

Manifesting Denman's Farm Plan

You may have seen the recently-erected "Denman feeding Denman" painting on the Graffiti Hill fence. My guess is that you support the message.

So you might be interested in Denman Island's Farm Plan. The plan's vision statement is a longer version of the slogan Denman feeding Denman: "An island where we feed each abundantly because farming is a viable and valued foundation of our sustainable community." The plan was created in 2012 based on a voluminous amount of community involvement and research, and is a rich source of information and inspiration about agriculture on Denman.

Much of the Farm Plan still needs to be implemented. And for that, it needs a team of volunteers. These community members, ideally people with knowledge of local farming, land use, food security issues, and environmental issues, will get together in the form of a **Special Advisory Commission to guide the Farm Plan implementation process**. If you are interested in serving on this committee, check out the info at the end of this article.

What does "Farm Plan implementation" mean?

It could mean a lot of things, given that we're talking about a 107-page document containing over 40 recommendations! But in the interests of do-ability, the Local Trust Committee (which commissioned and is ultimately responsible for the Farm Plan) has narrowed the scope to six of these recommendations – those focussing on changes to Denman's land use regulations.

"Implementation" means considering which recommendations to adopt, thus potentially changing local bylaws that govern agricultural land use.

Some of these recommendations focus on farmland housing, such as allowing additional accommodation for farm help and permitting agritourism accommodation (for instance, farmstay guests, WOOFers, etc) outside the main home (page 49 of the plan).

Other recommendations focus on allowing activities that help farmers to market, sell, store, and process their products, so that they can more easily make a living, and on preventing overall loss of agricultural land.

Recommended changes to the Land Use Bylaw (which defines zoning) include allowing Temporary Use Permits for agricultural purposes such as processing facilities, a mobile abattoir, etc; allowing roadside stands, small-scale marketing and processing, and agricultural education and research; establishing an Agricultural Enterprise Zone outside the Agricultural Land Commission for agriculture-related businesses and services; removing the requirement for off-street parking to be covered by impermeable surfaces; allowing a produce stand and/or farmers market at the Denman Community Dock site; and more (page 56 of the plan has the full list).

Recommended changes to the Official Community Plan (a general policy document for the Island) include adding a statement recognizing agriculture as a priority use for agriculturally-designated lands; changing the definition of “agriculture” to reflect the provincial definition; adopting a ‘no net loss’ policy to farmland quality and quantity; and more (full list is on Page 57 of the plan).

What will the Special Advisory Commission do?

This commission will meet about once a month for about 10 months, and also take part in at least three public consultation events. It will meet separately from the Local Trust Committee and will have the support of Islands Trust planning staff.

The role of this commission is one of advisor. I expect that meetings will include lively discussions of the pros and cons of the various Farm Plan recommendations, informed by the members’ knowledge and values, the information available, and by the public consultation results. Eventually, the commission will provide advice to the Local Trust Committee about which recommendations to adopt. The final decision is made by the three elected representatives who sit on the Local Trust Committee, after a public hearing has taken place.

More information:

Find the **Denman Farm Plan** at the Denman library, via a Google search or on the Islands Trust Denman Island webpage at this address:

<http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca/media/148780/defarmplanfinalnov152012.pdf>

Find a past Trustee Notebook on the Farm Plan at

<http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca/media/283258/december-2012-the-denman-island-farm-plan-unveiled.pdf>

Apply for the Special Advisory Commission: Contact Planner Rob Milne, rmilne@islandstrust.bc.ca / . 250-247-2203