

**REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO****RURAL/AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE  
AGENDA****Thursday, January 14, 2021**

<b><u>PAGE NO.</u></b>		<b><u>ACTION</u></b>
	<b><u>AGENDA- January 14, 2021</u></b>	<b>Approve</b>
	<b><u>Supplementary Agenda</u></b>	<b>Receive</b>
	<b><u>MINUTES</u></b>	
<b>3-6</b>	<b>Rural/Agriculture Committee Meeting Minutes - November 5, 2020</b>	<b>Adopt</b>
	<b><u>DELEGATION</u></b>	
	<b><u>YOUNG AGRARIANS</u></b> Sara Dent, Executive Director and Co-Founder RE: Update	
	<b><u>AGRICULTURE REPORT</u></b>	
<b>7-10</b>	<b>Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development – Food Hub Feasibility Study and Food Economy Assessment Update</b>	<b>Receive</b>
	<b><u>AGRICULTURE CORRESPONDENCE</u></b>	
<b>11-15</b>	<b>Bulkley-Nechako and Fraser Fort George Regional Adaptation Strategies – Agricultural Water Supply Resilience Roadmap</b>	<b>Receive</b>
<b>16-21</b>	<b>Nechako Valley Ag-Partnership Meeting Minutes – November 2020</b>	<b>Receive</b>
	<b><u>RURAL REPORTS</u></b>	
<b>22</b>	<b>Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development – Grant in Aid Update: October 14 – December 31, 2020</b>	<b>Receive</b>

<b><u>PAGE NO.</u></b>	<b><u>PLANNING DEPARTMENT (All Directors)</u></b>	<b><u>ACTION</u></b>
	<b><u>DEVELOPMENT SERVICES</u></b>	
	<b><u>Crown Land Referral</u></b>	
<b>23-25</b>	<b>Deneve Vanderwolf, Planner 1 - Crown Land Referral No. 7410161</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
	<b><u>Discussion Item</u></b>	
	<b>RCMP – Service Delivery in Rural Areas</b>	
	<b><u>SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA</u></b>	
	<b><u>NEW BUSINESS</u></b>	
	<b><u>ADJOURNMENT</u></b>	

**REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO****RURAL/AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE MEETING****Thursday, November 5, 2020**

**PRESENT:**

Chair	Mark Parker
Directors	Mark Fisher Tom Greenaway Clint Lambert Chris Newell Jerry Petersen Michael Riis-Christianson Gerry Thiessen
Staff	Curtis Helgesen, Chief Administrative Officer Cheryl Anderson, Manager of Administrative Services Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development – Via Teleconference John Illes, Chief Financial Officer Jason Llewellyn, Director of Planning Sashka Macievich, Controller – arrived at 9:49 a.m. Deneve Vanderwolf, Planner 1/Regional Transit Coordinator – arrived at 9:56 a.m., left at 10:05 a.m. Wendy Wainwright, Executive Assistant
Others	Gladys Atrill, Town of Smithers Judy Greenaway, District of Fort St. James Linda McGuire, Village of Granisle – arrived at 10:02 a.m.
Media	Priyanka Ketkar, Lakes District News.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Parker called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m.

**AGENDA**Moved by Director Riis-Christianson  
Seconded by Director Petersen**RDC.2020-8-1**

“That the Rural/Agriculture Committee Agenda for November 5, 2020 be approved.”

(All/Directors/Majority) **CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY****MINUTES****Rural/Agriculture Committee Meeting Minutes -October 8, 2020**Moved by Director Lambert  
Seconded by Director Petersen**RDC.2020-8-2**

“That the minutes of the Rural/Agriculture Committee meeting of October 8, 2020 be adopted.”

(All/Directors/Majority) **CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**RURAL REPORTS**

Federal Gas Tax Review Letter Moved by Director Riis-Christianson  
Seconded by Director Lambert

RDC.2020-8-3 “That the Rural/Agriculture Committee recommend that the Board provide the Federal Gas Tax Review Letter to MP Taylor Bachrach in his role as NDP Critic for Infrastructure and Communities to advocate for changes to the eligibility criteria for the Federal Gas Tax Program.”

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

**Grant in Aid Update**

CFO Illes provided an overview of his Grant in Aid Update memo. Discussion took place regarding:

- Total grant in aid maximum for all Rural Directors combined
  - o 2017-2019 total grant in aid maximum was not reached
- Regional Grant in Aid
  - o Includes Electoral Areas and Municipalities
- Grant in aid requests unknown year to year
- *Local Government Act* Section 374(9) in regard to grant in aid limitations
- Based on spending limit not taxation limit
- Electoral Area Economic Development Services
- “Trade” limits on expenditures between Electoral Areas
- Electoral Area Directors discretion to adjust taxation below the \$0.10 per \$1,000 of the assessed value of Land and Improvements
- Potential impacts of the COVID Pandemic to groups requesting grant in aid in 2021.

Grant in Aid Update Moved by Director Newell  
Seconded by Director Lambert

RDC.2020-8-4 “That the Rural/Agriculture Committee receive the Chief Financial Officer’s Grant in Aid Update memo.”

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

**Funding Options Impact of Electoral Areas Joining the Transit Service**

Discussion took place regarding:

- Consideration of COVID and any taxation structure changes
- Electoral Area “A” (Smithers Rural) supportive of the service
  - o Would like further conversations in regard to improving the service in the west of the Regional District
    - Potential options for funding, scheduling and routes
    - Potential discussions with other passenger transportation operators eg. BC Bus North/Northern Health Bus
- Staff participated in an update with BC Transit
  - o COVID protocols/impacts to ridership
  - o Highway 16 Transit ridership increased quicker than other transit areas of the Province as COVID protocols transitioned
    - BC Transit and Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure recognize value in the service
    - Solidifies the need for the service to continue in perpetuity
- Electoral Area “C” (Fort St. James Rural)
  - o Currently no service
  - o Interested in service provision

**RURAL REPORTS (CONT'D)**

- Electoral Area "D" (Fraser Lake Rural)
  - o Alternative available funding and potential future funding options a consideration
- Federal and Provincial Funding for Transit
- Electoral Area "B" (Burns Lake Rural) supportive of services
- Ensure full participation in regard to funding a fair and equitable share of the transit service
- Being prepared for the future
- Alternative Approval/Referendum
  - o Discretion of the Board
- Consideration for Electoral Areas that don't have direct access to the Highway 16 Transit system
- Taxation models
- Future meeting
  - o Rural Directors Committee meeting focusing on Regional Transit Service.

**Funding Options – Impact of Electoral Areas Joining the Transit Service**

Moved by Director Lambert  
Seconded by Director Fisher

**RDC.2020-8-5**

"That the Rural/Agriculture Committee receive the Chief Financial Officer's Funding Options – Impact of Electoral Areas Joining the Transit Service memo."

(All/Directors/Majority)

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY****PLANNING DEPARTMENT (Rural Directors)****DEVELOPMENT SERVICES****Crown Land Referrals****Crown Land Application Referral No. 0280400 – Electoral Area F**

Moved by Director Petersen  
Seconded by Director Lambert

**RDC.2020-8-6**

"That the Comment Sheet for Crown Land Application Referral No. 0280400 be provided to the Province."

(All/Directors/Majority)

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY****Crown Land Application Referral No. 6401785 -Electoral Area B**

Moved by Director Lambert  
Seconded by Director Riis-Christianson

**RDC.2020-8-7**

"That the Comment Sheet for Crown Land Application Referral No. 6401785 be provided to the Province."

(All/Directors/Majority)

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY****Crown Land Application Referral No. 7410152 -Electoral Area F**

Moved by Director Petersen  
Seconded by Director T. Greenaway

**RDC.2020-8-8**

"That the Comment Sheet for Crown Land Application Referral No. 7410152 be provided to the Province."

(All/Directors/Majority)

**CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**AGRICULTURE REPORT**

Farm Management Canada's  
Ag Excellence Online  
Conference Dec 8-10, 2020

Moved by Director Lambert  
Seconded by Director T. Greenaway

RDC.2020-8-9

"That the Rural/Agriculture Committee receive the Agriculture Coordinator's Farm Management Canada's Ag Excellence Online Conference Dec 8-10, 2020 memo."

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Update – BC Beef Plant in  
Westwold

Moved by Director Lambert  
Seconded by Director T. Greenaway

RDC.2020-8-10

"That the Rural/Agriculture Committee receive the Agriculture Coordinator's Update – BC Beef Plant in Westwold memo."

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Update on the RDBN Food  
Hub Survey

Moved by Director T. Greenaway  
Seconded by Director Lambert

RDC.2020-8-11

"That the Rural/Agriculture Committee receive the Agriculture Coordinator's Update on the RDBN Food Hub Survey."

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

**ADJOURNMENT**

Moved by Director Newell  
Seconded by Director Petersen

RDC.2020-8-12

"That the meeting be adjourned at 10:14 a.m."

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

---

Mark Parker, Chair

---

Wendy Wainwright, Executive Assistant



## Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Rural / Agriculture Committee Memorandum

To: Chair Parker and Committee  
From: Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development  
Date: January 14, 2021  
Regarding: **Food Hub Feasibility Study and Food Economy Assessment Update**

---

### **Recommendation:**

Receive.

### **Background:**

Staff continue to support the work of the RDBN Food Hub Feasibility Study and Food Economy Assessment Project.

The contract team is currently finalizing the Phase 2 Report for the project and setting up small group meetings around the region.

A producer-focused survey hosted on the RDBN website provided valuable information, including a significant number of contacts interested in participating in the small group discussions. The Survey Findings Highlights were presented to the Food and Agriculture Working Group at the December 7<sup>th</sup> meeting and are attached for your convenience.

# Survey Findings Highlights

## Why we did this survey

At the suggestion of the Food and Agriculture Working Group, the project team developed a survey tool for members to collect information with and distribute through their respective networks. The survey was also promoted through the RDBN database of food and agriculture networks and contacts. The purpose of this survey is to determine the level of interest and readiness in terms of spaces, equipment, and services to launch initial phases of a food hub in 2021 and potentially a regional food hub network. The survey was online ([www.rdbn.bc.ca/departments/agriculture](http://www.rdbn.bc.ca/departments/agriculture)) from October 15 to November 20, 2020.

## Many people responded

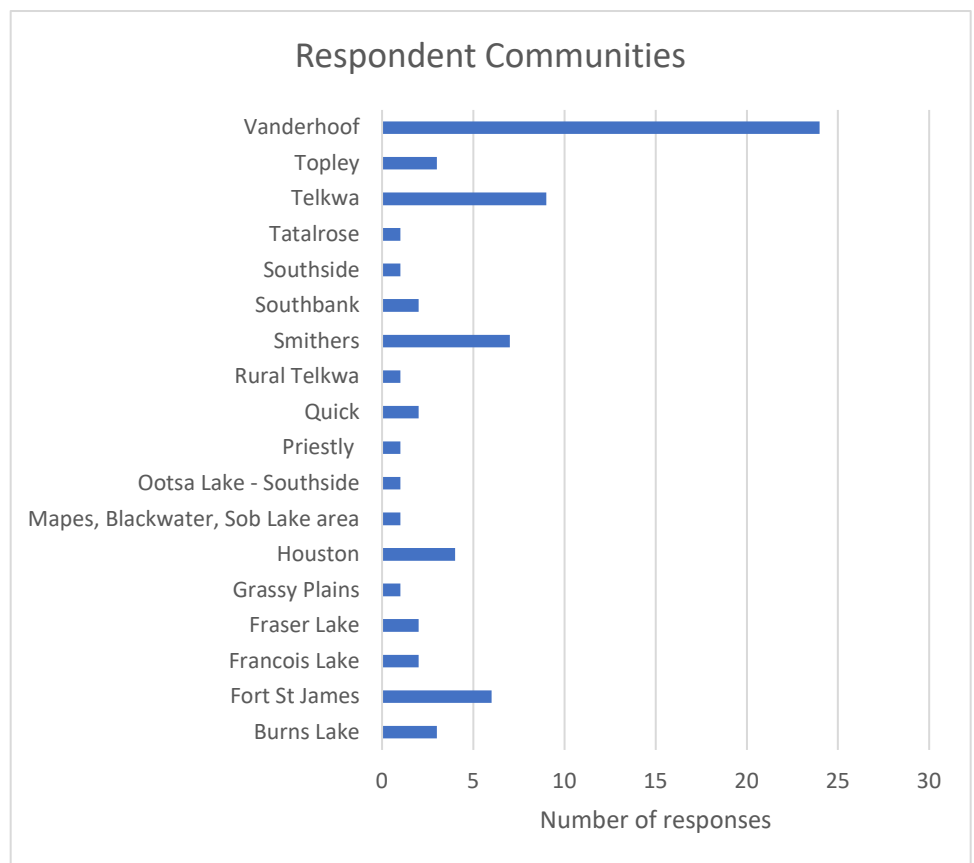
A total of 72 people responded to the survey. People from across the region participated, although 40% of total responses were from Vanderhoof/Fort St. James area.

## The largest group of respondents are primarily livestock farmers

A range of food producers, raisers, harvesters, and makers responded to the survey. Consistent with census information on farm-type in the RDBN, livestock farmers comprise nearly half 49% of responses. Fruit and vegetable producers (18%), grass and grain producers (13%), as well as farmers markets, food processors and makers and community programs (10%) made up the rest of respondents.

## The majority of respondents are small to medium scale producers.

Sixty-one percent of respondents are from the small-scale agriculture sector with gross farm revenue under \$30,000 per year. A further 28% are medium scale (\$30,000-100,00/yr).



## Over half of respondents process products

Fifty-four percent of respondents produce processed products while the remainder do not. Of those that do process, 79% of them indicated they use abattoirs, 33% do on-farm processing, 20% do out of region processing, 8% do off-farm processing, and 8% process in a health certified commercial kitchen space. Many respondents indicated that they use more than one category of processing.

## Most producers use direct sales as their primary marketing channel

Many respondents use multiple sales methods although, 48% of them sell through direct to customer/ farm gate sales.



## Many businesses want to expand

---

Sixty-one percent of respondents are interested in expanding their business, while 39% are currently satisfied with their existing level of sales. Of those who are interested in expanding their business, they are interested:

- Increasing meat production and processing (primary and secondary)
- Broadening their customer base geographically to include regional customers and beyond
- Improving marketing and product development
- Expanding processing and storage capacity
- Supporting businesses to conform to regulatory requirements

## A local food store is the most desired function for the hub

---

Consistent with findings from the RDBN Food and Agriculture plan, a local food store was selected as the most popular service that a food hub could provide. Online sales and storage, aggregation, and commercial kitchens were also selected frequently. Seventeen percent of respondents indicated they are not interested in food hub services.

## Producers are hungry for knowledge

---

The most popular topics are business planning, soil and nutrient testing, webinars, and how to grow/raise/process particular products. Other education training ideas from survey respondents include: rotational grazing practices and diversifying markets, butcher, cut/wrap, curing, sausage making, meat processing, slaughter-safe and related, cattle management (e.g. health and nutrition), land management (i.e. how to get the best out of your land with the materials we produce, such as manure to fertilize instead of chemicals), how to freeze dry food, permaculture, on-farm energy production, and bee keeping.

## Most producers are likely to use a food hub but not quite ready to do so

---

The majority (87%) of respondents are somewhat to very likely to use a food hub, with 29% indicating they are very likely. Thirteen percent of respondents are not likely to use a food hub. When asked if they were ready to use a food hub, the largest segment (45%) of respondents indicated that they are not ready or are doing fine now in regards to using/joining a food hub. One respondent noted, that while they see value on a food hub for new entrants, “most of us have had to make do without this kind of [food hub] help and have already made arrangements to own or share the equipment necessary for our operations.” Although this indicates a lack of likeliness or readiness, if considered together, 54% of respondents indicated they were almost ready, ready now, or ready yesterday, potentially indicating a good level of readiness in certain producers.

As the most likely and ready the 38 respondents, who are a lot more likely to use a food hub in the near future, are of specific interest. Below is a summary of their key responses to identify who they are and what their needs are:

- 88% of them are small and medium sized producers with annual revenues less than \$100,000.
- 70% of them are livestock farmers and/or fruit and vegetable growers.
- 88% of them sell direct to customers/farm gate sales.
- 78% of them are interested in expanding their business.
- 48% of them are from the Vanderhoof/Fort St. James area.
- They would mainly like the food hub to provide the following services:
  - Retail outlet (73% of “food hub ready” respondents)
  - Online store (65%)
  - Food storage (48%)
  - Business planning courses (48%)

Based on the responses from the “food hub ready” respondents, implementing a retail outlet in Vanderhoof with an online store, mainly for livestock and produce growers, could be a key recommendation.

## Reaching new markets is the main value that a food hub can give to producers

---

Respondents were asked, specifically, “what would make it worthwhile for you to become a member of a food hub?” Most comments centred around the value of the food hub being to reach new markets and customers (regionally and beyond). Themes in open-ended responses to what would make it worthwhile to participate in a food hub include:

- Access to local/regional markets/marketing and connection to customers
- Address regional meat processing gaps and support existing abattoirs to expand
- Linking to community programs and community trade networks
- Help with regulations and funding sources
- Building business confidence
- More information on the hub as well as education and training
- Specific services, facilities and equipment.

## There is strong interest in meeting in small, on-line groups

---

About half of respondents (51%) are interested in meeting as a small group to further discuss opportunities. The project team will be in contact to set these sessions up in 2021.

For more information on this process and food and agriculture in the RDBN please visit:  
<https://www.rdbn.bc.ca/departments/agriculture>

## Bulkley-Nechako and Fraser Fort George Regional Adaptation Strategies

---

### Agricultural Water Supply Resilience Roadmap

#### ***Strategies/Actions addressed within Bulkley-Nechako and Fraser Fort George Regional Strategies:***

***Strategy 3.1:*** Improve informational resources about farm/ranch water storage development

- *ACTION 3.1a:* Identify and implement mechanisms to connect producers with (up to date) resources and expertise associated with water storage regulation

***Strategy 3.2:*** Assess the feasibility of developing water storage that captures runoff to reduce localized flood risk

- *ACTION 3.2a:* Determine optimal locations for shared water storage development
- *ACTION 3.2b:* Evaluate the feasibility of combined water storage and runoff management/flood control

#### ***Proposed Start and Completion Dates***

December 2020 – August 2021

#### ***Project administrator***

Eaglet Lake Farmers' Institute

#### ***Executive summary***

Climate change projections for warmer summer temperatures, along with a greater likelihood of reduced summer precipitation in some years, will result in increased agricultural water demand to maintain crop production and water livestock. Changes in snowpack levels and timing of spring melt are also expected to reduce summer water flows (on some watercourses), putting additional pressure on water supplies. While these conditions will reduce water availability, increasing precipitation in the spring and fall, along with an increase in extreme precipitation events, may create opportunities to divert/capture water for future agricultural use.

The region is geographically large and agricultural water supply vulnerabilities and opportunities differ by location (e.g. Vanderhoof is much drier than the Robson Valley), creating the need for sub-regional agricultural water resilience planning. Producers have reported increased uncertainty about access to sufficient water for crops and livestock under changing climate conditions. It is also difficult to identify suitable and feasible solutions to current and/or future supply shortages - due to financial, regulatory and informational constraints. Some possible solutions (such as shared water storage and conveyance) require further evaluation to determine

where these solutions may be viable, and to outline the conditions (collaborative, economic, regulatory) necessary for success.

This project will create a roadmap for actions to support climate resilient agricultural water supply solutions that are grounded in local needs. These solutions will focus on sub-regional and farm level opportunities. This will be achieved by:

- documenting the water supply challenges faced by producers in different areas of the region;
- identifying and assessing the suitability of water management solutions at the farm/sub-regional level (e.g. shared water storage, water capture from roofs, etc.);
- identifying data and resource gaps that will need to be filled to support solutions identified in step above;
- prioritizing and further examining the viability for 3-5 solutions (i.e. case studies that could be turned into future projects)

The project will begin with a document scan to review previous research and consultation, and to narrow down possible topics/solutions for further exploration. Once this “long list” is vetted with local experts, consultation materials will be developed for engagement with the agriculture sector.

Consultation with agricultural stakeholders will capture the geographic distribution of water supply management challenges/vulnerabilities and other concerns around water supply, infrastructure, and water management. The focus will be current and known or expected future water supply challenges.<sup>1</sup>

This consultation (and subsequent analysis) will also identify and evaluate opportunities for water management solutions that have not been tested in the region. These solutions may include shared water storage and conveyance infrastructure, and the feasibility of capturing and storing excessive spring and fall precipitation for use during the drier summer months.

While these types of solutions are frequently discussed among producers, there is very little information about the technical/practical feasibility of such solutions. This study will provide a starting point by identifying the necessary conditions (data, technical, regulatory, cooperative) for a range of water supply solutions. This research will be at a high level and will identify and vet solutions that are deemed to be a good fit for the region but require further evaluation and analysis.

<sup>1</sup> Some of the potential topics that have emerged through discussion during development of this description include understanding the impacts to water storage/conveyance/intake infrastructure from excessive precipitation, rapid snow melt and ice build-up, documenting producer experiences with navigating the water licensing process, and documenting interest in developing on-farm water storage and the barriers to action.

Some of this additional analysis will be accomplished by prioritizing 3-5 solutions for further examination (as determined through the consultation and further ground truthing with the oversight committee/local experts). Once selected, these solutions will be further developed into case studies that will include identification of critical gaps, existing resources, and next steps.

The research will be synthesized to create a roadmap for agricultural water resilience that provides recommended solutions for sub-regions. This roadmap will include identification of knowledge and data gaps that will need to be filled to move forward with solutions.

The findings will be summarized in both a fireport and a summary document, and will be presented to stakeholders through a webinar and/or forum. This research will lay the groundwork for future action to implement solutions that are customized to the sub-regional agricultural needs.

### ***Objectives***

- Summarize water supply challenges facing agricultural producers (sub-regional focus)
- Identify obstacle (resource and data gaps, regulatory environment) relating to agricultural water supply decision making
- Assess the viability/conditions for success for a range of novel water management solutions
- Identify and prioritize solutions and opportunities to address water supply vulnerabilities and challenges on a sub-regional basis

### ***Activities***

#### *Work planning/background research*

*[February 2021 – March 2021]*

- Review literature/summary reports from previous research to refine project scope and identify a “long list” of topics of focus
- Vet topics of focus with local experts (e.g. Regional Agrologists), and Project Oversight Committee
- Identify key contacts for stakeholder consultation during project and develop consultation plan/resources

#### *Stakeholders Consultation and Analysis*

*[March 2021 – June 2021]*

*Consultations:*

- Undertake consultation (via interviews/one-on-one meetings, etc.) with:
  - Producers in a range of geographic sub-regions
  - Producers with a range of water supply sources, storage infrastructure, and production systems
  - Government (AAFC, MoA, FLNRORD etc.) staff and industry specialists
  - Local government staff

- Through consultation, identify and groundtruth:
  - Water supply challenges and their geographic distribution (i.e. insufficient or diminishing supply, risk of damage to water storage/conveyance/intake infrastructure from excessive precipitation and rapid snow melt, experiences with applying for water licences, etc.)
  - Current efforts by producers and local governments to address these challenges
  - Opportunities/interest for producers to collaborate on solutions (e.g. shared water storage/conveyance)
  - Priority areas of focus (for future work) to support sub-regional and farm-level water supply resilience

*Synthesis of results/analysis of data and resource gaps:*

- Develop research methodology/criteria for analysis of consultation results
- Synthesize results from consultation and literature scan to:
  - delineate the water management solutions that are most viable (at farm/sub-regional level)
  - identify knowledge/data gaps
  - identify policy/regulatory barriers to action on solutions
- Work with stakeholder and Project Oversight Committee to prioritize 3-5 solutions for further exploration/evaluation
- Assess the viability of the 3-5 priority solutions and further develop into case studies:
  - identify sub-regions (or smaller) for pilot/demonstration/knowledge transfer
  - inventory existing resources and identify resource gaps that need to be filled
  - document where data gaps will hinder action and which organization will need to fill these gaps to move forward
  - identify policy/regulatory barriers to action on solutions
  - summarize findings in a case study for each solution that includes details on next steps (to support on-the-ground action)

*Analyze findings and create summary report*

- Share draft report with Project Oversight Committee
- Incorporate edits and finalize final report and summary document
- Share research findings through a webinar/forum

***Project Deliverables***

- Long list of topics and methodology/criteria for analysis of agricultural water supply vulnerabilities and opportunities
- Summary of consultation, shortlist of 3-5 solutions for further development
- Final report (including case studies)

- At-a-glance summary report for agricultural producers
- Webinar/Forum (to share research results)

### ***Communication Plan***

- Consultation with producers will include a cross-section of production types, geographic areas and water supply types. Producers will be identified through local Project Oversight Committee and outreach may include a broad invitation to participate (through agricultural organizations) if desired by contractor.
- Upon completion, the final report and summary will be made broadly available and will be promoted/shared with agricultural organizations, local government, and other stakeholders.
- The webinar and/or focus group will be communicated to all agricultural producers through available channels (agricultural organization newsletter, CAI newsletter, etc.).
- Information about the project will be posted to the CAI website and shared via website and social media.

### ***Performance Plan***

*Near-term performance indicators include:*

- Producer participation in consultations
- Improved understanding of recent/current water supply challenges facing agricultural producers
- Identification of sub-regional solutions to these challenges
- Documentation of knowledge and data gaps to support agricultural water supply decision making
- Development of an action plan (i.e. roadmap) to address gaps and challenges, with support of local agricultural sector
- Development of 3-5 case studies to inform future projects
- Stakeholder attendance at webinar/focus group

*Medium to long-term performance indicators (beyond project timeline/scope):*

- Implementation of new project to address next steps/recommendations from report
- Improvement of resources (data and knowledge) to support climate-resilient agricultural water supply

### ***Potential Project Partners***

- BC Ministry of Agriculture
- BC Ministry of Environment
- BC Ministry of FLNRORD
- Agricultural organizations
- Local and regional governments
- First Nations
- Upper Bulkley Roundtable

## Nechako Valley Ag-Partnership

*November 2020 Meeting*

In attendance: Richard Martens, Mark Barnes, Mark Parker, Jay Bangs, Mike Pritchard, Lara Beckett, Alex Kulchar, Chelton vanGeloven

Regrets: Tim Sanders

1. Pest Project – Update (Serena)
  - a. Applying for funding for 2-year program, led by Dr. Dezene Huber
  - b. Expanded to full both regional districts, so that project qualifies for funding (\$50,000 from Climate Action Initiative)
  - c. Reached out for representation to be provided by Nechako Valley Regional Cattlemen’s, Skeena Regional Cattlemen’s, PG Cattlemen’s, BC Forage Council, and Ministry of Agriculture
    - i. **Action Item:** Looking for additional producer-representation on working group.
      1. Wayne Salewski – willing to participate
    - ii. Project will start (pending funding confirmations) with deeper Stakeholder Engagement in Feb-March 2021
  
2. Climate Change Adaptation
  - a. Weather Data in BC – update (Serena)
    - i. New BC ACARN project currently being conducted: “Roadmap for a B.C. Agri-weather Network Report” (started October 2020, to be completed May 2021).
    - ii. The specific objectives of the proposed report are as follows:
      1. Summarize the benefits of weather data to the B.C. agriculture sector;
      2. Summarize B.C.’s current weather station operating structure;
      3. Identify essential data that should be collected at agricultural weather stations in B.C., with cost estimates of best-suited technology;
      4. Provide recommendations and cost estimates for how to standardize quality assurance and quality control practices for agricultural weather data in B.C.;
      5. Provide recommendations and cost estimates for how to provide adequate agricultural weather station coverage in B.C.; and
      6. Provide recommendations for how to improve the utility and accessibility of B.C. agricultural weather and climate data.
    - iii. Next Steps – Discussion
      1. Action Item: Serena to make sure that Andy Nadler connects directly with Stephen Dery (to discuss RioTinto group), Wayne Salewski and Mike Pritchard
        - a. Specific challenges with geographic representation – with the current installed system, 20km makes a significant difference and makes the weather data unreliable.



- b. Soil Health and Forage (Grazing) Management Project
    - i. No current update.
    - ii. **Action item:** Establish working group to initiate deeper discussion and develop project proposal.
    - iii. **Regenerative Farming** – Kiss the Ground
      - 1. How can we get movement to further the discussion of regenerative farming, particularly around the systems involving community gardens and market gardens. There are several people willing to dedicate land to the idea.
      - 2. Richard Martens – suggests that he (and others) already doing it.
      - 3. There is a new Soil microbiologist faculty member at UNBC who may be interested in collaborating; Serena to connect with directly.
      - 4. Alex Kulchar- Believes that they've been doing this for years, but just not getting credit.
        - a. Brooke Hayes – new study from U-Vic looking at soil health and the role this type of agriculture has to play moving forward
        - b. Cattle ranchers are different than what is often portrayed in these documentairs. They're already doing regenerative practices by principle – encouraging grasses, biodiversity in the ecosystem.
        - c. It also makes sense to the pocketbook.
      - 5. Richard – agrees with Alex. We haven't degraded our ground, but there can always be ways that we can still improve: still can increase the health of the land and increase production. We've kept it in plant diversity; minimal soil disturbance.
        - a. Focus of work moving forward should be focused at acknowledging what we've done well and simultaneously look to where we can improve
        - b. Already using livestock in their systems; already there.
        - c. Already has examples of increasing the soil quality – already increasing soil moisture preservation on the landscape.
        - d. Rotational grazing, bale grazing, already being done in the Valley.
        - e. May be opportunity to collect baseline data, and market the good that we're already we're doing.
    - iv. **Action Item:** Serena to develop a presentation that can provide an update on the national Project for carbon sequestration, that BC Forage Council is participating in.
3. Water Management
  - a. Watershed Mapping
    - i. Mapping watershed to help predict future water supply and availability.
    - ii. Wayne has been chasing it for several years. Health of aquifer, current standing.

1. Nak'azdli Whut'en is interested in this project and could be a potential collaborator and/or partner
  2. GeoScience BC – have a plan on the shelf to do it, but missing the funding to do it
    - a. Renewed relationship with Mt Milligan, who own a tool that utilizes seismic measuring. Wayne continues to work on connecting with the person on that file.
    - b. Stephen Dery – very involved in this project already. He is publishing a paper on watershed on areas around Mt Milligan.
    - c. **Action Item:** Wayne to look into the tool, how to use it. Stephen Dery is going to help with the project.
  3. Other water projects current underway:
    - a. Working now with Chelton with stream restoration; starting to record what it happening on the land base, and measuring the improvements that they're seeing.
  - iii. Mark Parker: BC Hydro has had discussions with RDBN around the power supply for the LNG plant and concerns around available power for other mining initiatives. Something to keep in mind during future discussions.
4. Ag-Sector Diversification
- a. Hemp Production
    - i. Update from 2020 trial production: Jay Bangs
      1. Challenges in farming in general; so hard to assess the new project.
      2. Overall saw impressive yields, but concerned around the impact on soil. Soil tests suggest that the crop is extremely demanding of nutrients – both macro- and micro-nutrients were depleted after one year.
      3. Struggles that he experienced:
        - a. Harvest: pull behind disc mower. It is able to chop it down and windrow; but once on the ground and full-length stalks, it is too difficult to deal with
        - b. If you can chop it to 2ft length, much better to manage.
        - c. Hemp looks like a much messier field, but once harvested, cleaned up the field. Very little mess/litter left behind.
      4. Questions around profitability; until there's a local processing plant, it will be hard to see what it's worth.
        - a. We need to know what an average yield looks like and compare to the input costs
      5. Unsure if they will try again next year, more because of difficult hay season in 2020 and additional work on that side of the operation. It's good to note that hemp seems to be less heartache than hay, in that you can cut in rain and the crop can withstand rain after being cut.
    - ii. **Action Item:** Serena to follow up with Jay to discuss the opportunity for Jay to do some presentations from his experience.

1. Lara - We need to get this information out there, and hear what does hemp production look like to farmers; we need to really understand what this production may mean on the ground is keen and share this information on a local government level.
- iii. **Other questions and considerations:**
  1. It would be good to measure soil organic matter, total soil-C and CEC at different depths (0-15cm, 15-30cm, 30-45cm)
  2. Explore information on impact of hemp on soil health and nutrient cycling, and why there was such a depletion in soil test results
- iv. **Action Item:** Serena to follow up with:
  1. Chris Hatfield for an update from BC Hemp Corporation
  2. Christine O'Reilly to learn if there is information for hemp from Ontario, and whether there is any relation to their forage systems.

Member updates:

5. Cattle Virtual Fencing – Mike Pritchard
  - a. Currently working to get a made-in-western Canada solution, as there is a lack of collars available. Believes that we do have the capacity to build something here.
    - i. There have been early meetings with GIS programmers (Telus) and hardware manufacturers (in Alberta); trial these out with Cattlemen's sites.
    - ii. Could theoretically have collars in spring 2021.
    - iii. Additional application of the collars could be in Riparian Management Strategy.
  - b. Originally thought you need good cellular data, but they now believe that you could pre-program the collar – front and back fences – at the start of the season and let them go.
    - i. Applications could be useful in regard to USA-Canada Border challenges in the south, railway crossings, rotational grazing programs, range programs.
  - c. They expect that the technology will help youth get excited about the cattle industry.
6. Chelton – has new drone and emailed the group more information about the specific spec's of the drone. He would be happy to do a presentation at a future meeting about the potential use of the technology.
  - a. Has a red-edge and near-infrared to look at the health of chlorophyll
  - b. Has the potential to help access how much carbon is going into the ground
  - c. Can get assessment of area that is healthy/unhealthy, and can cover 160ha/hr.
  - d. Current use is focused on stream assessments but would be keen to collaborate on a trial for its potential use for on other agriculture applications.
  - e. Wayne – knows that there is a producer using it to go find cows; sees how it can help with the modernization of the ranch.
7. Funding Updates
  - a. UNBC is in regular contact with one of the major donors; updates and contracts expected for April 2021.
  - b. **Action Item:** Serena to draft a Concept Note that outlines the work the UNBC-Nechako producers group is doing to send to the Minister. These updates will provide useful in securing long-term government support for the programming that is being developed.

8. Next meeting and follow-up
  - a. Each Working Group to develop goals/objective for the work, develop a work plan. The plans will be added to a master-list, and using larger-group meetings to provide updates, gather feedback.
    - i. **Action Item:** Serena to help set up reporting out to Cattlemen's Associations; as it would be valuable to give them a presentation once a year on the work that the group is doing.
  - b. Pre-schedule regular meetings to ensure consistency
    - i. 4x a year; start mid-January. Because of the funding envelopes
    - ii. Serena to propose a time; noted that Thursdays do not work.

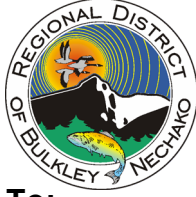
***Estimated Cost*****Estimated Total Cost: \$49,500**

Proposed CAP: \$39,500 (80%)

Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako: \$5,000

Regional District of Fraser Fort George: \$5,000

***Budget [Estimated]****Literature and data review, methodology for analysis (\$4,000)**Consultation with agricultural stakeholders (\$10,000)**Synthesis of results and analysis of data and resource gaps (\$7,000)**Development of 3-5 priority project topics (\$13,000)**Final report and At-a-glance Summary Report: (\$5,000)**Participation in outreach activities to share results (\$2,000)**Project management and travel expenses (\$4,000)**10% Project administration fee (\$4,500)***Total: \$49,500**



## Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Rural/Agriculture Committee

**To:** Chair Parker and Committee  
**From:** Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development  
**Date:** January 14, 2021  
**Subject:** Grant in Aid Update: October 14- December 31, 2020

### RECOMMENDATION

(all/directors/majority)

Receive.

### Background:

The following Grant in Aid requests of \$2,500 or less were approved by Electoral Area Directors between October 14 and December 31, 2020.

Community Group	Project	Amount
<b>Area 'A' (Smithers Rural)</b>		
Smithers Chamber of Commerce	Zero Waste Business Award	\$350.00
Smithers Chamber of Commerce	Zero Waste Forum Planning	\$271.66
<b>Area 'B' (Burns Lake Rural)</b>		
Burns Lake Minor Hockey Association	Additional Practice Ice Time	\$1,000
Village of Burns Lake	VIC Capital Costs	\$2,500
<b>Area 'C' (Fort St; James Rural)</b>		
Fort St James Toy and Food Drive	2020 Toy and Food Drive	\$2,000
Ulh'goh Bi'yoh Native Friendship Center Society	Emergency Lighting at Shelter	\$2,000
<b>Area 'D' (Fraser Lake Rural)</b>		
Royal Canadian Legion Branch 274	Wreath for Remembrance Day	\$82.00
<b>Area 'E' (Francois/Ootsa Rural)</b>		
Grassy Plains Hall Society	Engineer - Renovation Project	\$800.00
Village of Burns Lake	VIC Capital Costs	\$2,500
<b>Area 'F' (Vanderhoof Rural)</b>		
<b>Area 'G' (Houston Rural)</b>		



## REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO

### STAFF REPORT

**TO:** Chair Parker and Rural/Agriculture Committee  
**FROM:** Deneve Vanderwolf, Planner 1  
**DATE:** January 14, 2021  
**SUBJECT:** Crown Land Referral No. 7410161

### RECOMMENDATION

That the attached comment sheet be provided to the Province as the Regional District's comments on Crown Land Application 7410161.

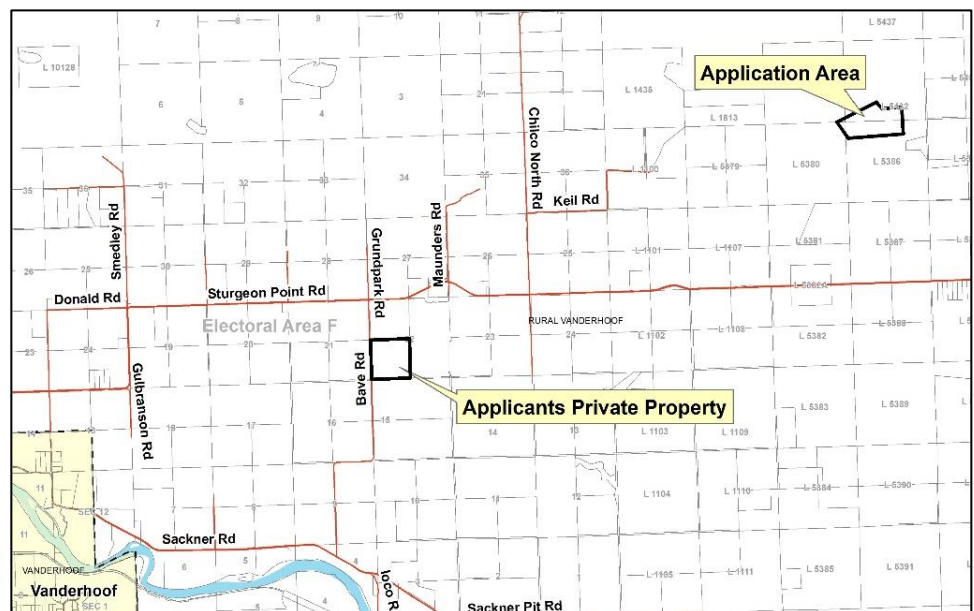
### VOTING

All Directors / Majority

### DISCUSSION

The application area is located on Crown land that spans portions of District Lots 5433, 5432, 5386, and 5380 near Sturgeon Point Road, approximately 17 kilometres south of the District of Vanderhoof. The application area is approximately 65 ha in size.

The applicant's farm headquarters is located 9 kilometres from the application area. The intent of this application is to provide additional arable land to their existing hay farm operation. This Crown



Grant will allow the applicant to establish fencing, harvest merchantable timber, and clear land for hay production.

The application is not located in the Agriculture Development Area (ADA) under the Vanderhoof Area Crown Land Plan. ADAs are Crown lands that are designated for agriculture development and settlements reserve areas.

**ATTACHMENT**

Comment Sheet





**REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO  
COMMENT SHEET ON CROWN LAND REFERRAL 7410161**

---

<b>Electoral Area:</b>	F
<b>Applicant:</b>	Daniel and Camille Albertson
<b>Existing Land Use:</b>	Provincial Forest
<b>Zoning:</b>	Rural Resource (RR1) in the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Zoning Bylaw 1800, 2020
<b>Plan Designation</b>	Resource (RE) in the Vanderhoof Rural Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 1517, 2009
<b>Proposed Use Comply with Zoning:</b>	Yes
<b>If not, why?</b>	
<b>Agricultural Land Reserve:</b>	No
<b>Access:</b>	Sturgeon Point Road
<b>Building Inspection:</b>	No
<b>Fire Protection:</b>	No
<b>Other comments:</b>	None