

SECTION 3 - NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The East Wellington - Pleasant Valley Plan Area contains a variety of lands with natural resource value, including those for agriculture, aggregates and forestry. These lands have historically played a significant role in shaping the character of the Plan Area as well as providing important economic benefits. Their long-term viability and productivity is increasingly threatened by urban encroachment and the spread of incompatible uses, necessitating special attention and protective measures. It cannot be overlooked that operations and activities related to these resources can have equally significant consequences on the natural environment and existing residents and development. It is important to achieve a balance.

The policies in this section define the community's intentions and priorities with respect to the long-term management and use of lands with natural resource value. Where stated policies relate to matters beyond the jurisdiction of the Regional District, they are only intended to compliment, guide and assist senior governments in their decision-making processes.

General Objectives:

- *Protect* and *maintain* the agricultural, forestry and aggregate land base and associated activities.
- *Minimize* the impact of agriculture, forestry and aggregate-related activities on both the natural environment and other land uses and development.
- *Support* sustainable and best management practices for the resource base.
- *Advocate* comprehensive resource management decision-making where resource lands are in conflict with other lands.

3.1 AGRICULTURE

Agriculture plays an integral role in defining the rural character of the Plan Area. Agricultural lands establish limitations on the extent of development, provide buffer areas between established residential areas and represent both a primary and secondary source of income for some Plan Area residents. The Regional District supports and encourages land management practices, which preserve agricultural land and the sustainable production of food.

Approximately 24% of the total area, equating to approximately 790 hectares of land, has been designated Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) under the provincial *Agricultural Land Commission Act*. The Agricultural Land Commission is one of the main agencies responsible for managing the use and subdivision of ALR lands and, along with the Ministry of Agriculture, is also an important agency for promoting agricultural activities. The ALR's integrity is often threatened at the interface with urbanized development.

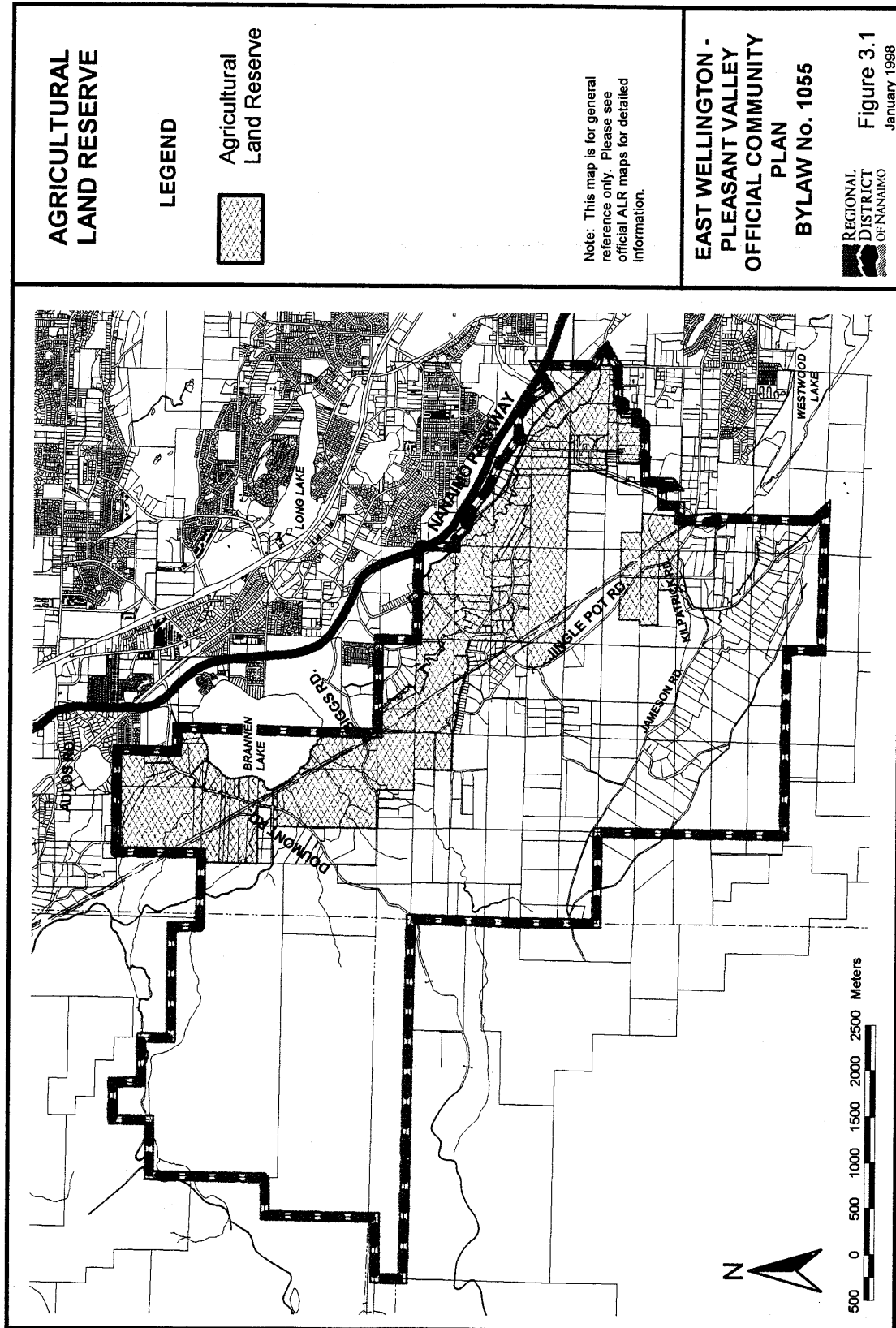
Objectives: Agriculture

- *Protect and maintain* the agricultural land resources of the Plan Area for present and future food production.
- *Recognize and protect* the needs and activities of agricultural operations when considering non-agricultural uses on adjacent lands.
- *Encourage* sustainable and environmentally sound farming practices.
- *Ensure* that the availability and quality of water supply is protected and seek ways and means of improving water availability for irrigation purposes.

Policies: Agriculture*Action:*

1. Lands within the Agricultural Land Reserve, as well as all other lands considered to be agricultural in character or supportive of agriculture, shall generally be designated as *Rural* in this Plan.
2. Broad-based agricultural activities, including agricultural, livestock and horticultural uses and the processing, production, distribution and sale of locally grown products, shall be encouraged and supported on agricultural lands both within and outside the Agricultural Land Reserve. It is recognized that the regulation of intensive agricultural operations located on land outside the Agricultural Land Reserve, which may that may be detrimental to the natural environment and surrounding lands, may be necessary.
3. The retention of large land holdings within the Agricultural Land Reserve shall be encouraged to maintain the option and feasibility of farm use.
4. The Regional District shall encourage adjacent land uses to be compatible with existing farm uses and to minimize impacts on agricultural lands.
5. The Regional District shall support the Agricultural Land Commission's mandate of preserving and encouraging the use of agricultural land for agriculture. The Regional District may support the use of agricultural land for non-farm purposes provided that the Agricultural Land Commission first grants permission for the proposed use and the use is compatible with surrounding land use patterns and development.

Figure 3.1



3.2 FORESTRY

Forestry is a dominant land use in the Plan Area, enhancing its character and providing many economic and recreational benefits and opportunities. In recognition of its value to the community residents have expressed a desire to protect forestry lands and related activities. Residents, also recognizing that improper forest practices can significantly impact the Plan Area, further support sustainable and environmentally sensitive harvesting practices and the restriction of intensive processing activities in proximity to established residential development.

Forestlands within the Plan Area are either owned by the Crown or by private forestry companies - approximately 535 hectares is Crown land while private forestry companies own approximately 630 hectares. Crown land and private holdings designated as 'managed forest' or 'tree farm' are subject to the *Forest Land Reserve Act* and included within the Forest Land Reserve (FLR). The FLR was established to regulate the manner in which the forestland base is utilized and to prevent its conversion to non-forestry uses. The *Act* is not intended to regulate forestry operations.

Although lands within the FLR are not subject to local land use regulations, the Regional District wishes to minimize conflicts that may arise between forestry activities and surrounding land uses. Where policies in this section relate to matters beyond the jurisdiction of the Regional District, they serve only as broad objectives to help guide senior governments and private forest landowners in decisions for the management of forestlands.

Objectives: Forestry

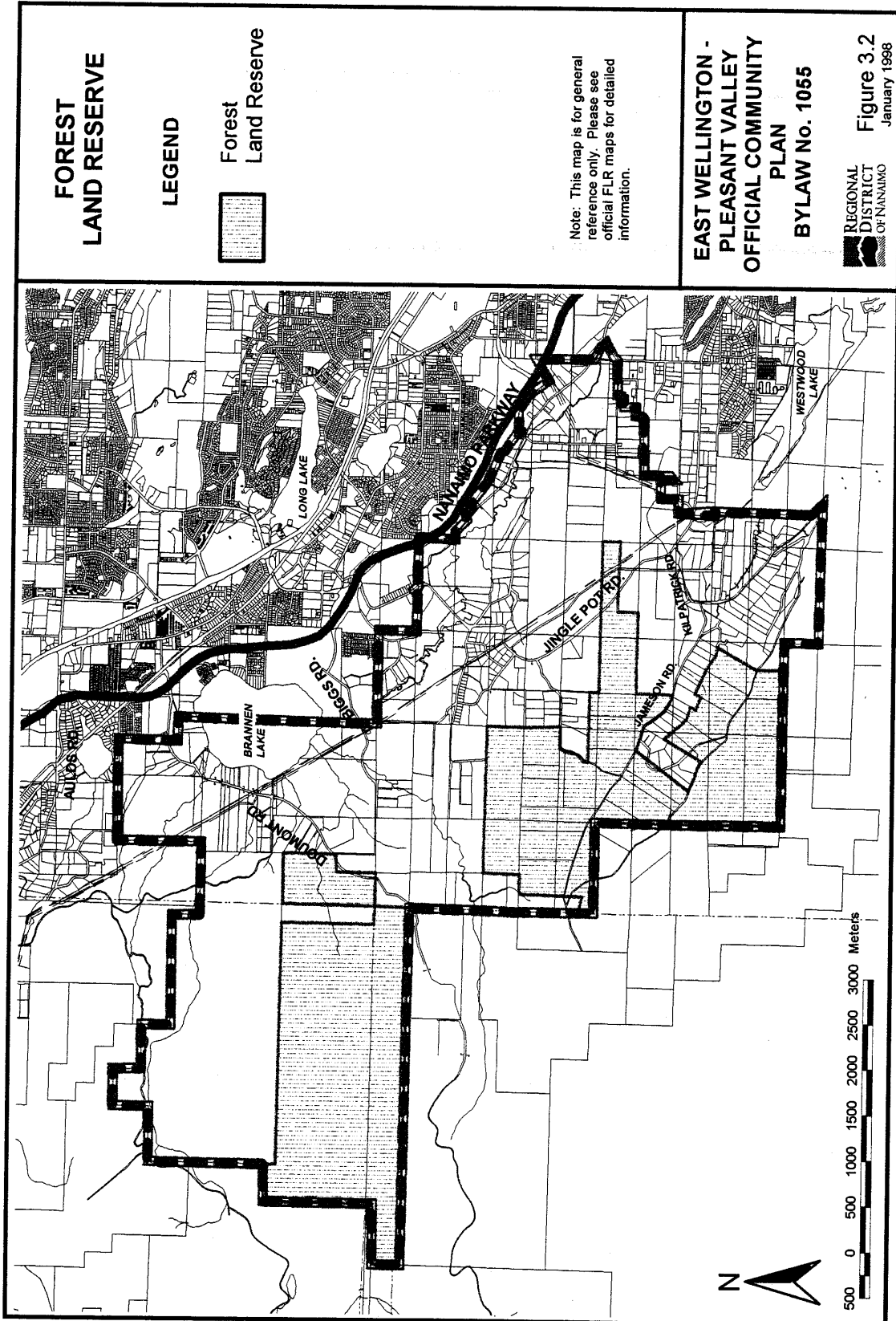
- *Ensure* that forestlands are protected from activities, which may disrupt their renewable resource potential.
- *Oppose* the conversion of productive, high capability forestland for other land uses or activities.
- *Minimize* the impact of forestry-related activities on surrounding lands, the natural environment and transportation routes.
- *Encourage* environmentally sound harvesting and reforestation activities.
- *Encourage* the application of the Forest Practices Code to both provincial forest and the Forest Land Reserve.
- *Encourage* the retention of productive forestlands within the managed forest classification.
- *Support* the public's use of forestlands for recreational enjoyment and education.

Policies: Forestry

Action:

1. Lands with forestry resource potential shall generally be included within the *Resource* designation of this Plan.
2. Lands designated as Forest Land Reserve and which are bounded by and/or adjacent to lands designated as Agricultural Land Reserve or *Rural Residential* in this Plan, shall generally be included within the *rural* designation of this Plan.
3. The retention of large holdings with forestry potential shall be encouraged in order to maintain options for future silviculture activities.
4. The subdivision of lands designated as Forest Land Reserve shall be opposed.
5. The Regional District shall support the protection of lands designated as Forest Land Reserve pursuant to the *Forest Land Commission Act*. Forestry-related uses shall be given priority on FLR lands, although, the following subordinate uses may be permitted on these lands:
 - a) passive outdoor recreational activities, where such uses are approved by the Forest Land Commission and the landowner, and which do not contribute to the degradation of the quality of the local environment nor negatively impact adjacent properties; and/or
 - b) mineral and aggregate extraction and processing on lands designated as *Resource* in this Plan or mineral and aggregate extraction on lands designated *Rural* if permitted by the Forest Land Commission, approved by Ministry of Employment and Investment (Energy and Minerals Division) and which do not contribute to the degradation of the quality of the local environment nor negatively impact adjacent properties.
6. The Regional District shall not support the use of lands designated as Forest Land Reserve for the storage or recycling of waste or garbage materials or other industrial uses, except for those industrial-type uses directly related to legitimate forestry activities.
7. Notwithstanding Policy 3.2.5, the Regional District shall generally not support intensive forestry processing uses on land designated *Rural* in this Plan.

Figure 3.2



3.3 AGGREGATE RESOURCES

Currently there are six gravel pits operating in the Plan Area. They are generally located at the end of Doumont and Andres Roads. Recently, aggregate extraction and processing activities have increased considerably as a result of the construction of the Nanaimo Parkway. As a result, many residents of the Plan Area have experienced increased heavy truck traffic on local roads. Concern has also been directed towards the environmental impact of these operations, particularly with respect to surface water.

The management of aggregate and mineral resources falls primarily within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Employment and Investment (Energy and Minerals Division). The Ministry is responsible for issues generally relating to public/worker safety, environmental protection and reclamation of aggregate operations. The Regional District often has the opportunity to formally comment on proposals to establish or expand aggregate operations.

Where stated policies relate to matters beyond the jurisdiction of the Regional District, they are intended to serve only as broad objectives to help guide senior governments in their decision-making processes.

Objectives: Aggregate Resources

- *Protect* lands with aggregate or mineral resources from development, which would render them unviable or inaccessible.
- *Minimize* conflicts between extraction activities and adjacent land uses.
- *Minimize* the impact of extraction activities on the natural environment.
- *Support* site rehabilitation and reclamation of mined landscapes for future productive use and for environmental and aesthetic considerations.

Policies: Aggregate Resources

Action:

1. Lands with aggregate or mineral resource potential shall generally be included within the *Resource* designation of this Plan.
2. The processing of aggregate resources shall generally be limited to land where such operations would have a limited impact on residential development, other land uses and the natural environment, and where permitted by the Land Use and Subdivision Bylaw.

3. The Ministry of Employment and Investment (Energy and Minerals Division) shall be encouraged to provide due consideration to possible impacts on neighbouring land and the natural environment prior to initiating new mining operations or re-establishing a derelict pit. Particular attention should be focused on assessing the potential impacts of resource removal on the quantity or quality of surface and groundwater, residential development and other land uses, and traffic volumes and dynamics. The Ministry is encouraged to make this information available to the Regional District and surrounding landowners for comment prior to a decision.

4. Environmentally-sound and aesthetically-sensitive reclamation and conservation practices should be undertaken at all aggregate and mineral resource extraction operations within the Plan Area. Where a mining operation may cause significant disturbance to the surface of the land or where environmental damage is a possibility, the Ministry of Employment and Investment (Energy and Minerals Division) shall be encouraged:
 - a) require that a performance bond be posted to ensure that all required reclamation works are fully and properly completed in a timely manner; and,
 - b) ensure that reclamation works are undertaken on an on-going basis so that mining activities are not actively undertaken on not more than a maximum of 2.0 hectares of a mining site, at any given time.