



REGIONAL  
DISTRICT  
OF NANAIMO

## **AGRICULTURAL AREA PLAN IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT OUTLINE**

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Board endorse the proposed Agricultural Area Plan implementation project outline included in the staff report on the Agricultural Advisory Committee agenda dated September 28, 2023.

### **BACKGROUND**

Following the adoption of the Agricultural Area Plan (AAP) in September 2012, the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN), with the assistance of the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) developed the first AAP implementation work plan. While significant progress on the workplan has been made, there continues to be a number of outstanding actions that have not been completed. There are various reasons why there continues to be items outstanding including jurisdictional challenges, budget and resource requirements, departmental priorities, and political and community support.

In addition, the first work plan included 68 of 128 recommended action items in the AAP. As such, there continues to be a number of recommended action items that could be considered for further exploration.

Over the last few years, the AAC has been reviewing the AAP on an ad hoc basis with the intent of identifying a new set of priorities for implementation. Given the complexity and scale of the task and inability to provide adequate staff support, these discussions have not resulted in a new action plan or list of priorities.

In response, a report (see Attachment 1 – Agriculture Area Plan Project Report) was presented to the Board for consideration at its February 28, 2023 meeting. The report clarifies that there was no Board direction to proceed with an update to the AAP and that the update of the AAP was not part of a RDN department work plan. As such, a recommendation was made to provide funding allocated to an AAP project of \$20,000. The report also provides an outline of the intended use of the funds.

The Board passed the following motion at its February 28, 2023 meeting in support of the recommendation:

*It was moved and seconded that the Board reduce the amount of funding to \$20,000 for professional fees for an Agriculture Area Plan project in the 2023 Budget.*

The purpose of this report is to seek feedback and support from the AAC on a proposed AAP implementation project outline based on the intended use of the funds approved by the Board.

### **PROJECT OUTLINE**

The following is a proposed general AAP implementation project outline. Please note, the intent of this section is not to outline the project in detail, but rather to provide a high-level overview and opportunity for AAC input. Further refinement opportunities will be provided once a draft Terms of Reference (TOR) has been provided.

*Desirable Outcomes*

- A new set of priorities for AAP implementation in the form of a workplan for board consideration.
- Initiate consultant support for workplan implementation.

*General Scope of Project*

- High level review of the AAP and AAP implementation.
- Detailed review of the AAP recommended action items, implementation plans, staff reports and other materials.
- Evaluation of recommended action items.
- Collaborate with the AAC to review and prioritize AAP actions items.
- Prepare recommended AAP implementation workplan.
- Identify opportunities for the AAC to actively participate in AAP implementation.

*Roles and Responsibilities*

The following provides an overview of the roles and responsibilities of project stakeholders:

<b>Consultant</b>	<b>AAC</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Board</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide professional and technical expertise</li> <li>• Project lead</li> <li>• Facilitate discussions with the AAC</li> <li>• Implement Project</li> <li>• Assist AAC in the project</li> <li>• Prepare documents and reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Represent agricultural interests</li> <li>• Actively participate in the process</li> <li>• Provide input to the consultant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate the project</li> <li>• Contract administration</li> <li>• Assist the consultant where needed</li> <li>• Provide local government and planning expertise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decision making</li> <li>• Represent community perspectives</li> <li>• Overall project direction</li> <li>• Approval of workplans</li> </ul>

**NEXT STEPS**

Following endorsement of the proposed project outline, the next step in the process is to develop a project TOR. The TOR will contain a more thorough outline of the project as well as a project timeline, to be presented to the AAC for input prior to being finalized.

Once the project TOR is finalized, a request for proposals will be issued to hire a qualified consultant to initiate the project.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

A budget amount of \$20,000 has been allocated in the 2023 budget for the purpose of hiring a consultant to assist the AAC with this project. Existing staff resources will be required to initiate, coordinate, and support the project and oversee the contract.

### **STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT**

Growth Management - Protect agricultural lands and promote agriculture and food production in the Region.

### **REVIEWED BY:**

- P. Thompson, Manager, Current Planning
- L. Grant, General Manager, Development and Emergency Services
- D. Holmes, Chief Administrative Officer

### **ATTACHMENT**

1. Attachment 1 – Agriculture Area Plan Project Report February 2023



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## AGRICULTURE AREA PLAN PROJECT

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### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the Board receive this report for information.
2. That the Board reduce the amount of funding to \$20,000 for professional fees for an Agriculture Area Plan project in the 2023 Budget.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Electoral Area Services Committee requested that the Agricultural Plan, be referred to the Board for inclusion on the February 28, 2023 Board agenda. This request is related to proposed funding for the Agriculture Area Plan (AAP) in the amount of \$100,000 that is currently included in the 2023 budget for the Electoral Area Planning Service.

Funding for professional fees was added to the draft 2022 budget for work related to the AAP. Upon review of the 2022 RDN Budget the Board removed this funding with direction to reconsider funds for the AAP in 2023. Of note is that there is no Board direction to proceed with an update to the AAP nor is there direction to include funds in the Electoral Area Planning budget for review of the AAP. Also of note is that a review or update of the AAP is not part of a RDN department work plan.

Following the adoption of the Agricultural Area Plan (AAP) in September 2012 the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) reviewed the 128 recommended Action Items outlined in the AAP to identify which were of highest priority to consider within the first work plan. The result was a list of 68 priority Action Items representing a broad range of topics related to aquaculture and agriculture in the region. Staff then organized the priority Action Items into six main projects and tasks to be considered during the first work plan period from 2014-2016. The Regional District of Nanaimo (RND) Agricultural Area Plan Implementation 2014-2016 Action Plan (IAP) identifies the following six projects for consideration during the 2014-2016 work plan period:

1. Agriculture Bylaw and Policy Updates
2. AAC Terms of Reference
3. Promotion and Economic Development
4. On Farm Water-related Infrastructure
5. Invasive Species Management
6. Composting Facility

In addition to the above identified projects, there are several priority Action Items that were also included in the 2014-2016 IAP that did not fit within one of the main projects and were outstanding at the end of the first work plan. These items were to be reconsidered in subsequent AAP Implementation Work Plans. Following the completion of the first work plan implementation period the creation of a second work plan was proposed but not completed.

Since that time, the AAC has been reviewing the AAP on an ad hoc basis with the intent of identifying a new set of priorities for implementation. As this has not resulted in a new action plan or list of priority actions, a more structured approach may be required. The goal would be to develop a second implementation plan based on the action items in the AAP. A new implementation plan will provide clear direction on the outstanding action items. Some funding would be useful in this regard to assist the AAC with this review.

The proposed funding in relation to the AAP is for professional fees. This generally means that the funding will be used to hire a consultant to assist the RDN with a project. The project that has been identified since the completion of the first IAP is a new set of priorities and then subsequent follow-up with those action items.

More specifically, a consultant would assist the AAC to review the action items that have not yet been implemented including the action items identified as a priority, but which did not have support from the Electoral Area Directors back in 2014. The AAC would be asked for their advice on a new set of implementation priorities and then once the priority actions have been approved by the Board then the AAC would be involved in providing guidance on implementation of those action items. The consultant could assist with some of the action items if appropriate and as funds permit.

The project to identify priority action items could provide a basis for a work plan for the AAC and associated budget to assist with the work plan.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The draft 2023 budget for Electoral Area Planning currently includes an amount of \$100,000 for professional fees to assist with a project related to the Agriculture Area Plan. This amount could be revised based on possible work that could be initiated in 2023. At this time there is no defined project or course of action associated with that funding. The amount of funding for professional fees could be reduced based on the understanding that an AAP related project could be initiated in 2023 and continue in 2024. The Staff recommendation is for \$20,000 to assist the AAC with setting priorities for further implementation of the AAP.

Another consideration is that staff in the Electoral Area Planning service, both Current and Long Range, are already fully committed to projects and other job requirements such as processing applications. Requiring Planning staff to be reallocated to another project will require that they be removed from other projects that are on approved work plans and in Current Planning then that will also affect application processing.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT**

Growth Management - Protect agricultural lands and promote agriculture and food production in the Region.

### **REVIEWED BY:**

- L. Grant, General Manager of Planning and Emergency Services
- D. Holmes, CAO