



Farm Plan Project Update

The Denman Island Farm Plan implementation project is well underway, and has brought up many questions. I'll try to answer a few, with the caveat that this is just one trustee's understanding.

What is the Local Trust Committee trying to do with this project?

The LTC is seeking to honour and bring to fruition the hard work that went into the creation of the Farm Plan. To create the plan, a group of about 10 people (mostly local farmers) met regularly, conducted surveys, did research, and held community meetings, to come up with 14 over-arching recommendations for supporting farming on Denman. The process took close to three years.

The LTC is following up on the recommendations that pertain to our responsibility. This means amending some of our regulations. The implementation project is guided by the Farm Plan's vision statement: "An island where we feed each other abundantly because farming is a viable and valued foundation of our sustainable community."

What are the key elements of this project?

In summary, the proposed bylaw amendments would do the following:

- Open up more possibilities for housing and agritourism on bona fide farms in the ALR;
- Provide more leeway in siting roadside farm stands;
- Remove height restrictions on some farm structures;
- Increase setbacks from lot lines and wetlands for feedlots (this means that if anyone ever established a feedlot on Denman (which would be allowed on ALR land due to the Farm Practices Protection Act) they would need to follow these;
- Clarify and tidy up some key definitions (see below).

What's happening with definitions and how will this affect farming?

The proposed amendments are adding four new definitions: agri-tourism, agri-tourism accommodation, immediate family, and temporary secondary dwelling unit.

Also, four definitions that are already in our Land Use Bylaw (in other words, they are the definitions under which Denman Island farming is and has been operating) are being looked at, mainly to clarify them and ensure consistency with provincial standards, which can minimize ambiguity down the road:

- Agriculture would have minor alterations to align it with provincial regulations;
- Feedlot would have the addition of one word,

"wholly," to clarify that this term only applies to animals who have been raised in an enclosed environment, with no access to pasture, from birth to death, for the sole purposes of sale as meat (thus, hopefully, clarifying that animal husbandry as typically practiced on Denman would *not* be considered a feedlot);

- Intensive agriculture would include commercial cannabis production, thus making this use unlawful in residential zones;
- Panhandle is refined to enable subdivision regulations to prohibit this property formation.

The proposals for definitions have raised numerous questions. Aside from the fact that the LTC is hearing that cannabis regulation should best be undertaken as a separate process, there are also concerns that the current definitions, although they seem to have served for years, are not appropriate, or at least not ideal.

How do all the overlapping jurisdictions work? What's the ALR, the ALC and the FPPA and how do they interact with local regulations?

The Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) is a provincial land-use zone where agriculture is recognized as the priority use. This goal is legally enshrined in the Agricultural Land Commission Act (the ALC Act) and the Agricultural Land Reserve Uses, Subdivision and Procedure Regulation (the ALR Regulation), and its implementation is overseen by an appointed body called the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC). 46% of Denman is in the ALR.

On land in the ALR, the ALC Act and ALR Regulations ensure that certain uses *must* be permitted; this includes farming generally; retail sales of farm products; packing, sorting and processing of agricultural products; and agritourism activities and infrastructure, other than accommodation associated with agritourism. Although local governments can't prohibit these uses, it can regulate them via things like setbacks, height restrictions, etc.

The ALR Regulation also stipulates other uses that it allows, but that local government may prohibit (in other words the ALR wouldn't 'over-ride' local regulations). This includes agritourism accommodation, secondary suites and other types of secondary housing, and Bed and Breakfast operations. For these, a local government is authorized to allow less than what the ALR permits, but can't allow more.

The Farm Practices Protection Act (Right to Farm) (FPPA) protects farming from the application of local government nuisance laws such as those dealing with noise and odour, and also protects farming from civil suits from

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neighbours concerned about impacts on their property.

Where is the Farm Plan Implementation Project at in its process and should I be giving input?

The project has solidified (somewhat) into draft bylaw amendments which have been put out for consultation to the Advisory Planning Commission (a group of appointed Denman Island volunteers) the Denman Growers and Producers Association, First Nations, and numerous agencies, and which were discussed last month at a Community Information Meeting.

The LTC discussed all this input at its August 7 meeting, came up with a list of questions and topics for further research and analysis, and requested a staff report that would summarize input and provide options for responding to key themes. This will likely be discussed at its October 9 meeting.

In the meantime, we welcome input. This is not just an issue for farmers; all Denman Islanders will be affected, not just by changes to agriculture but also potential changes to housing regulations and agri-tourism options on farms.

There's also lots of information (including the Farm Plan) on the Islands Trust website at <http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca/islands/local-trust-areas/denman/projects-initiatives/denman-island-farm-plan-implementation/>. You can read previous Trustee Notebooks I've written about this at <http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca/islands/local-trust-areas/denman/local-trustee-corner/> (see the August 2016, Jan 2016 and Dec 2012 articles).

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Saint Saviour's Anglican Church invites you to join our cozy congregation for the service of Holy Communion. We meet on the **second and fourth Sundays of the month at 10.30 am.** at the little white church at the top of the ferry hill. We are an eclectic bunch, by no means all "card-carrying Anglicans", so expect to be welcomed whoever you are! We will be celebrating the fall season with free cupcakes at the Blackberry Fair so drop by our table and say hello.

This month our services will be on September 9th and 23rd and we will be singing up a storm accompanied by our surround sound system. Come for communion and stay for coffee hour in the Senior's Lounge - we have great bakers! Please bring \$3 for the drop in fee at the lounge.



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