



**REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO
RURAL/AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
AGENDA**

Thursday, November 9, 2023

<u>PAGE NO.</u>		<u>ACTION</u>
	<u>AGENDA, November 9, 2023</u>	Approve
	<u>Supplementary Agenda</u>	Receive
	<u>MINUTES</u>	
3-6	Rural/Agriculture Committee Meeting Minutes - September 7, 2023	Approve
	<u>AGRICULTURE REPORTS</u>	
7-11	Megan D'Arcy, Regional Agriculture Coordinator – Food and Agriculture Plan -Implementation Update	Receive
12-13	Megan D'Arcy, Regional Agriculture Coordinator – Northwest Invasive Plant Council Update Fall 2023	Receive
14-15	Megan D'Arcy, Regional Agriculture Coordinator – Ministry of Agriculture and Food Regional Engagement Program	Receive
16-17	Megan D'Arcy, Regional Agriculture Coordinator – Veterinary Drug and Medicated Feed Regulation	Receive
18	Megan D'Arcy, Regional Agriculture Coordinator – Water Restrictions for Agriculture Operations	Receive
19-31	Nellie Davis, Regional Manager of Economic Development – Municipal Agriculture Disaster Declaration	Receive

<u>PAGE NO.</u>	<u>AGRICULTURE CORRESPONDENCE</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
32-37	Government of Canada – Federal-Provincial Support Helping Disaster-Affected Farmers	Receive

DISCUSSION ITEM

- **Volunteer of the Year**

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

NEW BUSINESS

ADJOURNMENT

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-NECHAKO**RURAL/AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE MEETING****Thursday, September 7, 2023**

PRESENT: Chair Clint Lambert

Directors Judy Greenaway
Shirley Moon
Chris Newell
Mark Parker
Michael Riis-Christianson
Stoney Stoltenberg

Staff Curtis Helgesen, Chief Administrative Officer
Cheryl Anderson, Director of Corporate Services
John Illes, Chief Financial Officer
Jason Llewellyn, Director of Planning – left at 1:00 p.m.
Wendy Wainwright, Deputy Director of Corporate Services

Other Linda McGuire, Village of Granisle – left at 1:06 p.m.
Kevin Moutray, District of Vanderhoof - left at 1:24 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Lambert called the meeting to order at 12:50 p.m.

AGENDAMoved by Director Parker
Seconded by Director NewellRDC.2023-5-1

"That the Rural/Agriculture Committee Agenda for September 7, 2023 be approved."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**MINUTES**Rural/Agriculture Committee
Meeting Minutes
-June 8, 2023Moved by Director Greenaway
Seconded by Director NewellRDC.2023-5-2

"That the minutes of the Rural/Agriculture Committee meeting of June 8, 2023 be approved."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Referrals

Crown Land Application Moved by Director Parker
Referral No. 160467107-006 Seconded by Director Greenaway
Electoral Areas D (Fraser Lake Rural)
and F (Vanderhoof Rural)

RDC.2023-5-3 "That the comment sheet be provided to the Province as the Regional District's comments on Crown Land Application Referral No. 160467107-006."

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Crown Land Application Moved by Director Greenaway
Referral No. 159045290-006 Seconded by Director Stoltenberg
Electoral Area C (Fort St. James
Rural)

RDC.2023-5-4 "That the comment sheet be provided to the Province as the Regional District's comments on Crown Land Application Referral No. 159045290-006."

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Coastal GasLink Segundo
Lake Compressor Station
Notification Moved by Director Riis-Christianson
 Seconded by Director Stoltenberg

RDC.2023-5-5 "That the comment sheet be provided to the BC Energy Regulator and Coastal GasLink as the Regional District's comments regarding the proposed Segundo Lake Compressor Station."

(All/Directors/Majority) CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Coastal GasLink Clear Creek
Lake Compressor Station
Notification Moved by Director Parker
 Seconded by Director Stoltenberg

RDC.2023-5-6 "That the comment sheet be provided to the BC Energy Regulator and Coastal GasLink as the Regional District's comments regarding the proposed Clear Creek Compressor Station."

Opposed: Director Newell CARRIED

(All/Directors/Majority)

REPORT

Canada Community -Building Fund BC – Area A (Smithers/Telkwa Rural) Smithers Curling Club – Ice Plant Replacement Project Moved by Director Stoltenberg
 Seconded by Director Newell

RDC.2023-5-7

1) "That the Committee recommend that the Board approve an additional \$75,000 of Electoral Area A (Smithers/Telkwa Rural) Canada Community-Building Fund BC allocation monies to an Ice Plant Replacement project at the Smithers Curling Club, and further,

(participants/weighted/majority)

2) That the Board authorize the withdrawal of up to \$75,000 from the Federal Gas Tax Reserve Fund."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

NEW BUSINESS

Pierre Poilievre, Federal Conservative Party Leader in Smithers, September 14, 2023

Chair Lambert mentioned that Pierre Poilievre, Federal Conservative Party Leader will be in Smithers, September 14, 2023 and has asked to meet with cattle producers in the region.

Drought Conditions and Irrigation for Farms

Chair Lambert brought forward concerns regarding the Province requesting farmers in the southern interior of B.C. cease irrigation of their crop cycle.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Potential advocacy and the importance of irrigation for food security in the province
- The need for a provincial inventory and data collection of aquifers and water sources
- Community irrigation projects similar to Saskatchewan
- Newer irrigation systems use less water
- Hay shortage impacts
- Provincial and federal agriculture recovery solutions
 - o Reasonable rates and trucking costs to purchase hay from other provinces and the United States
- AgriStability Program and workshops
- Staff will research the issue and provide an update to the Committee.

NEW BUSINESS (CONT'D)

School Buses

Director Moon spoke of receiving a number of inquiries regarding busing for private school students in the region. Provincial bus funding per student was discussed.

Declaring an Agriculture Disaster within the RDBN

Director Moon inquired about declaring an agriculture disaster in the RDBN due to the current drought and agricultural impacts occurring in the region. She noted that Alberta has criteria and policy in place to declare an agriculture disaster. Staff will bring forward additional information at a future meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Director Stoltenberg
 Seconded by Director Newell

RDC.2023-5-8

"That the meeting be adjourned at 1:36 p.m."

(All/Directors/Majority)

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Clint Lambert, Chair

Wendy Wainwright, Deputy Director
 of Corporate Services



Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Rural/Agriculture Committee

To: Chair and Committee
From: Megan D'Arcy, Regional Agriculture Coordinator
Date: November 9, 2023
Subject: **Food and Agriculture Plan – Implementation Update**

RECOMMENDATION: (all/directors/majority)

Receive.

BACKGROUND

Upon completion of the RDBN Food and Agriculture Plan in April 2020, staff committed to providing updates on the Implementation Strategy. The Plan is currently in Phase 1: 2020-2023. Several Priority Area actions have been (or are soon to be) completed. For reference, the eight top Priority Areas from the RDBN Food and Agriculture Plan are:

1. Support producers in navigating government policies and requirements
2. Prepare for emergencies
3. Develop the food and agriculture sector and market(s) for RDBN goods
4. Engage a broad audience in regional food and agriculture activities and information
5. Prevent and manage invasive and harmful species
6. Ensure agricultural policies are in-place and consistent across the region
7. Increase climate change resiliency and adaptation capacity
8. Continue to build capacity for effective and strategic implementation

Each Priority Area includes specific actions which are included in the three-phase implementation strategy. The phases contain concurrent actions. Phase 1 is not required to be complete prior to Phases 2 and 3, and each phase includes short, medium, or long-term goals.

The following Implementation Actions remain underway and are ongoing through all three Phases:

1.1 Develop a communication strategy to disseminate information to producers on government regulations affecting agriculture.

1.2 Create and disseminate producer-focused tools to support clarity with the multiple levels of government regulation.

RDBN Economic Development and Agriculture staff are currently working on using the Growing Opportunities podcast series and brochure style handouts to disseminate information related to rural living and owning/operating an agricultural operation. Some of the topics include the Agricultural Land Regulation, leasing land, invasive plants, and fencing.

2.1 Update and publish RDBN Agriculture Emergency Preparedness Information

Protective Services and Agriculture staff have worked collaboratively to create extension materials for both emergency preparedness and livestock evacuation. These include a factsheet for producers without farm status, as well as a presentation and a short video focused on livestock evacuation. The factsheet and the video are on the RDBN website: <https://www.rdbn.bc.ca/departments/agriculture/livestock-emergency>. Both have also been published in the newsletter and online through social media.

2.2 Strengthen livestock emergency preparedness.

The Regional Agriculture Coordinator took part in an Emergency Operations Centre training exercise in April 2023 which included mock scenarios.

2.3 In the event of emergency, activate Agriculture Emergency plan within regional EOC in events involving agriculture.

The RDBN Agriculture Coordinator assisted the provincial Agriculture Leads in the 2023 EOC by communicating alert and order information for the early events, helping to update the provincial resource spreadsheet, and offering general support. Protective Services summer students also played an important role in maintaining continuity during wildfire events with livestock evacuations. Plans are underway to continue to build process and communication channels that would facilitate smooth EOC activities for future events.

2.4 Strengthen responses for recovery from emergency events impacting agriculture, AND

3.1 Advocate for and facilitate access to affordable shavings and hay.

The Regional Agriculture Coordinator communicated with several organizations, including BC Livestock, the Smithers Farmers' Institute, the Bulkley Valley Cattlemen's Association, the Nechako Regional Cattlemen's Association, the Lakes District Cattlemen's Association, and the Tatalrose Farmers' Institute to encourage them to write letters to the RDBN, communicating the severity of the impact that the drought situation had on their forage

yields. Information about the Access to Feed program available through the BC Cattlemen's Association was disseminated through the Growing Opportunities newsletter and through word of mouth. Information about AgriRecovery program announced in October 2023 will be shared out in a similar manner, as well as on RDBN social media.

Access to affordable shavings is variable throughout the region. At present, accessing affordable hay has taken precedence. The agricultural landscape of our region has shifted substantially this year as many producers either sold all their animals, or they sold a much larger percentage of them as they could not source affordable feed.

3.2 Continue to update and distribute the Connecting Producers and Consumers Guide annually.

Updating the Connecting Consumers to Producers online directory is ongoing. Economic Development staff attended Farmers' markets this summer to promote the Connecting Consumers to Producers program and support the Farmers' Markets by 'taking over' the market (paying the vendor stall fees) and doing a prize draw featuring local product from the market on that day.

3.3 Undertake a food hub feasibility study and a regional food economy assessment.

The results of the completed Food Economy & Food Hub Assessment (April 2021) were communicated by the Regional Agriculture Coordinator to a group of producers at the Regional Business Forum earlier this spring. This information will also be shared through the Growing Opportunities podcast series 2.

4.1 Continue to support and build relationships and networks around RDBN food and agriculture.

The Regional Agriculture Coordinator attended several agricultural organization Annual General Meetings, including the Nechako Valley Cattlemen's Association and the Skeena Regional Cattlemen's Association.

The Regional Agriculture Coordinator has been part of a Regional Agriculture Support (RAS) Systems project, an initiative funded by the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District that is in its third and final year. The RAS group is comprised of people who do regional food and agriculture support throughout the province. Information gathered from this process has been disseminated through the Growing Opportunities newsletter.

4.2 Promote Sustainable Agriculture Practices

There has been a new 5-year federal/provincial agreement signed this year that replaces the Canadian Agriculture Partnership. The new agreement is called the Sustainable Canadian Agriculture Partnership. The Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) program has been funded again under this agreement and is now administered by the Investment Agriculture

Foundation of BC. The Beneficial Management Practices (BMP) program has been parsed out of the EFP program and is now a standalone program. The BMP program has several funding streams that flow into it. The Regional Agriculture Coordinator has been responding to inquiries about how to apply for funding through some of these programs.

5.1 Advocate for and support collective efforts to prevent and manage invasive species, AND

5.3 Ensure that invasive species are prevented and managed on RDBN owned or managed lands.

The RDBN continues to provide both financial and staff support to the Northwest Invasive Plant Council (NWIPC). In addition, the Regional Agriculture Coordinator has coordinated with NWIPC to try and prioritize areas adjacent to the CN right-of-way, and prioritize areas within the RDBN (both RDBN-owned and private). Agriculture and other RDBN staff have also worked with the agencies involved in re-seeding the Highway 16 bike trail.

5.5 Encourage private landowners to prevent and manage all weeds, noxious and native.

The RDBN Agriculture Invasive Species Management webpage has links to both invasive plant species and pest management. The Regional Agriculture Coordinator responded to several calls from the public asking for guidance on invasive plant species management, and information about water hemlock.

6.2 Continue to advocate to senior levels of government and industry around issues that impact RDBN producers.

The key issue producers faced this year was the cumulative impacts of drought and wildfires experienced throughout the region. In addition to the work being done to assist producers in accessing provincial/federal support, the RDBN continues to support efforts from all agencies to increase veterinary capacity in our region. Other issues under consideration are access to veterinary drugs, water restrictions imposed during drought years, and planting density on crown land being used for range.

7.1 Continue to collaborate in implementing the Bulkley-Nechako Fraser-Fort George Climate Action Initiative.

The Regional Agriculture Coordinator participated in both the Working Group for this initiative, and all the Project Advisory Committees for the different projects. The Climate Action Initiative was re-branded as the Climate Change Adaptation Program (CCAP) in its final year. Deliverables for each of the projects have been shared on the RDBN website and through the Growing Opportunities newsletter. They can also be found at the CCAP website: <https://www.bcclimatechangeadaptation.ca/>. The Agriculture Coordinator is

currently participating in a Regional Engagement Committee established by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food that is a continuation of the CCAP work.

7.2 Increase climate risk mitigation and adaptation for agriculture lands.

The Regional Agriculture Coordinator's participated in the Hazard Risk Vulnerability Assessment reports now finalized and available through Protective Services.

7.3 Reduce organic and plastic agricultural waste in the landfill.

The Regional Agricultural Coordinator continues to work with RDBN Environmental Services and CleanFarms BC to ensure that regional producers are aware of the agricultural plastics recycling program pilot currently being implemented in our region.

8.2 Maintain the Agriculture Coordinator Position.

8.4 Continue to be a learning organization.

The Regional District Agriculture Coordinator continues to participate in extension events hosted by organizations such as the Regional Agriculture Support Systems project, the Canadian Forage & Grasslands Association, and the BC Forage Council.



Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Rural/Agriculture Committee

To: Chair and Committee
From: Megan D'Arcy, Regional Agriculture Coordinator
Date: November 9, 2023
Subject: **Northwest Invasive Plant Council Update Fall 2023**

RECOMMENDATION: (all/directors/majority)

Receive.

BACKGROUND

The Northwest Invasive Plant Council (NWIPC) Board of Directors has met in January, April, and June 2023 thus far. The main purpose of these meetings was to make decisions on organizational structure and function, and 2023 budgets. The NWIPC Annual General Meeting was scheduled for November 9, 2023. It has since been postponed, and replaced by a Board meeting, date to be announced.

As of this year, there has been a change to the way the province requires the field contractors to collect data as there is a new database system that the province has implemented. The NWIPC field coordinator, Mike Pangman, and the Program Manager, Penni Adams, have both expressed difficulties extracting data in a format that is user-friendly and easily adapted for both pre-work purposes and post-season reporting.

The pre-season workplan for the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako included 30 RDBN-owned properties and approximately 360 rural, private properties with occurrences of high priority invasive plant species.

Invasive plant species treated on RDBN-owned properties included: common tansy, mountain bluet, Himalayan balsam, spotted knapweed, field scabious, meadow goats-beard, and St. John's wort. Similar species are treated on the rural, private properties, with the addition of marsh plume thistle, black knapweed, diffuse knapweed, leafy spurge, Cypress spurge, and Queen Anne's lace.

The Regional Agriculture Coordinator was contacted by a producer and the District Agrologist during the summer regarding invasive plant species observed along the new dike system in Village of Telkwa. Mike Pangman was able to get crews onsite to treat the common tansy, spurge, and other weeds observed by the producer. The producer

contacted Mike Pangman post-treatment to let Mike know that he was pleased with the result.

The crews are now finished for the year (they normally finish by the end of September), but the Regional Agriculture Coordinator has already contacted Mike Pangman about another observation of scentless chamomile growing along the Cycle 16 Trail. Bluet, knapweeds, and common tansy are the weeds that are prioritized by the province, however, the NWIPC may treat lower priority weeds if requested by the RDBN and they have available resources.

Financials for 2023 are anticipated prior to the Annual General Meeting.



Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Rural/Agriculture Committee

To: Chair and Committee
From: Megan D'Arcy, Regional Agriculture Coordinator
Date: November 9, 2023
Subject: **Ministry of Agriculture and Food Regional Engagement Program**

RECOMMENDATION: (all/directors/majority)

Receive.

BACKGROUND

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food has initiated a five-year Regional Engagement Program that is intended to build on work completed under the Climate Change Adaptation Program. The Regional Engagement Program has funding to implement regional research projects and demonstration trials and other knowledge transfer events and/or tools intended to help commercial agriculture producers meet the challenges presented by climate change. More information about the program can be found on the Ministry website: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/programs/regional-extension-program>.

The Regional Engagement Program was launched in April of 2023. A Regional Engagement Committee was struck that is organized and hosted by three District Agrologists, John Stevenson (Smithers), Karen Tabe (Vanderhoof) and Nicole Pressey (Quesnel). The other committee members are producers with operations located from Haida Gwaii to McBride, and as far south as Quesnel. Several of the committee members are actively involved in their local agriculture associations. Megan D'Arcy has been sitting on the committee as the Regional Agriculture Coordinator for the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako, as this work is building on the previous Climate Change Adaptation Program (formerly known as Climate Action Initiative). Increasing climate change resiliency is Priority Area 7 in the RDBN Food and Agriculture Plan. The committee has met three times: June 8th, August 1st, and October 17th.

As part of the committee work, five key themes have been identified as priorities:

- Soil health management,
- Water storage and development,
- Nutrient management practices,

- Grazing management systems, and
- Crop selection for resilience.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food is hosting Regional Extension Open Houses to further explore these themes, and to gain insight from producers with respect to developing project ideas. To this purpose, open houses will take place in Smithers/Telkwa on November 6th, and in Vanderhoof on November 7th.

It is understood that the Ministry of Agriculture and Food will take the information from these meetings and develop projects that will be initiated in the spring of 2024.

ATTACHMENTS

None.



Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Rural/Agriculture Committee

To: Chair and Committee
From: Megan D'Arcy, Regional Agriculture Coordinator
Date: November 9, 2023
Subject: **Veterinary Drug and Medicated Feed Regulation**

RECOMMENDATION: (all/directors/majority)

Receive.

BACKGROUND

Veterinary Drug Licensing in BC

As per the BC government website, there are four types of veterinary drug licenses.¹

1. Limited medicated feed license – businesses that sell non-prescription medicated feeds, but do not manufacture medicated feed.
2. Medicated feed license – license for businesses that manufacture and sell medicated feed.
3. Veterinary drug license – business can sell products listed in the BC Veterinary Drug and Medicated Feed Regulation.² The drug cannot be listed on the prescription drug

¹ <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/animals-and-crops/agricultural-licences-and-forms/veterinary-drug-licensing>

² injectable biologicals for the prevention or treatment of disease in production animals, including antisera, bacterins, toxoids, antitoxins, products containing concentrated or purified antibodies and vaccines, except brucella, rabies, anthrax, modified live virus and live virus vaccines for mammals; antibiotics for administration to production animals; vitamins for injection into or oral administration to production animals, injectable vitamin A not to exceed 500 000 I.U. per millilitre and injectable vitamin D not to exceed 75 000 I.U. per millilitre; preparations containing (i) minerals for oral administration to, and (ii) selenium and iron for injection into production animals, for the prevention of deficiencies, including hematinics for horses, if the hematinics contain not more than 1 milligram of copper gluconate or cobalt gluconate or both; growth promotants in the form of implants and feed additives labeled by the manufacturer for use in production animals; injectable epinephrine for treatment of anaphylactic reactions in production animals; dextrose, calcium, phosphorus and magnesium preparations and propylene glycol labeled by the manufacturer for treatment and prevention of acetoneemia and hypocalcemia in production animals and preparations intended as an aid in the supportive treatment of nutritional deficiencies in debilitated production animals; anti-cannibalism compounds for poultry; topical preparations labeled by the manufacturer as liniments, counter-irritants or poultices for the treatment of joint pain, swollen ligaments, tendons or muscles; acetylsalicylic acid boluses for horses or cattle; disinfectants, udder washes and teat dips and sanitizers.

list, which is federal (Prescription Drug List can be found on the Drug and Health Product Register: <https://hpr-rps.hres.ca/pdl.php?lang=en#a2>). Penicillin (in its various forms) is on the prescription drug list.

4. Veterinary drug dispense license application – issued to a person who has passed a written exam. Every medicated feed licensee and veterinary drug licensee must have a veterinary drug dispenser when the business is open for the sale of non-prescription veterinary drugs (listed in footnote).

At present, it is understood that producers wanting to access drugs on the Prescription Drug List need a prescription issued by a veterinarian. The prescription can then be filled either by a veterinarian, or a pharmacist that also sells veterinary drugs. Drugs not on the list and included in the Veterinary Drug and Medicated Feed Regulation can be purchased from a business with a veterinary drug license. This has been confirmed with P&B Feeds, Smithers Feed, and Vanderhoof Co-op, all of which have Veterinary Drug licenses.

An attempt has been made to connect with Dr. Burns, the province's Chief Veterinarian, by both phone and email. Currently, there has been no response from the Chief Veterinarian or her office. An email sent to her earlier this summer included the following questions:

- In the Veterinary Drug and Medicated Feed Regulation, what is the definition of 'antibiotics for administration to production animals', and how are these drugs different that the antibiotics listed on the federal Prescription Drug List?
- Are live vaccines listed on the Prescription Drug List? Just to confirm, is the Prescription Drug List updated and maintained by Health Canada?

There is a guidance document entitled "Guidance Document: Determining Prescription Status for Human and Veterinary Drugs" issued by the Federal Government that details the considerations for decisions made about what drugs need a prescription (document found here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/drug-products/prescription-drug-list/guidance-document.html>).

ATTACHMENTS

None.



Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Rural/Agriculture Committee

To: Chair and Committee
From: Megan D'Arcy, Regional Agriculture Coordinator
Date: November 9, 2023
Subject: **Water Restrictions for Agriculture Operations**

RECOMMENDATION: (all/directors/majority)

Receive.

BACKGROUND

In the late summer of 2023, producers in some areas of the province were asked to either implement water conservation measures or, in some cases, to cease irrigation of some forage crops.

A press release from the BC Ministry of Forests¹ indicated that a fish population protection order was put in place for the lower Salmon River and Bessette Creek on August 16, 2023, to protect spawning Chinook salmon and due to extreme drought conditions. The order restricted water use for forage crops, including hay, alfalfa and forage corn. The order did not apply to water diverted and used for non-forage crops, such as market vegetables, livestock watering, or domestic purposes. It also did not restrict water use of stored water. The order was in effect from August 16 to September 30, 2023.

Danielle Synotte, Executive Director for the BC Agriculture Council was interviewed by the Western Producer. She pointed out that producers can and have been implementing management strategies such as scheduling irrigation and growing drought resistant crops.

The Water Use During Scarcity webpage² published by the provincial government does a good job of describing how the 'First In Time, First in Right' system is applied during drought conditions. It also defines critical environmental flow thresholds and explains fish population protection orders and when they are applied. It states that prior to giving the order, the Minister must "give due consideration to the needs of agricultural users".

¹ <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2023FOR0052-001305>

² Water Use During Scarcity: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/water/water-licensing-rights/water-licences-approvals/water-use-during-scarcity>



Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako Rural/Agriculture Committee

To: Chair and Committee
From: Nellie Davis, Manager of Regional Economic Development
Date: November 9, 2023
Subject: **Municipal Agriculture Disaster Declaration**

RECOMMENDATION: (all/directors/majority)

Receive.

BACKGROUND

As per request at the September 7, 2023, Rural/Agriculture Meeting, staff have researched the declaration of an 'agriculture disaster' by a local government. While it was not possible to find similar document from a source within British Columbia, the Rural Municipalities of Alberta outlines the steps they use towards declaring such a disaster in their document 'A Guide for Declaring Municipal Agricultural Disasters in Alberta'.

While the declaration does not specifically activate financial or other supports at any level of government, it does promote consistent data collection and enable year over year comparisons. It also provides a mechanism to inform residents, industry and other levels of government, and increases collaboration with impacted groups. The Guide is attached for further information.

ATTACHMENTS

A Guide for Declaring Municipal Agricultural Disasters in Alberta



A Guide for Declaring Municipal Agricultural Disasters in Alberta

Prepared by the Rural
Municipalities of Alberta



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About This Guide

Steps used towards declaring a municipal agricultural disaster can bring awareness to a developing situation, inform residents, industry and provincial and federal governments and enable collaboration with impacted producer groups.

This guide is intended to be used as a tool to enable municipalities to use informed decision making process prior to making a formal declaration of agricultural disaster as conditions evolve. **Municipal declarations do not automatically trigger access to increased funding programs, provincially or federally.**

A number of elements drove the creation of this guide, including:

- Past drought and excessive moisture experiences impacting agricultural production and crop yields,
- 2015 drought which resulted in a provincial declaration and multiple municipal declarations,
- Discussion stemming from the provincial Drought and Excessive Moisture Advisory Group (DEMAG) whose mandate is to provide advice and recommendations to complement government actions on drought and excessive moisture related issues affecting Alberta's agricultural producers in Alberta and to advise and provide recommendations to government on long-term strategies for mitigating the effects of drought and excessive moisture. More information regarding DEMAG is included in Appendix C.

Purpose of the Guide:

The purpose of the Guide is to promote a consistent mechanism for data collection and monitoring to support municipal decision making to guide agricultural disaster declarations.

Through the use of information provided in the Guide, municipalities can bring awareness to a situation as it is developing and ensure all levels of government and local residents are aware of the situation, without immediately declaring it as a "disaster."

The use of this guide is intended as a source of information that will allow data comparisons within a municipality year after year.

The Guide provides:

- Directions for consistent and clear messaging
- Identification of tools available to arrive at condition statement
- Access to technical data to support condition statement
- Timeline documentation of conditions
- The ability to modify condition statements due to a change in conditions
- An explanation of the differences between a condition statement versus a provincial declaration of agricultural disaster
- A recommendation as to when a municipal declaration should be made

- A communications guide noting key parties to notify

Condition Statement Tool Overview

The Condition Statement Tool is intended to provide a tracking mechanism that will enable data-driven municipal decision making where agriculture production is impacted by natural causes.

Utilizing data available through Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (ASFC) (ex. crop reports available at a regional level) and/or municipal resources such as agricultural fieldmen, the condition statement tool can be used to highlight and track the percentage of crops in poor condition. The use of a colour-coded chart demonstrates a snapshot of conditions at a given time, and includes identification of the size of area impacted (in hectares).

Municipalities are encouraged to attach a map highlighting the impacted area(s) where possible.

It is advisable to assess conditions through this tool every two to three weeks to monitor and document any changes prior to making a formal declaration. It is important to note that improved conditions can result in a declaration being lifted.

The Condition Statement Tool is available in Appendix A for use and a sample is provided below:

Date:	July 7, 2015					
Municipality:	County of RMA					
Total Area Impacted:	324 seeded hectares					
Map Included:	No					
Next Report Due:	July 21, 2015					
	Ranking	Drought	Excessive Moisture	Floods	Pests	Hail
Annuals Impacted (% rated poor):						
Cereals		13% poor				
Oil Seed					26% poor	
Others						
Perennials Impacted (% rated poor):						
Tame Hay				55% poor		

Tame Pasture						
Native Pasture						
Other: (please indicate)						

Legend: % of crop (in hectares) rated 'poor':

	0 – 10%	Crops near normal and above
	10% - 25%	Expected diminished crop yields
	25% - 50%	Pending disaster
	50% or higher	Definite disaster
	No impacts being experienced	

Technical Information to Support Data

There are a number of tools available that supply data municipalities can use in assessing their local conditions and utilizing the condition assessment tool. Click on the hyperlinks provided for access to information.

Agriculture and Forestry

Alberta Agriculture and Forestry houses significant data sources that municipalities can utilize, including:

- [Instructions for Accessing Precipitation Data from Alberta Agriculture and Forestry](#)
- [Alberta Climate Information Services](#)
- [Alberta Climate and Atlas Maps](#)
- [Agriculture and Forestry Climate Services Staff Resources](#)
- [Agricultural Moisture Situation Update](#)

Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC)

AFSC can assist municipal districts and counties when they are experiencing drought or excessively wet conditions. AFSC provides information through the following mechanisms:

- *Crop Reports*: AFSC senior adjusters report on crop conditions every two weeks from emergence until harvest is complete. These reports provide information at the county or municipal district level and are available on the AFSC website. This information can be presented in more detail

during severe dry or wet conditions, for example maps that show the percent of crops rated poor relative to previous years.

- *Insurance Program Response*: Detailed information on how AFSC's existing insurance products respond to a specific conditions are made available on the AFSC website. This would include options for putting crops to an alternate use when crops are deteriorating and there is a shortage of feed in an area.
- *AgriStability Response*: How AgriStability responds can be posted on the AFSC website along with procedures for obtaining an advance under this program.
- *AgriRecovery Process*: AFSC along with Agriculture & Forestry staff can provide municipalities with detailed information on what is required to trigger an AgriRecovery response.
- Information on accessing Environment Canada data:
 - [Instructions for Accessing Precipitation Data](#)
 - [Instructions for Accessing Historical Radar Data](#)

Municipal Information:

- [RMA](#)
- Association of Alberta Agricultural Fieldmen ([AAAF](#))

Government of Alberta Declaration

The Role of AFSC

Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC) is a provincial Crown corporation that provides farmers, agribusinesses and other small businesses with loans, crop insurance and farm income disaster assistance. AFSC expenditures are consolidated into the provincial budget and the provincial budgeting process includes requirements for ministries and Crown corporations to live within budgeted expenditures, meaning that departments or Crown corporations cannot spend more than what has been budgeted for.

AFSC forecasts annual revenues that will be gained through premiums and estimates expenditures to pay out indemnities. AFSC provides those budget estimates to the Government of Alberta for inclusion into the provincial budget. If indemnities exceed budget amounts, AFSC needs to access reserve funds and the remainder of premiums as expenditures. This requires a formal process through the Treasury Board.

Provincial Declaration

In order to access additional funds the Government of Alberta must declare a disaster to access those funds for claim payments. This decision is made by Cabinet and is informed by data and analytical information provided by AFSC and Alberta Agriculture and Forestry. This declaration triggers a financial transaction through the Treasury Board to enable AFSC access to reserve funds.

Municipal Role

A common misperception is that a municipal declaration of an agricultural disaster will influence a provincial declaration or access to funding supports. This is simply not the case. Municipal declarations bring awareness to an issue in a specific area of the province, but they do not trigger a provincial declaration or access to any funding to support the issue.

Municipalities can work with their local agriculture industries or industry/producer organizations to communicate concerns and assess challenges being experienced.

Municipal Communications Process

The RMA assists AFSC and the Government of Alberta in distributing information to municipalities and Ag Service Board members. Providing a central communication hub for information sharing improves understanding of the challenges being experienced and connecting impacted municipalities with appropriate resources and support.

Before a municipality formally declares a state of agriculture disaster, a number of questions should be considered to enable consistent and thorough communications. These include:

- Does the state of agricultural disaster cover the entire area or just a region within the municipality?
- Does the agriculture disaster cover all agriculture in the municipality or only certain commodity products?
- Has the municipality used AFSC data for the local area to assess the level of impact being experienced?
- Has the municipality contacted producer groups and associations to discuss impacts being experienced?
- Does the municipality have data to support this decision (ex. completed condition assessment tool(s) and municipal mapping)?

Once a declaration of agriculture disaster has been made, the municipality should provide information regarding the details of the agriculture disaster to the following organizations for access to consistent information:

- Government of Alberta (Agriculture and Forestry)
- AFSC
- RMA

Appendix A: Condition Statement Tool

Utilizing data available through Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (ASFC) (ex. crop reports available online at a regional level and/or municipal resources such as agricultural fieldmen, the condition statement tool can be used to highlight and track the percentage of crops in poor condition.

The use of a colour-coded chart demonstrates a snapshot of conditions at a given time, and includes identification of the size of area impacted (in seeded hectares where applicable).

Municipalities are encouraged to attach a map highlighting the impacted area(s) where possible. It is advisable to assess conditions throughout the growing season to monitor and document any changes.

Date:						
Municipality:						
Total Area Impacted:						
Map Included:						
Next Report Due:						
	Ranking	Drought	Excessive Moisture	Floods	Pests	Hail
Annuals Impacted (% rated poor):						
Cereals						
Oil Seed						
Others						
Perennials Impacted (% rated poor):						
Tame Hay						
Tame Pasture						
Native Pasture						
Other: (please indicate)						

Legend: % of crop (in hectares) rated 'poor':

	0 – 10%	Crops near normal and above
	10% - 25%	Expected diminished crop yields
	25% - 50%	Pending disaster
	50% or higher	Definite disaster
	No impacts being experienced	

Appendix B: Municipal Agricultural Disaster Declaration Template

Municipal Agricultural Disaster Declaration

(attach all relevant data and completed condition statements to support declaration)

Municipality:	
Type of Agriculture Disaster:	[Type of disaster experienced and impact, such as drought conditions impacting 60% of cereal yields]
Stages of Disaster Declaration:	[Document the stages on the spectrum of the agriculture disaster and, as best as possible, the dates at which each stage was met]
Data to support:	[Insert or reference the data used to justify the state of agriculture disaster]
Level of impact:	[Describe the areas and commodity types impacted by the agriculture disaster]
Communication process:	[Outline the stakeholders to be contacted by the municipality following the declaration of agriculture disaster including Government of Alberta ministries, AFSC, RMA, and producer associations]
Other information:	

Appendix C: Drought and Excessive Moisture Advisory Group

The Drought and Excessive Moisture Advisory Group (DEMAG) is comprised of appointed representatives of key stakeholder agencies:

- Agri-Environmental Services Branch of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC)
- Alberta Agriculture and Forestry
- Alberta Association of Agricultural Fieldmen (AAAF)
- Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties (RMA)
- Alberta Environment and Parks
- Crop sector
- Irrigated Crop sector
- Livestock sector
- Wildrose Agricultural Producers Association

Mandate:

- To provide consistent and consolidated advice and recommendations to complement government actions on drought and excessive moisture related issues affecting the agricultural producers in Alberta.
- To advise and provide recommendations to government on long-term strategies for mitigating the effects of drought and excessive moisture.

Key Duties and Responsibilities of DEMAG:

- Facilitate two-way communication that is effective, timely, respectful and clear.
- Recommend extension activities and provide input to drought and excessive moisture related and related risk management information for key stakeholder groups.
- Serve as a formal communication connection between industry and government, and from government back to industry.
- Provide recommendations and policy advice to the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry for effective, fiscally responsible drought and excessive moisture preparedness, monitoring and reporting, and response actions.
- Actively participate in long-term strategic planning for future drought conditions in Alberta; for example, long-term water management and production/crop choices.
- Work with industry organizations to identify how to best assist producers in preparing for and coping with drought and excessive moisture, and develop these discoveries into recommendations.
- Oversee the implementation of the Agriculture Drought Risk Management Plan (ADRMP), and provide advice on and input during the ADRMP's review and evaluation.

Acknowledgments

The RMA would like to thank the following organizations for their contributions in developing this guide:

- Agriculture Financial Services Corporation
- Alberta Association Agriculture Fieldmen
- Alberta Agriculture and Forestry



Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada

[Canada.ca](#) □ [Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada](#)

Federal-provincial support helping disaster-affected farmers

From: [Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada](#)

News release

October 20, 2023 – Victoria, British Columbia – Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

After an intense summer of wildfires and drought, B.C.'s farmers and ranchers are receiving additional support to repair or replace damaged infrastructure and to help with the expenses they incurred to keep their animals fed, sheltered and safe during these emergencies.

The support is provided through the 2023 Canada-British Columbia Wildfire and Drought AgriRecovery Initiative and offers as much as \$71 million to help producers throughout the province return to full operation and provide the food British Columbians rely on.

Farmers and ranchers will receive assistance with as much as 70% of certain extraordinary expenses incurred during the emergencies, such as:

- livestock feed due to decreased pasture availability
- transportation costs related to moving livestock to feed and water
- transportation and veterinarian costs supporting animal health and safety

- repairs or replacement of critical irrigation infrastructure damaged by wildfire not covered by insurance
- labour costs to repair fencing damaged by wildfire
- re-establishing forage crops damaged by the wildfires
- replacing apiaries, bee colonies and beekeeping equipment lost in the wildfires

AgriRecovery programs are created to support producers with extraordinary costs they incur due to an emergency, and to get them back into production. Each one is developed to meet the needs of farmers and ranchers affected by a specific situation.

AgriRecovery funding is available through the disaster relief assistance policy framework defined in the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable CAP). Sustainable CAP is a 5-year (2023-28) \$3.5-billion investment by federal, provincial and territorial governments to strengthen competitiveness, innovation and resilience of the agriculture, agrifood and agri-based products sector. Sustainable CAP includes \$1 billion in federal programs and activities and a \$2.5-billion commitment cost-shared 60% federally and 40% provincially/territorially for programs that are designed and delivered by provinces and territories.

For more information about the 2023 Canada-British Columbia Wildfire and Drought AgriRecovery Initiative, producers can call: 1 888 332 3352 or email AgriRecovery@gov.bc.ca.

Program and application details will be available on Monday, Oct. 23, 2023, at noon (Pacific time).

Quotes

"I've had the opportunity to meet with farmers and producers from across Western Canada and they've shared just how challenging this growing season has been for their operations. This support under the AgriRecovery Framework will help producers in British Columbia recover so they can continue to feed Canada and the world."

- The Honourable Lawrence MacAulay, Federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food

"This summer was an extremely challenging time for B.C.'s farmers and ranchers as we dealt with unprecedented drought and wildfire. We've been listening to and working with farmers and ranchers, and providing programs and support that meet their unique needs. AgriRecovery is another way we are taking action to protect the livelihoods of our province's food producers, helping them return to their land, while supporting local food security and our local economies."

- Pam Alexis, B.C.'s Minister of Agriculture and Food

"This is welcomed news after the challenging season ranchers have faced. Any producers affected by wildfire or drought have been anxiously waiting for this announcement of AgriRecovery. Today's announcement of support will make a real difference to those ranchers facing tight feed supplies."

- Brian Thomas, president, B.C. Cattlemen's Association

Related products

- [Backgrounder: Provincial support for farmers and ranchers](#)
- [Backgrounder: AgriRecovery supporting British Columbia farmers and ranchers with extraordinary costs](#)
- [Backgrounder: AgriRecovery framework](#)

Associated links

- [Emergency management for agriculture](#)

Contacts

For media:

Francis Chechile

Press Secretary

Office of the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food

francis.chechile@agr.gc.ca

Media Relations

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

Ottawa, Ontario

613-773-7972

1-866-345-7972

aaaf.mediarelations-relationsmedias.aac@agr.gc.ca

Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#)

Web: [Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada](#)

Dave Townsend
Ministry of Agriculture and Food
Media Relations
250-356-7098
250-889-5945 (mobile)

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Date modified:
2023-10-23

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