

The Future of Agriculture

The District of Pitt Meadows



Agricultural Plan Steering Committee

Report Prepared by:

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1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The APSC would like to see adjustment of this policy by allowing for the subdivision of agricultural land parcels provided the number of lots does not increase and none less than 20 acres are formed, and provided there is a net benefit to agriculture, as determined by the local Approving Officer in consultation with the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee. The APSC would also like the District to actively encourage the consolidation of ALR land parcels.

Recommendation:

Support subdivision of agricultural parcels only where the number of parcels does not increase, there are no parcels created that are less than 20 acres, and there is a net benefit to agriculture, as determined by the local Approving Officer in consultation with the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee, with the exception of home site severance for retiring farmers consistent with existing Agricultural Land Commission policy. Whenever possible, actively look for ways to consolidate smaller parcels to larger ones.

7.3.2. Residential and Secondary Dwellings in the ALR

The ALCA and regulations set a limit of one single family dwelling and accessory building and structures per land registry parcel unless necessary for farm help. The ALCA currently provides for, and does not restrict, the number of additional dwellings if they are necessary for farm help. The Municipal District may issue permits for additional residences necessary for farm use without application to the ALC.

Land Use Bylaw No. 1250 states that no more than one dwelling shall be permitted on any lot except for:²⁰

- One temporary mobile home as a temporary accessory dwelling
- Temporary farm labourer accommodation
- Accessory residential use for full-time help

The APSC supports the “one house, one lot” principle and the guidelines in place for additional dwellings for farm help.

There is no current municipal or provincial policy regulating the location and size of dwellings in the ALR. The APSC does not believe the District should regulate the floor area of dwellings in the plan area, but there was concern over the potential impact large dwellings may have on the future agricultural use of land parcels, especially if the buildings are located in the middle of a parcel.

Because of this, while the APSC supports the guidelines in place regulating the *types* of buildings allowed on an agricultural land parcel, the APSC would like to see the guidelines strengthened to regulate the *location and size* of the portion of agricultural land impacted by development. The intent is to maximize the amount of land available for any future agricultural use. The APSC supports the development of an “envelope” policy, where only a fixed portion of the land parcel (based on the size of the parcel) may

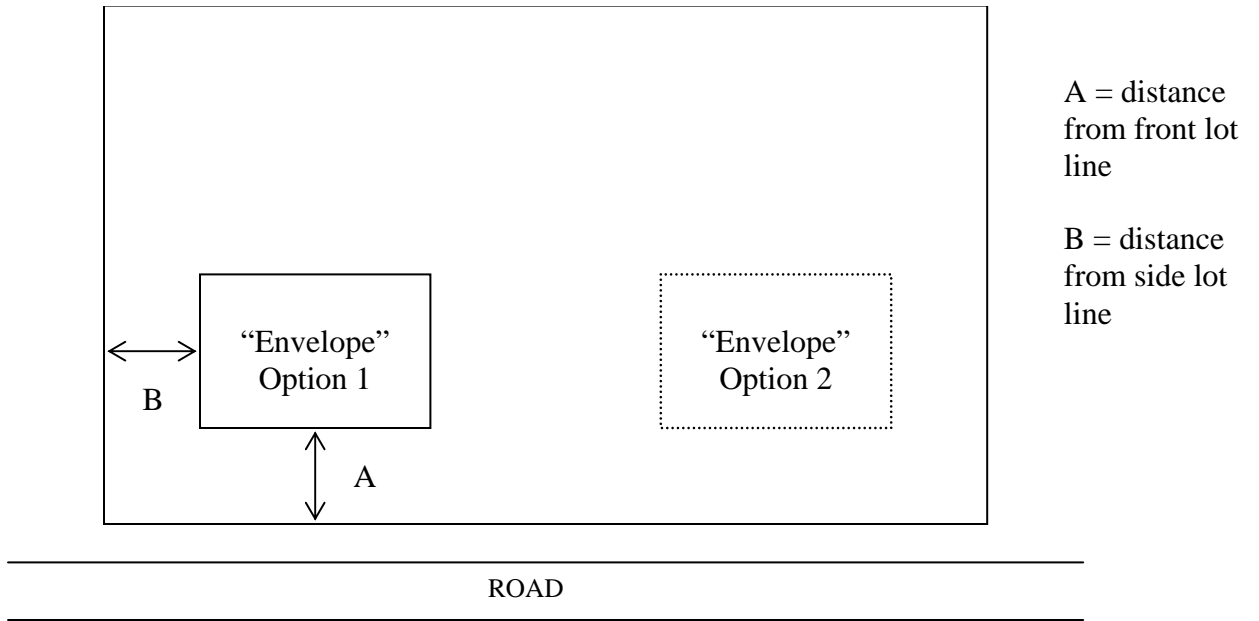
²⁰ Land Use Bylaw No. 1250, page 82.

be used to situate residential and farm help buildings. The “envelope” would also need to be located at certain predetermined distances from the side and front lot lines in order to minimize the impact on the agricultural land. The APSC felt that all associated farm buildings, such as barns and storage facilities, when necessary for a farm operation, and any farm enterprise uses, should be exempt from the “envelope” policy.

An example of an agricultural land envelope is diagrammed below. Dimensions of the envelope and distances from lot lines must be developed and are not being recommended at this time.

Example of a Residential Dwelling “Envelope”

On a given land parcel, there would be two options for the location of the “envelope”.



Recommendation:

Contain all future residential and farm-help dwellings within a contiguous “envelope” in accordance with a policy to be developed by the District of Pitt Meadows in consultation with the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee, the ALC and the BCMAF.

The policy should be applied within the context of an appropriate zoning bylaw and regulate items including, but not necessarily limited to, the following:

- The dimensions of the envelope. The APSC recommends that the envelope be either a maximum square footage or a specific percentage of the land parcel, whichever is greater.
- The location of the envelope. The APSC recommends that the envelope be confined to one corner of the land parcel through designating maximum distances from front and side lot lines.
- The type and number of dwellings and associated residential uses allowed in the envelope. The APSC recommends that principal residential dwellings and dwellings for farm help be contained in the envelope and that all associated farm

buildings, such as barns and storage facilities, when necessary for a farm operation, and any farm enterprise uses, should be exempt from the envelope policy.

Exceptions may be identified as non-conforming and sent to the Standing Agricultural Advisory Committee for review with the Board of Variance.

7.3.3. Seasonal Farm Labour Housing

Seasonal farm labour is an integral part of farm operations where mechanical harvesting is not possible and crops mature quickly and within a restricted time frame. Current policy as stated in Land Use Bylaw No. 1250 is that temporary farm accommodation shall be at the ratio of 10 persons for each 4 hectares (10 acres) up to a maximum of 40 persons per bona fide farm. The APSC recognizes the importance of seasonal farm labour accommodation and supports the existing policy, with the addition of conformity to Health and Fire Code regulations. The rationale for enforcing limits on the number of people accommodated seasonally on the farm is to minimize the impact of residences on the ALR land. Other components of the temporary farm accommodation, such as lot size, floor area, etc., are supported.

Recommendation:

Ensure all seasonal farm labour housing projects conform to Health and Fire Code regulations.

7.3.4. Non-Resident Ownership

At the present time there is no policy on non-resident ownership. The APSC recognized the difficulty of restricting land ownership and that action on this issue must come from senior governments. However, it also recognized that non-resident ownership can present a possible threat to the future agricultural use of a land parcel.

Recommendation:

To maximize the agricultural land available for future agricultural uses, request the Province to review policies on non-resident ownership currently in place in other jurisdictions and consider implementing policies to encourage agricultural uses of all agricultural lands.

7.3.5. Guidelines Regarding Agricultural and Farm Enterprise Zone

In 1999, Council adopted a new zoning designation called The Agricultural and Farm Enterprise (AFE) Zone with the intent to enhance the economic viability of farming and to promote investment and diversification of the agriculture industry in Pitt Meadows. According to the policy, a farm enterprise use provides for the processing, storing, distributing, wholesaling, grading, sorting and packaging of farm produce, animal and fish products, feed and seed (excludes mushroom growing medium preparation use). Permitted uses within an AFE zone include those permitted in the General Agricultural Zone, as well as farm enterprise uses and farm enterprise buildings.²¹

²¹ Zoning Text Amendment Bylaw No. 1955.