



Governance & Services Committee

TO: Governance and Services Committee

FROM: Todd Cashin
Director of Community Services

DATE: July 9, 2020

SUBJECT: Regional Agricultural Compliance and Enforcement Strategy

Purpose: To update the Governance & Services Committee on the Regional Agricultural Compliance and Enforcement Strategy.

Executive Summary:

The Central Okanagan has strong agricultural roots and this sector has been important in defining the region and its growth pattern. With changes in population, pressures of development, increased climate impacts, and water pressures, these changes have raised more awareness of the importance of farmland. Over the last number of years, staff has become aware of a significant increase in the misuse of farmland. In response, staff is working towards a comprehensive compliance and enforcement strategy that is aimed at consistency, effectiveness, and fairness throughout the Central Okanagan.

This Regional Agricultural Compliance and Enforcement Strategy will outline the Region's approach to its compliance goals, ranging from assisting property owners in understanding their obligations to comply with legislative requirements on farmland, and extends to monitoring compliance, performing inspection activities, and communicating the message that farmland is to be used for farming.

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Governance & Services Committee receive for information the Regional Agricultural Compliance and Enforcement Strategy report dated July 9, 2020.

Respectfully Submitted:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Todd Cashin".

Todd Cashin
Director of Community Services

Approved for Committee's Consideration

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Reardon".

Brian Reardon, CAO

Prepared by: Brittany Lange, Environmental Planner

Implications of Recommendation:

Strategic Plan:	Receiving the report aligns with the Regional Board's Strategic Priority "Sustainable Communities" by expanding the Regional Planning Lab initiative to identify common needs and opportunities for collaboration.
Policy:	Receiving the report is in keeping with several of the Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1336 policies.

Background:

In June 2019, staff provided the Governance and Services Committee with an introduction to the Regional Agricultural Compliance and Enforcement Strategy. The identified purpose of this strategy is to protect farmland through the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices, and to increase food security in the Central Okanagan. More specifically, members of the Regional Planning Lab have expressed their concerns about agricultural issues in the Central Okanagan, and agreed to move forward with the creation of a collaborative Compliance Project.

Furthermore, in October 2019, staff provided an update to the Governance and Services Committee that identified the project framework and key issue areas within the Central Okanagan. Since then, project members continue to work together to collectively problem solve through shared learning and taking proactive measures to promote food security, and thereby protect farmland for generations to come. This collaborative approach will reduce duplication, facilitate efficiencies, and encourage consistent enforcement across the region. The goal is to form new connections, increase communication, strengthen relationships that have already been formed, and ensure that farmland is used primarily for farming.

Project Deliverables and Responsibilities:

The role of the RDCO is to administer and support the Project by:

- Increasing communication between stakeholders (i.e. local government and staff at the Agricultural Land Commission);
- Developing a collaborative system for addressing agricultural issues; and,
- Building public awareness on the importance of protecting the ALR and best practices on farmland.

The Role of Project Partners:

Project partners include staff from RDCO incorporated municipalities (City of Kelowna, City of West Kelowna, District of Peachland, and District of Lake Country), Westbank First Nation, the District of Summerland, Agricultural Land Commission (ALC), B.C. Assessment, Interior Health Authority, and the Ministry of Agriculture.

All Project Partners are expected to participate in the Regional Agricultural Compliance and Enforcement Strategy through in-kind staff support. Project partners are responsible for:

- Attending meetings to share ideas, concerns, problems, and success stories;
- Contribute to the sharing of information and dialogue between other partners; and,
- Promote safe and sustainable farming practices within the ALR and communicate this to the public and our shared communities.

Feedback from Regional Partners

Following the initial meeting with Project Partners held on July 31, 2019, RDCO Planning staff conducted a survey to identify key issue areas and identify helpful tools to take action on compliance issues. Out of 16 partners, 13 participated in the exit survey following the meeting. Below is a brief summary of the survey results:

- 99% of participants believe the project to be meaningful to the Central Okanagan;
- The top three issues were identified as:
 1. The deposition of fill;
 2. Large structural footprints and production facilities; and,
 3. Storage of vehicles and equipment.
- The top three issue areas were identified as:
 1. The community of Ellison;
 2. West Kelowna Wine Trail; and,
 3. Southeast Kelowna Wine Trail.
- The top three tools identified as being helpful to partnering jurisdictions includes:
 1. Better collaboration and engagement with ALC staff;
 2. Developing an educational campaign to inform landowners (e.g. brochures, bulletins, news releases); and,
 3. Exploring a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between project partners and the ALC.

Technical Stakeholder Workshop

Given the survey results, it was identified that one of the main topics of concern is the placement of fill, illegal dumping, and the transition of soils impacting farmland in the ALR. As such, staff held a technical stakeholder workshop in November 2019 which included presentations from soil experts at Ministry of Environment and the Agricultural Land Commission. The meeting was well attended by project partners and included discussion on common issues, application processes through the ALC, and future approaches to compliance and enforcement.

Furthermore, RDCO staff continue to share information on the project broadly with regional partners and the public through the Regional Planning Lab bulletin posted on the RDCO website.

Regional Growth Strategy

This project is supported through several of the policies of the Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1336, including:

- Preserve and support sustainable agricultural activities and land base that enhances local agriculture through the strengthening of best practices, support of local and regional food systems and the expansion of local food markets and agri-tourism.
- Encourage cooperation with the Agricultural Land Commission and the Ministry of Agriculture to promote consistency among bylaws, policies, regulations, and decisions that will be made regarding agriculture.

- Promote the use of agriculture and ALR lands for food production and ancillary agriculture processing and retailing consistent with uses outlined in the Agricultural Land Commission Act and Regulation.
- Protect the supply of agricultural land and promote agricultural viability.
- Support opportunities for regional partners to collaborate, communicate and coordinate on matters of regional significance.
- Encourage collaboration among the regional partners on long range land use, infrastructure and financial planning based upon projected growth, emerging priorities and the anticipated needs of communities.

Financial Considerations:

The RDCO received a \$15,000.00 grant as part of the Community Food Action Initiative in cooperation with Interior Health Authority (IHA) for the Regional Agricultural Compliance and Enforcement Strategy. This funding has been essential to the success of the project by supporting Regional District staff in administering and collaborating with regional partners. Final deliverables for this funding has now been completed.

Furthermore, Community Services staff has budgeted \$5,000.00 in the 2020 Regional Planning budget for continued implementation of the project beyond the IHA funding period in anticipation for the Regional Agricultural Strategy scheduled to be completed in 2021.

Conclusion:

RDCO staff and regional partners will continue to collaborate in an effort to build momentum with this project. Staff intend to host a virtual meeting in August 2020 to discuss the issue of production facilities and commercial businesses in the ALR. Furthermore, a portion of the Planning Services Summer Student work plan has dedicated time to create information bulletins on the importance of farmland and clarification of ALR regulations as well as work to complete a desktop review of non-farm activities occurring in the Ellison Area on farmland.

Considerations not applicable to this report:

- Organizational
- External
- Alternative Recommendation

Attachment(s):

- Survey Results
- Fall 2019 Planning Lab Bulletin