

SECTION 3 – NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

3.1 Agriculture and Aquaculture

3.2 Forestry

3.3 Mineral, Gravel and Hydrocarbon Resources



Natural resources in this section refer to those areas and features that are relied on by industries for growing or rearing foods and for extracting commodities such as lumber or gravel. These natural resource industries are an important part of the economy in the Plan Area, and are important for food security and for sustainable growth and development when products can be used locally.

Many of these industries rely on a healthy natural environment to thrive and can be a barometer for ecosystem health. In turn, the health of the ecosystems rely on sustainable industry practices being established and followed.

3.1 Agriculture and Aquaculture

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture and aquaculture are important activities as economic drivers and as part of a local food system. They rely on land and water that is designated for these purposes and on the health of the ecosystems of which they are a part.

A local food system allows farmers, food producers, and their customers to interact either face-to-face at the point of sale or through community partnerships or initiatives which encourage local products. It also supports a “farm to plate” relationship by encouraging farm products to be grown, stored, processed, sold and handled locally.

The Province designated an Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) in the early 1970’s based on maps of agricultural land capability. In 1987 the boundary was reviewed in the Plan Area and elsewhere on Vancouver Island based on new mapping at a larger scale and other local considerations, resulting in some lands being added to the ALR and some removed. Currently, 24% of the Plan Area is designated as ALR.

The mandate of the Agricultural Land Commission is to ensure the future productivity of lands within the ALR. Non-agricultural development, including subdivision or non-farm use of these lands is not permitted without Agricultural Land Commission approval.

Shellfish aquaculture is a significant industry for the province of BC, and much of the production is within Baynes Sound. The main species farmed are clams, mussels, oysters and scallops. The Plan Area includes the southern part of Baynes Sound as well as Deep Bay Harbour which is an important port for the industry. The rest of Baynes Sound is within the Comox Valley Regional District and the Islands Trust.

The community is supportive of the aquaculture industry in recognition of its contribution to the local economy, and also for increased availability of local shellfish at stores and restaurants.

AGRICULTURE AND AQUACULTURE POLICIES

1. The Regional District supports the Agricultural Land Commission's mandate of preserving and encouraging the use of land for agriculture.
2. The retention of large land holdings within the ALR is encouraged, to maintain future opportunities for farm use.
3. The Regional District discourages encroachment and fragmentation of farmland by non-farm related uses, particularly land that is known to be of high value for agriculture.

OBJECTIVES

1. *Protect* agricultural land resources of the Plan Area for present and future food production.
2. *Support* the aquaculture industry by protecting marine water quality and supporting associated land-based activities in suitable locations.
3. *Recognize* and protect the needs and activities of agricultural and aquaculture operations when considering residential uses on adjacent lands and vice versa.
4. *Advocate* for comprehensive resource management decisions where agricultural land is competing with forestry, or environmental protection objectives.
5. *Encourage* sustainable farming methods in order to protect fresh and marine water resources and adjacent properties.
6. *Ensure* that the quantity and quality of the water supply is protected.

4. The availability of water for agriculture irrigation should be maintained and impacts considered when there are proposals for land use change or development in surrounding areas.
5. Land-based components of aquaculture such as rearing, processing, storing and distributing shellfish or aquatic plants are supported:
 - a) in the ALR where considered a farm use; and
 - b) in the Resource Lands and Rural Lands designations in a location that is not expected to negatively impact the natural environment or the use and enjoyment of nearby properties; and for land in the Rural designation, also pursuant to Rural Lands Policy 4 which supports rezoning for service commercial uses subject to a list of criteria.
6. Subdivision of land adjacent to the ALR is regulated by development permit to prevent future conflicts between agricultural uses and other adjacent uses.
7. Agrology reports submitted in support of applications for subdivision within or exclusion from the ALR should fully consider non-soil based farming activities and environmental best practices.
8. The Regional District supports the continued referral to the Agricultural Advisory Committee of land use applications and amendments to this Plan that affect land in the ALR.
9. The Regional District should consider regulating the size and location of residential uses in the ALR so that they are farm-oriented and do not reduce the likelihood that the land will be farmed in the future.

ADVOCACY POLICIES

10. The owners of land adjacent to ALR lands are encouraged to provide a vegetative buffer between their lands and the ALR lands and follow all Ministry of Agriculture policies and best management practices.
11. The Ministry of Agriculture and local farm organizations are encouraged to assist and support owners of agricultural land with options and opportunities related to all aspects of farming, including business development and other land tenure options if they are unable to or uninterested in farming.
12. The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and other relevant agencies are encouraged to ensure that the location and construction of new roads, utility or communication rights-of-way should be sited to avoid ALR lands wherever possible. Where unavoidable, these rights-of-way should be sited in a manner that will cause minimal impact on agricultural operations. Alignments should avoid road endings or stubs which point directly into the ALR and half roads along the ALR boundary, and be established in consultation with affected landowners and the Agricultural Land Commission

3.2 Forestry

INTRODUCTION

Forestry is a significant land use in the majority of the Plan Area. Private Managed Forest Lands cover 56% of the land base, and there are also large areas of Provincial Forest owned by the Crown. Most of these Crown lands are concentrated between Qualicum Bay and Deep Bay and in the lowland areas of the Plan Area. In 2010, part of this Crown Provincial Forest was protected under a Coastal Douglas Fir Land Use Order where harvesting is no longer permitted.

Although most of the first growth forests in the Plan Area have long since been harvested, second growth forests are now in various stages of maturity. This Plan supports the protection of forest lands for silviculture in the same manner as agricultural lands are protected for agriculture, and also supports protection of significant forest lands for conservation purposes. 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 forest lands.

FORESTRY POLICIES

1. This Plan supports the use of Resource Lands for forestry-related uses where appropriately zoned. In addition, the Plan supports the use of Resource Lands for recreational activities (such as hiking trails), where such uses do not contribute to the degradation of the natural environment and are permitted by the landowner.
2. The Regional District shall coordinate with the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and commercial forest companies to develop public access to private logging roads and trails during non-operational periods, except in times of high or extreme fire hazard or active logging.

ADVOCACY POLICIES

3. The Province and private forest land owners shall be encouraged to manage their forest lands so that they do not:
 - a. Pose a threat to the quantity and quality of fresh water within the drainage system of watercourses, streams, lakes or wetlands;
 - b. Alter the aesthetic appeal and visual integrity of the Plan Area;
 - c. Disturb areas of unique vegetation or wildlife; and
 - d. Increase, or contribute to, soil erosion.
4. The Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and commercial forest companies shall be encouraged to ensure the sustainability of outdoor recreation in the natural woodlands of this area in conjunction with the management of the forest. This would include supporting the public

OBJECTIVES

1. **Ensure** the Area's forest lands are managed on a sustained yield basis and are protected against activities that may disrupt their renewable resource potential.
2. **Support** sustainable forestry practices.
3. **Support** the Area's forest lands availability for recreational enjoyment and education.
4. **Encourage** best use of FireSmart recommendations to reduce susceptibility of buildings and property to wildfire.

access to private logging roads and areas during non-operational periods , except in times of high or extreme fire hazard or active logging.

5. The Regional District will encourage Provincial leadership towards ensuring environmentally sound forestry practices on private forest land.
6. The Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, commercial forest companies and private forest landowners will be encouraged to use FireSmart recommendations to reduce susceptibility of buildings and property to wildfire.

3.3 Mineral, Gravel and Hydrocarbon Resources

INTRODUCTION

The predominant known mineral resource within the Plan Area is gravel concentrations around Horne Lake, Spider Lake, and Nile Creek. Other potential resources include deposits of limestone and clay. It is important to note that aggregate resources such as sand and gravel have greater potential value in mineral production than metallic metals and hydrocarbon resources in the Plan Area. As other areas become depleted of aggregate resources or are lost to development, there may be increasing pressure for access to aggregates in the Plan Area.

The regulation of aggregate extraction falls primarily within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Energy & Mines and the Ministry of Forests, Lands & Natural Resource Operations. The province is responsible for operational issues, such as public/worker safety, environmental protection, closure and reclamation of aggregate operations. The Regional District may regulate areas where processing of aggregate resources is permitted. The Regional District cannot regulate mining and mineral exploration activities as they are subject to the *Mines Act* and *Mineral Tenure Act*.

The objectives and policies of this section remain broad in nature to offer guidance to senior governments in their decision-making process, as part of the referral process.

OBJECTIVES

1. ***Protect*** lands underlain by gravel, sand, mineral or hydrocarbon resources from surface developments, which would render them inaccessible.
2. ***Minimize*** conflicts between extraction activities and adjacent land and water uses.
3. ***Support*** good conservation practices during mining operations so as not to prejudice the long-term renewable resource potential of the area.
4. ***Encourage*** site rehabilitation and reclamation of damaged landscapes for subsequent productive use and environmental protection.

MINERAL, GRAVEL AND HYDROCARBON RESOURCES POLICIES

1. Prior to allowing development in an area underlain by mineral resources, the feasibility of removing the resource should be adequately considered by the province and the Regional District.
2. The Regional District will recommend that environmentally sound reclamation and conservation practices be undertaken at all mineral and aggregate resource extraction operations to protect long-term resource potential in the Plan Area. Specifically, where a mine or earthworks may cause significant disturbance to the surface of the land, the Province shall be encouraged to require that a performance bond be posted to ensure the proper reclamation of the damaged landscape (this reclamation is controlled by Part 10 of the *Mines Act*, Health, Safety and Reclamation Code).

ADVOCACY POLICIES

3. The Province will be encouraged to provide adequate consideration to possible impacts on neighbouring residential and/or rural parcels and the natural environment prior to issuing a permit considering a new mining operation or re-opening an old mine (or pit). Particular attention should be focused on assessing the potential impacts of resource removal on the quantity or quality of surface and groundwater or social impact on neighbouring residences. This information should be referred to the Regional District and adjoining landowners for comment prior to a decision.

4. The Province will be encouraged to require a groundwater study prior to approving any excavations or drilling above known aquifers or in well protection areas for community water systems as shown on Map 2.b in order to determine aquifer depth and minimize impact on the aquifer.