural land.

The purpose of edge planning is to encourage compatibility with adjacent land uses. Edge planning, done appropriately, can help the District to ensure longer term security for farming along the urban/agriculture edge. The type of strategy used for an effective edge plan will vary, depending on the circumstances and the creativity of the people involved.

The BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and the Agricultural Land Commission recently prepared guidelines for edge planning. The rationale behind these guidelines is the concept of shared responsibility for the edge. To accomplish this, the following main guidelines were developed:

- Defining edge planning areas on both sides of the ALR boundary, not just the farmer side or the development side
- Designing communication tools to enhance public awareness of the edge planning objectives
- Amending or adopting bylaws that encourage intensive land use with strengthened land management along the edge planning area.

The guidelines prepared by the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and the Agricultural Land Commission suggest local governments design and manage the edge planning process. The first step is to identify areas of the community where edge planning could be beneficial. Any appropriate edge planning strategy should be developed in consultation with the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee and the farmers and other citizens involved.⁸

⁷ BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, *Direct Financial Contribution of Farming Areas to Local Governments in British Columbia*, October 2005.

⁸ For details on edge planning see BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, *Guide to Edge Planning*, 2008.

2.3.5 The Agricultural Land Commission Act

In 1973, the provincial government approved the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* that established a special land use zone to protect land with agricultural potential in the province. The zone is called the Agricultural Land Reserve. The ALR encompasses approximately five percent of the province and almost 50% of the land base of the District of Kent.

The *Agricultural Land Commission Act* is implemented through regulations related to the Act and through the activities of the Agricultural Land Commission, an independent provincial agency. There are uniformed Act enforcement officers in place. The *Agricultural Land Commission Act* takes precedence over, but does not replace other legislation and bylaws that may apply to the land. Local and regional governments, as well as other provincial agencies, are expected to plan in accordance with the provincial policy of preserving agricultural land.

Agriculture is the priority use within the Agricultural Land Reserve. Farming is encouraged and non-agricultural uses are controlled by the legislation and regulations. Provisions involving the definition of farm activities and other non-farm uses permitted in the ALR are important for the implementation of the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*. There are specific requirements for soil removal and placement of fill, for example. The regulations also define procedures for submitting applications for inclusion and removal of land from the ALR and they identify filing requirements and the respective roles of local governments and the Agricultural Land Commission. Land in the ALR is subject to provincial regulation whether private or Crown.

2.3.6 The BC Ministry of the Environment

The Fish and Wildlife Branch of the BC Ministry of the Environment establishes legislation, policies, and procedures for managing fishing and hunting activities, and for the allocation of fish and wildlife resources for recreational and commercial use. The BC Ministry of the Environment may work closely with Fisheries and Oceans Canada in the area of fish habitat management.

The goal of the provincial Fisheries program is to conserve the natural diversity of fish and fish habitat and to sustainably manage freshwater sport fishing in B.C. The province exercises delegated authority, under the federal *Fisheries Act*, for the management of non-salmon freshwater fisheries.

Wildlife Management Programs operated by the Ministry of the Environment maintain and manage wildlife, habitat and sustainable uses and keep a balance between human use of wildlife and conservation. The Ministry of the Environment administers and enforces the *Wildlife Act* of British Columbia.

The Ministry of the Environment would like a Wildlife Management Area in the District of Kent to include some 1,400 hectares of land at the confluence of the Harrison and Chehalis rivers near Harrison Mills. The boundaries of the District of Kent extend to the middle thread of the Harrison River. A portion of the Crown aquatic land to be included in the Wildlife Management Area is within the District of Kent. There is no upland in the proposal within the District of Kent. The only upland is habitat on private land that is owned by the Nature Trust on the other side of the river.

The farm community has been generally uninterested in establishing this Wildlife Management Area, because it may impact on future farming practices. But farmers generally are proud of their consideration for wildlife. It may be possible to achieve the aims of the Wildlife Management Area with a broader focus on biodiversity within the Environmental Farm Plan program. By managing wildlife in this manner, farmers can maintain some control over the processes used. Essential to this approach, however, is the need to effectively promote to the community at large the farmers' activities in wildlife management and habitat protection.

The Riparian Area Regulation managed by the Ministry of the Environment under the *Fish Protection Act* was discussed in the District. The regulation provides protection for the natural maintenance of stream health. Maintenance includes such things as sources of large organic debris (fallen trees and tree roots), areas for stream channel migration, vegetative cover to help moderate water temperature, provision of food, nutrients, and organic matter to the stream, stream bank stabilization, and buffers for streams from excessive silt and surface runoff pollution.

The current Riparian Area Regulation does not apply to agricultural or institutional development. It is important to the agricultural community that this exemption be retained in order to ensure that the extensive network of drainage systems throughout the agricultural lands can be appropriately maintained. It is felt that establishing streamside protection and enhancement areas through the Riparian Area Regulation would create an additional regulatory roadblock on farmers' ability to adequately drain their lands to be usable for efficient production.

2.3.7 Agricultural Waste Control Regulation

Developed under the BC *Environmental Management Act* and *Health Act*, the purpose of the Agricultural Waste Control Regulation is to "describe practices for using, storing and managing agricultural waste that will result in agricultural waste being handled in an environmentally sound manner".⁹ The Regulation requires farmers to avoid manure application on frozen land, on land with standing water or saturated soils, during times of heavy wind, and in amounts exceeding what is required for crop growth.

2.3.8 The Farm Practices Protection Act

The *Farm Practices Protection Act* applies to farmers who operate in the Agricultural Land Reserve or in other areas where farming is permitted by local zoning bylaws. When farmers operate using "normal farm practices", the Act protects the farmer against nuisance actions, court injunctions, or specific nuisance bylaws related to the operation of the farm.

The *Farm Practices Protection Act* established the Farm Industry Review Board as the tribunal that considers complaints from persons aggrieved by odour, noise, dust, or other disturbances resulting from farm operations, and encourages settlement of the complaints. The Board will hear complaints and determine whether the disturbance in question results from normal farm practices.

⁹ *Agricultural Waste Management Regulation*, Part 1, Purpose.

2.3.9 The Land Title Act

The *Land Title Act* gives the approving officer of the District the power to assess potential impacts of proposed subdivisions on farmland. Before subdivision approval is given, the approving officer may require adequate buffering of farmland from the subdivision, or the removal of unnecessary roads directed to the Agricultural Land Reserve, to ensure no unreasonable interference with farm operations.

2.3.10 The Local Government Act

The *Local Government Act*, a provincial Act, provides the legislative framework for local governments. Under the Act, certain provisions address agriculture, such as those covering community planning, zoning, nuisance regulations, the removal and deposit of soil, weed and pest control, and water use and drainage. Particular sections of the Act address planning for agriculture. There may be policy statements in a community's Official Community Plan that respect the maintenance and enhancement of farming on land in a farming area or in an area designated for agricultural use. Also, land use bylaws adopted by a local government are expected to recognize specific planning standards for agricultural operations.

The District of Kent OCP was completed in June, 2001 and there are plans to initiate an update. The current OCP supports agriculture in the District.

2.3.11 The Fraser Valley Regional District

The Fraser Valley Regional District was formed in 1995 by the amalgamation of Central Fraser Valley, Dewdney-Alouette and Fraser Cheam Regional Districts. The FVRD is a partnership of local government members including the Cities of Abbotsford and Chilliwack, the Village of Harrison Hot Springs, eight electoral areas, and the Districts of Mission, Hope, and Kent.

In 2004, the FVRD prepared a regional growth strategy¹⁰ identifying eight growth management goals, the second of which was to “support and enhance the agricultural sector”. The Fraser Valley is one of the most intensively farmed areas in Canada and the FVRD generates more annual farm receipts than any other regional district in BC. The FVRD is committed to the expansion of the agricultural sector while at the same time addressing other regional growth pressures. Providing support for the agricultural sector in the District of Kent is consistent with the FVRD regional growth strategy.

One strategy for balancing urban growth needs with protection of the agricultural land base is sometimes called “grow up not out”. The strategy encourages communities to develop within their existing boundaries, essentially providing accommodation for more people on the same amount of land. Agassiz, for example, has embraced the approach and now boasts the highest urban density figures in the FVRD in terms of people accommodated per hectare. At this point, the District of Kent is exploring ways to accommodate future growth within the town of Agassiz as well as industrial development that may be important for the economic future of the District.

¹⁰ *Choices for Our Future: Regional Growth Strategy for the Fraser Valley Regional District, 2004.*

2.3.12 The Fraser Basin Council

The Fraser Basin – the area drained by the Fraser River and its 13 main watersheds – stretches 1400 km from the Rockies to the City of Richmond. The Basin boasts one of the world's most productive salmon river systems. Its ecosystem supports 65 species of fish and numerous species of birds, mammals, plants, and trees. Eighty percent of BC's economy is generated in the Basin. Almost 70% of all British Columbians live within the Fraser Basin.

In 1997, community groups, business, and four orders of government, including First Nations, came together to create the Fraser Basin Council. Its mandate is to ensure that the decisions we make now will protect and advance the Basin's social, economic, and environmental sustainability into the future. The Fraser Basin Council conducts research, offers a series of programs and services, and is an advisory group to governments and other agencies.

2.3.13 The District of Kent Official Community Plan

The District of Kent's most recent Official Community Plan was adopted in 2001. The intent of the OCP is to guide decisions in relation to policies for land use (including farmland and agricultural activities) and establish a framework for all aspects of land use regarding social, environmental, economic, and growth management objectives. It is anticipated that a review and update of the OCP will be initiated in 2010.

The 2001 OCP reflects the District's support for agriculture and identifies that "the District of Kent's historic roots lie with the agricultural community".¹¹ A series of policies related to agriculture is identified in the OCP.

As a broad statement of direction, the OCP provides the statutory authority for the more detailed and site-specific zoning and subdivision bylaws, development permit system, and other policy instruments designed to ensure that development is appropriate and meets public expectations. These tools provide guidance on siting, building mass, permitted land uses and activities, the character and form of development, and other details. These site-specific tools include land use plans for:

- Agassiz
- Else/Ashton Road
- Hot Springs Road
- Golf Road
- Rockwell Drive
- Cemetery Road
- Harrison Mills
- Mount Woodside (and a neighbourhood plan)

The OCP identified the development of an agricultural area plan as a priority to provide agricultural opportunities while meeting community concerns over the protection of the ground

¹¹ *District of Kent Official Community Plan*, June 2001, p. 42.

water resource and potential conflicts over non-compatible land uses. As part of developing the plan, it was expected there will be further agricultural policy refinements to:

- Protect agricultural areas and enhance farming
- Maintain agricultural activities
- Enhance agricultural viability
- Co-ordinate farming and environmental protection
- Manage water use and drainage
- Increase agricultural awareness and community involvement.

The Agricultural Area Plan is expected to be a sub-plan or schedule of the revised OCP. The Agricultural Area Plan provides more detail on the agricultural sector than the OCP. It must be adopted by Council as part of the OCP bylaw so staff recognize the Agricultural Area Plan as part of the guidelines for managing the community.

2.3.14 Zoning Bylaw 1219, 2002

The District's Zoning Bylaw was adopted in 2002. It regulates the location and use of buildings and structures and the use of land, including the surface of water, within the District of Kent. "For that purpose the District is divided into zones pursuant to the provisions of the Local Government Act, having due regard to the promotion of health, safety, convenience, welfare of the public, overcrowding of land, preservation of the amenities peculiar to any zone, the securing of adequate light, air, and access, the value of the land and the nature of its present and prospective use and occupancy, the character of each zone, the character of the buildings already erected, and the peculiar suitability of the zone for particular uses, and the conservation of property values."¹²

Under the Zoning Bylaw, the definition of agricultural use means "a use providing for the growing, rearing, producing and harvesting of agricultural products" and specifically includes:

1. The processing on an individual farm of the primary agricultural products harvested, reared or produced on that farm and the storage of farm machinery, implements, and agricultural supplies, and repairs to farm machinery and implants used on that farm;
2. The keeping of dogs, horses, cattle, swine, poultry, pigeons, doves, bees, furbearing animals or other livestock;
3. The operation of stockyards, abattoirs, and composting facilities; and
4. Excludes all manufacturing processing, or storage or repairs not specifically included in this definition.

A definition for intensive agricultural use is also provided in the Zoning Bylaw; it generally refers to larger poultry or livestock operations and larger greenhouse operations. The Zoning Bylaw provides some specific setbacks for intensive agricultural uses.

The purpose of the Agricultural (A) Zone "is to provide for agricultural and related rural development and to protect the agricultural integrity of land within the Agricultural Land

¹² Zoning Bylaw, p. 2.

Reserve.” The existing agricultural zone provides a regulatory tool to manage agricultural uses and activities.

2.4 EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

2.4.1 The Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre

The Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre, with two facilities in British Columbia at Summerland (including the Kamloops Range Research Unit) and Agassiz, is one of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's national network of 19 research centres. Research at both sites addresses national agricultural priorities.

Originally established as the Dominion Experimental Farm, today, the Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre in Agassiz has a land base of 310 hectares with a 7.5 hectare field site in Abbotsford. It includes poultry research facilities, a feed mill, the Avian Research Centre, greenhouses and a weather station that has been collecting weather data since 1889. Along with a heritage stone barn built in 1893, the Centre has a modern laboratory and office complex conducting research on a wide range of subjects. In addition, the University of BC's Dairy Education and Research Centre is on site leading to collaboration on dairy cattle research.

Key areas of research currently being conducted at the Agassiz facility are:

- Assessing behaviour and evaluating the welfare of dairy cattle, including feeding behavior, detection of lameness, and behaviours when sick
- Poultry nutrition and nutrition effects in relation to bone strength and welfare
- Identifying, monitoring and preserving poultry stocks for short-term use and long-term availability
- Soil biochemistry and fertility, soil microbiology, soil degradation and environmental quality
- Insect pest control measures for vegetables, berries and greenhouse vegetables
- Strawberry and raspberry varieties that adapt well to Canada's Pacific northwest, with emphasis on natural disease and insect resistance
- Innovative production and post-harvest methods to improve the quality of fruits, berries, nuts and greenhouse vegetables
- Greenhouse vegetables to enhance antioxidant content for human health; ways to increase the tolerance of these vegetables to low storage temperatures and to prolong their shelf life.

2.4.2 The UBC Dairy Education and Research Centre

The University of British Columbia's Dairy Education and Research Centre is on the site of the Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre. This location has paved the way for increased collaborative research between the Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre and the University, particularly on dairy cattle.

The UBC Dairy Education and Research Centre was designed to provide education and technology transfer programs in support of the dairy industry in BC and beyond. The Centre supports a critical mass of scientists and provides sufficient numbers of animals in a well-equipped setting for research.

The Centre is unique in Canada and is one of the largest in the world. It is rapidly developing a leading international reputation for dairy cattle research. The main animal research facility was opened in 2000. This facility contains 300 free-stalls, a 24-cow milking parlor, offices, a dry lab, and public reception areas. In 2005, the Feed Intake Research Facility, which can house up to 120 animals over 15 months of age, was completed. Feed and water intake consumption by individual animals that are group-housed can be measured continuously on a 24-hour per day basis.

The new Heifer Research Facility for calves between 11 weeks and 15 months of age was completed in 2006. This facility is equipped to continuously measure individual animal feed intake in groups of calves.

Also, in 2006, the Westgen¹³ Calf Research Facility for calves to 11 weeks of age was completed. The building contains teaching and research facilities which are equipped to continuously measure milk, water, grain, and forage consumption as well as body weight by individual calves housed in six separate age groups.

The Dairy Education and Research Centre's basic farming operation is financially self-sufficient. Revenues generated from the sale of milk and animals cover the costs of management and farm-worker salaries, animal feeds and care, utilities, and routine maintenance. Research costs are above and beyond the costs of the basic operation of the Centre.

The Centre attracts students and researchers from across the country and internationally. It provides opportunities in training for industry workers and college technical students as well as hands-on practical and research experience for undergraduate students.

2.4.3 The University of the Fraser Valley

The University of the Fraser Valley is a fully accredited public university that enrolls some 11,000 students annually. With campuses in Abbotsford, Chilliwack, and Mission, and regional centres in Hope and Agassiz, the University has begun development of a new 80-acre campus in the Canada Education Park along the Vedder River in Chilliwack. The Chilliwack campus is only about 30 minutes from Agassiz.

The University of the Fraser Valley offers 13 bachelor's degrees, one applied master's degree and more than 80 certificate and diploma programs in applied and academic areas, including trades. Agricultural programs are offered at the Chilliwack campus. Several programs at the diploma and certificate levels are of particular interest to farmers in the District of Kent including the Livestock Production Certificate program and the two-year Agricultural Technology Diploma.

¹³ Westgen (Western Canada's Genetics Centre) provides artificial insemination services to dairy farmers and beef producers in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.

2.5 PERSPECTIVES FROM OTHER JURISDICTIONS

When the Agricultural Area Plan was being prepared, the agricultural industry in Canada was showing some evidence of growth and optimism, despite the downturn in the Canadian and world economies. Sales have been steady, farmers are buying farm equipment, and there has been a surge of interest in food security and the production of food for local consumers.

What are the likely influences on agriculture over the life of this Agricultural Area Plan? What is happening to agriculture in other parts of Canada and around the world? What is the role of agriculture in the future of Canada, British Columbia, and the District of Kent?

In a recent issue of *Country Guide*, Editor Tom Button provided a list of influences on agriculture in the future. He suggested new markets will emerge in specialty areas such as canola oil and soybeans, larger farm corporations will likely continue, and marketing of agricultural products will be even more important in the future. He is worried about whether farmers are doing enough to deal with farm succession, and this is an important concern among District of Kent farmers. Button is confident that Canadian farmers will remain world leaders in adapting to change.¹⁴

Questions about the future of agriculture are being addressed in many jurisdictions besides the District of Kent. For example, in Washington State, many apple growers were unable to compete with lower-cost producers elsewhere and they turned to the development of local markets. Farmers paid attention to local consumers who were seeking quality products and who cared about where their food products were grown. Smaller operators who couldn't compete with prices on a global scale, found themselves unable to keep up with the local demand for their products.

In the District of Kent, farmers on small acreages that are selling within expanding niche markets suggested they could easily sell much more of their product if they could only grow more. The various *Buy Local* and *Support Your Local Farmer* campaigns have assisted the industry with the development of local, and profitable, markets.

Certainly there are many limitations to the future of agriculture when the focus is only on local markets. Encouraging local sales of agricultural products and services is not the panacea for profit troubles in agriculture. Indeed, a recent paper provided by the George Morris Centre at the University of Guelph suggested there are numerous regulatory and other limitations standing in the way of any reliance on only local sales.¹⁵ On the other hand, when it is suggested that some food for an average meal in BC may travel as much as 2,500 km and come from five different countries, it is not surprising that some local farmers are able to encourage, and profit from, local sales of agricultural products.

In other parts of Canada, farmers continue to adapt to changing circumstances. Canadian farmers have successfully maintained their global export markets through innovation and growth. Top farmers have improved their management skills, including studying their more exact costs of production. They have also turned their attention to marketing, finding ways to

¹⁴ *Country Guide*, January 2009, Page 6.

¹⁵ Gooch, Martin, *Local Food-The Untold Story*, George Morris Centre, October, 2007.

attract a higher price for their products despite the competition from regions in the world with lower cost of production.

Top farmers are looking beyond their farms for information and advice. They are building relationships with other sectors of the economy and practicing successful business strategies in the same way that other successful business people do. Top farmers are inquisitive and curious and continuously look for new ways to improve their operations. Sometimes those ways come from advances in technology and other innovations. Sometimes improvement comes from creativity and the capacity to see new applications for older knowledge. Farmers are continually innovating and designing ways to maximize the use of their resources and equipment. Farmers in the District of Kent, through the Agassiz Producers Group, have found creative ways to improve their product marketing.

Progressive farmers recognize the importance of partnerships whether it is with retailers or other marketers, or education and research institutions such as Universities and Colleges that can contribute to their operations with innovative ideas. Farmers spend more of their time interacting with other top business leaders and research institutions seeking new markets for their products based on consumer preferences. In the District of Kent, the opportunities for more of this interaction are extensive. With the presence of the Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre, the UBC Dairy Education and Research Centre, and the close proximity of the University of the Fraser Valley, the District is well-served with education and research facilities.

Diversification, value-added, and vertical integration have become increasingly important strategies in modern agriculture. Many District of Kent farmers are using these strategies. Some have introduced new commodities as part of their production, adding value to the products they produce such as making cheese from their own milk, or sauerkraut from their own cabbage, or retaining more of the steps in getting their product to the consumer. Some District farmers do their own product grading and packaging and find their own markets, both local and national.

Farmers of the future will also be the ones who recognize the changes occurring in the world around them and adapt to those changes. Today, we hear a lot about protection of the environment, about safe food products, and about animal rights and welfare. Many successful farmers have adapted by reducing or eliminating the use of chemicals on their farms and by producing their products with full attention to land rejuvenation and sustainability. Farmers are developing environmental farm plans as a way to practice due diligence and to show consumers how they care about their land and farm practices. On-farm food safety programs are being incorporated and many farmers have willingly adopted Canadian Food Inspection Agency approved best practices for managing animals on their farms.

Today's world is dominated by rapid technological growth in virtually all areas of our economy. It would be naïve to think that agriculture will be impacted by changing technology any less than any other sector. We can expect to see more widespread use of robots even beyond the current robotic milking systems. A local firm, Westcoast Robotics, has established in the District and in their first year of operation sold more than a dozen robotic units. Many progressive farmers may eventually turn to robots or other machines to replace the current reliance on seasonal labour. We can expect ongoing application of computer technology to all farm operations with those unwilling to embrace the changes eventually lagging behind.

3 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Identifying an appropriate time frame for implementation of an Agricultural Area Plan is difficult. In preparing this Agricultural Area Plan, the time frame of 20 years was considered to be realistic. Regular reviews of the plan are recommended as part of the implementation strategy. Generally, successful implementation of an agricultural area plan can be traced to the early commitment and motivation of Council and the Agricultural Advisory Committee.

Despite mention of a time frame, one principle of an Agricultural Area Plan is the recognition of “agriculture forever”. This principle, relating to the land base for agriculture, is important because quality farm land is always under pressure from other potential uses.

3.1 ROLE OF THE AGRICULTURAL AREA PLAN

The District of Kent Official Community Plan is a legal document for planning and managing the District’s social, economic, and physical future. The OCP provides a long-range vision to reflect community values determined through a public participation process. The OCP is based on a realistic assessment of the District’s existing situation, future prospects, and relationship to the surrounding region.

In addition to the OCP, the District charts its course with other planning or strategic documents such as various Neighbourhood Plans and other Regional District growth strategies and others.

The District recognizes the importance of agriculture as a food source, an environmental resource, a heritage asset, and an important contributor to the local economy. The District is committed to protecting the supply of agricultural lands and to ensuring the viability of farm operations.

It is expected the Agricultural Area Plan will be a sub-plan or schedule of the revised Official Community Plan, and this intent was identified in the 2001 OCP. It is a plan for the agricultural sector that provides more detail for agriculture than the OCP. The Agricultural Area Plan must be adopted by Council and appropriate bylaws implemented where required so staff recognize the Agricultural Area Plan as part of the guidelines for managing the OCP. The Agricultural Area Plan is an important member of the District’s planning and strategic documents.

Implementation of the plan will require some bylaw adjustments and there will be other demands placed on District staff as the plan recommendations are assessed and implemented.

3.2 MONITORING AND REVIEW PROCESS

Various indicators of successful implementation of the Agricultural Area Plan should be developed and monitored on an annual basis. Monitoring will determine the impact of the plan and will provide motivation and support for the implementation process.

In order to provide evidence of increased profitability in the industry and progress with implementation of the plan, some of the following considerations may be monitored:

1. Increase and/or change in marketing channels used by producers, for example:
 - Increases in farm direct marketing opportunities
 - Volume of local sales of local products
 - Evidence of increased Agri-tourism
2. Retention and/or expansion of number of farms in operation, and percentage of land in production, for example:
 - Number of farms sold in the District
 - Average farm size
 - Hectares (acres) of land in the ALR in Kent
 - Number of cows milked in the District
 - Number of beginning farmer start ups
 - Number of experienced farmers recruited to the area
3. Number of applications for removal, approvals, rejections for non-farm use and sub-division in the ALR
4. Number of jobs on farms retained and/or created
5. Increase in diversification of agricultural production and agriculture-related processing mix in the community
6. Increase in agriculture-related on-farm value-added activity
7. Development of a mentoring program or other services and tools for farmers and new entrants to farming
8. Development of new post-secondary agricultural education courses through local Universities and colleges, including business planning courses
9. On-going local employer-employee training
10. Perceptible increase in support for agriculture, for example:
 - Increase in positive agriculture industry media coverage
 - Number of farmer – neighbour complaints
 - Community calls for farmland protection and/or preservation
 - Positive comments about the tour of area farms
 - The establishment of an Agriculture Week in the District.

An appropriate review process for the Plan should be established. Any plan, regardless of how much effort and skill went into its development, must be regularly reviewed and updated to make sure it remains applicable and valid. Regular plan reviews should be conducted by the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee on a bi-annual basis and a full review of the plan should be done after the fifth year of implementation.

3.3 IMPLEMENTING THE SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to facilitate the Agricultural Area Plan implementation, the specific recommendations advanced in the plan have been isolated and provided with further details. Where possible, funding options have been identified. Although the Agricultural Area Plan may have a life of some 20 years, the timeline for recommendations to be implemented was tightened to about 10 years. It is recognized that it may be difficult for the District to initiate action on all of the recommendations within a 10-year time frame.

Note: The recommendation numbers refer to those used in the Agricultural Area Plan.

3.3.1 Encourage Industry Profitability

Recommendation	Steps to Implementation	Partners/ Funding Options	Timeline/Results Expected
<i>Recommendation 4.1.1 Commitment to ALR Land</i>	KAAC report to Council Include in OCP	KAAC Council	OCP Review 2010/2011
<i>Recommendation 4.1.2 Inventory non-permitted uses</i>	Staff review Report to Council	Staff Council	Prior to next OCP in 2010/2011
<i>Recommendation 4.1.3 Bring non-permitted uses into compliance</i>	KAAC review Staff plan Report to Council	KAAC Staff Council	Over next 10 years
<i>Recommendation 4.1.4 Determine if further development is an option in Golf Road/Ashton Road area</i>	Staff review Report to Council Consult with neighbourhoods	Staff Council Neighbourhoods	Completed by 2011
<i>Recommendation 4.1.5 Initiate a Golf Road/Ashton Road Neighbourhood Plan</i>	Determine if development required Review with citizens Prepare Neighbourhood Plan	Staff Citizens Council	Completed by 2012
<i>Recommendation 4.1.6 Discourage applications for removal of ALR land (McCaffery)</i>	Review all applications by KAAC Report to Council	KAAC Council	Upon plan acceptance
<i>Recommendation 4.2.1 Consider edge planning strategies to protect farmers from impact of development</i>	Staff review with citizens and farming community Design appropriate edge plans Review with KAAC Report to Council	Citizens Staff KAAC Council	During life of the plan
<i>Recommendation 4.2.2 Ensure covenant to identify agricultural practices</i>	Staff Council	Staff Council	Upon plan acceptance

Recommendation	Steps to Implementation	Partners/ Funding Options	Timeline/Results Expected
<i>Recommendation 4.3.1 Ensure dykes provide protection from river encroachment but encourage recreation trails that do not conflict with farming operations.</i>	Plans developed by Community Recreation and Parks Services in consultation with the agricultural community affected	CRRS Staff KAAC Council	Ongoing
<i>Recommendation 4.3.2 Review plans for recreation trails on dykes with the agricultural community, the Kent AAC and the ALC where required.</i>	Plans developed by Community Recreation and Parks Services Review with agricultural community Review with KAAC Review with ALC if required Report to Council	CRRS Staff KAAC Council	Ongoing
<i>Recommendation 4.4.1 Encourage amalgamation of contiguous parcels of land</i>	Staff identify parcels	Staff Council	Ongoing
<i>Recommendation 4.4.2 Provide information on benefits of farming to non-farming ALR land owners</i>	Staff identify benefits Review with KAAC Report to Council	BCMAL Staff KAAC Council	Ongoing
<i>Recommendation 4.5.1 Discourage applications for additional residences on ALR land</i>	Council	Council	Ongoing
<i>Recommendation 4.5.2 Consider eliminating RR1 and RR 2 zones</i>	Staff review Review with KAAC Report to Council	Staff KAAC Council	During life of the plan
<i>Recommendation 4.5.3 Adopt a homeplate bylaw</i>	Staff review policies in other jurisdictions Review with KAAC Report to Council	Staff KAAC Council	Completed by 2011
<i>Recommendation 4.6.1 Support farmers by working closely with regulatory bodies to make changes for efficient ditch cleaning and allow installation of screens to prevent migration of fish into ditch systems</i>	Review current procedures Meet with regulatory bodies Make changes as required	Staff Council Regulatory bodies	Ongoing
<i>Recommendation 4.6.2 Implement appropriate bank protection and encourage better dredging of the Fraser River</i>	Review situation with regulatory bodies and the FVRD and/or Province	Staff Regulatory Bodies FVRD/Province Council	Ongoing

Recommendation	Steps to Implementation	Partners/ Funding Options	Timeline/Results Expected
<i>Recommendation 4.6.3</i> <i>Update refuge area maps and other strategies for livestock evacuation</i>	Review existing maps Update as required	Staff Council BCMAL	Ongoing
<i>Recommendation 4.7.1</i> <i>Support farmers to make their products available for local purchase</i>	Review situation with farm community Utilize District website	Staff Agassiz Producers Group	Completed by 2011
<i>Recommendation 4.7.2</i> <i>Review ways to encourage a local farmers' market</i>	Review by CRRS Review with Kent Agassiz Chamber of Commerce Review by KAAC Review with agricultural community	CRRS KAAC Agricultural community	Completed by 2011
<i>Recommendation 4.8.1</i> <i>Provide supportive regulatory environment for farm diversification efforts</i>	Monitor all District regulations to ensure support for agriculture	Staff KAAC Council	Ongoing
<i>Recommendation 4.8.2</i> <i>Update existing kitchen to commercial standards</i>	Review with agricultural community Review with business community Obtain cost estimates	Community Agriculture Society KAAC Seek funding from IAF	Completed by 2011
<i>Recommendation 4.9.1</i> <i>Review development cost charges bylaw and establish appropriate development cost charge rates</i>	Review by KAAC Report to Council	Staff KAAC Council	Upon plan acceptance

3.3.2 Enhance Agricultural Capacity

Recommendation	Steps to Implementation	Partners/ Funding Options	Timeline/Results Expected
<i>Recommendation 5.1.1</i> <i>Appoint staff person for agriculture</i>	Ongoing	Staff Council	Upon plan acceptance and ongoing
<i>Recommendation 5.2.1</i> <i>Encourage KAAC to continue to address agricultural issues</i>	Ongoing	Council KAAC	Upon plan acceptance and ongoing
<i>Recommendation 5.2.2</i> <i>Fill KAAC community liaison positions in a timely manner</i>	Identify candidates	Council	Upon plan acceptance and ongoing

Recommendation	Steps to Implementation	Partners/ Funding Options	Timeline/Results Expected
<i>Recommendation 5.3.1 Prepare Decision Guidelines form</i>	Prepare Draft form Use form and build and add to it as required	Staff KAAC	Completed by 2011
<i>Recommendation 5.3.2 Introduce agricultural impact assessment process</i>	Review other processes used in other municipalities Develop process to suit District	Staff KAAC Council	Completed by 2011
<i>Recommendation 5.3.3 Apply agricultural impact assessment process to Cemetery Hill and Mount Woodside</i>	Apply to areas as required	Staff KAAC Council	Completed by 2012
<i>Recommendation 5.4.1 Encourage BCMAL to develop business planning and other tools for small acreage farmers</i>	Review by KAAC Write letter to BCMAL	KAAC BCMAL	Completed by 2011
<i>Recommendation 5.4.2 Develop an agricultural business profile</i>	Identify components of profile Review with BCMAL staff	Staff KAAC BCMAL	Completed by 2011
<i>Recommendation 5.4.3 Encourage BCMAL to initiate a mentoring program</i>	Review by KAAC Write letter to BCMAL	KAAC BCMAL IAF	Completed by 2011
<i>Recommendation 5.4.4 Amend Zoning Bylaw lot restrictions for intensive agricultural use</i>	Review by KAAC Report to Council	KAAC Council	Completed by 2011
<i>Recommendation 5.5.1 Declare "Agriculture Week"</i>	KAAC review Report to Council	KAAC Council	Upon plan acceptance
<i>Recommendation 5.5.2 Continue agricultural area tours</i>	KAAC review	KAAC	Ongoing
<i>Recommendation 5.5.3 Incorporate more opportunities to review agricultural issues during farm tours</i>	Review opportunities with farm community	KAAC	Ongoing
<i>Recommendation 5.5.4 Expand farm tours to neighbouring areas</i>	Review opportunities with farm community	KAAC	Ongoing

Recommendation	Steps to Implementation	Partners/ Funding Options	Timeline/Results Expected
<i>Recommendation 5.5.5 Organize agriculture information seminar on agricultural rules and regulations</i>	Develop list of regulations to include for seminar Contact relevant organizations	KAAC Regulatory bodies	Completed by 2011 and repeat as required
<i>Recommendation 5.6.1 Provide information on farm activities, events and normal farm practices on District website</i>	Collect information as required	Staff KAAC	Completed by 2011 and ongoing
<i>Recommendation 5.6.2 Emphasize farmers' manure spreading patterns on District website</i>	Collect information as required	Staff KAAC	Completed by 2011 and ongoing
<i>Recommendation 5.6.3 Develop website section on current local agricultural products and services</i>	Contact interested farmers Modify website to accommodate	Staff KAAC APG	Completed by 2010 and ongoing
<i>Recommendation 5.7.1 Prepare a brochure on agriculture</i>	Review requirements Prepare brochure	Staff KAAC	Completed by 2011
<i>Recommendation 5.8.1 Encourage BCMAL to prepare Best Management Guidelines for visual appearance of farming areas</i>	KAAC review Prepare letter to BCMAL	KAAC	Upon plan acceptance
<i>Recommendation 5.8.2 Encourage BCMAL to prepare Best Management Guidelines for building placement on farms</i>	KAAC review Prepare letter to BCMAL	KAAC	Upon plan acceptance
<i>Recommendation 5.9.1 Develop a signage program to minimize traffic hazards</i>	Review by KAAC Review with Ministry of Transportation	Council Ministry of Transportation	Completed by 2011
<i>Recommendation 5.11.1 Retain a dedicated part-time person for implementation of the Agricultural Area Plan</i>	Review by KAAC Review funding options (IAF) Advertise and hire	KAAC IAF	Upon acceptance of plan
<i>Recommendation 5.11.2 Review the Agricultural Area Plan after fifth year</i>	KAAC review Establish appropriate monitoring information	KAAC	Completed after fifth year of plan implementation

3.3.3 Foster Partnerships and Collaboration

Recommendation	Steps to Implementation	Partners/ Funding Options	Timeline/Results Expected
<i>Recommendation 6.1.1 Support a Working Group for agriculture in the District</i>	KAAC meet with PARC & UBC staff Consider a first meeting to review possible value and topics Prepare terms of reference for Working Group	KAAC PARC UBC Council	During first year of plan implementation
<i>Recommendation 6.1.2 Encourage relevant research and understanding</i>	Ongoing	KAAC Working Group	To be decided by Working Group
<i>Recommendation 6.1.3 Address environmental and other regulations</i>	Ongoing	KAAC Working Group	To be decided by Working Group
<i>Recommendation 6.1.4 Invite regulatory bodies to Working Group meetings</i>	Staff and KAAC to develop list of people to invite	KAAC Working Group	To be decided by Working Group
<i>Recommendation 6.1.5 Investigate ALUS and similar programs</i>	Ongoing	KAAC Working Group	To be decided by Working Group
<i>Recommendation 6.1.6 Encourage Environmental Farm Plans</i>	Develop list of farms with completed plans Promote value of EFP	KAAC Working Group BCAC	During first year of plan implementation and ongoing
<i>Recommendation 6.1.7 Investigate relevance of an education program to address urban use of chemicals</i>	Review existing programs in other municipalities Consider merits	KAAC Working Group Council	To be decided by Working Group
<i>Recommendation 6.1.8 Foster excellence in agriculture</i>	Review and discuss at meetings	KAAC Working Group	To be decided by Working Group
<i>Recommendation 6.2.1 Maintain positive relationships with First Nations</i>	Invite First Nations to relevant District activities as required	Council	Ongoing
<i>Recommendation 6.3.1 Encourage interested agricultural businesses to join Chamber of Commerce</i>	Contact Chamber Review list of farms already as members Promote benefits to agricultural businesses	KAAC Council	Ongoing
<i>Recommendation 6.4.1 Continue to build positive working relationships with FVRD and the province</i>	Attend meetings as required	Staff Council	Ongoing

4 APPENDIX

4.1 KENT AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE



THE CORPORATION OF THE DISTRICT OF KENT

Agricultural Advisory Committee TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 1. Mandate:** To identify and address agricultural issues important to the District of Kent and advise Council on those issues.

At Council's request provide information on problems and concerns in the area of agriculture.
- 2. Membership:** Members to be appointed by Mayor in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee to a maximum of ten members at large, five executive members and three non-voting liaison members.
- 3. Executive:** To consist of a Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary-Treasurer and two Directors.
- 4. Liaison:** Three non voting members, one representing the Provincial Government and two representing Council to act as a source of information and for regional district and municipal support.
- 5. Term:** Term of membership will be for three years, but reviewed annually.
- 6. Qualifications:** Voting members to be active in the Agriculture Industry, but shall not include District staff or liaison members.
- 7. Quorum:** A quorum will consist of five voting members.
- 8. Minutes:** Minutes shall be taken at each Committee meeting and each Executive meeting and circulated to the membership, Mayor and Chief Administrative Officer.

Resolutions requiring consideration by Council shall be given to the Mayor along with a supporting statement.

- 9. Remuneration:** Members shall service without remuneration.
- 10. Annual Budget:** Executive to prepare an annual budget for submission to CAO by January 31.

Considered and Approved by Council on the 13th day of March 2006. Amended February 6, 2009 – Approved February 9, 2009.

4.2 THE CONSULTANT TEAM

The Consultant Team – Don Cameron Associates District of Kent Agricultural Area Plan

Don Cameron, MSc., P.Ag., has over 30 years of experience in management, consulting, teaching, research, and organizational development. He has worked in a consulting role with farmers in most agricultural commodities in BC and with people in governments, the private sector, and with not-for-profit organizations and volunteers. He has 12 years of formal teaching experience and holds a M.Sc. degree from the School of Agricultural Economics and Extension Education at the University of Guelph. He has extensive experience with group facilitation and conducting focus sessions

Kari Huhtala, MCIP has over 25 years of policy planning experience in social and community planning, community participatory projects, project/program review and assessment, and budgeting planning and review. He has worked as a professional planner with the City of Richmond, the City of Vancouver, and the Corporation of Delta on development and municipal land use policies in B.C. Kari worked with Don Cameron to develop the City of Richmond Agriculture Viability Strategy.

Dave Whiting P.Ag, MCIP has over 30 years experience as a land use planner, agrologist, and educator, and teaches agriculture and land/resource planning at Thompson Rivers University on a part-time basis. He is a member of three professional organizations - the Canadian Institute of Planners, the BC Institute of Agrologists, and the BC College of Teachers.

James Rahe, Ph.D received his Ph.D from Purdue University in biochemistry and biological science and is Professor Emeritus in plant pathology at Simon Fraser University, recently retired. Dr. Rahe has extensive experience with soils and agricultural land capability with a specific specialty in herbicidal activity in diverse agricultural soils.

Rod MacLean, M.Sc. P. Eng. is a Project Manager and Agricultural Engineer with Associated Engineering in Kelowna, BC. His current role is as private consultant, acting as design engineer for utilities in the Okanagan. Rod's 18 years of experience include being a soil conservation and irrigation specialist, as well as engineering manager with UMA Engineering Ltd., and senior manager with the Irrigation Branch of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Albert Anderson is a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine who practiced in the Fraser Valley for many years while also developing, with his family, one of the most successful agri-tourism operations in BC. Operated as Aldor Acres Limited, the farm features an educational dairy operation as well as farm tours and the direct sale of a wide range of agricultural products.

Jyl Singh is the current accreditation inspector with the BC AgriTourism Alliance and she is heavily involved with agriculture and agricultural opportunities in the province, particularly as they relate to the "experience economy". Jyl is a past President of the Fraser Valley Farm Direct Marketing Association and, with her husband Tim, developed a highly successful farm market, specialty greenhouses, and an important agri-tourism destination in the Lower Mainland.

SCHEDULE E (BYLAW NO. 1508)

District of Kent Agricultural Area Plan



Prepared by:
Don Cameron Associates
with support from the
Steering Committee for the
Agricultural Area Plan

April 2010

“Agriculture likes it here”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Don Cameron Associates and the Steering Committee for the District of Kent Agricultural Area Plan are pleased to present this Agricultural Area Plan.

We wish to acknowledge the financial assistance of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC for making this project possible. Thanks are also extended to the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and Council of the District of Kent for their financial support for this work. To the members of the agricultural industry who opened their farms for tours, attended meetings or interviews, and gave willingly of their time and knowledge, thanks are given. Thanks are also extended to those citizens who may not be directly involved with the agricultural industry but who cared enough about it to participate in the Open House meetings and discussions.

The suggestions in this plan were prepared using the knowledge and experience of producers involved in the industry and others who provided comments and input.

Don Cameron Associates and members of the Steering Committee express their appreciation to the late Corney Klop, who contributed

immensely to the development of the District of Kent Agricultural Area Plan. Corney Klop will be remembered for his dedication to the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee and Kent Agricultural Plan Steering Committee, as well as for his numerous contributions to agriculture and to his community, the District of Kent.

Please direct comments and enquiries about this plan to:

Darcey Kohuch, Director of Development,
District of Kent
604.796.2235
DKohuch@district.kent.bc.ca

The following are the Steering Committee members for the Agricultural Area Plan:

Peter Andres
Martin Dinn
Lorne Fisher
Laurens Van Vliet
Kim Sutherland

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) is pleased to participate in this project. AAFC is committed to working with our industry partners and the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC to increase public awareness of the importance of the agriculture and the agri-food industry to Canada. Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the organization and not necessarily of AAFC.

Funding provided by:



TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE FUTURE OF AGRICULTURE IN KENT	3
1 OVERVIEW	3
2 GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE PLAN	4
3 VISION AND GOALS	5
4 STRATEGY – ENCOURAGE INDUSTRY PROFITABILITY	5
4.1 <i>Commitment to Agricultural Land</i>	6
4.2 <i>Appropriate Edge Planning</i>	8
4.3 <i>Dyke Areas and Trails for Recreation</i>	9
4.4 <i>Parcel Amalgamation</i>	10
4.5 <i>Additional Residences and Homeplate Bylaw</i>	11
4.6 <i>Appropriate Drainage and Floodplain Protection</i>	12
4.7 <i>Encouraging Local Sales</i>	14
4.8 <i>Diversification and Value-Added</i>	16
4.9 <i>Development Cost Charges</i>	17
5 STRATEGY – ENHANCE AGRICULTURAL CAPACITY	17
5.1 <i>Designated Staff Member</i>	17
5.2 <i>The Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee</i>	18
5.3 <i>Decision Guidelines and Agricultural Impact Assessment</i>	18
5.4 <i>Encouraging New Entrants</i>	20
5.5 <i>Agricultural Awareness and Industry Public Identity</i>	22
5.6 <i>The District Website</i>	23
5.7 <i>A Brochure on Agriculture</i>	24
5.8 <i>Best Management Guidelines for an Attractive Farm Community</i>	24
5.9 <i>Traffic in Farm Areas</i>	25
5.10 <i>Moving Farm Equipment</i>	25
5.11 <i>Resources for Implementation</i>	26
6 STRATEGY – FOSTER PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION	26
6.1 <i>A Working Group for Agriculture</i>	27
6.2 <i>Collaboration with First Nations</i>	31
6.3 <i>Collaboration with the Business Community</i>	31
6.4 <i>Collaboration with the FVRD and the Province</i>	32

This Agricultural Area Plan is supported by a Background and Implementation document providing background information on the plan’s development process, information about agriculture in the District, the policy context in which the plan was developed, and an implementation strategy. The document is available on the District website at: www.district.kent.bc.ca

THE FUTURE OF AGRICULTURE IN KENT

1 OVERVIEW

The District of Kent has some of British Columbia's highest-quality farm land, and that factor, coupled with a favourable climate, makes this District one of BC's most productive agricultural areas. The Agricultural Area Plan has the protection and enhancement of this valuable land resource for agriculture as its most important goal.

With increasing parcelization and other non-farm uses evident, the District decided to prepare an Agricultural Area Plan. The Agricultural Area Plan was developed prior to the anticipated revision of the District's Official Community Plan. It is expected the Agricultural Area Plan will be a sub-plan or schedule of the revised Official Community Plan. The OCP revision is expected to be underway in 2010.

The purpose of the Agricultural Area Plan is to provide for the sustainability, enhancement, development and retention of viable farming and agricultural uses in the District. The Agricultural Area Plan was developed using input from both the farming and general community.

District residents view their community as a farming community. Despite some tensions noted between the rural and more urban sectors of the District, most people have traditionally supported the protection of the District's agricultural base. Historically, people of the District have been supportive of the agricultural industry "as an economic activity, a lifestyle choice, and as a community characteristic."¹



Based on a total District land area that excludes First Nation reserves, forest reserve, Crown land, and roads and highways, about 50% of the District land lies within the Agricultural Land Reserve. The town of Agassiz is the residential hub of the District.

The District wants to keep its farmers producing profitably and attract new entrants to ensure that the productive agricultural land is being used most effectively for agriculture.

Some recommendations in the Agricultural Area Plan were prepared to encourage profitability in the agricultural industry. Consistent with other agricultural strategies at the provincial and federal levels, a profitable agricultural sector is one way to ensure that farmers remain in business and new farmers are attracted to the area.

Expansion of the agricultural industry may be encouraged by preserving and enhancing the land base for agricultural purposes. Preserving and enhancing the land base will involve adequate drainage for existing agricultural land. It also involves working with the Fraser Valley Regional District and provincial and federal governments to limit the encroachment of the Fraser River on land being currently used, or potentially available, for agriculture.

¹ *District of Kent Official Community Plan*, June 2001, page 43.

The District of Kent, like most areas of BC, has numerous smaller land parcels of five acres or less. Many successful farmers operate on smaller acreages. With current support for more locally produced food, there are reasons to believe in a healthy future for smaller-acreage farmers. For these reasons, the Agricultural Area Plan has recommendations for farmers planning to diversify or add value to their products and services even though they may be farming on a smaller-acreage land base.

The District of Kent is reluctant to support and enhance the agricultural industry if there are consequent impacts on other residents. To this end, the plan has recommendations to increase understanding and awareness of normal farming practices. Also, compliance with existing regulations governing any expansion of agricultural businesses is emphasized. For example, farm businesses are allowed to have retail sales from the farm. However, farmers must ensure that at least 50% of the retail sales area is limited to the sale of farm products produced on the farm, and the total area, both indoors and outdoors, used for the retail sales of all products must not exceed 300 m².²

The Agricultural Area Plan also contains recommendations to foster partnerships and collaboration among farmers and others interested in agriculture, as well as among agriculture and other residents and businesses in the District and beyond. These recommendations are rooted in the belief that, when people work together, the resulting benefits outweigh benefits that might be achieved through conflict.

² *Agricultural Land Reserve Use Subdivision and Procedure Regulation, Part 2, Permitted Uses.*

2 GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE PLAN

There are eight guiding principles identified as part of the developmental process of the Agricultural Area Plan. The purpose of the guiding principles is to ensure that the plan meets the needs of both the agricultural community and other citizens. The guiding principles were established in consultation with the project steering committee and were based on the original terms of reference.

The plan will:

1. Be an integral part of the overall planning objectives in the District Official Community Plan
2. Ensure that the main use of District land in the Agricultural Land Reserve will be for a vibrant and profitable agricultural industry
3. Ensure that the stability and integrity of the ALR boundary is supported and maintained
4. Provide for agriculture's access to land and water resources
5. Support agricultural opportunity on large and small acreages and address urban-edge issues
6. Provide for public awareness and understanding of the important role of agriculture in the District
7. Address the need for effective communication with all affected farmers and residents in the development and implementation of the strategies identified in the Agricultural Area Plan
8. Connect favourably with Regional District, Provincial and Federal government planning and development strategies and initiatives.

3 VISION AND GOALS

The following is the **vision** for the future of agriculture in the District of Kent:

The District of Kent, with some of BC's most productive land for agriculture, will protect and enhance this valuable resource. Using strategies emphasizing cooperation and communication, the District will support its agricultural sector in becoming increasingly vibrant and profitable.

The **main goals** for the Agricultural Area Plan are to:

- Encourage industry profitability by providing commitment to the protection and enhancement of agricultural land for agricultural uses and other related and supportive measures for the agricultural industry
- Enhance agricultural capacity with organizational processes and procedures and through the provision of appropriate industry promotion within the District and Region
- Address agricultural issues, water and drainage and other regulatory concerns, through the establishment of partnerships, collaboration and information sharing.

The main goals lead to three strategies. Within each of the strategies, specific recommendations emerged. The recommendations are directed mainly to District of Kent Council or the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee. The strategies, mirroring the three goals, are:

1. Encourage industry profitability
2. Enhance agricultural capacity
3. Foster partnerships and collaboration.

4 STRATEGY – ENCOURAGE INDUSTRY PROFITABILITY

Farmers, like other business people, make future decisions based on opportunity and risk. Consistent with other agricultural strategies developed at both the provincial and federal levels of government, the Agricultural Area Plan contends that one of the best ways to ensure the future of agriculture and farming, and to maintain effective and appropriate land stewardship and a sustainable agricultural industry, is to make sure it is profitable for farmers to work there. Farmers will continue farming as long as they can make a reasonable return on their invested dollars and their time.

One way to encourage farmers to continue farming is to provide commitment to protection of the land they use to do it. Recommendations in this strategy protect the existing land committed to agriculture and ensure that the land is available and used for agricultural purposes.

Addressing water-related issues in the District is also important for industry profitability. The District abuts the Fraser River, which has a wide flood plain. In addition to adequate drainage, there is a need to reduce river encroachment, protect groundwater supplies and protect local residents from flooding.



This strategy also includes recommendations to encourage local sales of agricultural products and services.

Farmers themselves are ultimately responsible for the profitability of their own farm businesses. They need to be aware of changes occurring in their industry and be open to opportunities. These opportunities may lie in diversification, value-added, or forms of vertical integration, or specific marketing strategies. To the extent that the District can assist farmers in this way, recommendations were prepared to encourage diversification and support for increased local sales.

4.1 Commitment to Agricultural Land

Agricultural land is good land for everything. It is usually flatter and accessible. It may be less expensive to develop than alternative land less suitable for agriculture. For this reason, land designated for agriculture is under continual pressure to be used in other ways besides farming.



Given reasonable market and financial conditions, the more good land there is available for development and housing, the more growth will occur. To further protect and enhance the agricultural land in the District, limits to land-base growth for the town of Agassiz are in place. Future growth of the town is expected within the existing townsite boundaries using the approach of “grow up, not out.” The town of Agassiz has done well to date with densification and currently boasts one of the highest populations per hectare of all communities in the Fraser Valley Regional District. To facilitate densification, a municipal water system was built, and plans are in place

to upgrade and expand the municipal sewer system. The District has observed lower than expected population growth in the past but does anticipate “balanced growth” over the next 20 to 30 years. Population growth is expected to be accommodated without the need to use land currently designated for agricultural purposes.

Support for using agricultural land for other uses may result when the land is not being farmed. Parcelization—creating smaller parcels from larger land parcels—may contribute to the land not being farmed. When land is not farmed, other uses are promoted. Small land pieces have non-farm uses and are more easily removed from the ALR. Agricultural land is lost, not necessarily in big pieces but more likely in smaller ones. Other growth surrounds agricultural land, discouraging farmers and making it more difficult to farm. Death to farm land occurs “from a thousand cuts.”³

District residents have shown support for protection of the agricultural land in the District of Kent. There are some existing land situations in the District requiring attention to further protect and enhance valuable agricultural land.

Recommendation 4.1.1

It is recommended the District of Kent continue to confirm commitment in future Official Community Plans to the protection and enhancement of land within the Agricultural Land Reserve for agricultural purposes.

a) Non-permitted Uses

There are non-permitted uses occurring on agricultural land in the District of Kent. These uses involve any activity not currently included under “agricultural use” in Zoning Bylaw 1219

³ This reference to a thousand cuts comes from the Imperial Chinese form of slow torture, but the expression “death by a thousand cuts” is often used to describe the tactic of making small and gradual changes over time so that nobody notices or complains.

and any non-permitted uses under the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*. These non-permitted uses are inconsistent with the vision of the Agricultural Area Plan, which has as its most important goal to “protect and enhance” agricultural land in the District.

Some of the existing non-permitted uses have been in place for a considerable length of time, and it may be inappropriate to suggest they be eliminated without due consideration for the people involved. Nonetheless, future non-permitted uses should not be allowed, and existing non-permitted uses should be phased out as appropriate.

Recommendation 4.1.2

It is recommended the District of Kent direct staff to prepare an inventory of all current non-permitted uses on agricultural land in the District.

Recommendation 4.1.3

It is recommended the District of Kent develop a plan to address all non-permitted uses in the ALR, with the intent of ensuring that the non-permitted uses are brought into compliance with the District Zoning Bylaw and the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*.

b) The Teacup Property

This property, shaped like a teacup, was designated in the existing Official Community Plan (OCP) as an area for future residential development.⁴ With an OCP designation of “Residential Reserve,” the property is prime agricultural land and is located adjacent to Highway 9 in Agassiz. The teacup property and what to do with it has been a stimulant for debate among District of Kent citizens.

The teacup property was included within the Urban Growth Boundary of the Fraser Valley

⁴ *District of Kent Official Community Plan*, June 2001, page 30.

Regional District (FVRD) *Choices for Our Future: Regional Growth Strategy for the Fraser Valley Regional District*. This growth strategy was supported by the FVRD in 2004. The urban



growth boundaries in the *Choices for Our Future* document were taken from municipal official community plans (OCPs). Because the FVRD document was published in 2004,

it reflected content from the District of Kent OCP done in 2001.

It is likely the future of the teacup property will continue to be discussed in the District. Because the Official Community Plan will be reviewed and updated shortly, the OCP forum of discussion was considered most appropriate for this issue. It is the position of the Agricultural Area Plan that the land should not be removed from the Agricultural Land Reserve and should not be considered for future residential development.

c) The Golf Road and Ashton Road Area

The Golf Road and Ashton Road areas present a challenge to District planners should municipal sewer services become available to either of the two areas. Land in these areas is within the Agricultural Land Reserve, but most of the properties are two acres or less and many were subdivided prior to December 21, 1972. Under the terms of the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, Section 23 (1), restrictions on the use of agricultural land do not apply to land that, on December 21, 1972, was, by separate certificate of title issued under the *Land Registry Act*, R.S.B.C. 1960, c.208, less than two acres in area. Some properties in the area may have had other non-farm uses prior to December 21, 1972. Should this be the case, the non-farm use

may continue but only on the land upon which the non-farm use was operating. The non-farm use does not extend to the entire land parcel.

If sewer-main construction in either of these two areas occurred, it is possible that sewer services would be made available to the Golf Road and/or Ashton Road residents. With available sewer services, it is likely that some property owners would apply for non-farm use development such as higher-density housing.

Smaller parcels of land in the ALR that are not being farmed are generally considered to be areas of potential conflict with adjacent farms, particularly if the smaller parcels become even smaller through further subdivision.

Should sewer projects with the Golf Road or Ashton Road areas reach construction stage, the District should determine whether it is receptive to the development of adjacent lands not restricted by the Agricultural Land Commission regulations. If the District is receptive to further development in these areas, such development should be appropriately planned to avoid haphazard development that may lead to issues with neighbouring farms.

Recommendation 4.1.4

It is recommended that, prior to construction of sewer mains within the Golf Road and Ashton Road areas, the District determine whether it is receptive to further development of lands in these areas that are not restricted by Agricultural Land Commission regulations.

Recommendation 4.1.5

It is recommended that, if additional development is supported, the District of Kent initiate a Neighbourhood Plan for the Golf Road or Ashton Road areas, and this plan ensure that permitted non-agricultural development does not unreasonably interfere with adjacent farming operations.

d) The McCaffery Road Property

Identified in the 2001 Official Community Plan, it was suggested this parcel be removed from the Agricultural Land Reserve to accommodate new homes. Some new homes have already been built, and discussions have been held about additional housing in the area.

The Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee has reviewed this issue and recommended no further housing be approved for the area. The housing already established has experienced drainage problems, with residents expressing concerns to the District. Drainage problems have also been observed by staff of the UBC Dairy Education and Research Centre. Despite some buffering, current residents are exposed directly to adjacent farming activities occurring on the UBC site. An active dairy farm operates on the site, and although the herd is primarily for research purposes, the management is consistent with normal farming practices occurring on other dairy farms in the area.

Recommendation 4.1.6

It is recommended the District of Kent discourage any applications for removal of additional land from the Agricultural Land Reserve at the north end of McCaffery Road.

4.2 Appropriate Edge Planning

Agriculture is particularly vulnerable, and conflict may occur between farmers and others, where active farms interface with non-agricultural land uses. One strategy for mitigating potential conflict in these instances is “edge planning.” Having appropriate edge-planning strategies, which often include some form of buffering, is a way the District can “protect and enhance” its valuable agricultural land. The type of strategy used for an effective edge plan will vary depending on the circumstances and the creativity of the people involved.

There may be District areas where edge planning becomes an important tool for the District. Education about the benefits of edge planning and strategies for edge plans that take into account the concerns of both farmers and other citizens generally work best for everyone. Recent guidelines prepared by the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, in consultation with the Agricultural Land Commission, and identified in the Background section of this plan, suggest “edge planning areas” be established in situations where appropriate edge planning can occur.⁵

When edge planning is working best, farmers are able to operate their farms without the pressure of neighbour complaints, and the farms are freer from vandalism, rainwater runoff and other factors that could lead to financial loss.

Recommendation 4.2.1

It is recommended the District of Kent, in situations where development may impact farm operations in any way, consider edge-planning strategies as an effective option for protecting farmers from possible impact on their operations.

Recommendation 4.2.2

It is recommended that, as part of a development process, the District of Kent require all property owners with land bordering, or adjacent to, agricultural land to have an appropriate covenant, under Section 219 of the *Land Title Act*, attached to their properties identifying agricultural practices that may occur and ensuring that respect for buffering and other edge-plan strategies is given.

⁵ For details on edge planning, see BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, *Guide to Edge Planning*, 2008.

4.3 Dyke Areas and Trails for Recreation

Although much of the District of Kent land base is a working landscape for farmers, there are dyke areas and trails for recreation.

Dyke lands are mostly located on private property. The District of Kent has access to the dykes through a land access agreement with the landowners. The upper surface of the dykes is attractive for walkways, bicycle paths and other recreational uses. These other uses may be in conflict with farming activities if they lead to land damage, littering, crop vandalism or theft, and they may create liability issues for the farmer-owner.

The dykes in the District of Kent are mainly located in the southern and western parts of the District, where agricultural land is protected from the Fraser River on the south side, and in the area at the confluence of the Fraser and Harrison Rivers. The Agricultural Land Commission must give permission for any recreational use of dykes in the Agricultural Land Reserve.

The dykes are already used by some responsible citizens, and, if used appropriately, the dykes can contribute to quality of life in the District. Some Lower Mainland municipalities have found ways to use their dykes for recreational purposes and avoid conflict with farmers. Indeed, the presence of active farm businesses may add further appeal for urban users. There may be opportunities for farmers to contribute to dyke users’ agricultural education and awareness using appropriate signage. Worries about vandalism and theft may be mitigated with appropriate gating to prevent motorized vehicles, and with fencing to limit access to farm land. Worries about litter and possible crop damage may be avoided with appropriate garbage receptacles and proper maintenance schedules performed by District staff.

Recommendation 4.3.1

It is recommended the District of Kent ensure dykes be used for their primary purpose of providing protection from river encroachment, but a secondary use for recreational trails should be encouraged. Dyke-trail development planning and operation must include appropriate strategies to allow recreational use of the dykes without creating conflict with adjacent farming activities and must include consultation with the Agricultural Land Commission.

The District of Kent has other recreational trails that are enjoyed by residents and visitors. The “District of Kent Active Transportation Plan 2009” addressed active transportation networks to encourage development and enhancement of trails and recreation corridors. Other recreational trails and amenities will be considered by the District from time to time. There is considerable value to the community in terms of healthy, active living to have these recreational trails and services, and their development should be encouraged by the Agricultural Area Plan.⁶

Recommendation 4.3.2

It is recommended the District of Kent, in all cases where recreational trails may be considered in, or adjacent to, agricultural land, have plans reviewed by the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee and the Agricultural Land Commission where required, and involve the agricultural community in the planning and implementation of design standards and maintenance or operation plans, to take into consideration concerns of the agricultural community and to minimize conflict.

⁶ For detail on the issues and opportunities when developing trails in farm and ranch areas, see BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, *A Guide to Using and Developing Trails in Farm and Ranch Areas*, 2005.

4.4 Parcel Amalgamation

Amalgamation of smaller parcels of agricultural land into larger units does not occur frequently. Most people opt to keep intact land that is already in smaller parcels, even though farming may be occurring on contiguous parcels in a manner consistent with the parcels being amalgamated. If farming occurs on these parcels in that way, there are limited negative impacts on farming.

British Columbia is considered to have the most heavily parcelized agricultural land base in Canada. Pressure to use smaller parcels for non-agriculture purposes is intense because BC’s best agricultural land is also located in its areas of greatest population density. Larger parcels of land are more suitable for the sustainability of agriculture over the longer term. Larger parcels also provide for a broader range of agricultural uses.

If amalgamation of parcels can be encouraged, then it is a benefit for the future of agriculture as it ensures future use of the land; and future owners of the land will have a parcel most appropriate for agricultural use. Normally, amalgamation of existing contiguous parcels can be done at the local District level. However, although amalgamation of parcels is desirable, it should not be obtained if conditions of amalgamation include additional residential or industrial or other non-agricultural uses. In other areas of the Lower Mainland where amalgamation attempts have been initiated, conditions for amalgamation have generally been advanced.

Recommendation 4.4.1

It is recommended the District of Kent encourage amalgamation of contiguous parcels owned by one land owner to the extent possible, but not if any non-agricultural use of any part of the parcels is proposed as a condition of amalgamation.

Recommendation 4.4.2

It is recommended the District of Kent and the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee make a special effort to provide land owners with parcels in the Agricultural Land Reserve, but who may not be actively farming those parcels, with available information about the benefits of farming as a source of income and the tax benefits that may be available when the land is being actively farmed.

4.5 Additional Residences and Homeplate Bylaw

When agricultural land is occupied by additional residences, the value of the land for agricultural purposes may be impacted over the longer term. Adding another home, possibly for a retiring family member, may eventually lead to more people who are not actively farming living on agricultural land. This can occur either on the death of a family member or when health or other reasons force a family member to move. Depending on where the additional residence is situated, future farming practices may be compromised.

Another situation that can lead to additional residences on farm land is the building of a new residence for the farm family while they are living in the existing residence. After finishing the new residence, another home remains that may still be quite acceptable as a rental home. The District will consider appropriate means to ensure there remains only one residence on the property, consistent with the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*.

Mobile homes located on ALR parcels as a second dwelling, if not on a permanent foundation, are generally supported by the Agricultural Land Commission. Additional dwellings for farm help may also be approved, but the dwellings must be necessary for farm use. Some additional dwellings on agricultural land have been erected for farm use, but later,

when the farm use is no longer needed, have evolved to other non-farm uses.

Although the District may approve additional dwellings on farm land, local approving officers are advised to seek input on the decision from the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and officers of the Agricultural Land Commission.

Recommendation 4.5.1

It is recommended the District of Kent, as a matter of policy, discourage applications for additional residences in the Agricultural Land Reserve.

The District of Kent currently has two Rural Residential zones. These zones, Rural Residential 1 Zone (RR1) and Rural Residential 2 Zone (RR2) both suggest “residential use” as a principal use within the zone. The District of Kent would like to encourage that the principal use of its agricultural land be for agriculture. This principal use in the RR1 and RR2 zones may suggest that the parcel in question is not on land where the use is expected to be farming. According to the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, “a person must not use agricultural land for a non-farm use unless permitted by the ALCA, the regulations or an order of the Commission.”⁷

Eventually, as the number of additional dwellings on agricultural land is reduced and farm uses for smaller parcels increase, there may be valid reasons to remove the RR1 and RR2 zones.

Recommendation 4.5.2

It is recommended the District of Kent, after discouraging applications for additional permanent dwellings on agricultural land, consider removing the Rural Residential 1 and Rural Residential 2 zones from the Zoning Bylaw so that all agricultural land has as its

⁷ *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, Section 20, subsection 1.

main purpose to provide for agricultural and related rural development.

Also, discussion of land parcels of five acres or less in BC suggests that homes on parcels that are not being actively farmed are actually rural estates being developed at significantly less cost than equivalent homes placed in a more densely inhabited urban core. Often, rural areas on agricultural land are the only place where oversized residences can still be built.

Some BC municipalities have considered, or have introduced, measures designed to ensure that the agricultural values of land in the Agricultural Land Reserve are considered when the land is used for residential purposes. Agricultural values are affected if the placement and size of residences have a negative impact on the future agricultural potential of the land.

Municipal measures to address these concerns are referred to as a “homeplate policy” or bylaw. The City of Abbotsford is considering such a bylaw, and the corporation of Delta has already adopted one. The “homeplate” is set up in such a way that the house and any accessory buildings are included. Maximum homeplate areas may be established, and square footage allowed for principal residences may be identified. The homeplate area may be restricted to a reasonable distance from the access road or street, thus avoiding placement of a large house in the middle of a land parcel. The placement of the homeplate should be site-specific so that the productive agricultural land can be maximized.

Homeplate regulations within the District of Kent can protect agricultural values and future agricultural potential while recognizing residential activity that may occur on existing parcels within the ALR. The District of Kent

already has a number of smaller parcels of prime agricultural land that could be used for rural estates at the expense of future agricultural uses. The homeplate bylaw should limit the impact of this use on agricultural land.

Recommendation 4.5.3

It is recommended the District of Kent, upon the review of homeplate policies and bylaws in other jurisdictions, adopt an appropriate homeplate bylaw for the District of Kent.

4.6 Appropriate Drainage and Floodplain Protection

The District of Kent, unlike some BC municipal areas where the adequacy of the water supply is the major concern, is more concerned about getting rid of excess water. This issue extends to concerns about the floodplain. Almost all of the District’s excellent agricultural land is in the floodplain of the Fraser River and is protected by a system of dykes.

Some areas of the District have been identified as environmentally sensitive, where natural drainage streams and watercourses require stream and habitat stewardship.



Considerable work has been done to develop appropriate ditch-maintenance procedures for the District of Kent. This work was undertaken by the District’s Drainage Committee working with Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the then BC Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection.

The District has also undertaken comprehensive drainage studies to develop ditch-maintenance procedures that take into consideration flooding and farm drainage as well as fish-habitat needs. The District of Kent accepts the stewardship and responsible management of the drainage system in cooperation with Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the BC Ministry of the Environment.

Drainage-ditch maintenance concerns farmers, because limited ditch maintenance may lead to longer periods of water accumulation on farm land and possible increased miring of farm equipment. Poorly drained soils may exhibit less bacteriological activity and nutrient recycling. Longer periods of visible water on the land, or saturated land, also affect farmers' ability to spread manure. Under the Agricultural Waste Control Regulation, farmers cannot apply manure to their land if the land is saturated or has areas of water pooling. The regulation provides other limitations on farmers who must spread manure on their land.

The farming community of the District of Kent has continually expressed concern over the way in which ongoing changes in environmental regulations have hampered ditch-cleaning operations, particularly since many of these ditches have been treated as habitat areas. Farmers contend that they cannot afford to support maintenance techniques, such as hand-cleaning, in ditches that favour habitat development over effective drainage procedures. Effective maintenance of ditches involves regular, full machine-cleaning and clipping of both banks so that the ditch is not blocked with debris and rotting grass. It is critical to the farming community that the ditches retain their original purpose, which is to drain the farm lands. The restrictive ditch-maintenance regulations and the costs associated with the inability to effectively farm agricultural land that has been compromised by poor drainage is prohibitive to farmers. The agricultural community has repeatedly argued a need for regulation changes that will permit the

re-establishment of the ditch systems as farm drainage and allow the implementation of necessary screening structures to prevent fish from migrating back into the ditch systems from sloughs and streams.

It is important for the District of Kent to continue a regular ditch-cleaning program in cooperation and consultation with area farmers that follows generally accepted procedures for ditch maintenance.

In addition to difficulties establishing cleaning and maintenance protocols, the District of Kent is concerned about streamside setback regulations and the impact they may have on farm land. Many of the drainage ditches in the District were originally engineered to provide drainage for agricultural land. These ditches were extended and upgraded in the late 1970s and early 1980s under the Agri-Food Regional Development Agreement. In this context, the ditches were primarily established for the purpose of farm drainage and were not intended to be natural streams or part of the natural watercourse.

It is important for the District to work closely with regulatory bodies to ensure that farmers are meeting, and exceeding where possible, the requirements of legislation and regulations that affect ditches and other natural watercourses.

Recommendation 4.6.1

It is recommended the District of Kent continue to support farmers by working closely with the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and the BC Ministry of the Environment to make necessary regulatory changes that will allow cleaning procedures that achieve greater efficiency in ditch cleaning and ditch maintenance and will allow installation of screens to prevent the migration of fish into the ditch systems.

The recent Agassiz Slough Drainage Study⁸ suggested the District will need to upgrade its capacity for stormwater removal to meet an anticipated 10-year storm event. Significant updates would be necessary to meet the 100-year storm event. In addition, there is a need to ensure that the District of Kent remains alert to possible flooding of the Fraser River. The flooding of agricultural land would have serious impact on farm crops and livestock. There is considerable livestock inventory in the District, mainly dairy cows.

Protection of the existing floodplain is an issue of concern to farmers. Concerns were expressed about the continuous and relentless work of the Fraser River to reclaim the productive land in the floodplain, and there may be need to consider shoreline protection, often referred to as “riprapping,” where rock or other material is used to provide shoreline protection. In addition, inadequate dredging to remove gravel and sediment from the river leads to a shallower river and increases the likelihood of flooding. However, dredging to remove gravel from the river may impact salmon numbers, as salmon deposit their eggs in the gravel during spawning season. This limits when dredging can occur.

Recommendation 4.6.2
It is recommended the District of Kent work closely with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Fraser Valley Regional District, and the Province as required, to implement appropriate bank protection and encourage better dredging of the Fraser River.

⁸ Water Management Consultants, Agassiz Slough Drainage Study, October 2007.

Recommendation 4.6.3
It is recommended the District of Kent continue to work closely with the agricultural community, the Kent-Harrison Joint Emergency Program committee, the Fraser Valley Regional District and the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands to continually update refuge-area maps and other strategies for community and livestock evacuation in the event of flooding.

4.7 Encouraging Local Sales

Many District farmers sell in a provincial marketplace where their quality products are sold for profitable returns. Other farmers have found ways to develop niche and local markets for their products.



When it is suggested that food for an average meal in BC may travel 2,500 kilometres and come from five different countries, it is not surprising to hear more about encouraging local sales. Encouraging local consumers to “Buy Local” or “Eat Local” has

potential benefits for the District economy and can help sustain and improve profits for local farm businesses.

There are reasons to believe that the interest in local sales of locally produced agricultural products is not temporary. There are worldwide local-food movements, fuelled in part by such successful books as *The 100 Mile Diet*, written by local BC authors,⁹ which was preceded by Barbara Kingsolver’s *Small Wonder*.¹⁰ An internationally popular author, Kingsolver has

⁹ Smith, Alisa and J. B. MacKinnon, *The 100 Mile Diet: A Year of Local Eating*, Toronto: Random House Canada, 2007.

¹⁰ Kingsolver, Barbara, *Small Wonder*, Thorndike Press, 2002.

since released a second book documenting the story of her family seeking to live for one complete year with food produced on their own farm or on those of their neighbours.¹¹

It may be feasible for local dairy farmers to more aggressively position themselves as the providers of the quality milk and dairy products being consumed in the District of Kent and the Lower Mainland of BC. Indeed, established dairy farmers may find it beneficial to have additional specialty crop development on their larger farms.

Farmers may sell their products to local consumers either from the farm gate through a sales outlet of some type, in other retail establishments in the area or through local farmers' markets.

Recommendation 4.7.1

It is recommended the District of Kent make every effort, in cooperation with the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee, the local agricultural community and the Harrison Agassiz Chamber of Commerce where appropriate, to support District farmers in making their products available for local purchase either from the farm gate or through a farmers' market or in cooperation with other local retailers.

A farmers' market is being considered for the District of Kent. There are some 100 farmers' markets listed with the BC Association of Farmers' Markets, and they are expanding in BC. They can stimulate local farm sales and encourage community spirit. Successful markets can become tourist destinations, providing additional returns to the community and often helping sales for other local merchants.

Farmers' markets also help satisfy consumer demand for local food and farm-fresh products. They are popular because of consumer health

¹¹ Kingsolver, Barbara, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life*, HarperCollins, 2007.

concerns caused by "food scares" and the wish of consumers to know more about where their food is coming from. Farmers' markets have benefited from the impact of celebrity chefs and others who have been promoting the value and quality of local food. Farmers' markets may be a marketing opportunity for new entrants to the industry.

Having a farmers' market in the District of Kent is supported by District staff through Community, Recreation and Park Services. Some stimulus for a market could come from the provision of local facilities designed to assist with market outreach.

Farmers' markets, however, are difficult to start: there is considerable cost to farmers when they participate, and there must be a sufficient volume of consumers to make the market worthwhile for farmers. Getting key farmers to participate in a farmers' market in the District may be problematic.

Recommendation 4.7.2

It is recommended the District of Kent, in cooperation with interested local farmers and the local business community, and the Harrison Agassiz Chamber of Commerce if appropriate, review ways to encourage development of a local farmers' market in the Agassiz and Harrison area.

In addition to encouraging local sales at farmers' markets, through other local retailers or from the farm gate, there may be merit in fostering further connections between local farmers and restaurateurs seeking to feature local products. The Agassiz Producers Group, an informal group of local producers, began in 2005 to find markets for local agricultural products, primarily through area chefs in higher-end restaurants. According to the Agassiz Producers Group, there are markets available for locally produced agricultural products that are not being filled. For some products already on the market, demand is exceeding supply.

Specialty products available in the District, such as artisan cheeses, crayfish and pea sprouts, for example, are featured in restaurants and other food outlets. Support from the District may help to encourage more featuring of local food products. The strategy in this Agricultural Area Plan to “enhance agricultural capacity” provides additional recommendations for promoting and encouraging local sales and value-added products.

4.8 Diversification and Value-Added

The agricultural industry faces pressures for economic viability similar to those faced by any other dynamic industry. To support profitability in the agricultural community, farmers need to take advantage of business opportunities as they present themselves.

There are options available to farmers wishing to diversify or add value to their products. Adding value need not be difficult. It can be as easy as husking some of your own corn before selling it, or locating a sales outlet where your products can be more easily accessed by the travelling public.¹² Farmers may consider direct farm marketing (selling products directly to the consumer) or more agri-tourism or culinary tourism options that may attract customers to their farms. Diversification may include vertical integration, where farmers take on more of the steps in producing finished products for consumers.

Recommendation 4.8.1

It is recommended the District of Kent support farmers considering value-added, vertical integration, agri-tourism, culinary tourism or other diversification efforts by continuing to provide a supportive regulatory environment for this to occur.

¹² Morton, Gary, *Building Added Value Through Farm Diversification*, Canadian Farm Business Management Council.

A supportive regulatory environment can be fostered using a later recommendation assigning a staff member to provide liaison between the agricultural community and the community at large. By having a staff person identified as a contact for the agricultural community, understanding of the various regulations affecting local agricultural businesses will be improved.

Other forms of value-added that could be initiated in the District of Kent may be facilitated by an area kitchen that meets the requirements of a commercial kitchen. The



Agricultural Hall has a quality kitchen that could be updated to meet commercial kitchen standards. The kitchen update may benefit other businesses in the non-agriculture sector of the District. There has been increased interest in other areas of BC for courses on canning and pickling and making preserves. Courses offered in these subject areas may stimulate use of a commercial kitchen in the District of Kent.

Recommendation 4.8.2

It is recommended the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee, in cooperation with the local Agriculture Society and interested area farmers and others, obtain cost estimates for updating the existing Agricultural Hall kitchen to commercial kitchen standards and seek appropriate funding for this update to be undertaken.

4.9 Development Cost Charges

More local sales of agricultural products or services may create more pressure on local service infrastructure. It is reasonable that a building erected on agricultural land for the purpose of retailing agricultural products from the farm should have appropriate development cost charges applied to it. The intent of the building is to retail farm products; getting those sales is expected to cause more traffic on area roads, for example, and other District services may be impacted. Similarly, a farmer who erects another barn or storage shed on agricultural land may also be contributing to increased use of road infrastructure or other District services, often through the increased use of heavy farm equipment or larger trucks coming to the farm.

Bylaw 1306 identifies Development Cost Charges for the construction and upgrading of collector roads and intersections within the District.

Recommendation 4.9.1

It is recommended the District of Kent review its current development cost charges bylaw to address the impact of farm buildings on District infrastructure and to establish appropriate development cost charge rates.

5 STRATEGY – ENHANCE AGRICULTURAL CAPACITY

About one-half of the land in the District of Kent is in the Agricultural Land Reserve. More than 90% of the land available for agriculture is being farmed. However, the percentage of people farming this land is much less than one-half of the District population. In 2006, there were 119 farms reported in the District, and the farm population (based on the BC average of three persons per farm) was estimated to be under 400 (actually 357). With the District population

at about 5,000, one-half of the District land base is operated by 7 percent of the people.¹³

The agricultural industry provides a contribution to the District by supporting local service infrastructure and businesses and contributing to District tax revenue. In the District of Kent, 5% of the tax revenue is derived from farms, excluding tax revenue from farm homes and buildings. Recent studies by the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands suggest the agricultural sector is a net contributor of tax revenue when the housing and buildings component of the farm, and the reduced supply of municipal services to the agricultural sector, are taken into account.

This strategy includes a recommendation that a staff member be identified as a first point of contact for the agricultural industry and to liaise with the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee. The strategy also provides recommendations to encourage new entrants to the agricultural industry and addresses issues concerning local traffic and safe movement of farm equipment. Finally, it recommends resources be obtained to implement the Agricultural Area Plan.

5.1 Designated Staff Member

A recent study by the American Farmland Trust, although focused on farmers in Nebraska, concluded that farmers will more likely be positive about the future of agriculture if they regard local government as supportive, particularly when dealing with potential conflicts with the non-farm community.¹⁴ Having a designated staff member as a first point of contact for the agricultural industry will indicate support for farmer efforts to farm in a manner that reduces conflict with their neighbours.

¹³ Data obtained from *District of Kent Agricultural Overview*, BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, July 2008.

¹⁴ American Farmland Trust, *Sustaining Agriculture in Urbanizing Counties*, 2008.

The Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee is an important Committee of Council. In order to make responsible recommendations to Council, the Committee must have the necessary background information for their meetings.

Recommendation 5.1.1

It is recommended the District of Kent continue to appoint a staff person as the designated first point of contact for agricultural issues and concerns, to attend all meetings of the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee, and to prepare the background material and other items necessary for those meetings.

5.2 The Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee

Appropriate communications and decision-making structures are important for implementation of the Agricultural Area Plan. Currently, there is an Agricultural Advisory Committee with terms of reference and members appointed by Council.

The terms of reference for the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee were accepted by Council in March 2006 and further amended and approved in February 2009. Since its establishment, the Committee has been active in many aspects of agriculture and has taken its role seriously. The Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee was the impetus for the development of an Agricultural Area Plan.

As farmer numbers have declined, and more specific commodity organizations and associations have appeared, general farm organizations to deal with local farmer issues have almost disappeared. The revised terms of reference for the existing Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee provide for adequate input to Council on behalf of the agricultural sector. By providing some focus for leadership within the District, more specific attention can be paid to local agricultural issues.

Recommendation 5.2.1

It is recommended the District of Kent encourage the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee to continue to identify and address agricultural issues in the District and, where appropriate, provide information on problems and concerns in the area of agriculture.

Another component of the vision for the future of agriculture in the District of Kent involved cooperation with the rest of the community. The revised terms of reference for the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee provide for three liaison members for the Committee. One of the liaison members represents the provincial government, and the other two are community members representing Council. These appointments are not for people active in the agricultural industry.

There are benefits to having views heard at the committee level from citizens interested in agriculture but not actively farming. This provides active farmers with different viewpoints and may promote broader discussion at committee meetings.

Recommendation 5.2.2

It is recommended the District of Kent make every effort to ensure that Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee positions for liaison members from the community are filled in a timely manner.

5.3 Decision Guidelines and Agricultural Impact Assessment

When the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee addresses local issues, it is important to ensure that all background information is provided. Also, the Committee should ensure a level of consistency in the advice being provided to Council. Decision guidelines would ensure that the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee has appropriate, consistent information for their meetings, regardless of staff changes or other interruptions. A decision guidelines form should

consist of, but not be limited to, the following main considerations:

- Provision of appropriate maps for locating the land in question
- Background to the issue, including related decisions
- Letters received and relevant reports
- Regulations and other legislation that may impact the decisions.

Recommendation 5.3.1

It is recommended the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee, in consultation with the designated staff member, prepare a Decision Guidelines Form to identify the main information required as background for their meetings.

The Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee provides recommendations to Council on any land-use applications or other changes that may impact agriculture in the District. Recommendations should be consistent and fair. Consideration should be given by Council to the development of appropriate policy-defining processes for dealing with these land-use applications, minor Agricultural Land Reserve boundary adjustments, or other changes to land in the Agricultural Land Reserve.

Some municipalities, such as the City of Surrey, have developed policies for considering these applications. The policies reflect the reality that, even though the District is committed to protecting its agricultural land, applications for removal of land from the Agricultural Land Reserve, or boundary adjustments within it, will be received from time to time.

With such a policy in force, the District of Kent and the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee would be able to more consistently apply processes for considering applications affecting the Agricultural Land Reserve. In some cases, the District may wish to involve a qualified third

party to advise the District on the agricultural impact of the decision.

The agricultural impact assessment process should include, but not be limited to, the following considerations:

- Minor boundary adjustments
 - ✓ Size of the parcel adjusted
 - ✓ Location of the parcel
 - ✓ Impact on the ALR boundary
 - ✓ Topographical or natural features implicated
 - ✓ Compensation considerations if relevant
- Alternate land-use applications
 - ✓ Agricultural and soil capability
 - ✓ Present land use
 - ✓ Adjacent land use
 - ✓ Proposed use and other areas where use could be located
 - ✓ Amount of land involved
 - ✓ Compatibility with area agricultural uses
 - ✓ Water runoff affecting drainage patterns
 - ✓ Air quality and noise implications
 - ✓ Traffic volume and safety considerations
 - ✓ Buffers or other physical barriers from agricultural operations
 - ✓ Overall impact on agriculture
 - ✓ Impact on wildlife and livestock
 - ✓ Compensation considerations where relevant

Recommendation 5.3.2

It is recommended the District of Kent, with input from the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee and other appropriate bodies such as the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and the Agricultural Land Commission, prepare an appropriate agricultural impact assessment process so that all situations involving land-use

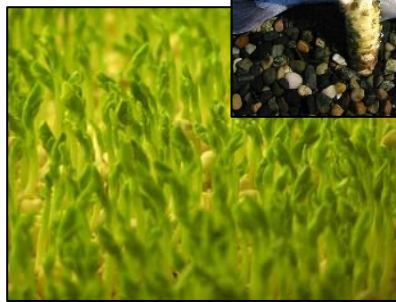
applications or other issues affecting agricultural land in the District of Kent may be addressed through a consistent process.

When reviewing the land in the Agricultural Land Reserve in the District, it was noted that there was at least one boundary issue under discussion with the Agricultural Land Commission and at least one other area that may require attention.

The boundary established for the ALR around Cemetery Hill was being reviewed with the Agricultural Land Commission and may require some modest adjustment. The Mount Woodside area was identified as a residential zone primarily for single-family residential purposes. However, the Mount Woodside Neighbourhood Plan, completed in 2003, identified some potential issues with land situated in such a way as to make it very difficult to be farmed, and that land may lie within the Agricultural Land Reserve.

Recommendation 5.3.3

It is recommended the District of Kent, in consultation with the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee and with appropriate consultation and review with the Agricultural Land Commission, consider the Agricultural Land Reserve boundary in the Cemetery Hill area and the Mount Woodside land that may lie within the Agricultural Land Reserve as two situations for applying the agricultural impact assessment policy.



5.4 Encouraging New Entrants

When land committed to agriculture is not being actively farmed, pressure increases for other uses. There are smaller parcels in the District of Kent that could be actively farmed. Discussions with some farmers suggested there is a potential market for agricultural products that could be produced on smaller parcels. As local consumers continue to place emphasis on food security and the availability of local food products, it is expected these factors will drive an escalation in demand for local food. The District of Kent would like to do whatever is possible to encourage smaller parcels to be actively farmed.

There are a number of advantages available to potential District farmers. The quality of the land and climate of the area are highly suited for agricultural production of virtually any crop. Land prices in the area remain competitive and are still lower than elsewhere in the Lower Mainland.

However, starting a new farm operation is difficult, and new entrants must be cautious. Niche-market agriculture can be competitive, and short-term success may not ensure longer-term profitability. Future market potential, marketing strategies, and investment or capital-cost requirements must be considered. Most crops being started may not be ready for market until at least several growing years, adding even more risk to the venture.

Members of the Agassiz Producers Group have considerable personal and anecdotal evidence to suggest there are unfilled markets for more

locally produced agricultural products. They have conducted area surveys to support this evidence. There are active farmers in the District who are willing to assist other interested potential farmers to start local businesses on smaller land parcels. Despite markets being available and other farmers willing to provide support, potential farmers may still require additional business planning and other start-up tools.

New entrants may require information about other resources available to them, including support for business and financial planning, where to get farm labour, and various programs and services available from provincial farm organizations, the British Columbia Agriculture Council and the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands.

Recommendation 5.4.1

It is recommended the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee encourage the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands to identify and develop the most appropriate business planning and other tools to support potential smaller-acreage farmers in the province.

In other recommendations below, the District of Kent website was identified as a source for more complete agricultural information for residents and visitors on normal farming practices and agricultural events and products available for sale. There is an appropriate section on the website for this information, currently called “Business in Kent,” which could also feature an agricultural profile for the District of Kent.

Recommendation 5.4.2

It is recommended the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee, in cooperation with the Circle Farm Tour participants and the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, develop an agricultural business profile providing information on agriculture as a business opportunity for use on the District website and as a component of a brochure on agriculture.

The agricultural industry in the District of Kent expressed concern about its capacity to attract young people and new entrants. It was felt that people who may be considering farming simply do not have access to the knowledge, or do not have the skills, to make the move.

Commonplace among other industries, mentoring programs are beginning to catch on with farmers. Mentors can be recruited from the active and experienced farmers who are already farming in the District and are willing to share their knowledge and experience with others. A mentoring program is currently being offered by the Canadian Farm Business Management Council, which has produced a background resource on mentoring programs in agriculture.¹⁵

Recommendation 5.4.3

It is recommended the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee encourage the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands to initiate an organized mentoring program to assist new farmers to begin agricultural operations and to assist existing farmers seeking help to expand their operations.

An issue related to new entrants is ensuring that the capacity exists for farmers to make their own choices about the type of operation they wish to have. The District of Kent Zoning Bylaw currently restricts intensive agricultural uses to lot sizes of 10 acres minimum (4 hectares). Although it may be desirable to encourage intensive agricultural use on larger parcels, it is unlikely the Zoning Bylaw, because of the provincial



¹⁵ Communications Tour du Lac Inc., *Farm Mentoring: A Community Mentorship Handbook*, Canadian Farm Business Management Council, Ottawa, 2006.

Farm Protection Act, could prevent a potential farmer from choosing an intensive agricultural use on a parcel of less than 10 acres.

Recommendation 5.4.4

It is recommended the District of Kent amend the Zoning Bylaw regulations, Agricultural Zone, to remove any lot-size restrictions for intensive agricultural use.

5.5 Agricultural Awareness and Industry Public Identity

Increasing non-farmer understanding of the agricultural industry may reduce the number of incidents of rural-urban conflict. More agricultural awareness and understanding for local citizens may support the local industry through increases in local purchasing of agricultural products and services.

People in most communities generally want to know more about agriculture. Having a progressive and active agricultural community in the District is considered by many to improve the quality of their lives.

Recommendation 5.5.1

It is recommended the District of Kent declare an “Agriculture Week” in the District to place emphasis on the active agricultural industry and the importance of agricultural operations to the preservation of green space and enhancement of the quality of life in the District of Kent.

Some municipalities in BC have had success with helping others to better understand agriculture by providing regular farm tours. The District of Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee has been conducting such tours since 2005. The press, local politicians and other interested people are invited to participate. Generally, a meal is served during, or after, the tour, featuring local products as much as possible. The farm tour encourages agricultural awareness by providing agricultural information to others through the local farm press and

other information sources. This annual tour may be part of the “Agriculture Week” mentioned above.

The agricultural tours are also of value to participating farmers, as they provide new ideas for their existing operations. Government extension specialists were once regularly present on BC farms, but during the last 15 years or so, the province, like most provinces in Canada, has reduced its services in extension and technology transfer. Farmers have turned to other information sources such as fertilizer and equipment suppliers, bankers and accountants, agricultural consultants, the internet and other farmers.

Recommendation 5.5.2

It is recommended the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee continue to organize and conduct agricultural area tours in order to highlight agricultural operations in the area and promote the contributions of the local agricultural industry.

During meetings with the agricultural community, it was mentioned there were not enough opportunities for farmers and others interested in agriculture to meet and discuss the impact of local issues and other trends in agriculture. There may be value to District of Kent farmers in having their tours include, from time to time, opportunities for discussion and review of local agricultural issues and concerns.

Recommendation 5.5.3

It is recommended the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee, where possible, consider ways to incorporate more opportunities for discussion and review of local agricultural issues into their farm tour programs.

In order to provide farmers with even more ideas and options for their farm operations, and for perspective on agricultural issues and concerns, there may be merit, from time to time, in having the farm tour include other areas of BC.

Recommendation 5.5.4

It is recommended the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee expand their tours to include, from time to time, neighbouring and other areas of BC.

Some members of the community suggested that various rules and regulations affecting agriculture are not widely understood. A difference of opinion about the role of Riparian Area Regulations was one area noted. Regulations change. Interpretations of policies continually change. There is a need to regularly review the regulations that are in place and how they may apply to farming in the District of Kent.

Recommendation 5.5.5

It is recommended the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee in cooperation with the area agricultural community and selected members of various regulatory bodies, such as the BC Ministry of the Environment, the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, the Agricultural Land Commission, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada, organize and present an information seminar for the community on agricultural rules and regulations.

5.6 The District Website

The District has an effective website that is being used by District residents to access current information about District activities and services. Websites are an important communication tool, and the website may be a communication tool of considerable value in support of the District's efforts to improve agricultural awareness and understanding and to address issues that may create rural-urban conflict. Often, effective communication can mitigate conflict.

Recommendation 5.6.1

It is recommended the District of Kent develop a specific section on the District website to provide citizens and others with information

about current agricultural activities and events in the District and with information about normal farm practices that may be underway on District farms. This section of the website may be most appropriately located within the "Business in Kent" heading and may involve an expansion of information currently contained under the subheading "Agricultural Land Reserve Information."

Some farmers indicated that most of the complaints they receive from the non-farming public relate to the normal farm practice of spreading manure. These complaints arise even though farmers follow Best Management Guidelines for manure spreading and management. Anything that can be done to reduce complaints in this area will contribute positively to a more attractive and acceptable farm community.

Recommendation 5.6.2

It is recommended farmers' manure spreading patterns be one of the normal farm practices emphasized on the District website.

When communicating on the website about normal farm practices, farmers also have an opportunity to better inform their neighbours about their farm businesses. Some additional information that could be available on the website includes:

- The extent of provincial, national and local sales
- What the agricultural business is doing to improve food safety and food quality or for the environment or wildlife
- The availability of local products for sale to consumers, where relevant
- Hours of operation of the businesses, where relevant
- More details about the business, such as customers reached.

During the farm tours held prior to the preparation of the Agricultural Area Plan, farmers who sell agricultural products and services from their own retail centres indicated there is value to be gained from better promotion of local products.

Recommendation 5.6.3

It is recommended the District of Kent, in cooperation with the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee, develop a section on the website to provide District citizens and other visitors with information about current local agricultural products and services available for purchase. Updates for this information should be the responsibility of the farmers involved.

5.7 A Brochure on Agriculture

The agricultural industry is the largest single industry in the District, and it operates on close to one-half of the District's entire land base. The District is committed to the protection and enhancement of this valuable land base for agricultural purposes.

A brochure on agriculture in the District of Kent may be an additional tool to assist the District to explain its commitment to agriculture. The brochure may also be important for attracting potential farmers to the District.

It is difficult to predict whether there will be a continuing requirement for hard-copy brochures and other similar promotional tools, particularly as wider use of electronic communication continues. It is expected the brochure will be updated on a limited basis.



Recommendation 5.7.1

It is recommended the District of Kent prepare a brochure on agriculture. The brochure should highlight the various types of farming opportunities and advantages of farming in the District, and identify normal farm practices while addressing steps being followed for the maintenance of good-neighbour relations.

5.8 Best Management Guidelines for an Attractive Farm Community

The visual attractiveness of the farming area encourages citizens to support agriculture in the District of Kent. Well-kept, progressive and productive farms dotting the landscape in the District impress visitors and are a source of pride for non-farm residents. As new farms get started, and other farms in the District expand and develop, it is important to maintain the high standards for quality, clean and attractive farmsteads in the District.

Recommendation 5.8.1

It is recommended the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee encourage the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands to prepare Best Management Guidelines for contributing to the visual appearance of a farming area.

With almost all of the agricultural land in the District improved to Class 1, 2 or 3, there is some merit in encouraging limited use of the land for buildings and other structures. In

a recommendation above, a homeplate bylaw was suggested to limit house size and location. There is merit in providing guidelines to farmers for locating farm buildings in a manner that will preserve the land for future agriculture.

Recommendation 5.8.2

It is recommended the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee encourage the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands to prepare Best Management Guidelines for building placement on farms to minimize their impact on the agricultural land.

5.9 Traffic in Farm Areas

Many District of Kent roads are narrow. Because of ditches or other impediments, road widening is not practical. Local residents generally have no problems with the narrow roads, and they exercise caution when farmers move farm equipment from farm to farm or field to field. Farmers are also careful to follow appropriate guidelines for the safe movement of farm equipment.

Residents and farmers have complained about more traffic on District roads. At some times of the day, particularly when workers with Corrections Canada are beginning or ending their shifts, high volumes of traffic on the District's narrower roads have been observed. Also, owners of smaller parcels of agricultural land not presently being farmed are being encouraged to farm their land. Some may choose value-added and marketing options that encourage even more visitors, and traffic, to the District.

Higher-than-normal traffic volume creates potential hazards for farmers and their families. It may be difficult for the District to influence driver habits and patterns. Traffic-calming strategies and other approaches may yield desirable results, but these strategies usually create additional inconvenience for those who live in the area.

Recommendation 5.9.1

It is recommended the District of Kent, in consultation with the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee, develop a signage program for the District to ensure that appropriate signs are placed in farming areas to warn drivers about slower-moving vehicles, to indicate when drivers must yield to farm vehicles, and to identify normal farming practices that may be occurring in the area.

5.10 Moving Farm Equipment

Moving farm equipment on the heavily travelled Agassiz-Rosedale Bridge on Highway 9 was identified as an issue. The bridge is the only



option farmers have for moving their equipment to leased or owned farms on the south side of the Fraser River. Movement of larger farm equipment across the Fraser River can be problematic, as the bridge is not wide enough to maintain normal traffic flow.

Normal farming practices, which are often heavily influenced by weather and other unforeseen events, make it difficult for farmers to predict when the movement of a larger piece of equipment may be necessary.

The Ministry of Transportation and the Insurance Corporation of BC have prepared a booklet to assist farmers with the safe movement of their farm equipment. Farmers in the District should obtain a copy of the booklet to guide them on the safe movement of their farm equipment.¹⁶

¹⁶ BC Ministry of Transportation and ICBC, *Farm Vehicles on the Move: A Guide to Licensing and Insuring Farm Vehicles in British Columbia*.

5.11 Resources for Implementation

Implementing the recommendations in the Agricultural Area Plan assumes some involvement and commitment from the local farm community. There will also be a need for resources to coordinate the implementation of the recommendations and to maintain some momentum for enhancing the relationships between the agricultural community and the community as a whole.

It is understood some additional resources may be available from the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and the Investment Agriculture Foundation to districts in BC attempting to implement the recommendations of an Agricultural Area Plan. Funding support for a part-time position may be shared among the District, other governmental agencies, agricultural stakeholders and other appropriate funding agencies. It is suggested the budget assigned for this component of the Agricultural Area Plan be in the range of \$36,000 to \$42,000 over the three years.

Recommendation 5.11.1

It is recommended the District of Kent retain a dedicated part-time person for the first three years of implementation of the Agricultural Area Plan to ensure that some resources are in place to coordinate the implementation process, that decisions are recorded, that the monitoring process for the Plan is established and operating, and that liaison with Council, the agricultural community and the general public is being carried out.

Any plan, regardless of the care taken in its development, must be continually reviewed to ensure it remains relevant. Circumstances change, and it is important to assess progress and review directions. The Implementation Strategy provides some suggestions for statistical records that might be managed.

Recommendation 5.11.2

It is recommended the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee conduct, in cooperation with the agricultural community, a review of the Agricultural Area Plan after the fifth year of implementation.

6 STRATEGY – FOSTER PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

The District of Kent, with an active and innovative agricultural industry, can expect situations to arise that cause conflict with external and regulating bodies or non-farming residents of the District. Studies in various jurisdictions have repeatedly demonstrated the merits of developing partnerships and working together to achieve greater benefits for everyone. A recent study commissioned by the Agricultural Institute of Canada, for example, identified “relationship building” as one of the important characteristics of leading farmers.¹⁷



With both the Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre and the UBC Dairy Education and Research Centre within its boundaries, there is a strong cadre of agricultural professionals in the District willing to engage even more closely with the local agricultural industry. Within this strategy are recommendations to create an active Working Group for agriculture that will assist

¹⁷ Saskatchewan Agrivision Corporation Inc., *Re-Defining Agriculture*, prepared for the Agricultural Institute of Canada, February 2007.

the industry to address issues of conflict with regulatory bodies and others.

Farmers prefer to farm undisturbed and unregulated. But they are responsible for almost one-half of the District's land base, and their management of that land is of concern to non-farm residents. Public interest in food safety and quality and environmental protection has resulted in many of the regulations currently faced by farmers. This strategy of the Agricultural Area Plan provides recommendations for reviewing soil, air and water regulations and the farmer's role as a land steward.

The strategy concludes with recommendations addressing the need to continue collaboration with other levels of government and with the numerous First Nations in the District.

6.1 A Working Group for Agriculture

The District of Kent is well supplied with agricultural professionals and active and knowledgeable farmers. District farmers are leaders in agricultural groups and associations in the province. The District contains the Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre and the UBC Dairy Education and Research Centre.

Agricultural professionals are interested in working with farmers to help support and enhance the District's agricultural industry. Also, agricultural professionals benefit in their own work from close contact with practical and knowledgeable farmers. There may be very important contributions to be made to District agriculture by continuing to foster relationships between area agricultural professionals and farmers. During the development of the Agricultural Area Plan, the number of agricultural professionals living in the District, or in close proximity, was considered an important advantage for District farmers that could be enhanced. The District of Kent, and its staff, may be in a position to encourage the agricultural industry to foster these

relationships for the benefit of both farmers and the agricultural professionals. These relationships may best be strengthened by creating a Working Group to address agricultural issues and concerns. A modest amount of funding to provide refreshments and meeting amenities may be all that is required for this process to begin.

Recommendation 6.1.1

It is recommended the District of Kent continue to encourage the Kent Agricultural Advisory Committee to work with staff of the Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre and the University of British Columbia Dairy Education and Research Centre to establish a Working Group to review issues and concerns affecting agriculture and to make suggestions and recommendations to the appropriate bodies for addressing these issues and concerns.

Several areas were identified during the development of the Agricultural Area Plan where such a Working Group could make some useful contributions to the agricultural sector in the District.

a) Relevant Research for the District

It is important for the agricultural community to continue strong connections with the education, training and research institutions located in the area. Liaison with the progressive people at the Chilliwack campus of the University of the Fraser Valley or the UBC Dairy Education and Research Centre is important to assist the industry to remain current with research advancements. These research topics may extend well beyond the technical and production considerations of agriculture. During the development of the Agricultural Area Plan, the need for continual creativity and innovation was heard. How can we encourage more farmers to come to the District? How can we ensure future farming by addressing succession planning? Are there creative ways to ensure the farms we already have can continue?

Considerable research is already being done by the Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre and the UBC Dairy Education and Research Centre that has direct application to agriculture in the District. Topics for research follow mandated requirements directed by the research bodies and will include consultation with the farm community.

Recommendation 6.1.2

It is recommended the Working Group, in cooperation with the agricultural community, continue to encourage relevant research and assist District of Kent farmers with awareness and understanding of research advancements and other factors that may impact their businesses.

b) Input to Farm Regulations

Most people prefer to conduct their businesses undisturbed, as do farmers. But farmers in the District of Kent are now operating in an increasingly regulated environment. More rules and regulations have been put in place, driven by public demand for higher levels of food safety and food quality and concerns about environmental issues involving soil, air and water. Farmers are also impacted by regulations affecting how they handle their livestock and how they deal with wildlife that use their farms as habitat. Since most British Columbians are removed from direct involvement with farming, farm people may sometimes feel isolated and threatened by increasing levels of regulation. The unspoken implication is that they are abusing their land and animals.

Farmers opposing regulations are not necessarily against the broader intent of the regulations. Generally speaking, farmers oppose regulations when they are not being properly involved in their development and are not given credit for how much they are doing already to ensure their farm practices protect and enhance the land, air and water.

Are there ways to mitigate farmers' negative reactions to regulations? Can District of Kent farmers, along with the Working Group recommended above, provide the leadership needed to place farmers directly in front of the move to ensure food safety and to protect and enhance agricultural land, air and water quality? The District of Kent farming community may be "branded" as industry leaders in environmental stewardship. Farmers in the District could be identified as examples where positive relationships exist between industry regulators and farmers.

Recommendation 6.1.3

It is recommended the Working Group consider ways the agricultural industry can more effectively address environmental and other regulations impacting the industry by encouraging the industry to meet, and to exceed wherever possible, all science-based regulatory requirements for agriculture in the areas of air quality, land use and water use; by seeking ways to adequately measure and communicate these efforts to the public at large; and by positioning the industry as a strong and vibrant leader and an industry example for all areas of BC.

When there has been confrontation between farmers and regulatory bodies, it is difficult for farmers to maintain positive attitudes. The Working Group can assist farmers to discuss regulatory issues in a more neutral setting.

Recommendation 6.1.4

It is recommended local officials of Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the BC Ministry of the Environment, for example, be invited to participate in meetings of the Working Group to share their perspectives and viewpoints on efforts by the agricultural industry in the District of Kent to protect and enhance the agricultural land and to ensure food quality and environmental responsibility in the District.

c) The Farmer as a Land Steward

Farmers are, for the most part, quality land stewards. Operating from self-interest to some extent, farmers know the importance of ensuring their land is kept healthy and productive. But farmers resent being told what to do with their land when the implication is they are not following appropriate management practices.

There are some signs in other jurisdictions that farmers, when invited to participate in programs to protect the environment, and when compensated in some way for their efforts, respond positively and enthusiastically. Paying farmers to care for the environment (for the good of everyone) is an idea that should be embraced by the Agricultural Area Plan.

The Canadian Senate's Standing Committee on Agriculture and Forestry has officially endorsed the concept that paying farmers to care for the environment is the right and appropriate thing to do and there should be "incentives for producers as providers of social benefits beyond food production, such as environmental benefits."¹⁸ In Prince Edward Island, the government has become the first one to offer every farmer on the Island the opportunity to earn money for taking action on environmental efforts such as grassing waterways or preserving wildlife habitat on their farms.

The Environmental Farm Plan program, funded by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada through the National Agricultural Policy Framework, *Growing Forward*, and offered through the BC Agriculture Council, offers farmers the opportunity for cash support for environmental actions they may take on their farms.

¹⁸ Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, *Agriculture and Agri-Food Policy in Canada: Putting Farmers First*, Interim Report, June 2006, p. 7.

Pilot projects in other parts of Canada have demonstrated the value of supporting farmers in this way. Norfolk County in Ontario has a pilot project under the banner of Alternative Land Use Services. ALUS is an ecological goods and services program that is unique in that it was designed by farmers, for farmers. Originating in the United States, and prepared to protect duck habitat for duck hunters, the program recognizes the value of conserving Canada's natural habitat while respecting and rewarding the important role that farmers play in environmental management.

One of the principles upon which ALUS is based is that farmers and ranchers are in the best position to deliver environmental goods and services on their land. The ALUS program also allows farmers to lead the environmental agenda and develop workable solutions in cooperation with their communities, farm organizations, governments, non-government agencies and the Canadian public. Another principle of the ALUS program is that a mix of public and private ownership of resources exists on private land, so the stewardship of natural habitat and environmental resources must be a shared responsibility of governments and landowners. Because of this shared nature, environmental services should be cost-shared with producers. Farmers should receive annual payments or other forms of compensation to deliver and maintain environmental services.¹⁹

Recommendation 6.1.5

It is recommended the Working Group further investigate programs and services similar to the Alternative Land Use Services Program and seek ways to involve farmers more extensively in land stewardship programs and help find ways to ensure that some compensation is provided for farmer efforts in these programs.

¹⁹ Further information about Alternative Land Use Services is available at <http://www.deltawaterfowl.org/alus/>

Many of the Environmental Farm Plan program principles are consistent with the role of the farmer as a land steward suggested in this Agricultural Area Plan. Having an environmental farm plan may be one of the few ways farmers can demonstrate due diligence in the environmental management of their farms. In addition, completion of an environmental farm plan may provide opportunities for farmers to be partially compensated for their activities in this area.

Recommendation 6.1.6

It is recommended the Working Group make every effort to encourage farmers in the District of Kent to complete an Environmental Farm Plan.

The Agassiz Slough Drainage Study mentioned earlier also identified possible issues with fish and endangered species habitat. The agricultural industry’s nutrient runoff, more specifically runoff from the intensive dairy farms operating in the District, was identified as a contributor to lower-than-acceptable stormwater quality in the slough. Farmers have traditionally been active in providing effective land stewardship on their farms, and their use of fertilizers, for example, is controlled. Urban residents, on the other hand, may inadvertently be contributing more nutrients to the Slough as they fertilize their lawns and gardens, and do so uncontrolled.



Some municipalities have considered, and adopted, bylaws designed to regulate the use of selected fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides by urban dwellers. These bylaws may also extend to golf courses and other areas where chemicals

may be used to support greener lawns and fewer weeds.

Recommendation 6.1.7

It is recommended the Working Group review the possible application and value of an appropriate education program for the District of Kent to address urban use of chemicals including herbicides and pesticides.

d) The Concept of Quality and Excellence

District farmers understand the importance of producing quality agricultural products and services. Some of the province’s best dairy farms are located in the District. District farmers developed the Circle Farm Tour to encourage people to come to their farms and buy their quality products and services. The Working Group could review ways of fostering continued excellence in this area. Suggestions for discussion include:

- The extent of education and training programs that support the local agricultural industry
- The extent of research related to the local agricultural industry
- The extent of strategizing for the future being done on a regular basis
- Improving the relationships between the agricultural industry and funding agencies such as the Investment Agriculture Foundation
- Improving linkages between the agricultural industry and interested educational institutions, including increased levels of cooperation and industry involvement on education advisory committees
- Enhancing the spirit of cooperation and collaboration between the agricultural industry and interested educational institutions
- Increasing levels of recruitment of students from the local educational

institutions as part of the normal agricultural industry recruitment patterns

- The extent of communication and publishing vehicles that are in place
- The extent of attention given to the requirements of environmental responsibility and sustainable agricultural practices.

Recommendation 6.1.8

It is recommended the Working Group review ways to foster excellence in Kent agricultural products and services.

6.2 Collaboration with First Nations

The recently completed BC Agriculture Plan provides support for the province to “facilitate First Nations participation in agriculture initiatives.”²⁰

First Nations have traditionally been land stewards, and much of their background and history supports the protection and enhancement of agricultural land. First Nations’ farmers participate in a wide range of agricultural sectors in BC, including cattle ranching, grape growing and market gardening. First Nations’ farms exist in every region of the province. The District of Kent has six First Nations within, or adjacent to, its boundaries. Seabird Island Indian band, for example, has considerable productive agricultural land, and District of Kent farmers have a history of leasing that land to support their own agricultural operations.

Agriculture may be a way for First Nations to further build and develop their communities. Encouraging agricultural development on productive agricultural land that is owned and managed by First Nations is in the best interests of the agricultural industry in the District of

Kent. The District of Kent has maintained positive working relationships with First Nations in their area.

Recommendation 6.2.1

It is recommended the District of Kent continue to maintain positive relationships with First Nations communities by inviting representatives to participate in agricultural tours and other appropriate District agricultural events.

6.3 Collaboration with the Business Community

Town of Agassiz businesses have experienced considerable business turnover. Attracting businesses with potential to survive and prosper is important for town residents as well as those in the farming community. There is a need for farmers to work closely with others in the District of Kent to find ways for all business people, agricultural and other, to grow and develop their businesses in the best interests of the overall economy of the District.

The Harrison Agassiz Chamber of Commerce is an existing organization designed to advocate on behalf of the business community in the District of Kent and Harrison Hot Springs. The mission of the Harrison Agassiz Chamber is “to strengthen business and community through leadership, advocacy and support. We will accomplish this by providing services of value to business, by working closely with all levels of government and by acting as a catalyst for economic development.”²¹

Many agricultural businesses in the District of Kent might benefit from working closely with other businesses through the local Chamber.

²⁰ BC Agriculture Plan, page 28.

²¹ Harrison-Agassiz Chamber of Commerce, www.harrison.ca.

Recommendation 6.3.1

It is recommended the District of Kent continue to encourage interested agricultural businesses to join the Harrison Agassiz Chamber of Commerce.

6.4 Collaboration with the FVRD and the Province

One of the guiding principles for developing the Agricultural Area Plan was that it should “connect favourably with Regional District, Provincial and Federal government planning and development strategies and initiatives.” The recommendations in the Agricultural Area Plan should be consistent with guidelines and objectives in place within the Fraser Valley Regional District and the province.

District of Kent Council members are actively involved with the FVRD, serve on various Committees and attend regional meetings.

Recommendation 6.4.1

It is recommended the District of Kent continue its practice of working closely with the Fraser Valley Regional District and the Provincial Government to build positive working relationships that will serve the needs of the agricultural industry in the District.



End of document