

Rural Oliver Agricultural Area Plan Summary

“Rural Oliver” (Electoral Area C)¹ Statistics:

Population (2006)	3,899
Jurisdictional Area:	
Electoral Area ‘C’	63,300 ha
Plan Study Area	
Total Area Farmed (date)	7,442 ha
% of Farmland:	
Number of Farms (date)	~ 400
ALR	9,275

Date of Agricultural Area Plan: 2008

Title: “Agricultural Area Plan”

Length: 57 pages

Prepared by: Steering Committee & Area ‘C’ Director Allan Patton

Adoption Status:

- Adopted by board resolution. Date unknown.

Related documents:

- None.

Purpose Statement:

- No specific purpose statement.

Highlights:

- “.... pursue economic prosperity through the enhancement and promotion of its agricultural assets.” (6)
- “Through a series of public strategy meetings, Rural Oliver and Town of Oliver residents have jointly determined that preserving and enhancing the agricultural economy and quality of lifestyle is the highest priority.”
- “.... we describe this as “an evolutionary plan”. It will be a “living “document” to be modified over time to fulfill the needs of community today and still incorporate new components “

¹ Electoral Area ‘C’ is contained within the Okanagan-Similkameen Regional District. Statistics do not include the town of Oliver (which has a population of 4,370).

Outlined Issues:

1. Agricultural Land Use
 - Fragmentation & loss of farm land; encroachment of the municipality into rural areas.
 - Non-productive structures on farmland, non-agricultural use of land, non-farmer renters, under-utilized properties
 - Allocation of crown land to non-agricultural uses/designations
2. Agricultural Water Supply, Quality and Access
 - Climate change effects on the availability & of water: international competition, decreased capability of amounts used
 - Deteriorating quality of water
 - Increasing cost
 - No farmer control over delivery of water.
3. Pursuing Economic Prosperity
 - Lack of farm succession
 - Restricted access to information, markets, and customers
 - Lack of agri-tourism support
 - Shortage of temporary farm workers.
 - Under-supplied local markets for agricultural products.
 - Rural-urban conflicts
4. Agro-Environmental Interface
 - Soil erosion.
 - Rehabilitation of extraction sites (particularly gravel deposits)
 - Poor air quality from incineration of agricultural debris
 - Negative effects of native ecosystems & fish habitats
 - Wildlife interface
5. Rural-Urban Interface
 - Encroachment on the ability of farmers to carry out acceptable farm practices: nuisance complaints and unjustified harassment - boosting of farmer confidence is necessary
 - Difficulties in interpreting best management practices in Farm Practices Board
6. Corridors and Rights-of-Way
 - Rural road safety
 - Trails, transportation & power corridors through agricultural areas
 - Use of abandoned rail beds (Kettle Valley)
 - Navigation through rural areas (for visitors)
7. Enhancing the Profile of Local Agriculture
 - Public awareness is lacking; are not informed, although they like the “feel” of agriculture in the valley.
8. Regulation
 - loss of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses.
 - Subdivision and re-zoning of small ALR parcels
 - Impact of tourism and “wine capital” development on agriculture.

Objectives & Desired Outcomes:

NOTE: All strategies in this summary and in the *Agricultural Area Plan* are recommendations only, provided by the consultant, the AAC, and other contributors to the farm plan. Following is a summary of the “goals”, and “strategies”. (Only a selection of strategies are included for each goal).

1. Agricultural Land Use

Goal: *“To protect and expand the agricultural land base so as to maximize the primary production area.”* (31)

Recommended Strategies:

- Zoning regulations, including limited non-farm uses of land in agricultural areas, building coverage regulations, clustering and other efficient placement of buildings.
- Limits on non-farming purposes, labour housing designations.
- Retain all ALR land, regardless of size, encourage small land holders to make land available
- Seek to include non-ALR crown agricultural land into the ALR.
- Employ SGOG principles to minimize footprint

2. Agricultural Water Supply, Quality and Access

Goal: *“To ensure a secure, adequate, and affordable supply and quality of water for agriculture now and in the future.”* (32)

Recommended Strategies:

- Address water rights in the interest of agriculture, water rights attached to agricultural land
- Develop best management practices
- Promote more efficient technology, storage, and use of irrigation systems/water.
- Coordination of government efforts to supply, retain, and transport water

3. Pursuing Economic Prosperity

Goal: *“To ensure the long term economic viability of local agriculture”.* (33)

Recommended Strategies:

- Work with provincial and federal governments to maintain labour supply.
- Lobby local government to provide farmer and labour friendly land use farm bylaws
- Promote agri-tourism through already popular “wine capital” theme
- Employ wine-theme marketing opportunities, engage direct marketing in the local community
- Work with the town of Oliver

4. Agro-Environmental Interface

Goal: *“To support environmental initiatives that promote sustainable agricultural farming practices and recognize society’s obligations to farmers for wildlife damage losses and maintenance of habitat.”* (34)

Recommended Strategies:

- Educate farmers & encourage environmental farm plans
- Support ecological initiatives to enhance wildlife habitat; compensate farmers for damages/loss of farmland
- Monitor ALC decisions regarding gravel pit operations and site remediation.
- Pursue “cooperative” decisions regarding agricultural organic waste

5. Rural-Urban Interface

Goal: *“To ensure that agriculture co-exists with non-agricultural land uses with a minimum of conflict.”* (35)

Recommended Strategies:

- Require covenants on residential properties adjacent to agriculture.
- Establish OCP & zoning bylaws to establish buffers
- Direct growth to the town of Oliver.
- Establish development permit areas for sites adjacent to ALR.
- Consider a Farm Bylaw
- Education of stakeholders & decision makers.

6. Corridors and Rights-of-Way

Goal: *“To ensure that agricultural activities and potential impacts are taken into account in the decision-making related to the locating and designing of these facilities.”* (35)

Recommended Strategies:

- Require AAC participation in highway routing and design.
- Lobby for secondary road upgrading
- Develop signage, for both highway traffic, and trail users.

7. Enhancing the Profile of Local Agriculture

Goal: *“To increase the profile, appeal and appreciation of agriculture in the Valley.”* (36)

Recommended Strategies:

- Proclaim income and employment benefits/opportunities generated by local agriculture.
- Integrate agricultural growth into economic growth trends.
- Link agriculture to tourism.
- Engage the local press.
- Develop content in high-school curriculums.

8. Regulation

Goal: *“To ensure that regulatory policy guiding Oliver area development supports working agriculture and the objectives of the agricultural area plan.”* (36)

Recommended Strategies:

- Prevent agricultural subdivision, rezoning and conversion through bylaw amendment.
- Explore the development of a Farm Bylaw

- Adopt strengthened ALC buffering guidelines.
- Work with the Farm Practices board to ensure dispute resolution takes into account local “common acceptable” practices.

Development Process/Timeline:

- September 2003: Full day design charrette.
- February 2004: Community workshops.
- May 2004: Sub committee reports filed.
- June - August 2004: Research and Surveys
- December 2004: Draft AAP
- Fall 2005: In depth interviews.
- February 2006: Interviewing of focus groups.
- May 2006: Finalization

Rural Oliver OCP Supporting Statements¹:

- There is no direct mention of the AAP within the OCP (as the OCP pre-dates the AAP). However, it makes mention of supporting the creation of an AAP.
- The OCP has an extensive list of objectives and policies, supporting the retention and development of agriculture.

AAC Status:

- Ongoing.