

## **Land Use Exemption Applications: Do successful non-farm use and subdivision applications support or detract from farm use of ALR land**

The Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) is the provincial land use regulation and designation enacted to protect agricultural land in British Columbia. The regulation identifies permitted farm uses as well as non-farm uses that support agriculture and our food system. While there has been concern over and substantial attention paid to the loss of prime agricultural land through removal of ALR designation, another potential threat to the long-term protection of agricultural land is its incremental loss and diminished production capacity over time due to permitted non-farm uses and land changes. Permitted non-farm uses may not, from the outset, enhance agriculture as proposed, or may over time cease contributing to agriculture and the food system as originally proposed/ intended. Either ultimately constitute an effective loss to the ALR, and may contribute to arguments for taking the land out of the ALR. Additionally, ALR parcel subdivision may lead to an increase in non-farm uses. In 2016 alone, there were over 200 applications to the Agricultural Land Commission for subdivision and non-farm use permits in BC. There is need to ascertain if permitted non-farm use and subdivision have resulted in the enhancement of the land for agricultural purposes, as proposed/ supposed, or if they led to further erosion of agricultural capacity and diminution of the ALR.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to review previously submitted and approved applications (1976-2018) to the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) for land use exemption activities within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) in select, representative Metro Vancouver municipalities (Richmond, Surrey, Delta, Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows and the Township of Langley) and evaluate whether these changes remain as originally approved, and if they have served to enhance or detract from agricultural use of the land. Results from this research will contribute to our current understanding of agricultural land use challenges and inform the development of municipal policy tools and resources to support efforts to assure the integrity of the ALR, preserve agriculture land for agriculture, and to advance sustainable regional food systems.

### *Research questions*

- (1) How many subdivision and non-farm use applications have there been and how many applications were approved?
- (2) Are lands for which applications were approved being used for agricultural purposes per the stated purpose in the approved application?

### *Methodology*

- (1) Secondary data on subdivision and non-farm use applications will be gathered from the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) for the period between 1976 to 2018 (if available) for six agricultural municipalities in the Lower Mainland: Delta, Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows, Richmond, Surrey and Township of Langley.



- (2) A windshield survey will be conducted to gather information on the current land and status of the subdivision and non-farm use permitted. Our intent, goal, is to assess every parcel for which a non-farm use or subdivision was approved over the last 10 years.

*Deliverable*

Complete report with municipality specific data and evaluations. Will include GIS map of all identified parcels having land use exemptions.

*Timeline*

Approximately 8 months

*Estimated Budget*

Project oversight/ management	\$5,000 (ISFS contribution)
Student research assistants	\$15,000
Mileage	\$3,000
Report preparation/ print	\$300 (ISFS contribution)

Cash required= \$18,000. Requested contribution from each study municipality is \$3,000.

The Institute for Sustainable Food Systems (ISFS) is an applied research and extension unit at KPU that investigates and supports regional food systems as key elements of sustainable communities. ISFS applied research focuses on the potential of regional food systems in terms of agriculture and food, economic and community development, community health, policy, and environmental stewardship. ISFS extension programming provides information and support for farmers, communities, business, policy makers, and others. Community collaboration is central to the ISFS approach.

The ISFS team is multi-disciplinary, bringing together expertise in- social science, economics, organic agriculture, agroecology, food systems, planning and policy, community health and nutrition, landscape architecture, farm business management and agriculture education.