

***Disclaimer: These minutes were prepared as a reasonable summary of the essential content of this meeting, not as a transcription.***



**Minutes of the Agricultural Advisory Committee Meeting**

**February 15, 2024, 10:00 a.m.**

**Meadows Room**

**12007 Harris Road, Pitt Meadows, BC V3Y 2B5**

Voting Members:	J. Bachmann H. Bitter T. Hopcott W. Jack L. Kemper P. Robinson T. Vader D. Bondar, B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Food (non-voting member)
Council Liaisons:	Councillor B. Meachen (Alternate)
Guests:	Honourable L. Beare, Minister of Citizens' Services, and MLA for Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows H. Campbell, School District Trustee T. Despault, B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and Food E. Elsliger, Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship J. Shrimmer, Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
Staff:	M. Baski, Project Manager, Agriculture & Environment (Chair) P. Ward, Director of Planning & Development C. Reimer, Manager of Operations T. Warren, Deputy Fire Chief, Community Safety
Regrets:	D. Kosicki S. Howkins J. Parmar W. Wisselink Councillor M. Manion

Recording Clerk: K. Hills, Committee Clerk II  
V. Reid, Committee Clerk II

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

M. Baski, Project Manager, Planning, acknowledged that the meeting was held on the traditional territory of the ᑭᓴᓴᑦ (Katzie) First Nation.

The meeting was called to order at 10:07 a.m.

**2. LATE ITEMS**

None.

**3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

There was general consent amongst the committee to approve the February 15, 2024 Agricultural Advisory Committee agenda.

**4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES**

There was general consent amongst the Committee to approve the minutes from the November 9, 2023 Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting as circulated.

**5. NEW BUSINESS**

**5.1 Water Licensing and Water Shortage Discussion**

The Honourable L. Beare, Minister of Citizens' Services, and MLA for Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows, was in attendance and addressed the topic of water licensing and water shortages. She advised that many community members have shared their concerns about water licensing and thanked the committee for the opportunity to attend the meeting.

Note: All questions and discussions were held until all guests had given their presentations to the Committee.

J. Shrimmer and E. Elsliger, from the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship provided a PowerPoint presentation on water licensing and water shortage, forming a part of the minutes as Attachment 1.

T. Despault, from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food provided a PowerPoint presentation on available resources to producers from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, which included: information, tools, and funding; training

and engagement workshops; and resources on agricultural water management, forming part of the minutes as Attachment 2.

D. Bondar, from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food also provided an information poster on Decoding Drought Management Engagements Sessions, forming part of the minutes as Attachment 3. The information sessions are an initiative to help better communicate with the Agricultural Community and ascertain information as to how improvements could be made.

The Committee participated in a roundtable discussion following all guest presentations, including the following main themes:

- M. Baski informed the committee that the City of Pitt Meadows is already looking further into irrigation data provided by J. Shrimmer and E. Elsliger. Specifically, City staff are looking into ground water wells and location parameters.
- A question was raised on whether a water right could be taken back.
  - E. Elslinger advised that the water license is granted in perpetuity, however, if there was a situation of a severe draught, a licensee would first be asked to voluntarily surrender the license.
- A comment was made about whether the Alouette Lake Reservoir water could be used for irrigation.
  - J. Shrimmer said BC Hydro and Katzie First Nation both hold water rights to Alouette Lake Reservoir, but it may be something to look into further; J. Shrimmer offered to provide a contact name with respect to the water licensing for BC Hydro to determine whether some water could be held for irrigation purposes at a cost.
- The Fraser River was brought forward as a source of water for irrigation purposes and there was discussion on why the current pump station couldn't be used.
  - Staff said they didn't currently have resources, including staffing, and the current infrastructure is reactive for flooding rather than for proactive for irrigation. Staff also confirmed the City does not hold any water licenses.

- A discussion was had around the subject of wells and a comment was made that drilling wells could potentially be a waste of resources, as they had previously filled with salt water and they are not a long term solution; instead there would be support from the committee for a lift pump in the Pitt River that puts water back into the system, which would be a solution for everyone as it would raise the water back up in the ditches.
  - Staff confirmed they would pass this information along to the assessors; a comment was made about the wells that were drilled being unusable as they always had salt water in them. J. Shrimmer suggested looking at existing wells prior to drilling new ones.
- Staff asked Ministry staff whether there was information on ground water wells in Pitt Meadows.
  - J. Shrimmer said they did not have that information, and suggested looking at mapped Aquifers in Pitt Meadows and the age of the maps.

\*The Hon. L. Beare, left the meeting 10:54 a.m.

\*The Hon. L. Beare, returned to the meeting at 10:57 a.m.

- Staff confirmed that the current pump systems near the rivers are set up for drainage and not intended for irrigation. The City has to consider the options and risks for the entire community, in addition to the needs of the farming community. The City's in-progress irrigation study is intended to support the further consideration of the challenges and opportunities.
- A comment was made about the upcoming farming season being affected by the predicted lack of water, and that main comments today were about how can the licensing requirements be expedited when the situation immediately demands it.
- J. Shrimmer suggested applying for a Use Approval Permit, which is the short-term ability for a City, to use water. The application would still require information such as flow data, but the validity of the water license is for a short term period of time: two years. The data collected



during the Use Approval Permit could be then be used at a later date for a Water Licensing Application.

- D. Bondar suggested that the Agricultural Water Infrastructure Program could potentially provide funding for irrigation and water supply systems, such as a lift pump.

It was **MOVED** and **SECONDED** THAT the members of the AAC, request staff to:

- A. Pursue the application for a Use Approval Permit for water licensing for irrigation purposes, from either the:
  - i. Pitt River and/or;
  - ii. Fraser River and/or;
  - iii. Alouette River; and
- B. Pursue grant funding for irrigation and water supply systems, including a lift pump.

**CARRIED**

\*The Hon. L. Beare, left the meeting at 11:02 a.m.

## **5.2 Draft 2024 Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) Resolutions**

P. Ward, Director of Planning and Development, provided an overview of the draft UBCM Resolutions, forming a part of the minutes as Attachment 4.

The Committee participated in a roundtable discussion with the following main themes noted:

- (1) Minimum Requirements for Farm Classification: There was a discussion on how the resolutions affect the livelihood of small farm owners; the goal of the change was noted as to incentivize more farming;
- It was suggested to look at a two tiered system for minimum requirements for Farm Classification;

- Further to the discussion, the committee did not agree this was the best way to achieve that goal and it was noted they do not support the proposed increased income threshold for gross annual value of the farm operation figures;
- (2) School Tax Exemption: There was discussion on the proposed resolution regarding school tax exemption on ALR land if the land is vacant and unused or used only for a residential purpose;
- A question was raised on how other municipalities handle this specific type of taxation in the ALR;
- Further to the discussion, the committee confirmed their support of the proposed resolution of the School Tax Exemption;
- (3) Unfarmed Land Tax: There was a discussion on establishing a targeted unfarmed land tax to discourage speculation and encourage farming in the ALR; this resolution mirrors the speculative vacancy tax, same approach but with farm land;
- The committee confirmed their support of the proposed resolution for the Unfarmed Land Tax;

It was **MOVED** and **SECONDED** THAT the members of the AAC endorse the following draft UBCM Resolutions as presented at the February 15, 2024, Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting:

- A. School Tax Exemption, and
- B. Unfarmed Land Tax.

**CARRIED**

### 5.3 Introduction to the Urban Forest Strategy

Due to time, it was suggested to defer the Introduction to the Urban Forest Strategy presentation until the next committee meeting on March 7, 2024.

- M. Baski, Project Manager, Planning, to provide a PowerPoint presentation on the introduction to the Urban Forest Strategy, at the next AAC meeting.

#### **5.4 AAC Application Tracker**

M. Baski, Project Manager, Planning, provided an update on the AAC Application Tracker attached in today's agenda.

*There were no further discussions or comments made by the Committee on this topic.*

#### **5.5 AAC Action Items**

M. Baski, Project Manager, Planning, provided an update on the AAC Action Item Tracker. Proposed to open the March meeting to the Maple Ridge AAC.

*There were no further discussions or comments made by the Committee on this topic.*

#### **5.6 2024 AAC Calendar**

M. Baski, provided a review of the 2024 Committee meeting dates and it was confirmed that the April 11, 2024 meeting date would be changed to **April 25, 2024**, to accommodate guests' schedules.

#### **5.7 Fire Department Committee Recruitment**

Tracey Warren, Deputy Fire Chief, Community Safety, briefly spoke to the Committee about potential drought situations this summer. Deputy Chief Warren also advised that the Pitt Meadows Fire Department is recruiting members for the Community Firesmart and Resiliency Committee; a handout was provided and forms a part of the minutes as Attachment 5. The ideal candidate would have a vested interest in speaking on behalf of the AAC and have a vast range of knowledge. Commitment would be approximately 3 to 4 meeting per year, locally.

6. **ROUNDTABLE**

The Committee participated in a roundtable discussion, there were no motions or recommendations put forward.

7. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:23 p.m.

The next **Agricultural Advisory Committee** Meeting is scheduled for **March 7, 2024** at **10:00 AM**.

**Certified as correct:**

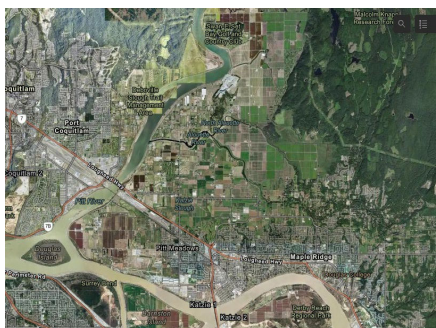
*Vanessa Reid*

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Vanessa Reid, Committee Clerk



ATTACHMENT 1



# Water Management in Pitt Meadows

February 15, 2024

**Jacquelyn Shrimmer**, Fish Protection Hydrologist, **Emily Elsiger**,  
Section Head Water Allocation

**Ministry of Water, Lands and Resource Stewardship**

## Science to Inform Decisions

ATTACHMENT 1  
BRITISH COLUMBIA Ministry of  
Water, Land and  
Resource Stewardship



Surface  
water



Groundwater  
science



Fish  
populations



Data collection  
and monitoring

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR APPLICATIONS

- ☐ Water or Aquifer Supply and Demand
- ☐ Details of Works
- ☐ Environmental Impacts:
  - ☐ Water quantity, water quality and the aquatic ecosystem
- ☐ Potential impacts to neighbouring properties and/or water users
- ☐ First Nations Rights and Title
- ☐ Agency interests (e.g., MOTI, ALC, BC Hydro, Fortis BC, Local Government)

## Environmental Protection

- **Environmental Flow Needs** – requirement for most applications
- **Hydraulic Connectivity** – consideration of groundwater–surface water connectivity
- **Critical Environmental Flow Threshold** – means of protection during times of scarcity

## Environmental Flow Needs (EFN)



DEFINITION: Volume & timing of water flow required for the proper functioning of the aquatic ecosystem of the stream.



Must be *considered* for new licences & use approvals for surface water and non-domestic groundwater use that is "hydraulically connected".

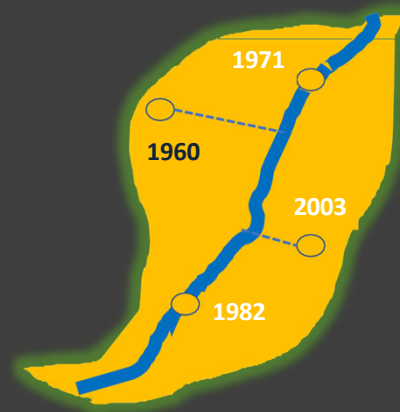
Minimum flow in reach of a stream to sustain environmental values in the long term

May also be requested for existing use applications

Mitigation or compensation could be required at time of decision

## WSA Fundamentals

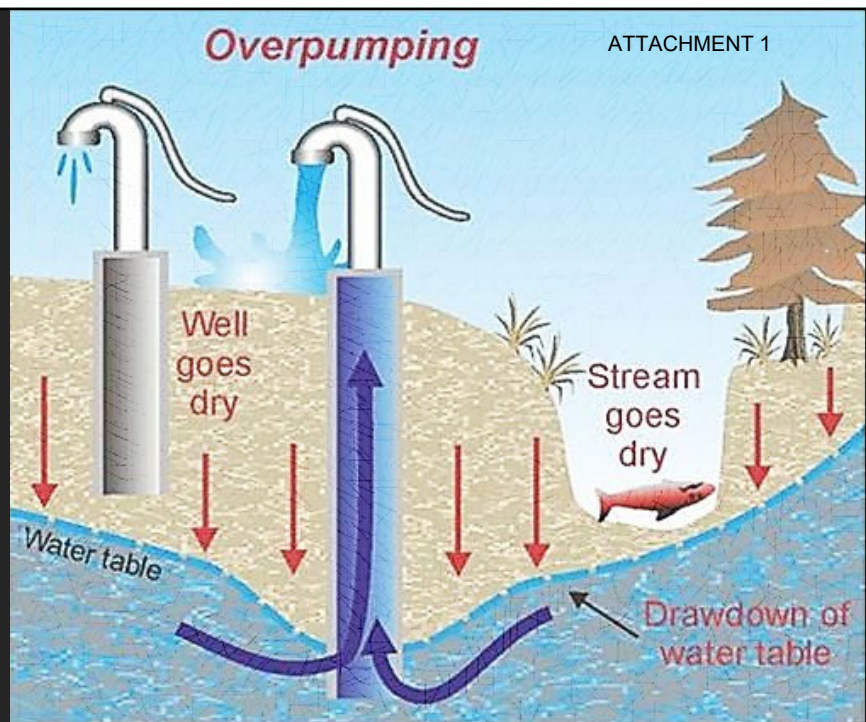
- Water rights are appurtenant to the land, mine or undertaking (i.e. not given to a person) and pass with the conveyance (sale or other disposition) of the land.
- FITFIR**: "First in Time, First in Right". You acquire a precedence right according to the dates set out in the authorizations for the diversion of water from a stream or aquifer.



If you plan on diverting, using or storing non-domestic water from a surface water or aquifer source, a Water Licence or Use Approval is required.



## Hydraulic Connectivity



## Environmental Protection: Critical Environmental Flow Threshold (CEFT)



**DEFINITION:** Volume of water flow below which *significant or irreversible harm* to the aquatic ecosystem of the stream is likely to occur.

- Absolute minimum flow level in the short term

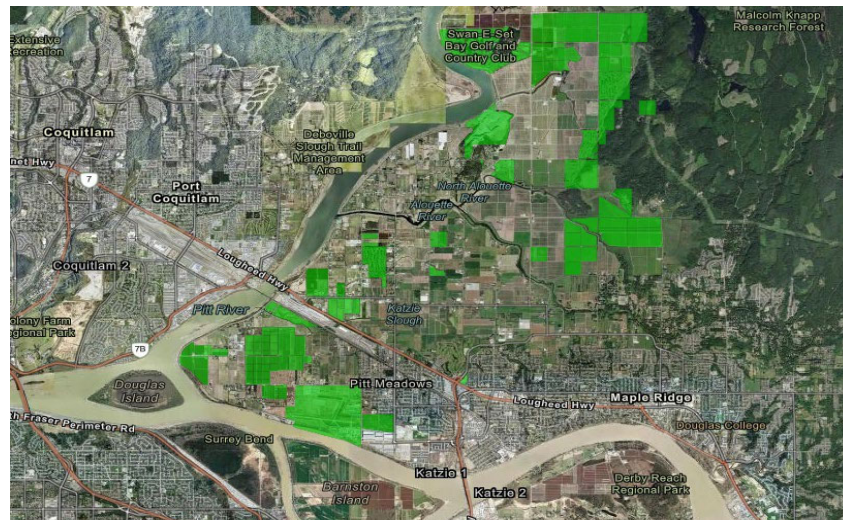
**TEMPORARY PROTECTION ORDER:**  
Regulates all water use during times scarcity to protect CEFT



# Water Licence Applications

File #	SW or GW	Submission Date	Purpose Use	Source
2003685	SW	Feb 24, 2015	Irrigation	Katzie Slough
2005190	SW	Jan 17, 2017	Greenhouse and Nursery	Cook Slough
20012855	SW	June 20, 2019	Irrigation	Unnamed
20023327	GW	Feb 8, 2022	Irrigation	Aquifer (near Alouette River)

# Parcels with an active water licenses

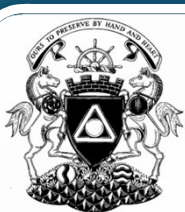


# Potential Options to explore for water supply

- Irrigation District
- Water Sustainability Plan
- Groundwater
- Fixing Leaks and upgrading infrastructure for water efficiency
- Other?


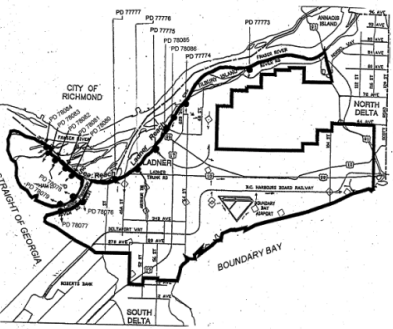
## Irrigation District Example – City of Delta

Water Licence →




THE CORPORATION OF DELTA  
BY-LAW NO. 7441  
A Bylaw to provide for the operation of the water service and  
impose charges for the use of water


Delta Water  
Service  
Bylaw No  
7441, 2016

WATER DISTRICT : NEW WESTMINSTER  
PRECINCT : FRASER DELTA  
LAND DISTRICT : NEW WESTMINSTER

Scale : 1:125,000  
Points of Diversion : ●  
Map Number : 92.0.005.2.4, 92.0.005.3.2, 92.0.005.3.3  
92.0.005.3.4, 92.0.005.4.3 & 92.0.005.4.4

This licence is appurtenant to lands located within The Corporation of Delta, boundaries of which are shown thus: 

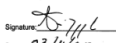


**ATTACHMENT 1**  
Province of British Columbia  
*Water Act*

CONDITIONAL WATER LICENCE


The Corporation of Delta is hereby authorized to divert and use water as follows:

- The streams on which the rights are granted are Fraser River, Ladner Reach, Sea Reach and Canoe Passage.
- The points of diversion/diversion are located as shown on the attached plan.
- The date from which this licence shall have precedence is August 30, 2001.
- The purposes for which this licence is issued are irrigation and land improvement (drainage).
- The maximum quantity of water which may be diverted is 24,000 acre feet per annum for irrigation purpose and that quantity required to maintain safe operating levels of the ditches as determined by the Corporation of Delta for land improvement (drainage) purpose.
- The period of the year during which the water may be used is the whole year.
- This licence is appurtenant to lands within the Corporation of Delta, boundaries of which are approximately as shown on the attached plan.
- The works authorized to be constructed are diversion structures, pumps and ditches which shall be located approximately as shown on the attached plan.
- The construction of the said works has been completed and the water is being beneficially used. The licensee shall continue to make a regular beneficial use of the water in the manner authorized herein.
- The diversion of water authorized under this licence may be restricted or prohibited at any time by an order in writing of the Regional Water Manager in order to maintain a minimum flow in the stream for the preservation of fish life.

Signature: 

Date: 03/11/05

C.L.: 118984  
File: 2002525



Alex Drysdale  
A/Regional Water Manager

File No: 2002525      Date issued: November 5, 2003      Conditional Licence: 116994

# Water Sustainability Plan

- Area based tool
- Initiated by Ministerial Order
- Can provide extensive change in how a watershed is managed
- Can be developed to address:
  - Conflict between users and Environmental Flow Needs
  - Risks to water quality or the aquatic ecosystem



## Thank you!

ATTACHMENT 1

Email:

[WaterActReferrals.LowerMainland@gov.bc.ca](mailto:WaterActReferrals.LowerMainland@gov.bc.ca)

FrontCounter BC: 604-586-4400

Drought Portal:

<http://bit.ly/BCDroughtPortal>



Drought in Agriculture:

<https://bit.ly/AgriStabilityInfo>



Water Licence Application:

<https://bit.ly/BCWaterLicenceApplication>



Drought & Water Scarcity:


<https://climatereadybc.gov.bc.ca/pages/drought-water-scarcity#resources>






ATTACHMENT 2

**What we will cover today:**



1. **Drought impacts** on the agriculture sector
2. Resources to help producers **prepare** for drought
3. What is AF's role **during a drought**
4. What is AF doing to help producers **recover** from the 2023 drought



## Our Understanding of Drought Impacts on Agriculture

- Crop losses and reduced crop quality and yield
- Cumulative impacts on perennial crop health over time
- Animal health, welfare and productivity
- Secondary/long-term impacts (e.g., increased costs, feed replacement, herd losses)
- Added stress and/or mental health impacts for farmers
- *Others?*



How are we helping producers prepare for drought?

- **Information and tools** to support on-farm water management
- **Funding programs** for water management and drought preparedness
- **Training and engagement** to build knowledge and capacity for improved on-farm water management



## Preparing for Drought

### Information: Key Factsheets & Guides

Factsheets available through the [Drought in Agriculture](#) webpage:

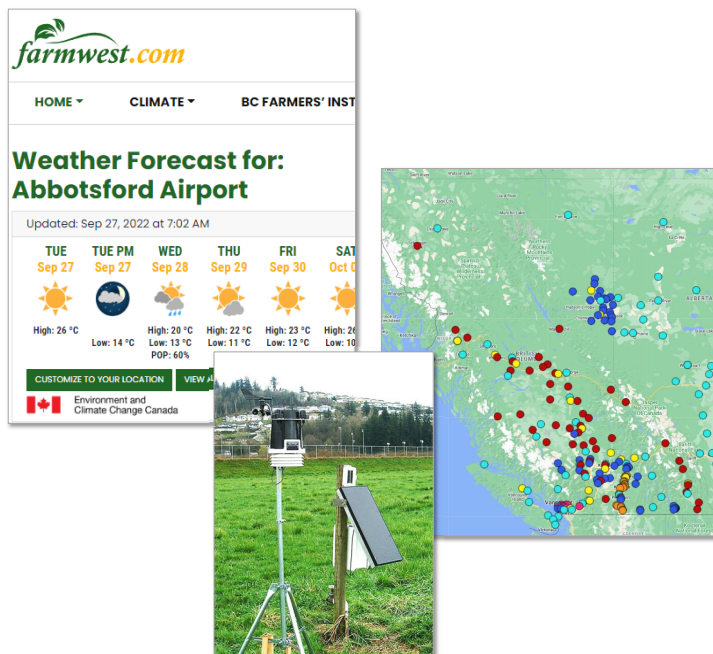
- [Quick Guide to Drought Resources](#)
- [Key Drought Management Tips](#)
- [Guidance On Farm Water Storage](#)
- [Irrigation Decisions with Limited Water](#)
- [B.C. Irrigation Management Guide](#)
- [Irrigation Tips to Conserve Water on the Farm](#)
- [Irrigation Water Saving Tips](#)
- And more...

## ATTACHMENT 2



## ATTACHMENT 2 Preparing for Drought

### Online Tools: Weather Stations

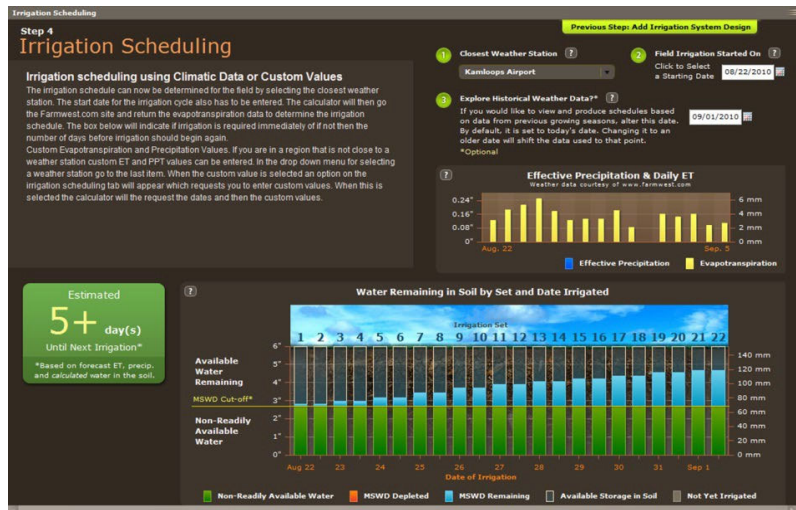


- Improve producers' access to weather data for decision-making that relies on weather conditions
- Over 200 stations in BC from a variety of federal, provincial, municipal, and private weather networks

## ATTACHMENT 2 Preparing for Drought

### Online Tools: Agricultural Irrigation Scheduling Calculator

- Uses real-time daily ET rates from climate stations linked to [www.Farmwest.com](http://www.Farmwest.com).
- Assists producers in making sound irrigation decisions.



## Preparing for Drought

### Programs: Agricultural Water Infrastructure Program

**Objective:** more efficient infrastructure or storage allows producers to maximize available water for agricultural uses, particularly irrigation and livestock watering

#### Project streams relate to:

1. Water storage systems and dams
2. Off-farm conveyance and water supply systems to farms (e.g., pipelines)
3. Agricultural water supply assessments, engineering studies or plans

#### Who's eligible?

- Incorporated and individual producers
- Agricultural and conservation groups
- Irrigation/improvement districts and local/municipal governments
- Indigenous Communities and Indigenous Producers



ATTACHMENT 2



## Preparing for Drought

Programs: [Environmental Farm Plan & Best Management Practices \(BMP\) for Water](#)

### What's eligible?

- New and upgrade/expansion of existing:
  - Irrigation systems
  - Dugouts, dams, reservoirs
  - Rainwater harvesting systems
- Irrigation system management/scheduling (e.g., soil moisture sensors/meters, weather stations)
- Water supply systems to farms (conversion of conveyance ditches to pipelines)
- Irrigation system assessments/plans & water management plans
- Engineering/technical designs and assessments

### Who's eligible?

- Any farm or ranch operation in BC with valid farm status (BC Assessment)
- Indigenous agricultural operations with designated authority to use the land.



## Preparing for Drought

Training & Engagement: Workshops and Resources

- [Workshops](#):
  - Drought Extension Workshops for Livestock and Forage Producers (*fall 2023 – info packages available*)
  - Agricultural Water Management Workshops
  - Decoding Drought Management Engagement Sessions
- **Regional Agrologists**: Front line staff offering regional support
- **Industry Specialists**: key liaison with industry associations, understanding industry needs/impacts

ATTACHMENT 2







ATTACHMENT 2

How does AF support the sector during a drought?

- **Communication** of drought conditions and response
- **Understanding** impacts and informing decisions
- **Supporting collaborative approaches** to drought response



ATTACHMENT 2

### Supporting Agriculture During Drought

Communication:  
What We Do & How Do We Improve?

- Work with WLRS in drought-related communications
- Develop and promote drought resources and supports
- Liaise with industry associations about drought decisions and sector impacts

**Where can I find the most current information?**

- [AgriService BC](#) e-bulletins (increasing frequency and moving to regional bulletins) - [join our mailing list!](#)
- Social media - [Facebook page](#)
- [BC Drought Information Portal](#) (drought conditions)

Questions to consider:

- Is this working for you? Are you hearing from your industry associations?
- What do you need to see more of or done differently?
- What are past successes that we could consider doing in the future?

# Get Connected With Us

## For more information on:

- Information and tools
- Funding programs
- Emergency supports
- Financial supports



[Drew.Bondar@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Drew.Bondar@gov.bc.ca)

Tara.Despault @gov.bc.ca

Subscribe to the **AgriService BC e-bulletin** and follow us on **Facebook** to hear about upcoming events, programs, and resources:

e-bulletin



Facebook







Ministry of  
Water, Land and  
Resource Stewardship



ATTACHMENT 3

Ministry of  
Agriculture  
and Food

# Decoding Drought Management Engagement Sessions

## Aldergrove, B.C.

**Monday, March 4, 2024, from 10:30am to 1:30 pm**

Aldergrove Kinsman Community Hall

26770 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Langley Township, B.C.

## Surrey, B.C.

**Tuesday, March 5, 2024, from 10:30am to 1:30pm**

Sullivan Community Association Hall

6306 152<sup>nd</sup> Street, Surrey, B.C.

## Chilliwack, B.C.

**Tuesday, March 12, 2024, from 10:30am to 1:30pm**

Atchelitz Community Hall

6542 Lickman Road, Chilliwack, B.C.

## Topics

**AGRICULTURAL DROUGHT SUPPORTS | 2024 CONDITIONS  
DISCUSSION | SCIENCE | DROUGHT RESPONSE ACTIONS**

For information on how to register contact:

**[events02@vgnresources.ca](mailto:events02@vgnresources.ca) or call [1-877-906-1131](tel:1-877-906-1131)**

Booking support provided by VGN Resources Group. Logistical support provided by VGN Resources Group and other project partners

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/decoding-drought-management-engagement-sessions-lower-mainland-tickets-827494637737?aff=oddttdtcreator>





## BACKGROUNDER

### Proposed UBCM Resolution: Minimum Requirements for Farm Classification

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#### Proposed Resolution:

WHEREAS the *Classification of Land as a Farm Regulation* establishes minimum gross income requirements for farm operations to be classified as Farm under the *Assessment Act*, that were last increased in 1993;

AND WHEREAS farm property tax reform that confers tax benefits to farm operations would help to encourage farming and support local food security;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that UBCM call upon the Province of BC to amend the *Classification of Land as a Farm Regulation* to increase the income thresholds to achieve Farm classification, to a single minimum gross farm income of \$7,000;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that UBCM call upon the Province of BC to review the income thresholds at least every five years.

The City of Pitt Meadows' recently-completed Agricultural Viability Strategy identifies farm property tax reform, including updates to the income thresholds, as a key action for stimulating a productive agricultural land base. Currently, under the [\*Classification of Land as a Farm Regulation\*](#), to be classified as farm under the *Assessment Act*, the gross annual value of the farm operation must be at least:

- \$2 500, if the area of land is between 0.8 ha and 4 ha;
- \$2 500 plus 5% of the farmland value of the land farmed in excess of 4 ha; or
- \$10 000, if the total area of the land is less than 0.8 ha.

The 2015 Metro Vancouver report on [\*Farm Tax Class Income Threshold Investigation\*](#) investigated whether the income thresholds to qualify for BC Assessment's Farm class status warrant adjustment to ensure that farmers and the public interest are benefitting from the policy to support the longterm viability of agriculture. The following are excerpts from that report:

*"Across Canada, and indeed across the world, different jurisdictions use various measuring sticks and associated incentives for farmers. It is worth noting that BC has one of the lowest income thresholds both within Canada and abroad. These include:*

- *Ontario sets farm property taxes at 25% of the municipal residential rate, but gross farm income must be at least \$7,000 as reported to the CRA for income tax purposes.*

- Quebec offers a rebate system: 50-77% off the residential rate, depending on the level of farm sales (77% if more than \$10,000). They also use a maximum assessed value for school taxes on farmland.
- Saskatchewan has a system that excludes farm residences and farm buildings from property taxes. Assessment values range from 50% (rangeland) to 70% (cropland) of agricultural market value.
- Alberta's Department of Agriculture and Forestry notes that a minimum of \$10,000 gross annual farm production income is required to obtain farm status.

Raising the threshold will discourage those who are using farmland primarily for lifestyle reasons and are obtaining Farm class status for solely the tax benefit. It will help ensure that the tax benefit is offered only to hobby and commercial farming operations.

A single, higher threshold was also a recommendation from the 2009 BC Farmland Assessment Panel report. That report recommended changing the threshold to \$3,500 for all farm sizes. It is now 6 years later, and it is worthwhile revisiting an increase in the Farm class threshold. It may also be appropriate to use inflation as a starting point for validating the threshold level, which was previously undertaken in 1995. At today's dollar values, the thresholds used in 1974 and 1993 would be between \$3,500 and \$7,500 when adjusted for inflation.

The 2016 Metro Vancouver White Paper on [Encouraging Agricultural Production Through Farm Property Tax Reform in Metro Vancouver](#) also informed the proposed resolution on the Minimum Requirements for Farm Classification. The following is an excerpt from that White Paper:

*"One of the main reasons for changing the threshold is to encourage more actively farmed land either through leasing agricultural land to farmers or by encouraging more investments in farming to increase income levels. In addition, removing the \$10,000 income threshold for properties less than 2 acres could encourage new farms on small lots near urban areas."*



## BACKGROUNDER

### Proposed UBCM Resolution: School Tax Exemption

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#### Proposed Resolution:

WHEREAS the *School Act* exempts 50% of the assessed value of a parcel of land in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) from school taxation if the land is vacant and unused, or used only for a residential purpose;

AND WHEREAS to encourage farming in the ALR to ensure local food security, school tax exemptions should only apply to ALR land that is being used for a farm purpose;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that UBCM call upon the Province of BC to amend the *School Act* to remove the 50% school tax exemption for vacant and unused land, and residential purpose land in the ALR.

The City of Pitt Meadows' recently-completed Agricultural Viability Strategy identifies farm property tax reform, including changes to the school tax exemption, as a key action for stimulating a productive agricultural land base. This resolution on the school tax exemption was informed by the background information in the 2016 Metro Vancouver White Paper on [Encouraging Agricultural Production Through Farm Property Tax Reform in Metro Vancouver](#). The following are excerpts from that White Paper:

*"The policy option under consideration is to eliminate the 50% school tax exemption for properties classed as "Residential" in the ALR. This change would ensure that residential uses of land are treated equitably throughout the region, whether in or outside the ALR. Removing the exemption is also justifiable because these residential properties are not farming or leasing their land and therefore are not providing the public benefits recognized for farms."*

*"The school tax exemption is an inequitable property tax policy as the main beneficiaries of the policy are residential landowners in the ALR who are not farming. Reforming this policy would provide a financial incentive to farm or lease agricultural land, as farm class would be required to receive the school tax exemption. Land classified as farm should retain the benefit because it supports active farming and the cost to society for providing this exemption to farmers is small. The elimination of residential classification from the School Act (Section 130) requires a change in provincial legislation, and would automatically apply to other agency fees defined under the Act."*

The BC Chamber of Commerce also recommends reforming the school tax exemption to apply strictly to land classified as farm (refer to [Using Property Tax Reform to Support](#)

[Agriculture Production](#)). The following is an excerpt from the BC Chamber of Commerce policy:

*"All land in the ALR, regardless of classification, receives a 50% exemption on School taxes. The 50% exemption also includes other taxes in Metro Vancouver such as TransLink, Hospitals, etc. An analysis completed by Metro Vancouver found that properties not used for farming accounted for 84% of the total amount of school tax exemptions for the region, despite accounting for only 59% of parcels. In particular, small properties (under two acres), not necessarily subject to ALR restrictions, received school tax exemptions."*



## BACKGROUND

### Proposed UBCM Resolution: Unfarmed Land Tax

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#### Proposed Resolution:

WHEREAS the purpose of the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) is to preserve much-needed land for farming to ensure local food security, and not real estate speculation;

AND WHEREAS speculation in the ALR can lead to increased land values and the underutilization of ALR land for farming;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that UBCM call upon the Province of BC to establish a targeted unfarmed land tax, to discourage speculation and encourage farming in the ALR.

The City of Pitt Meadows' recently-completed Agricultural Viability Strategy identifies farm property tax reform, including a targeted tax on unfarmed land, as a key action for stimulating a productive agricultural land base. In order to try to prevent valuable farmland from falling into the hands of speculators and developers, the proposed Unfarmed Land Tax is intended to be similar to the Speculation and Vacancy Tax introduced by the Province in 2018, to try to discourage housing speculation and people from leaving homes vacant in designated areas of BC.

The proposed Unfarmed Land Tax would tax land that is within the ALR that could be farmed, but that is not being farmed due to land speculation. It is intended to encourage farming in the ALR by providing a financial incentive to farm the land or lease it for farming.

The [2022 Farm Credit Canada Farmland Values Report](#) states that "the average cultivated farmland values in British Columbia increased by 8.0% in 2022. This followed an 18.1% increase in 2021 and an 8.0% increase in 2020. British Columbia is the only province to have recorded a single digit increase at 8.0%, but it is also a market where land values on a per-acre basis are the highest on average. Increasing demand and limited supply contributed to higher values throughout the province. Farmland near urban areas or within commuting distance saw increased competition for hobby farming, rural residences or investments." The land values are particularly high in the South Coast, Vancouver Island, and Okanagan regions.

This increase in land cost makes it nearly impossible for new, young farmers to enter the farming sector. Leasing land is now necessary to farm, as farmers are getting priced out of the market; however, farmers are less likely to invest in infrastructure and equipment



for leased land due to the uncertainty. Additionally, some land owners speculate that by not leasing the land for farming, they will be able to prove that the land is not viable for farming, in order to try to exclude it from the ALR and redevelop it for urban uses in the future.

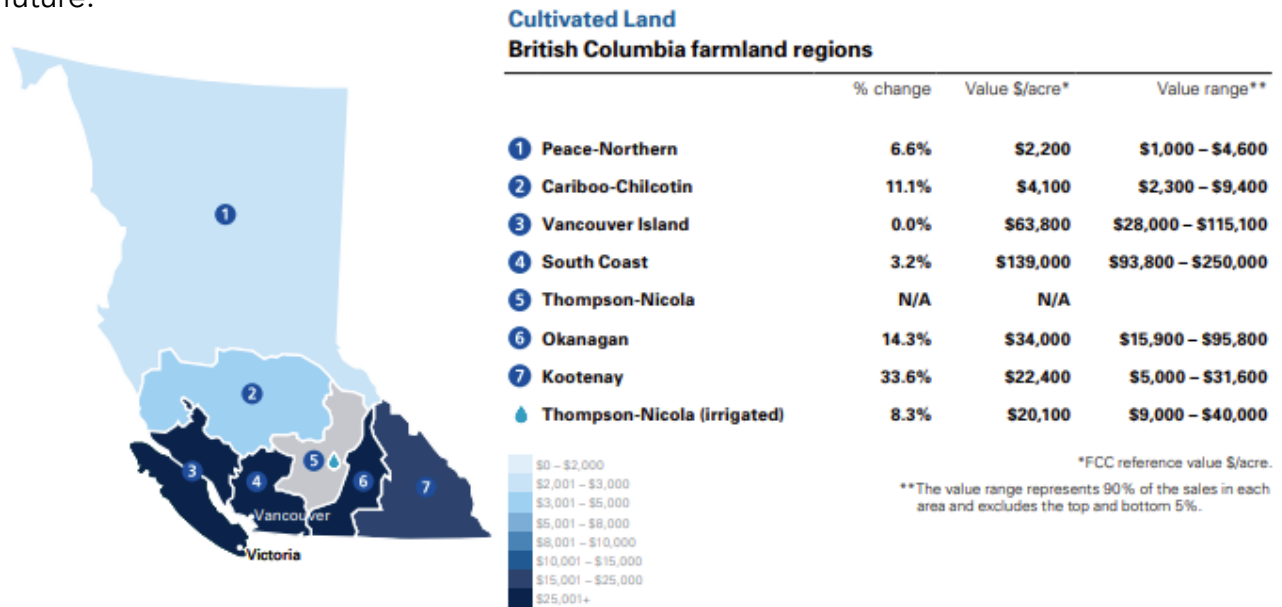


Figure 1 – BC Cultivated Land Value/Acre

Similarly, the BC Fruit Grower's Association and the BC Tree Fruit Sector conducted an [ALR Review](#) in 2018, recommending an ALR luxury tax that would be applied to Non-residents on ALR land, that would be higher than the property tax on a similar large homes in an urban area, to prevent residential development in the ALR.

As recently reported in the media (see November 29, 2023 issue of [Country Life in BC](#)), an anti-speculation tax, or tax on unused farmland, is being considered by the Province and is supported by BC Young Farmers.

## ***What is a Community Firesmart and Resiliency Committee?***

*A CFRC fills a key level of collaboration and organization on a scalable level that is currently missing across B.C. It takes the collaborative efforts of multiple stakeholders working together to achieve wildfire resilient communities. This may include local fire departments, First Nation and/or local government staff and elected officials, provincial government organizations such as Emergency Management BC and BCWS, industry representatives and other community stakeholders. The Community Firesmart and Resiliency Committee can provide the missing link bringing partners together under a common vision connected to the seven Firesmart disciplines.*

*The purpose of the CFRC is to strengthen collaboration between key partners including local communities and provincial agency staff (EMBC, FLNRORD) with stakeholders to coordinate, plan and share information on how to successfully implement the seven FireSmart disciplines at a regional or multi scale level. As B.C. is such a varied province in terms of risk, level of involvement, and existing governance structures, there is no one set of criteria or format suggested. The remainder of this document will outline suggestions regarding scale, structure, relationships and activities that will help facilitate the creation and starting phases of a CFRC. This document is created for local government, First Nations, and those involved in building resilient communities by following the seven FireSmart disciplines as a holistic approach to reducing wildfire risk to communities.*

*Suggested activities for CFRC Committee Successful CFRC committees reflect a range of local knowledge and expertise which can be accomplished by creating a multi-disciplinary, multi-agency steering committee that also includes other representatives. A CFRC is also a strong mechanism for coordinating collaboration between local FCFS funded activities and CLWRR funded activities and to collaborate on new plans and projects for the future. Defining audiences also sets the stage for how these interests can be represented during the development process. Below is a list of suggested activities that could be part of a Community FireSmart and Resiliency Committee:*

- *Develop or maintain a Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan.*
- *Provide collaboration and coordination on Community Funding and Supports Projects and Crown Land Wildfire Risk Reduction project initiatives that reduce risk to Municipal, First Nation communities and supporting critical infrastructure.*
- *Collaborate on a communication and public education strategy with multiple local governments.*
- *Develop a fuel management planning table in collaboration with FLNRORD and other agency staff.*
- *Develop/update, implement and monitor the success of your Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan.*
- *Streamline Firesmart Home Assessment and FireSmart grant programs by sharing capacity between multiple local authorities.*
- *Develop a network of Local FireSmart Representatives in the area and coordinate their activities within the region.*
- *Create an advocacy program for participation in the FireSmart Canada Neighbourhood Recognition Program and work towards increasing the number of recognized neighbourhoods in the region each year.*
- *Coordinate applications to the Community Resiliency Investment program and other funding opportunities.*
- *Develop a Terms of Reference document for the CFRC based on the template provided by the BCFSC.*
- *Identify FireSmart activities that should be undertaken to best build wildfire resiliency in higher risk areas.*
- *Connect and share via social media. - Identifying funding sources to access and support priority projects from Provincial, Federal and Regional Programs.*
- *Ensuring the coordination of project initiatives that span multiple jurisdictions and scales over space and time.*
- *Identify and recommend opportunities for continuous program improvement to BC FireSmart Committee.*

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