

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF CENTRAL OKANAGAN

AGRICULTURAL PLAN



June 2005



INTEGRA
Community
Planning Services

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Section 1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Plan Purpose.....	1
1.2 Plan Context.....	1
1.3 Planning Process.....	4
1.4 Background Report.....	5
1.5 Report Format.....	6
Section 2.0 LEGISLATIVE & GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE	7
2.1 Strengthening Policy & Government	7
Section 3.0 INFRASTRUCTURE.....	13
3.1 Irrigation.....	13
3.2 Roads.....	16
3.3 Sanitary & Storm Sewer.....	19
Section 4.0 ECONOMICS	22
4.1 External Competition	22
4.2 Costs of Production	23
4.3 Land Costs.....	24
Section 5.0 RURAL-URBAN FRINGE.....	26
5.1 Edge Permanency.....	26
5.2 Edge Separation.....	27
5.3 Farm Practices	29
5.4 Non Farm Rural Development	30
Section 6.0 ENVIRONMENT.....	34
6.1 Environmental Farm Practices	34
Section 7.0 RECREATION.....	37
7.1 Recreation Activities & Corridors.....	37
Section 8.0 EDUCATION	40
8.1 Public Awareness of Agriculture	40
8.2 Farm Succession & Research.....	41
Section 9.0 INDUSTRY SUPPORT	44
9.1 Agricultural Support Officer	44
Section 10.0 PLAN IMPLEMENTATION	47
10.1 Participants & Strategies	47
10.2 Costs.....	50
REFERENCES	52

TABLE OF CONTENTS

(continued)

Maps

- Map 1 – Project & Planning Areas
- Map 2 – Agricultural Land Reserve
- Maps 3A, 3B, & 3C – Irrigation Districts
- Maps 4A & 4B – Primary Land Use Activities
- Maps 5A & 5B – Primary Agricultural Activities
- Maps 6A & 6B – Irrigation Practices
- Maps 7A & 7B – Apple & Grape Farms

1.1 Plan Purpose

The purpose of the Agricultural Plan as stated in the Terms of Reference is:

“to enhance the viability of the agricultural sector in the Regional District by addressing farm viability issues arising from resource potential, diversification opportunities, urbanization conflicts and competition for agricultural land. While it is recognized that there are a broad range of issues and jurisdictions that have an impact upon agriculture, the main focus of this Agricultural Plan will be on those issues that lie within the jurisdiction of the Regional District”.

A Background Report has been prepared to review the agricultural context to discuss issues and opportunities. This document builds upon the background research to present actions recommended to improve conditions for agriculture in the Regional District.

1.2 Plan Context

The Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO) Agricultural Plan applies to those areas, mainly consisting of lands in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), that lie outside the boundaries and jurisdictions of the City of Kelowna, the district municipalities of Peachland and Lake Country and First Nations Reserves. The ALR lands in the Regional District are shown on Map 1. Also shown on Map 1 are planning areas that represent unique geographic regions and settlement areas within the Regional District. These areas are the subject of specific Official Community Plan documents including:

- Ø North Westside Official Community Plan
- Ø Westside Official Community Plan
- Ø Joe Rich Land Use By-law
- Ø Ellison Official Community Plan

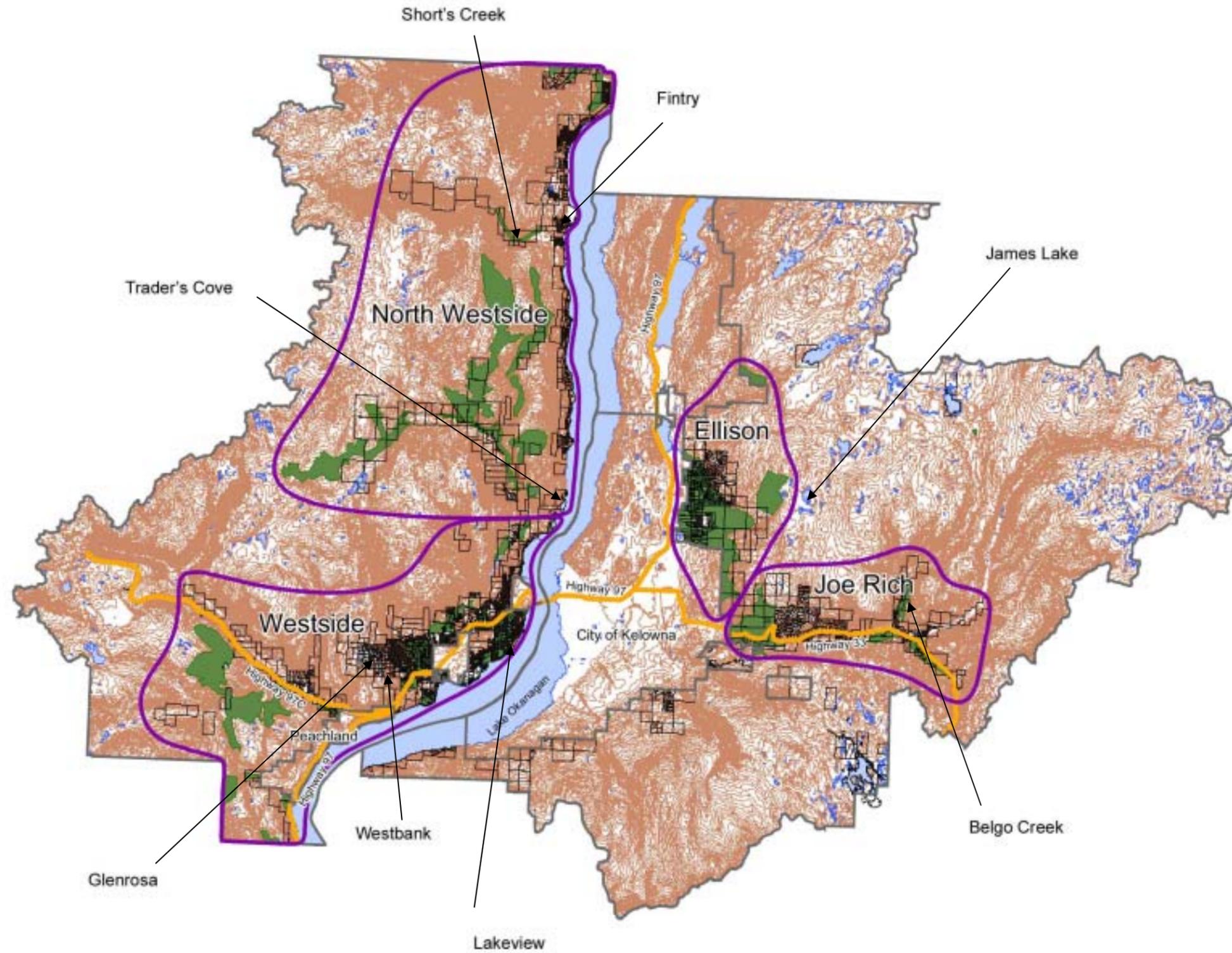
Lands in the plan area range in elevation from Okanagan Lake (elev. 342 m) to over 1000 m on parts of the adjacent plateau areas. On the west side of Okanagan Lake the most highly developed and diverse agricultural lands occur below the 700m elevation in the Westbank and Lakeview Heights areas. On the east side of Okanagan Lake, the most concentrated area of agricultural development is in the Ellison area. Lands at intermediate elevations include those in the Glenrosa area, east of Ellison, and in the Joe

Rich-Belgo Creek area. These are less intensively developed agricultural lands. The plan area also contains high lying, essentially undeveloped ALR lands, in scattered areas; south of Shorts Creek; in the general vicinity of Silver Lake; near James Lake; and east and north of Black Knight Mountain. These planning areas also represent unique agricultural zones and have been used throughout the planning process to provide a framework for the analysis and discussion of agricultural issues and recommendations.

Agricultural land in the ALR is of critical importance to the farm sector and to society as a whole through its role in protecting society's local foodlands. It is important to recognize that farms are not only part of the agricultural industry in the Okanagan valley but also are major players in the community in other ways. Agricultural land is a large part of the land base and an important shaper of the form of towns as well as a strong visual image in people's minds. Tourism has also benefited from the pleasant rural landscape, agricultural land uses, and the resulting activities and festivals.

The community has confirmed the importance of the agricultural landscape and agricultural activities to the livability of the region through recent processes to update both the Westside and the Ellison Official Community Plans. The desire to have an Agricultural Plan was established and supported in the policies of the Regional District.

The Agriculture Plan provides an opportunity to address current issues and provide policies directed at ensuring the best possible future for agriculture. The purpose of the Plan is to identify what the Regional District can do to encourage agricultural activity within the ALR and to help agriculture compete with other uses for a limited land base.

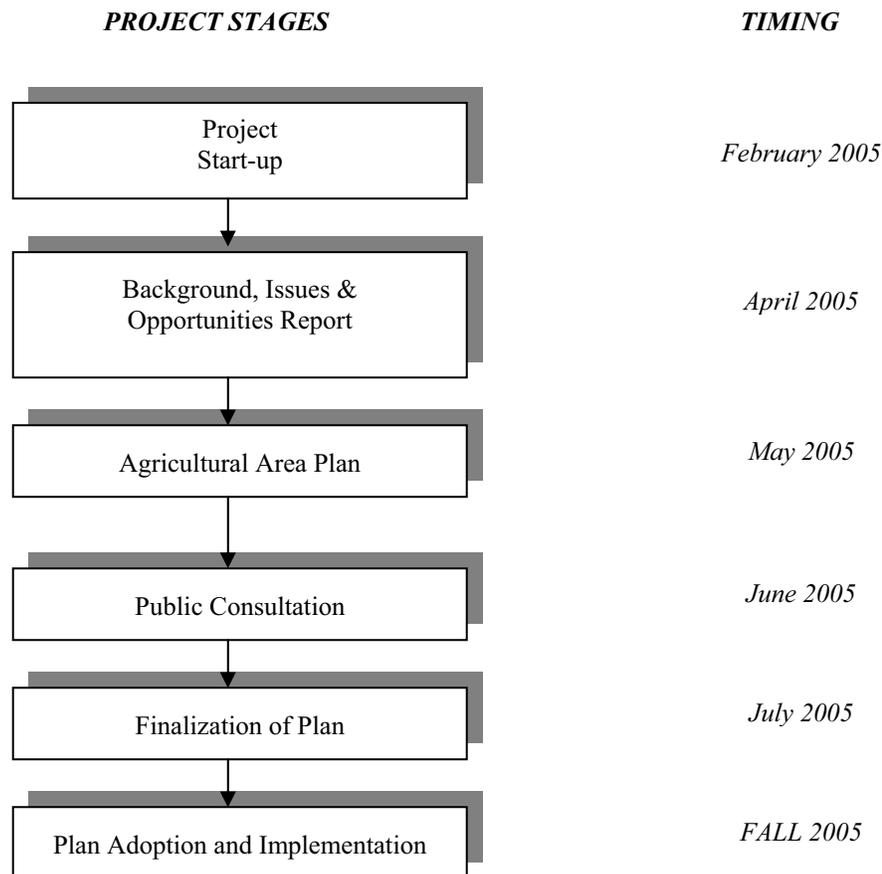


-  Planning Areas
-  Administrative Areas
-  Highways
-  Parcels
-  ALR
-  Contours (100m Interval)
-  Lakes



1.3 Planning Process

The Agricultural Plan process was started in February 2005. A Draft Background Report was circulated in April 2005 to outline the background consultation process, research findings and to provide a summary of issues and opportunities. The Agricultural Plan reviews relevant issues and makes recommendations on how to best take advantage of these opportunities.



1.4 Background Report

The Agricultural Plan Background Report provides a detailed overview of agricultural conditions and policy framework in the Regional District. The Background Report is available either from the Planning Services Department of the Regional District or the Regional District website at www.regionaldistrict.com in the Planning Department. Some of the key facts revealed through the background research include:

- ∅ the total farm capital value in the entire Regional District, including Kelowna, Lake Country and Peachland in 2001 was \$829.5 million with sales of \$74.9 million and wages of \$20 million.
- ∅ the most prominent agricultural uses in the Plan area include tree fruits, vineyards, pasture and forage operations and horse and beef cattle farms.
- ∅ secondary agricultural activities include wineries, wholesaling and retailing of agricultural products and tourist tours.
- ∅ irrigation is an important farm practice in the RDCO, with most of the agricultural lands below 700m supplied by one of the area's several irrigation districts.
- ∅ 81% of farmland was owned, while only 19% was rented in 2001.
- ∅ less than 20% of lands in agricultural production in 2001 were used for field crops and fruits, nuts and berries. This inventory may have been over reported due to the headquarters rule that requires wineries (and other agricultural uses) in the RDCO to report all vineyards as attributed to headquarters location, even those vineyards located outside RDCO.
- ∅ few farms were involved in livestock production, however 30% of all farms reporting having horses or ponies in 2001.
- ∅ 61% of the farms generated low incomes (<\$10,000 per year in 2001).
- ∅ farm operators are aging (43% were over 54 years old in 2001).
- ∅ the non-municipal area generates 20% of the gross farm receipts in the RDCO but contains 29% of the farm capital.

Additional research is available in the Background Report, including: information on the farm survey conducted by Ministry of Agriculture and Lands (AL) in 2005; the regional agricultural context; history of agriculture in the Central Okanagan; industry contact input; regional climatic and soils conditions; agricultural economics; and the current legislative and policy framework. A series of maps were produced for the Background

Report and are reproduced in *Appendix A* to provide further context for the Plan. The maps presented in *Appendix A* are as follows.

<i>Map 2</i>	Agricultural Land Reserve
<i>Map 3A, 3B, & 3C</i>	Irrigation Districts
<i>Map 4A & 4B</i>	Primary Land Use Activities
<i>Map 5A & 5B</i>	Primary Agricultural Activities
<i>Map 6A & 6B</i>	Irrigation Practices
<i>Map 7A & 7B</i>	Apple and Grape Farms

1.5 **Report Format**

This document discusses and provides policy direction for agricultural lands in the RDCO. Major topics presented in this report include:

- Ø legislative and policy structure
- Ø infrastructure
- Ø economics
- Ø rural-urban fringe
- Ø environment
- Ø recreation
- Ø education
- Ø agricultural support officer

A final section provides an implementation strategy to highlight the timing of priority strategies.

2.1 Strengthening Policy and Governance

2.1.1 Issue

∅ The vision of the permanent role of agriculture as an essential component of the physical, social and economic well-being of the Regional District of Central Okanagan should be clearly articulated or acknowledged through all policy and governance opportunities. Some of the available opportunities include:

- § Regional Growth Strategy
- § Official Community Plans
- § Farm By-law
- § Delegation Agreement
- § Transportation Planning
- § Subdivision By-law
- § Agricultural Advisory Committee

2.1.2 Objectives

- ∅ To re-affirm the essential role of the ALR to the farm sector and the role of agriculture as a fundamental and integral element of the Regional District of Central Okanagan setting.
- ∅ To ensure that the major Plans and initiatives of the region clearly reflect the commitment to the presence, health and vitality of the agricultural industry.
- ∅ To assume the authority and responsibility for administering agricultural activities in the region through a Delegation Agreement if local government can add positive support to those interests.
- ∅ To provide Farm Bylaw control of agricultural activities where local government can assist in nurturing improved farm practices and operations.
- ∅ To actively participate in all aspects of the planning and development approvals processes in the region, toward providing a comprehensive approach to the integration of agricultural interests into the growing community.
- ∅ To ensure that the appointed Agricultural Advisory Committee for RDCO and others throughout the region are best equipped and informed about

agricultural matters to enable their optimal contributions to the interests of the industry.

2.1.3 Discussion

There is broad awareness of agricultural activity as part of the fabric of the regional community, but there is a need to re-affirm a commitment to the long-term preservation of agricultural lands. The sustained and rapid community growth in the Okanagan area puts increasing pressure toward a conversion of agricultural lands to some other form of urban use, often in those areas at the interface of the two communities where site services and community amenity values are in near proximity. While the current Official Community Plans do address a need to preserve and respect agricultural values, there is a need to more clearly stress limits to growth activities where they occur at the diminishment of the integrity of the finite agricultural resource.

There is provision through a Delegation Agreement for local areas to assume limited responsibilities regarding land use and subdivision of Agricultural Land Reserve areas. The delegation of responsibility for approval to exclude land from the ALR is not included in this provision. While application fee revenues may be retained by local government under a Delegation Agreement, there is no certainty that added local administrative costs would be offset by those revenues. The Regional District would need to work with the Agricultural Land Commission to clarify costs and benefits associated with a Delegation Agreement.

Arising from the Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act, the B.C. Local Government Act accommodates local government enactment of Farm Bylaws, subject to Ministerial approval. The Local Government Act makes provision for Farm Bylaws to address matters including regulating the buildings and structures, the siting of storage, waste facilities, and stationary equipment, and prohibition of specified farm operations. Arising from the Agricultural Plan for the regional district, certain conditions may be identified that would warrant establishment of a Farm By-law. In particular the Farm By-law may be an opportunity to plan for farming in critical urban/rural interface areas.

Where farm parcels are surrounded by very sensitive adjoining land uses such as urban residential areas (Westside) then the prohibition of specific commodities that have a high potential to create continuous conflict may be considered. However, a prohibition of specific commodities within a farming area is seen as a last resort since there are other

ways in which farm bylaws can be used to prevent conflict. For example, standards can be established on how farm activities are conducted which will often solve the issue of potential conflict, while enabling farming operations to occur reasonably close to urban areas.

The farm bylaw allows for greater flexibility in standards for farming areas. Zoning bylaws have relatively specific parameters within which they function. The farm bylaw will provide opportunity to deal with matters that cannot be regulated by zoning bylaws. A farm by-law, for example, could establish conditions for the approval of certain uses that could potentially impact existing development. The siting of buildings and fans associated with a chicken farm is an example of an agricultural situation where both the farmer and the neighbouring property owners would benefit from specific direction provided through a Farm By-law.

A strength of the farm bylaw is that it may prescribe standards differently depending on: the size or type of farms; the type of farm operations; the site conditions; and the adjoining land uses. In concert with buffering urban development to protect agriculture, farm bylaws can be an important tool for planning on the farming side of the urban/rural edge.

There are considerable opportunities for the farm industry to expand operations through farm diversification. While basic farm operations that satisfy income requirements are classified within the farm category of the B.C. Assessment Authority, additional residential, commercial and industrial activities are assessed in those respective categories. When some farm operators seek to expand the scope of their farm-related operations to enhance economic returns, the assessment system may be prohibitive for these opportunities. The assessment of farm property is a provincial responsibility however the Regional District may have a role in encouraging change to the classification system.

The RDCO administers many of the local government planning functions, including community planning, while the responsibility for transportation and subdivision matters rests with the provincial Ministry of Transportation. A more unified integration of government service and development activities could provide for a more seamless approach to administering community affairs, including agricultural interests.

The Agricultural Advisory Committee performs an essential role in providing the Regional Board with guidance on a range applicant submissions and agricultural enhancement initiatives. The other Agricultural Advisory Committees in the central Okanagan perform similar activities, and there could be benefits to all with the sharing of information and experiences, and the pursuit of common agricultural objectives. Inclusion of agricultural interests within First Nations lands would also broaden the scope of those groups seeking to maintain the vitality of the industry.

Current provisions of Zoning Bylaw 871 adequately address permitted uses, parcel area, setbacks, coverage and building height within the A1 (Agricultural) zone for properties within the ALR. Definitions in the Zoning Bylaw, including Agri-tourism, provide a good framework for addressing agriculturally-related activities. The Agri-tourism definition describes a range of possible uses, maximum floor area, and accommodation limits. The General Regulations of the Zoning Bylaw describe buffer and setback requirements for development of properties abutting ALR lands.

The Subdivision and Servicing Bylaw 704 does not specify provisions for buffering of properties adjacent to road rights-of-way, but stipulates fencing requirements for separation of rights-of-way from adjacent properties.

2.1.4 Recommendations

RDCO Authority

- a. Refine the Regional Growth Strategy to provide a vision statement on the fundamental and permanent role that agriculture plays in maintaining the quality lifestyle of the region's communities.
- b. Strengthen the language in all Official Community Plans, expressing commitment to protection of the agricultural lands in the region, and the need to reinforce the permanent edges between rural and urban parts of the community.
- c. Consider participation in a Delegation Agreement between the Agricultural Land Commission and the Regional District of Central Okanagan at a future date when the details of added regional costs and responsibilities are defined.

- d. Consider the establishment of a Rural/Urban Fringe Development Permit Area under Section 919.1.c Protection of Farming and consider requiring an Agricultural Impact Assessment as part of the development approval information for Development Permits.
- e. Give consideration to the adoption of a Farm Bylaw to address matters which arise from the Agricultural Plan, and where a local perspective in the control of agricultural activities can assist in enhancing agricultural conditions. The Farm By-law should be limited in scope, so as not to create an unnecessary layer of regulation for farmers, and should only address those issues that require careful management. The sensitive agricultural/urban interface areas in Westside, for example, could potentially benefit from a Farm By-law. The by-law, once approved by the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, could provide policies relating to potential agricultural operations where there may be opportunity for conflict with urban development.
- f. Consider seeking a broader range of authority in the transportation planning and subdivision approval functions presently administered by the provincial Ministry of Transportation, with particular reference to the nature and scope of roadway impacts created between the rural and urban components of the region and the development of agricultural area buffers.
- g. Encourage provincial government to consider amendments to B.C. Assessment Authority parameters that would permit a broader range of commercial and industrial activities within the farm classification, particularly for farm diversification and agri-tourism operations.
- h. The rules of the Agricultural Land Commission in relation to agri-tourism appear to be fairly unrestrictive. The addition of new agri-tourism businesses as defined, may potentially impact neighbouring agricultural operations (parking, traffic, land development pressures). The RDCO may need to work with the ALC to refine the agri-tourism definition should these potential problems materialize in the Regional District.

RDCO Advocacy

- i. Encourage increased interaction, and sharing of information and resources between the Agricultural Advisory Committee, their counterpart bodies in the other communities in the region, and First Nations representatives.
- j. Explore potential frameworks for the development of a regional agricultural vision, and strategy that is based on an Okanagan Valley Agricultural Area. This strategy would integrate the many jurisdictional interests within this geographic region and explore partnerships to enhance the viability of agriculture.
- k. Encourage the development of a Okanagan Valley Agricultural Advisory Committee to consider issues of a larger regional nature (e.g. climatic change) and involve stakeholders throughout the region.

3.1 Irrigation

3.1.1 Issues

- Ø Adequate protection of groundwater sources and surface water supplies are necessary for both domestic and agricultural users.
- Ø Efficient use of water is necessary to ensure that water sources remain viable for both domestic and agricultural consumption over the long term.
- Ø Climatic change may introduce changes in water availability and quality and will present new challenges to agricultural activities and require innovative strategies to balance competing interests for water.

3.1.2 Objective

- Ø To support retention, growth and sustainable development of an agricultural industry that is largely dependent on irrigation.

3.1.3 Discussion

Irrigation water is necessary for most farm practices in the RDCO, however, agriculture is only one of the interests competing for water. In addition to being essential for agricultural production, water is also tied to a growing population and necessary for maintaining sensitive ecosystems.

Climatic change research is pointing towards “the early onset of the spring snowmelt and a tendency towards a more rainfall dominated hydrograph and considerable reductions in the annual and spring flow volumes” (Cohen, Neilson & Welbourn, 2003). Low flow periods are likely to be associated with peak demand periods from all users (agriculture, fisheries and domestic users).

Climate change modeling raises concerns that irrigation from in-stream sources may not be available through seasonal low flow periods. This situation will tax demand for stored water. Climate change is also predicted to have an additional effect to any population growth scenario, accelerating the population growth effects on water usage by several years.

The climate change research indicates that throughout the Okanagan basin, communities will need to adapt to changes and improve water use efficiencies. Possible strategies include:

- Ø domestic metering
- Ø agricultural (irrigation) metering
- Ø wastewater reclamation
- Ø amalgamation of water utility administration districts
- Ø irrigation scheduling for urban and farm uses
- Ø changes to lower water use crops and appropriate micro irrigation systems

There are numerous irrigations districts in the RDCO and no single agency preparing a strategic plan to address water issues.

3.1.4 Recommendation

- a. Work with the Water Utility providers (water purveyors) to explore opportunities for agricultural interests to be involved in the decision making process (including farmers on the Boards of all utilities).
- b. Work with the Water Utility providers to explore opportunities for co-ordinated drought management and conservation measures such as:
 - Ø water smart programs
 - Ø irrigation scheduling
 - Ø micro irrigation systems
 - Ø water costing to agriculture that considers the far-reaching importance of agriculture in the valley and the long-term sustainability of agriculture.
- c. Support expanded roles for the Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) and the Okanagan Mainline Municipal Association (OMMA) or similar valley wide authority in implementing sustainable water resource management that considers water costing to agriculture and the social and economic value of agriculture in the Central Okanagan.

- d. Support local governance models and committee structures that can provide integrated decision making on water issues. The Westside Joint Water Committee (WJWC) is an example of an integrative partnership “dedicated to responsible and sustainable water management and use” that may have application to a larger region. The WJWC will be involved in some of the following activities:
- Ø advocate for and coordinate actions toward improved water management in communities of the Westside, including supply and demand management and source water quality protection;
 - Ø coordinate and conduct public education programs;
 - Ø advocate for responsible water pricing within the Westside areas;
 - Ø foster consistent water resource management tools and policies;
 - Ø function as an multi-sectoral advisory body to statutory decision makes;
 - Ø prioritize and implement water supply and demand management recommendations of *Trepanier Landscape Unit (Westside) Water Management Plan*;
 - Ø foster the development of partnerships, such as with Kelowna Joint Water Committee, Okanagan Nation Alliance Fisheries Commission, Okanagan Basin Water Board, federal and provincial water resource managers to implement sustainable water resource management throughout the Okanagan Basin; and
 - Ø coordinate and conduct an annual meeting of the boards of trustees and councils of the major water purveyors of the Westside to review upcoming activities of the joint water committee.
- d. Engage the agricultural industry in processes that involve the allocation or pricing of water. The Westside Joint Water Committee is an example of a Committee that could benefit from having representation from the farm community.
- e. Implement a major valley-wide water protection and conservation initiative directed at both urban and rural communities, stressing limitations to the critical resource of agricultural land.
- f. Encourage formulation of a valley-wide water management plan that will address the long-term allocation of adequate water resources to sustain the agricultural industry as part of the overall resource utilization. The Plan should include a

drought management strategy that considers options for protecting access to water for farmers.

- g. Pursue a means to assist the farm community in water conservation measures by adapting to new irrigation technologies.
- h. Encourage University of British Columbia Okanagan (UBCO) and Summerland Research Station activities directed at the development of plant varieties requiring reduced water application.
- i. Encourage senior governments to provide enhanced financial programs directed at assisting farmers to convert to irrigation technologies and plant varieties requiring reduced water volumes.

3.2 Roads

3.2.1 Issue

- Ø Roads in agricultural areas support farm traffic, local traffic and through traffic and there is potential for conflict between these types of traffic.
- Ø Roads and road rights-of-ways are frequently the only transition between urban and farm uses.
- Ø Road network planning envisions additional roads through agricultural areas, particularly in Westbank.

3.2.2 Objective

- Ø To optimize traffic safety and efficiency of movement in agricultural areas while minimizing the traffic impacts on agricultural lands and agricultural activities.

3.2.3 Discussion

Agricultural lands are traversed by roads throughout the Regional District. These roads are supporting traffic volumes that are increasing with growing farm businesses, increased tourist traffic and general regional growth. Higher traffic volumes create more

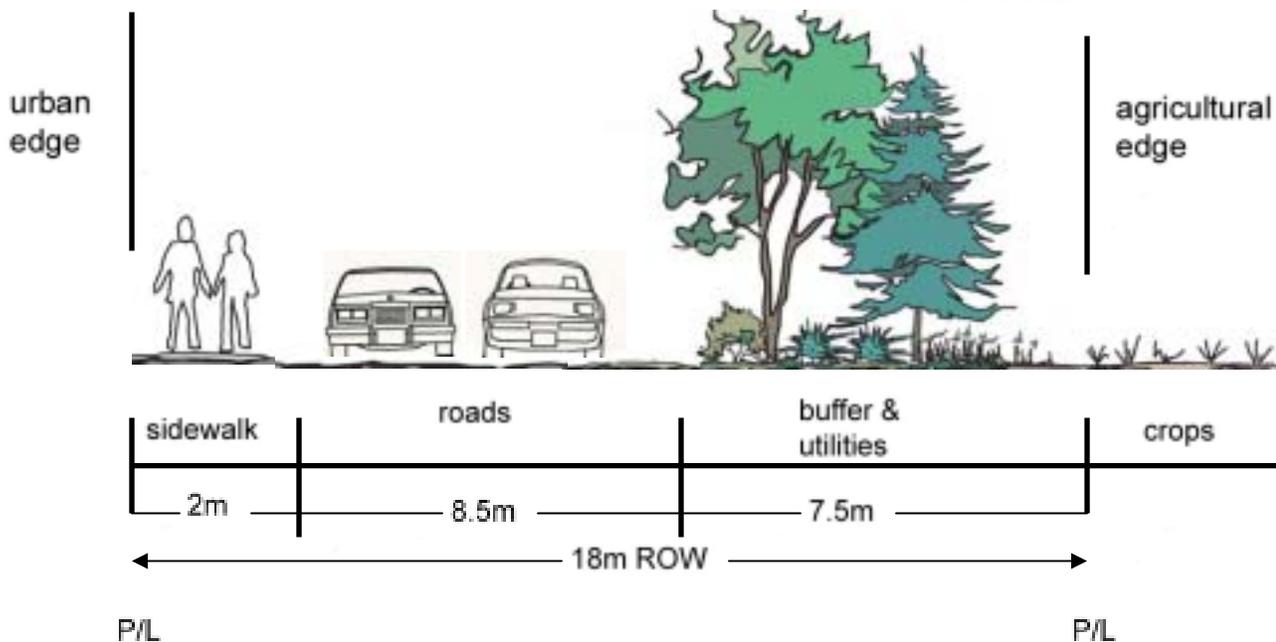
opportunities for conflict with slow moving farm vehicles and make it difficult for farmers to access lands that are traversed by roads. In Westbank for example, farmers are required to cross busy Boucherie Road to access their farmlands. Increased development planned for this area will further increase traffic volumes and consequently impact local farm operations.

With additional regional growth there will also be plans for additional road networks, including routes through agricultural areas. Roads through agricultural lands may be an issue for the farm community in terms of the loss of agricultural land and the fragmentation of farms. Benefits include the opportunity to plan roads that will adequately buffer farmland and support farming (functional shoulders, farm signage, farm vehicle crossings and pedestrian and bicycle corridors).

In the Westbank and Ellison areas there are numerous locations where a road right-of-way is the only transition between urban and rural land uses. These developments were generally approved prior to the adoption of existing OCP policies and applied traditional rural road design standards consisting of narrow pavement, limited gravel shoulders and ditches. In areas lacking appropriate agricultural buffers or interface areas there are conflicts between farmers and neighbouring residential land owners over such issues as: trespass, vandalism, noise, and pesticide drift. While roadways must first address transportation objectives, there may also be opportunities to use the right-of-way to benefit agriculture and non-farm land uses. Figure 3.1 illustrates a road design concept where hard road surfaces are pushed against the urban edge and the remaining right-of-way is used for utilities and agricultural buffering. There may be opportunity to consider this type of design when new roads are constructed or existing roads upgraded in the RDCO.

Figure 3.1: Rural Road Concept (using existing right of way)

Airborne Particle & Visual Vegetative screen buffers agricultural operation from trespass and vandalism while providing some protection from the movement of airborne particles (dust, sprays)



3.2.4 Recommendations

- a. Encourage the Ministry of Transportation (MoT) to review signage on rural roads, and where appropriate, install farm vehicle signs. Specific attention should be given to improving signage on Highway 33 to the Big White turnoff where both range cattle and tourist vehicles travel. Also, information signs, warning travelers of slow moving vehicles should be expanded in such area as Westside.
- b. Encourage transportation planning to prioritize routes that skirt ALR lands.
- c. Encourage MoT to involve the farm community in the consultation process when long-term transportation planning involves agricultural areas.

- d. Where future roads are planned to border ALR areas, standard road right-of-ways may not be sufficient to buffer agricultural lands. MoT and the Regional District should partner to develop strategies to provide adequate buffering. ALC buffer recommendations should be followed and greenway/pedestrian corridor opportunities should be considered (policy 7.1.4.g).
- e. Encourage MoT to monitor traffic volumes on rural roads and consider road improvements where high traffic volumes impede agricultural operations. Farm vehicle crossings or underpasses may be required where high volumes of urban traffic (e.g. Boucherie Road) compete with rural traffic.
- f. Encourage MoT to develop rural roadway standards that separate urban and rural traffic wherever possible and provide for agricultural buffers.
- g. Consider a program of pedestrian and roadway signage directed at informing the public about the nature and significance of the agricultural industry in the community.
- h. Transportation planning, particularly for new transportation corridors, should be an integrative, comprehensive process that addresses complex issues such as the impact on agriculture. To ensure a comprehensive perspective on transportation planning, the Regional District should partner with MoT or consider options for assuming local control of transportation planning exercises.

3.3 Sanitary and Storm Sewer

3.3.1 Issue

- Ø Consider opportunities to enhance agriculture through Liquid Waste Planning and Storm Water Management Planning.

3.3.2 Objective

- Ø To enhance agricultural opportunities through utility service infrastructure planning.

3.3.3 Discussion

Regional District policies support urban development connecting to existing sanitary sewer and storm water collection systems and discourage the development of independent satellite community systems. These policies discourage urban sprawl but increase speculation on ALR lands adjoining serviced areas. Ongoing education may be necessary to re-enforce awareness of the long-term commitment to agriculture and ALR lands that are within or adjacent to serviced areas.

Storm water and wastewater is not currently used for irrigation however there may be future irrigation opportunities associated with wastewater and storm drainage management practices. Education regarding potential application of wastewater for irrigation is encouraged to ensure that the public is informed on this issue before any decision making needs to be made.

3.3.4 Recommendations

- a. Explore opportunities for educating the community regarding the potential benefits for irrigation using treated wastewater. A pilot project may provide an opportunity to demonstrate potential benefits to agriculture including:
 - Ø increased nutrient level in the water.
 - Ø accessibility to water for irrigation at locations and during seasons when it may otherwise be unavailable.
- b. Consider opportunities to improve conditions for agriculture as part of any Regional District Liquid Waste Management Planning and Storm Water Management Planning.
- c. Seek the support of the Agricultural Land Commission in requiring that improvement works on farm lands are carried out such that on-site and off-site drainage conditions are not adversely impacted.
- d. Explore options for providing a regulatory context that would permit the installation of modest and cost effective infrastructure to service accommodations for seasonal workers in the agriculture industry.

- e. Continue to promote and support the Ogogrow Program that composts septic waste and sells it as soil conditioner.

4.1 External Competition

4.1.1 Issue

- ∅ The economics of agricultural production and agri-tourism interests continue to change locally, nationally and internationally placing strain on the central Okanagan industry to remain adaptive, competitive and economically viable.

4.1.2 Objective

- ∅ To assist in maintaining competitive agricultural market conditions in the RDCO, and nurturing an industry that is responsive and adaptive to changing conditions in agricultural product demand.

4.1.3 Discussion

Many economic sectors, including agriculture, now compete globally to maintain a favourable market position under changing and dynamic conditions. Given the relatively small scale of the Okanagan agriculture sector it is challenging for local businesses to face large external competition particularly in global or international markets. In fact, even the healthy wine industry has recognized that it will be challenged to meet the economies of scale in grape production that are necessary to compete in the global market. Instead, the wine industry is marketing locally with a “more product to the [local] table” campaign. There may be additional opportunities to grow and sell local products to local markets however decision makers will require more detailed marketing information in order to move in new directions. Although many of the initiatives aimed at addressing external competition are outside the jurisdiction of the Regional District and in the hands of other agencies (e.g. B.C. Wine Institute activities) or higher levels of government such as the provincial government there are advocacy opportunities for local government.

4.1.1 Recommendations

- a. Increase efforts to assist local agricultural economic conditions through the resources of the Economic Development Commission.

- b. Encourage increased cooperation with the other local governments, Chambers of Commerce, and Business Associations in the promotion and support of agricultural activity in the region.
- c. Work with AL staff to ensure local dissemination of information on agricultural trends, new niche market opportunities, and crop and livestock opportunities.
- d. Establish an Agriculture Support Officer position (Section 9) that can be staffed with a resource person who can help local farmers gain access to information and programs directed at helping B.C. farmers address issues of external competition.
- e. Recognize the importance of local markets and assist farmers with opportunities to identify the unique local niche markets that may be largely sustained by local production. Potential local markets, for example, may include organic farming.
- f. Work with AL to prepare an Economic Development Strategy for the agricultural sector that focuses on the growth and development of local markets for local agricultural products (e.g. subscription markets).
- g. Consider options for promoting interest in a region-wide Economic Development Strategy.

4.2 Costs of Production

4.2.1 Issue

- ∅ The costs of agricultural production in the Central Okanagan – land, labour, supplies and equipment – must strive to remain competitive relative to agricultural operations in other areas.

4.2.2 Objective:

- ∅ To provide local government assistance where feasible to minimize agricultural production costs.

4.2.3 Discussion

Agriculture in the Central Okanagan depends on inputs and services such as fuel, seeds and plants, plant protective products, fertilizers, equipment dealerships, building supplies, research, storage facilities and the trades. Most of these inputs come from non-local sources. The local economy and local farmers can benefit from having more local support services and access to programs assisting with inputs.

4.2.4 Recommendations

- a. Encourage the continuation of agricultural support programs, including the Orchard Replant Program directed at re-establishing inactive agricultural areas in the region.
- b. Continue efforts to enhance agri-tourism and related heritage, cultural and active recreation opportunities toward a comprehensive visitor market in which the agricultural base of the community continues to play an essential role.
- c. Encourage increased Farmer's Market activity in an appropriate Westside location and other potential locations in the region, directed at members of the urban communities and visitors to the Central Okanagan.
- d. Encourage a series of annual festival events that focus on the major sectors of the agricultural industry in the community.
- e. Expand a program of roadway signage in the region that addresses the importance of the agricultural industry to the community-at-large.
- f. Assist local businesses to source local products.

4.3 Land Costs

4.3.1 Issue

- Ø Land costs for agriculture operations are high in part due to the continual pressure for land for urban growth purposes in the region.

4.3.2 Objective

- ∅ To achieve and maintain land costs for agricultural purposes that permit current and future operations to remain as viable economic interests in the region.

4.3.3 Discussion

An ongoing commitment to the protection of existing agricultural lands will assist in re-affirming that the agricultural land base is a permanent component of the overall community. As well, this commitment will help ease land speculation and hopefully maintain property values at an affordable level for farmers.

4.3.4 Recommendations

- a. Work with the Real Estate Industry to re-enforce awareness and understanding of ALR lands as a long-term resource for the farm industry.
- b. Consider the opportunity for “land banking” of ALR lands by the Regional District in major urban/rural interface areas (e.g. Westbank) where pressure for urban development and agricultural uses are both high.
- c. Work with the B.C. Assessment Authority to value ALR lands for agricultural use.
- d. Ensure supportive and clear future land use policies for land within the ALR in order to reduce speculation that land in the ALR is available for future urban land uses as speculation has artificially driven up ALR land values and removed ALR lands from agricultural use.

5.1 Edge Permanency

5.1.1 Issue

- ∅ Need to reinforce the permanency of the rural-urban edge condition in the interest of providing clarity and certainty to the adjacent communities of the long-term role of ALR lands.

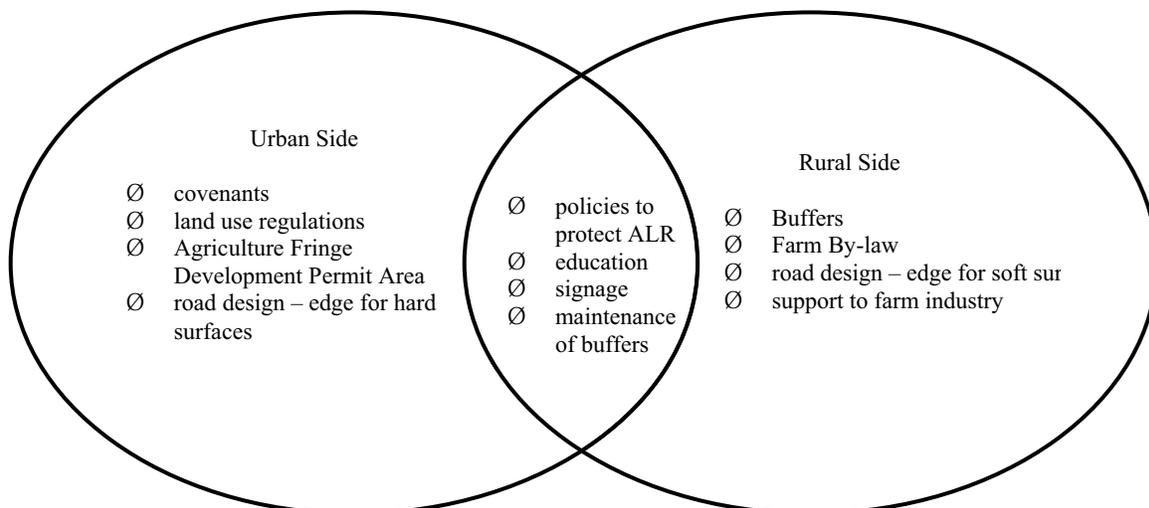
5.1.2 Objective

- ∅ To develop rural-urban edge conditions in the region that provide clarity, permanency and effectiveness for both agricultural and community development interests.

5.1.3 Discussion

The challenging and on-going issue of achieving workable and effective rural-urban boundaries is compounded by the nature of development pressures that occur along those edge areas and limited means to adequately separate the differing uses. The Agricultural Land Commission has buffering guidelines in place that seek to minimize conflicts, but the establishment of permanent and effective separation between agricultural and urban uses has not been totally resolved. Figure 5.1 summarizes some of the recommended strategies for edge planning that are discussed throughout this Plan.

Figure 5.1: Recommended Strategies for Edge Planning



5.1.4 Recommendations

- a. Continue to support the plans and initiatives to concentrate new urban growth within the existing established communities in the region, and to discourage the intrusion of non-farm uses in rural areas.
- b. Continue to support policies that require new development to provide buffering on the urban side of new development (e.g. Fringe Area Development Permit Area).
- c. Give priority to a region-wide rural-urban edge planning initiative between agricultural and non-agricultural areas as a means of strengthening and maintaining a defensible separation between land uses.
- d. Examine all edge-oriented ALR lands, toward the potential inclusion or exclusion of individual properties that could assist in creating a more defensible long-term boundary between agricultural and other land uses.
- e. Review current land use plans, and the potential of improved integration of public utility and transportation corridors, toward improved buffering techniques in rural-urban fringe areas, reinforcing the permanence of those interface areas.
- f. Consider development of a Farm By-law for requiring appropriate farm management techniques.

5.2 Edge Separation

5.2.1 Issue

- Ø Inadequate, ineffective and impermanent buffering provisions between rural and urban areas.

5.2.2 Objective

- Ø To develop rural-urban edge conditions that encourage sensitive co-existence of rural-urban issues.

5.2.3 Discussion

The physical separation of urban and rural uses is not always achievable and buffering is necessary to achieve a sense of separation. Even with effective buffering to reduce the impacts of vandalism and theft, there are still crossovers in terms of pesticide drift, noise and odours. Planning of new subdivisions and retrofitting of existing subdivisions to incorporate ALR buffering specifications is necessary to promote rural-urban compatibility.

While current Level 1 and Level 2 buffering provisions within the Zoning Bylaw are useful to assist in reducing urban-rural conflicts on a property-by-property basis, efforts to provide for permanent and effective separation of uses call for a broader-scale approach to the issue. As urban growth pressures continue and the need to protect agricultural lands increases, there is need to explore more extensive and effective means to maintain separation between the rural and non-rural interest. An Agricultural Fringe Development Permit Area is suggested as an opportunity for more extensive fringe planning.

5.2.4 Recommendations

- a. Consider establishing an Agricultural Edge Development Permit Area on the urban side to address sensitivity to farming. Development Permits may require an Agricultural Impact Assessment as a condition of permit issuance. The Development Permit may be an opportunity to require buffers and fencing.
- b. Examine the potential for improving rural-urban edge conditions and providing additional public use opportunities, particularly in the Westbank Town Centre area, by acquisition of properties that could assist in creating more effective and compatible rural-urban communities.

- c. Encourage public awareness of the rights and responsibilities of both urban and rural communities, including range land areas, regarding matters of trespass and other inappropriate behaviour.
- d. Require developers to enter into agricultural disclosure agreements with prospective purchasers to minimize the potential that new property owners are unaware of the presence and implications of nearby agricultural activity.
- e. Require a restrictive covenant on suburban property titles to minimize the potential that new property owners are unaware of the presence and implications of nearby agricultural activity.
- f. Inform residential and farming landowners of anticipated impacts and concessions related to residing adjacent to each other through information bulletins sent with annual tax notices to current property owners.
- g. Ensure consistency between noise by-law and Farm Practices Protection Act regarding use of bird scare devices such as propane fired cannons.
- h. Require landscaping and noise baffling measures in new urban development or re-developments to decrease noise and sight impacts.
- i. Require increased buffers between residential areas and farming areas.
- j. Consider a Farm By-law for requiring appropriate farm management techniques along urban/rural edges.

5.3 Farm Practices

5.3.1 Issue

- Ø Conflicts between rural and urban communities on matters such as noise, dust, odour, trespass, vandalism and theft.

5.3.2 Objective

- ∅ To improve awareness of farm practices and the rights and responsibilities of the farm and non-farm sectors.

5.3.3 Discussion

The Farm Practices Protection Act has made considerable progress in establishing the rights of farmers however efforts are still required to raise awareness of these rights. The Act is directed at resolving concerns expressed by both rural and urban communities, while providing right-to-farm protection for agriculturists who use normal farm practices. The Act further encourages local governments to support agriculture through local Bylaws that complement provincial legislation. For farmers, conflicts with urban residents can be extremely disruptive and for the non-farmers, conflicts can disrupt quality of life. Efforts to strengthen edges and improve edge permanency will address some of these conflicts. The plan area contains few of the user that have traditionally been associated with major urban-rural conflicts such as uses with strong odours (mushroom, chickens and other livestock) or continuous light (greenhouses). Since intensive uses may represent new agricultural opportunities for the Regional District it is important to plan for a full range of agricultural opportunities rather than limit discussion to orchards and vineyards.

5.3.4 Recommendations

- a. Consider development of a Farm By-law that sets guidelines for a full range of farm practices that enhances opportunities for farmers and raises awareness of farm options.

5.4 Non Farm Rural Development

5.4.1 Issue

- ∅ Rural setting is attractive to non-farm residential uses.

5.4.2 Objectives

- Ø Minimize the impacts of new estate residences in the ALR on lands with farming potential.

5.4.3 Discussion

The Regional District has many small and intermediate sized parcels in the ALR for which there is significant demand for rural estates, particularly in the Ellison area. Large new residences on small ALR properties often render the residual portion of the property non-farmable due to fragmentation. Figure 5.2 and Figure 5.3 are presented to illustrate options for managing the impact of rural residential estate development.

5.4.4 Recommendation

- a. Consider the development of a Farm By-law to regulate agriculturally disruptive rural residential development in farm areas.
- b. Consider the addition of a maximum size for residential structures in Agriculture zones. The maximum residential structure size or “home plate” regulation would limit the building footprint thereby minimizing the impact on agricultural land.
- c. Consider the addition of a maximum building setback for residential units, in Agricultural zones, thereby discouraging the fragmentation of residual agricultural lands.

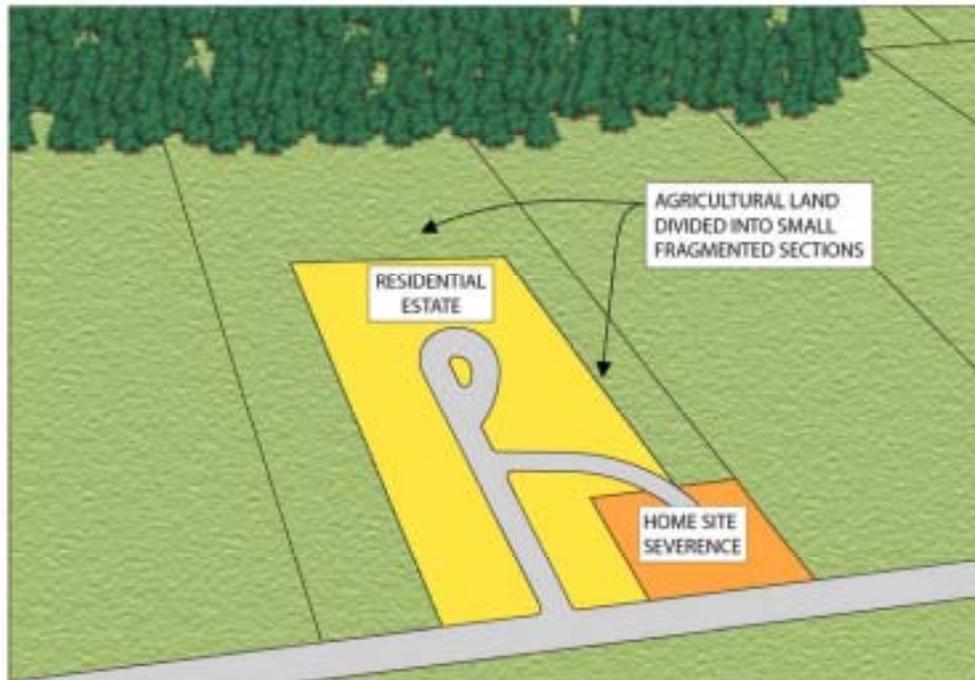


Figure 5.2: Conventional Rural Residential Estate



Figure 5.3: Conservation for Agriculture

- d. Where applicants wish to vary the maximum building siting regulations, consider requiring an Agricultural Impact Assessment for large estate residential developments. The purpose of the Agricultural Impact Assessment will be to determine if there is an identifiable or potential impact on agriculture as a result of the proposed development.
- e. Work with B.C. Assessment Authority to review income and parcel size requirements for maintaining farm status.

6.1 Environmental Farm Practices

6.1.1 Issues

- ∅ Support sound environmental farm practices that are not adversely impacting other lands, waterbodies or airshed areas. The British Columbia Environmental Farm Plan Program is in place to assist farmers to minimize risk of environmental impacts.

6.1.2 Objectives

- ∅ To encourage farm planning and practices that have minimal risk of incurring adverse environmental impacts within the region.
- ∅ To ensure that there are tangible and cost-efficient benefits to the farm community from the coddling moth control efforts of the Sterile Insect Release Program.
- ∅ To ensure that agricultural waste products are disposed of or re-utilized in an environmentally-safe and cost-efficient manner.
- ∅ To ensure that the agricultural industry in the central Okanagan remains responsive and adaptive to changing climatic conditions.
- ∅ To provide for adequate regulatory Bylaw control on properties where abandoned orchards, vineyards or other agricultural growing operations occur, toward ensuring that growing conditions on adjacent operations are not adversely impacted by insect, or weed infestations.

6.1.3 Discussion

The British Columbia Farm Plan Program is in place to assist farmers to minimize risk of environmental impacts. This Provincial program provides individual farmers with a review of their operations and technical advice on means of minimizing environmental impacts. The completed environmental farm plan permits farmers to apply for financial assistance through applicable grant programs. Environmental conditions have also been

improved where farmers have been able to reduce pesticide applications as through the Sterile Insect Release Program (SIR).

The SIR Program was initiated in 1992 toward control of the coddling moth, and its impact on apple and pear production. There are currently five regional districts in the interior of the province participating in the program. Results to date reflect a reduced farmer reliance on the use of organophosphate pesticides, but there has been active dialogue regarding the continuation or termination of the program. The inclusion of cherry production within the scope of the program has been given consideration.

Normal agricultural growing operations result in the creation of significant volumes of wood-cuttings and other organic material. The historical practice of open burning has generated considerable controversy in the region, as it relates to air quality and associated respiratory health concerns. From the grower perspective, there are cost prohibitions to hauling waste materials extensive distances for disposal. There is a current regional wood-chipping initiative directed at lands where orchard removal occurs. Wood chips resulting from the chipping can have application as a soil cover to retain moisture and deter weed growth.

There is on-going debate on the rate and extent of climatic change occurring as part of global warming. However, some of the scientific community forecast a gradual warming that would result in warmer temperatures, a longer growing season and an increased demand for water in the Central Okanagan. This trend could also provide for potential extended agricultural use of lands located at higher elevations within the region. The Summerland Research facility has directed research to the warming trend in the Okanagan, and its potential impacts on the agricultural sector. University of British Columbia Okanagan Agricultural faculty have also expressed the need for focused research on the future implications of climate change in the area.

Changing conditions in the regional agriculture industry have resulted in instances of abandoned orchards, vineyards or other growing operations. Such conditions can lead to weed and insect infestation that can adversely impact the operations of other growers. RDCO has Bylaw legislation to enforce noxious weed and insect control, and unsightly premises. However, the control of plant disease is not addressed by those Bylaw measures. The B.C. Plant Protection Act does provide for the control of plant diseases.

6.1.4 Recommendations

- a. Assist in distribution of information regarding the voluntary Environmental Farm Plan Program, and encourage the participation of local area farmers in the program in the interests of ensuring operations are carried out with minimum risk of adverse impacts on land, air and water environmental conditions.
- b. Give further consideration to continued participation, and the nature and scope of the Sterile Insect Release Program at the time of the overall program review to occur at the end of 2005.
- c. Continue active participation in the region-wide inter-governmental initiative to minimize the impact of open burning of agricultural and other waste materials, and encourage an expanded scope of wood-chipping activities to include on-going farm operations as an alternative to burning.
- d. Encourage intensified and on-going inter-agency monitoring of changing climatic conditions within the region, and encourage cooperative research with the Summerland Research Station and the University of British Columbia Okanagan (UBCO) that addresses plant adaptability to both longer growing season conditions and modified water requirements.
- e. Pursue local Bylaw authorization to be able to fully address the adverse impacts on surrounding properties created by inactive agricultural growing operations, including the spread of plant disease on abandoned orchards, vineyards or other horticultural operations.
- f. Ensure that agricultural interests in the region are aware of the potential wildfire hazardous conditions in rural and wildland interface areas, and advised of means to minimize those risks.
- g. Consider opportunities to establish an “organic farm zone” where farming practices and other aspects of environmental management produce environmental conditions necessary for organic production on a neighbourhood basis, not just a farm unit. Programs such as pest management programs, for example, would use environmentally friendly approaches within an “organic zone”.

7.1 Recreation Activities & Corridors

7.1.1 Issue

- Ø A growing regional population and tourism market generates continued pressure for recreation opportunities.

7.1.2 Objectives

- Ø Limit the encroachment of recreational activities on agricultural lands.
- Ø Avoid or mitigate the disruption of farming activities and property damage from recreation access and activities.
- Ø Increase public awareness and education about the possible impacts of recreation on farming.
- Ø Incorporate recreation corridor planning with planning and buffering for agriculture.

7.1.3 Discussion

As the Okanagan region continues to grow there is more pressure for access to agricultural land for recreational pursuits. More residents are turning to agricultural lands as places to hike, walk pets, trail ride, or view nature. Residents of Ellison horse farms, for example, are drawn to adjoining range lands for trail riding, and residents of Westbank regularly use unfenced orchards and vineyards for daily walking. A right of access is, in some cases, assumed by residents with some even installing their own gates onto agricultural lands. The addition of more people into agricultural areas means new opportunities for the spread of weeds, littering, trespass and vandalism. As well, farmers are concerned about potential issues of liability, particularly where recreation activities involve higher risk sports such as mountain biking and horseback riding.

Recreational opportunities can also contribute to agricultural operations, particularly where an agricultural business is associated with agri-tourism. The growing farm accommodation industry, for example, promotes and advertises trail riding and hiking opportunities through agricultural areas.

The demand for linear trail corridors can be expected to increase with regional growth, particularly when urban development is required to jump over prime ALR lands in the valley to non-ALR lands at higher elevations. This process will produce a scattered pattern of urban development that should be connected through recreation as well as transportation corridors. Agricultural lands offer attractive areas for locating the pedestrian and traffic corridors but these corridors should avoid ALR lands wherever possible and not spill over onto agricultural lands. At the same time agricultural areas may provide the only opportunity for accessing satellite hillside development. Careful planning is necessary to minimize the impact of any corridors. Planning should address buffering, recreation and transportation uses.

7.1.4 Recommendations

- a. When planning for new recreational activities (e.g. neighbourhood parks) avoid locations where there is a potential for conflict between recreation and agricultural activities. Where there is an interface, activities need to consider mitigation measures and buffering.
- b. Develop a definition for agri-tourism that prohibits or requires mitigative measures for uses that could impact adjacent farms (e.g. trail rides).
- c. Consider undertaking an agricultural impact assessment of proposed recreational uses on or adjacent to agricultural lands when park acquisition or dedication is being considered. The impact assessment should address potential impacts and measures to avoid or mitigate adverse effects.
- d. Involve farmers whose properties and activities are affected in decisions on the location, timing and duration of public access in recreational areas adjacent to farms.
- e. Explore opportunities to mitigate current conflicts through such mechanisms as landscaping, fencing, ditching, and timing of recreational use (e.g. posting of signs in parks during pesticide spraying), and by-law enforcement of parking on local roads and dogs roaming freely on farm fields.

- f. Develop an education strategy to inform recreationists about agricultural operations and how their activities may affect farms (e.g. signs, brochures, a “code of ethics/conduct”).

- g. Develop a greenway corridor plan to connect development nodes to other urban development areas (e.g. Smith Creek development to Westbank, or Ellison to Kelowna). Corridor plans should address potential impacts and mitigative measures for agricultural lands. Planning considerations should include:
 - Ø ability to skirt rather than bisect large blocks of ALR land.
 - Ø requires a minimum amount of land.
 - Ø includes a buffer between ALR and non-ALR uses.
 - Ø provides strategy for the long-term ownership and maintenance of the corridor.
 - Ø includes an opportunity to incorporate pedestrian activities and environmental objectives (e.g. protected sensitive stream corridor with pedestrian access).
 - Ø connects existing community focal points (waterfront, commercials areas) to new development areas (Smith Creek and Shannon Lake).

- h. Limit the number of recreation trails through agricultural areas. Concentrate trail development on:
 - Ø stream corridors, roads or other features that form logical edges to agricultural areas.
 - Ø corridors and/or greenways that can connect planned development nodes.
 - Ø trails that support an agri-tourism business and do not impact agricultural lands.

- i. Provide educational, directional and behavioural signage (code of ethics/conduct in farm areas) along public recreation corridors that traverse agricultural lands.

- j. Encourage recreation event organizers to provide advance notification in the community, enabling farmers and/or the public to make any desired adjustments.

- k. Where recreation opportunities are planned for the region, consideration should be given to the unique planning issues associated with agriculture.

8.1 Public Awareness of Agriculture

8.1.1 Issue

- Ø Commitment to the protection of agricultural lands needs to be strengthened by broad public awareness of the value of local agriculture.

8.1.2 Objective

- Ø Maintain and enhance efforts to heighten awareness of local agriculture and the Agricultural Land Reserve.

8.1.3 Discussion

The Regional District of Central Okanagan is primarily an urban region with 78% of its population living in the communities of Kelowna, Peachland and Lake Country. In addition, of the remaining population, only 375 persons are reported as farm operators in 2001. In this strongly urban context it is necessary to continue to have ongoing efforts to heighten local awareness of agriculture. As well, there is an ongoing need to re-enforce the value of ALR land for agriculture, as there is an ongoing perception of ALR land as land in transition that has future urban development potential.

8.1.4 Recommendation

- a. Support initiatives to introduce children to local agriculture and raise their understanding of agriculture. Potential initiatives include:
 - Ø In-service programs for teachers to raise awareness of curriculum options through the “Agriculture in the Classroom” program.
 - Ø RDCO sponsored award for student projects on local agriculture (Heritage Fair, Science Fair, Agriculture in the Classroom).
 - Ø work with the School District to explore opportunities for joint School Garden/Community Garden Projects.
 - Ø encourage farms to provide school farm tours.
 - Ø developing local partnerships to build upon Agriculture in the Classroom initiatives such as the School Fruit & Vegetable Snack Program.

- b. Develop materials to promote agriculture in the region, such as:
 - Ø Growers Guide listing community information, producers, fresh food, value-added products, farmers markets.
 - Ø Farm Tour Guide listing farm events, farm festivals, and agri-tourism businesses (e.g. Westside farm/winery tour).
 - Ø buy local programs.
- c. Support initiatives that encourage a buy-local shopping attitude for locally-grown and raised products.
- d. Pursue establishment of a permanent Farmers' Market in the Westside community.
- e. Expand the role of agricultural history and heritage in the region through interpretive opportunities at facilities including the Gellatly Nut Farm, the Fintry Heritage Centre, and the Ellison School.
- f. Continue to support the annual Farm Tour with elected officials to maintain their firsthand understanding of farm issues.

8.2 Farm Succession & Research

8.2.1 Issue

- Ø Process needed to ensure that farm succession and introduction of new farm practices results in the continued improvement of farm management capability, environmental stewardship, shorter gaps in production quality and quantity and passing on of rural codes of conduct.

8.2.2 Objectives

- Ø Ensure continued and/or improved productivity from the agricultural land base during changes in land ownership or changes in agricultural production.

8.2.3 Discussion

Farmers in the Regional District represent an aging population and farms are being bought and sold as they retire. Throughout their farming career these farmers have developed knowledge of local conditions that is an asset that should be communicated to new industry entrants.

In addition to maintaining the existing knowledge base, there is also a need to research and explore new opportunities for improving agriculture in the Regional District. It will be particularly important to address impacts of climate change and water resources. As well, global changes such as rising fuel prices will impact agricultural production patterns and costs and may create opportunities for new local products. Farmers will benefit if there is a local research facility examining these issues that they can access and use to assist them in their decision making process.

8.2.4 Recommendations

- a. Facilitate agricultural apprenticeship initiatives for new agricultural property owners.
- b. Work with UBCO to provide extension courses using farm expertise.
- c. Consider the potential role of the Economic Development Commission through the efforts of the Agriculture Support Officer (Section 9) as an agricultural information distribution centre, directed at consolidating the wide range of materials available to the agricultural community on programs, regulations, research and emerging trends.
- d. Pursue enhancement of agricultural interests through cooperative field research and training ventures with the newly established Agriculture faculty and Agroecology Degree Program at UBCO, and the facilities of the Summerland Research Station.
- e. Support initiatives such as the UBCO – BCFGGA agreement to work jointly on a broad range of agricultural interests.

- f. Work with AL to explore ways to work with members of the farm community, raising awareness of potential opportunities in agriculture. AL could be involved as follows:
- Ø ongoing connection and transfer of information to proposed Agricultural Support Officer particularly providing assistance with business planning for new farm initiatives.
 - Ø hosting of local workshops on agricultural opportunities.
- g. Consider opportunities to work jointly with neighbourhoods and farmers to provide information on the farm industry and farming legislation (e.g. Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act). The focus should be on getting people involved and raising awareness of farm issues. Opportunities may include:
- Ø meetings with neighbourhood associations scheduled to focus on agricultural issues.
 - Ø identifying neighbourhood contact(s) to liaise on agricultural issues (e.g. phone committee to advise residents of timing for spraying).
 - Ø exploring opportunities for the RDCO to add agricultural information on the website.
 - Ø neighbourhood campaigns to address urban/rural interface areas (e.g. use adopt-a-road model for rural/urban interface).

9.1 Agricultural Support Officer

9.1.1 Issue

- ∅ The farm community lacks local resources to assist with the promotion and enhancement of agricultural opportunities.

9.1.2 Objective

- ∅ To establish an Agricultural Support Officer position as a pilot project within the organization of the Economic Development function.

9.1.3 Discussion

Through the Agricultural Plan it is evident that the agricultural industry could benefit from having additional support in the form of business planning, educational opportunities, improved access to information and avenues to liaise with other agencies and institutions associated with agriculture. There are many groups involved with various aspects of these issues but the area lacks a coordinating local way to obtain support. Accordingly, it is recommended that the Regional District develop an Agricultural Support Officer position to provide assistance to the local farm industry as a pilot project. This position would require a person:

- ∅ technically trained and familiar with agriculture;
- ∅ able to work directly with farmers and the farming community;
- ∅ knowledgeable of the tools and techniques of business planning; and
- ∅ experienced working within the policy structure of the Regional District.

The Regional District and its member municipalities are keenly interested in supporting the farming community and filling a need for services expressed by the agricultural community during the development of this Plan. It could be argued that several initiatives in this Plan including education, centralized information exchange, and agricultural business support are the responsibility of the provincial rather than local government. There is an opportunity for the provincial government to be more forthrightly active in answering the business needs of farmers and supporting the business of agriculture.

9.1.4 Recommendation

- a. Encourage the provincial government to provide a focused leadership role in business related support for individual farmers, farm diversity, and secondary business opportunities.
- b. Establish an Agricultural Support Officer position as a 2 year pilot project, evaluating the opportunity for a permanent position at the end of the 2 year period in light of its success and limitations, and in light of provincial responsibilities and funding participation. Potential responsibilities and roles for this position include:

Business Planning:

- Ø work with the farm community to raise awareness of existing programs.
- Ø provide assistance negotiating on and accessing programs.
- Ø provide assistance with business planning for farm upgrade or feasibility projects.

Facilitating Education Programs:

- Ø farm community education on techniques, trends and opportunities.
- Ø raising the profile of agriculture in the Central Okanagan.
- Ø public education on agriculture (e.g. importance of industry to community, farm practices).
- Ø agriculture diversification and value-added opportunities (e.g. agri-tourism).

Information Resource:

- Ø distribution of information on existing programs (e.g. Environmental Farm Plan Program, Burn Program).
- Ø data collection and monitoring (e.g. assessment information).
- Ø case study tracking (e.g. niche market ventures).
- Ø current agricultural research activity monitoring (e.g. climate change).

Community Liaison for Agriculture:

- Ø maintain connections with research and industry experts.

- Ø university and college liaison (e.g. UBCO Agriculture Degree Program).
- Ø liaison on resource allocation strategies for agriculture (e.g. water resources).

Other:

- Ø agriculture grant application preparation.
- Ø monitoring Agricultural Plan implementation.

The implementation of the Plan cannot fall entirely on the proposed industry support person. The Agricultural Support Officer may be involved in Plan activities that are multi-jurisdictional in nature requiring participation from other agencies and Regional District staff.

10.1 Participants & Strategies

The implementation strategy is a critical component of the Agricultural Plan, required to assign responsibilities and timeframes for achieving plan recommendations.

Implementation of the plan requires commitments from the following:

- Ø agricultural community and the public
- Ø Agricultural Advisory Committee
- Ø Regional District
- Ø provincial government ministries particularly Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and Ministry of Transportation
- Ø Agricultural Land Commission
- Ø Federal Government
- Ø other local governments including regional municipalities and Regional Districts

Plan strategies recommend ongoing cooperative relationships for the agricultural community and the public. The farm community will have new avenues to explore opportunities in agriculture and the plan policies recommend increasing public awareness of agriculture through a variety of strategies.

The Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) will continue in its current advisory role, providing a strong link between the agricultural community and the Regional District. The Plan encourages the AAC to become more involved with other regional AAC's, potentially working with a regional AAC established to have a larger regional context (e.g. climatic change). The establishment of Regional AAC is outside the jurisdiction of the RDCO.

The Regional District will be most involved through direct administration of the plan and through the hiring of an Agricultural Support Officer as a pilot project. Policy changes are also required to strengthen the ALR boundary and clarify buffering provisions in urban-fringe interface areas.

The Provincial Government will be involved in Plan implementation through jurisdictional roles and as a potential funding source. Particularly AL is encouraged to

have strong role in working with the farming community to explore agricultural opportunities and business enhancement. The Plan has identified a need for more education on the economic development aspects of farm industry growth. In particular, the aspects of finding niche market farm products and developing marketing plans to get farm products to local markets. The Plan recommends adding this economic, product marketing perspective to the traditional scientific agrology based perspective of AL to provide the local farm community with the expertise necessary to identify new initiatives in the Central Okanagan. Some aspects of business development assistance will be provided through the Agricultural Support Officer, however, additional resources will be required through AL for the effective delivery of the agricultural enhancement initiatives.

The Agricultural Plan also includes recommendations that require engaging the Ministry of Transportation in discussions on:

- ∅ integrative, comprehensive transportation planning through agricultural areas (e.g. rural road design standards).
- ∅ restructuring the subdivision approval process to include a comprehensive assessment of agricultural impacts.

The ALC will maintain its significant role in the region regarding protection of ALR lands. Urban edge conditions will continue to face development pressures and the ALC can assist the Regional District in ensuring that edges are strengthened in areas of prime ALR lands.

ALR lands in remote rural areas represent the majority of the regional ALR inventory however these lands and their boundaries have received only preliminary analysis. These lands have not been clearly defined through soils studies and field reconnaissance. Although not a high priority, these areas should be evaluated over the long term to ensure effective agricultural area planning.

The Federal Government has a jurisdiction role as well as being a potential source of funding and research. The Plan emphasizes a key research role for the Federal Government through the Summerland research station particularly in continuing research on climatic change and crop opportunities.

The Agricultural Plan also includes strategies that may involve other local governments. Agriculture is a regional issue and all parties can benefit from working together to address shared issues such as economic development, servicing, marketing and research.

Table 10.1 provides an overview of key plan priorities, responsibilities and timing. The following is a draft only and subject to updating when the policies in the final plan are determined. There is a certain amount of staffing and resources available to carry out the strategic actions outlined in the Agricultural Plan. Each action also differs in the time it will take and complexity. Priorities need to be set about what happens first. The Regional District will also need to balance the obligations of the Agricultural Plan with the resources necessary to carry out other obligations set out in other plans and policies.

Table 10.1 Key Issue/Recommendation Area by Priority and Timeframe for Action

<i>Priority for Action</i>	<i>Recommendation Area</i>	<i>Key Issue</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
1	Strengthening Policy & Governance	Transportation Planning & Subdivision Approval	Shorter term
1	Strengthening Policy & Governance	Partnership for Regional Agricultural Vision & Strategy	Immediate
1	Irrigation	Integrated Partnerships & Decision Making involving Water Purveyors	Immediate
1	Irrigation	Valley-wide Water Management Plan	Shorter term
1	Industry Support	Agricultural Support Officer	Immediate
2	External Competition	Economic Development Strategy	Shorter term
2	Costs of Production	Review agri-tourism initiatives	Longer term
2	Land Costs	Consider "land banking"	Shorter term
2	Rural Urban-Fringe	Region-wide urban edge planning	Shorter term
2	Rural Urban-Fringe	Edge Covenant	Shorter term
2	Rural Urban-Fringe	Residential Home Plate/ Footprint Regulations	Shorter term
2	Rural-Urban Fringe	Development Permit Area	Shorter term

<i>Priority for Action</i>	<i>Recommendation Area</i>	<i>Key Issue</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>
2	Recreation	Agri-tourism Definition	Shorter term
2	Recreation	Greenway Corridor Planning	Shorter term
2	Strengthening Policy & Governance	Refinements to Regional Growth Strategy & OCP Policies	Shorter term
2	Strengthening Policy & Governance	Farm By-law	Longer term
2	Servicing Infrastructure	Farm Community Representative in Decision Making	Shorter term
2	Irrigation	Ongoing Research	Shorter term
2	Roads	Develop Rural Road Standards	Shorter term
2	Education	Introducing children to agriculture	Shorter term
3	Rural Urban-Fringe	education	Longer term
3	Environment	Climatic Change Research	Longer term
3	Strengthening Policy & Governance	Delegation Agreement	Longer term
3	Sanitary Sewer	Education Program on Irrigation using Wastewater	Longer term
3	Education	Regional Agricultural Profile	Longer term
3	Education	Westside Market & Agricultural Historical Venues	Longer term
3	Education	Agricultural Apprenticeship	Longer term

10.2 Costs

The most intermediate implementation costs to the Regional District involve the hiring of the Agricultural Support Officer and assigning staff to oversee the implementation of the Plan.

Long term capital costs may also be associated with strategies to strengthen ALR edges through opportunities for land banking and maintaining and enhancing buffers.

The Regional District should also explore opportunities for cost-sharing, perhaps identifying new partners to support economic development initiatives or the funding of the Agriculture Support Officer over the long-term.

REFERENCES

Cohen, Stewart, Denise Nielsen and Scott Smith. 2004. Expanding the Dialogue on Climatic Change and Water Management in the Okanagan Basin, British Columbia. Environment Canada and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

Regional District of Central Okanagan, 2005. Agricultural Area Plan – Background Report.

Statistics Canada, 2001, Survey of Agriculture.