



The RDBN Agriculture Forum

November 9, 2016

FORUM OBJECTIVE:

Working together in the changing face of agriculture: The role of the Regional District, Ministry of Agriculture, and agriculture groups in understanding and supporting small versus large, local vs international markets, organic versus non organic.

PURPOSE: Briefly discuss key areas for consideration with regard to the changing face of Agriculture in the RDBN or beyond.

PROTOCOLS:

1. All ideas are valid for consideration and respect (inside and outside the box);
2. Share the speaking time;
3. Focus on Agriculture and related industries;
4. Rely on actual and factual.

Introductions

Gary Blattner, Facilitator mentioned he has been a member of the farming community in the region for a number of years. Prior to retirement he had a cow/calf, hay/grain and feeder operations. He has now returned to raising organic beef and participates in farmers markets. Agriculture is an exciting business that has a number of challenges. The goal is to work together to reduce those challenges in the farming communities and between agencies and regulatory bodies and see those successes in the agriculture business.

Introductions were performed.

Welcome

Mark Parker, Chair Agriculture Committee, Director, Electoral Area "D" (Fraser Lake Rural) noted that the first Agriculture Forum has provided an opportunity for the Regional District to begin building contacts in the broad agriculture sector in the region.

Why are we Here?

The Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako formed an Agriculture Committee in February, 2016, recognizing the huge role and the importance of agriculture in, and to the region. Agriculture plays a role in every aspect of our social and economic well-being. The RDBN Agriculture Committee is a committee of the whole that involves all Municipal and Electoral Area Directors.

Some of the Initiatives that have occurred recently.

Chair Parker advised that of the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako (RDBN) along with the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George and Cariboo Regional District worked together to prevent the planting of trees on agriculture lands in the region for carbon offset credits for a foreign company. Working together built a stronger voice in support for agriculture lands. Chair Parker and Mark Fisher, Director, Electoral Area "A" (Smithers Rural) recently provided a presentation to Northern Development Initiative Trust (NDIT) encouraging the development of specific funding related to Agriculture which was well received. Director Fisher spoke to the opportunities to work with stakeholder, agencies and organizations such as the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and Chambers of Commerce to help bring awareness and recognition of the importance of agriculture.

The Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) attended an RDBN Agriculture meeting which has helped to open communications.

The Committee has been successful in its first year in formation but struggles to determine the role of the Regional District in the agriculture sector, what it can do to assist and where does it fit as a whole. Some of the matters that need collaboration and balance for success and co-existence are: local vs. exporting, organic vs. non-organic, *the Water Sustainability Act*, fiber supply and the use of wood chips for cattle ranching and farming along with wood ash from bioenergy plants. The Agriculture Forum will provide a beginning to outline and define roles.

RDBN Planning Department – Agricultural Land Use Planning

- **Topic of Discussion:** RDBN Agriculture Regulations
 - Maria Sandberg, Planner and Jennifer MacIntyre, Planner

(See attached PowerPoint Presentation)

RDBN Agriculture Plan

- Informs the RDBN economic development activities, and the region's Land Use Plans and regulations.

Why Plan for Agriculture?

- Plays a significant role in the history and a critical part of the economy;
- Helps define the culture and character of the region;
- Because of the importance of agriculture the Regional Board made it a priority to develop an Agricultural Plan in 2012.

Agriculture Plan

- Attempts to develop a shared vision of agriculture amongst farmers, the public, and local government within the Regional District;
- Used to guide future planning activities affecting agriculture;
- The plan helped to facilitate dialogue between the farming community and local government:
 - The groups worked together to create the Agriculture Plan and enhance understanding of agricultural issues in the region;
- The outcome was an action plan:
 - Contains recommendations to the Regional Board and others to take action in support of agriculture;
 - Two of the action items were reinstating the district agrologist and completing agriculture land use inventories.

Agricultural Land Use Inventory

- Purpose of the Land Use Inventory is to identify and monitor agricultural activity, non-farm uses and unused agricultural land;
- In 2013, the RDBN Planning Department and the Ministry of Agriculture started Agriculture Land Use Inventories for the rural areas around Smithers, and Telkwa and Vanderhoof;
 - Funding provided by the Omineca Beetle Action Coalition (OBAC) and the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC (IAFBC);
 - These areas were chosen because they have a strong agricultural land base and are experiencing the most development pressures in the region.

Inventory Tools

- Provides a snapshot of agricultural land use in the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako (RDBN);
- Provides a baseline of information that can be used for comparison against agriculture land use inventories in the future;
- Will allow the RDBN to see how agriculture may be changing in the region over time;
- The information will be extremely valuable in helping the Regional Board make informed decisions on how to best manage the agricultural land base and support and strengthen farming in the future.

Agriculture Plan Guiding Policy

- To maintain large parcel sizes and to keep small lot residential development away from farming areas;
- The plan states that it is important to:
 - preserve large parcels to allow for the widest range of possible future uses;
 - to keep small lot residential development away from farming areas, otherwise land use conflict is inevitable;
- This policy is used as direction to inform policies in our Official Community Plans (OCP's).

Official Community Plan (OCP)

- Local government bylaw that provides objectives and policies to guide decisions about planning and land development and management;
- Significant because, after they are adopted, all bylaws and works undertaken by a Council or Board must be consistent with the plan;
- Also provides the public and developers with information about how the community may develop;
- The RDBN has 7 OCP's, generally one OCP for each Electoral Area:
 - Each OCP contains statements that support agriculture;
 - Contain land use policies for the electoral area;
 - Important because the future of agriculture depends on the preservation and protection of agricultural land;
- Zoning – the most important regulation used to manage the development of land and implement the goals and objectives of an Official Community Plan and the Agriculture Plan is zoning:
 - Applies to most settled areas within the RDBN;
 - Most Agricultural Land Reserve land (ALR) is zoned Agricultural (Ag1);
 - Prime purpose to protect property owners against changes in the use of neighbouring parcels of land that may affect their neighborhood:
 - Achieved by requiring a property owner who proposes a change in the use of land to make an application to the Board.
 - Zoning regulations, based on the consultation and intent of an OCP policy, can support the ALR and agricultural uses and ensure that land is not used for some other use even if it is removed from the ALR;
 - Provincial regulations allow certain land uses and activities in the ALR:
 - the regulations also allow local governments to regulate or prohibit these same activities and uses;

- Zoning standards can help prevent an activity from becoming a nuisance to neighbours or interfering with agriculture;
- Zoning regulations may mitigate these impacts by directing where these types of activities can occur, and to what extent.
- The most important characteristics of zoning that aims to support the ALR and agricultural community include:
 - large minimum lot sizes;
 - protecting contiguous areas of agricultural land where other uses do not interfere with the practice of farming; and
 - regulation of accessory and non-farm uses on agriculture land to minimize their impact on agriculture.

Agricultural Land Reserve

- RDBN has approximately 365,000 hectares of ALR Land (5% of RDBN total area);
- Over 40% of the ALR land is being actively farmed;
- RDBN primarily works with the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) in two ways:
 1. We participate in the application process that property owners have to go through if they wish to subdivide or use your land for non-farm purposes or exclude land from the ALR.; and
 2. The *ALC Act* requires local governments to ensure our bylaws, such as OCPs and zoning bylaws are consistent with the *ALC Act*.

ALR Applications

- RDBN in the past received 15-20 ALR applications a year:
 - Majority are subdivision applications;
- In 2015, received 10 applications;
- In 2016 to date, received 4 applications;
- The number of applications seems to be decreasing in the RDBN;
- Each application is evaluated based on how the proposal complies with the Regional District's land use regulations such as policies, the OCP, the zoning bylaw and the Agriculture Plan;
- The Board takes a position on the application, which is then sent to the ALC for a decision.

The agricultural land use planning involves balancing the protection of agricultural and natural resources with development pressures. The agricultural policies in the plans, and studies provide insight into how agricultural land will be preserved for the benefit of future generations.

Agriculture Land Commission

- **Topic of Discussion:** ALC's Role
 - Gordon Bednard, Regional Planner – Via Teleconference

(See attached PowerPoint Presentation)

Provincial Ministry of Agriculture:

- **Topic of Discussion:** Role of the Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Agrologists
- Brent Barclay, Regional Manager, Interior

Regional Agrologists:

- John Stevenson, Sector Development Branch, Smithers
- Lavona Liggins, Sector Development Branch, Prince George

(See attached PowerPoint Presentation)

BC Ministry of Agriculture Overview

Vision: An innovative, adaptive and globally competitive agrifood sector valued by all British Columbians.

Mission: Cultivate a competitive and socially responsible agrifood sector.

- Roles (Branches) of the Ministry of Agriculture;
 - The Regional Agrologists are front line staff and engage with all branches as/when appropriate to the situation;

- Strategic Growth Plan (SGP)
 - 3 key areas and 20 action items;
- Growing Forward 2
 - A Federal, Provincial, Territorial Initiative is the current agriculture policy framework;
 - Began in 2013 and will expire in March 2018.
- Regional Staff
 - Front line technical staff who work with the agrifood sector (both producers and processors) to become more competitive and innovative;
- Agriculture land planning;
- Engaging with producers and processors;
- Economic Development:
 - Connecting new entrants to agriculture planning information and other resources;
 - Sponsoring business training by local delivery groups such as Beyond the Market;
- Emergency Management:
 - Province Wide:
 - Disease events;
 - Flooding and wildfire;
 - Roles of Regional Agrologist:
 - Located in Local Government Emergency Operation Centre (EOC);
 - Located in Provincial Emergency Operation Centre (PREOC):
 - Provide agriculture technical expertise;
 - Partner with Range Staff and work with Wildfire Management for on the ground local knowledge when the need arises to know where livestock is located and if and when livestock needs to be relocated;
 - Range Fencing:
 - Work with Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (MFLNRO) Range Branch on Crown Land to rebuild and repair burnt range barriers, fences and guards.
- Agriculture and Environmental Issues;
- Complaints:
 - Provide information not enforcement in regard to the *Trespass & Livestock Acts*;
- Climate Change Adaptation:
 - Adapt agriculture to climate change:
 - BC Forage Council Project – Weather data station in Vanderhoof;
 - Using existing technology to improve access to weather information & receiving feedback on future needs;
 - University of Northern BC (UNBC) – Crop Diversification project funded by Investment Agriculture Fund;
- Broad Initiatives;
- What the Ministry of Agriculture doesn't do...
 - Take roles away from commercial agriculture service providers e.g. specific agronomic advice;
 - Complaints against non-commercial operations e.g. hobby farms;
 - Limited Enforcement (ALC, FIRB, Meat Inspection);
 - Duties that fall under other jurisdictions e.g. federal government or other ministries;
 - Emergency response separate from local government;
- Approaches:
 - Works with all parts of the commercial agrifoods producers and processors;
 - Collaboration with stakeholders is essential for program delivery;

- What does this look like in RDBN?
 - Producers using cost-share programs;
 - Important to work with Regional Agriologists to develop field days, production workshops, etc.
 - On-farm climate adaptation project;
 - Emergency preparedness tools;
 - AgriService BC:
 - One common platform;
 - Better and easier access to information.
- RDBN & Opportunities:
 - Network with other areas across BC;
 - Economic Development Initiatives – how have other communities across the province leveraged agriculture in relation to timber supply reduction;
 - Capitalize on:
 - Competitive advantages – low land and feed prices;
 - Existing processing capacity;
 - Identify potential future interest in Growing Forward 3 (GF3) framework;
 - Currently requesting input.
- Regional Agriologists are Connectors for:
 - Information, Resources, Programs, Organizations and Opportunities;
 - Goal - Growing the Agrifoods Sector in a sustainable way.

Group Discussion Topics

- 1. Raise awareness of Agriculture locally and provincially**
 - a. Ministry of Agriculture not supported by the Province;
 - b. Has to be an important interest for the Province of BC that this sector survives and thrives;
- 2. Planning and long-term strategy for the future of agriculture and have an awareness of future plans for the long-term**
 - a. Concern about future agriculture moving forward;
 - b. 25-50 year - what does Agriculture look like in northwest BC?
 - c. How do we make decisions that are beneficial for the northwest and its communities?
- 3. Working with schools, high schools and post-secondary, to educate youth in regard to Agriculture**
 - a. What would a potential option for rural family lifestyle/livelihood in agriculture look like?
- 4. Co-operatives to meet the local food demand**
 - a. Suppliers that want local foods – how to get the economy of scale and produce the products – cooperative ventures between small farmers.
- 5. Agriculture's impact within and outside the agriculture sector**
 - a. relationship of agriculture to the broader community and within the agriculture sector.
- 6. Local food across all sectors of the economy can be accessible**
 - a. funding to provide time to educate and provide for food production;
 - b. funding to educate that local foods can be economical.
- 7. Broaden scope of the production of a variety of crops**
 - a. Investigate crops grown in other parts of the world to determine/discover potential crops that could be grown in BC.
- 8. Foreign vs. Local land ownership**
 - a. As pertains to food security.
- 9. Consumer Trust**
 - a. find a way to earn and maintain consumer trust in BC.
- 10. Educating individuals and encouraging more invasive plant control on private land**
 - a. Better invasive plant management on private land;
 - b. Education.
- 11. Subdividing Agriculture Land**
 - a. Subdividing Ag. Lands is a concern and can be an issue;
 - b. Need for enforcement when lands are subdivided – properly used;
 - c. Revisit and reeducate ALR/ALC in regard to subdividing Agricultural Lands.
- 12. Water Sustainability Act**
 - a. Need to understand.
- 13. Provide forums, workshops and seminars (resources) for Producers – Increase Resources at a local level**
 - a. Support producers – opportunities for good farming practices and healthy practices;
 - b. Full time farming and ranching requires innovation;
 - c. Meeting with other producers and requires agrologists/climate information and connections to the information.
- 14. Update Government of Canada Agriculture and Agri-Food's Canada Land Inventory (CLI)**
 - a. Information and mapping regarding potential agricultural lands and growth possibilities for Northwest BC are extremely out of date.
- 15. Resiliency – Recognize the Risk and Opportunities in regard to Climate Change**
 - a. Gained 300-400 heat units in 5-6 years.

BC Agriculture Council

- **Topic of Discussion:** BC Agriculture Council Role
 - Megan D'Arcy, FARM Director, Representing Community Agriculture and Organics

(See attached PowerPoint Presentation)

BC Agriculture Council Update for RDBN Agriculture Forum

- BC Agriculture Council includes:
 - BC Farmers & Ranchers;
 - 29 Associations;
 - 12 Sectors (Directors)
- Receives and Provides Information to:
 - Province of BC;
 - Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) and Canadian Government;
- Provides information to:
 - Agriculture Research Development Corporation (ardcorp);
 - Western Agriculture Labour initiative (WALI);
 - And its Members.
- FARM (Food and Agriculture Responsibility Members') and COABC (Community Council and the Certified Organic Association of BC share a seat at the BC Agriculture Council;
 - Ms. Darcy - voice for the producers and farmers and agriculture in northwest BC on the BC Agriculture Council;
 - Also enables information to be brought back to the northwest.

BC Agriculture Council:

- Primary focus to work with BC politicians and through the Canadian Federation of Agriculture.

Current Priorities:

Environment:

- Beneficial Management Practices;
 - Funded through Environmental Farm Plan Program;
- Labour;
- Public Trust - prominent topic of discussion currently:
 - Needs to communicate with people that are consuming the products and find out the concerns;
 - Improve transparency;
 - Show that all the producers are on a path of continued improvement;
 - BC Agriculture Council's Agriculture Producers members are working to develop a communication initiative.
- Taxation:
 - BCAC Farmer ID Card.

Ms. Darcy spoke to the benefit of being a member with the BCAC and to maintain a voice in the northwest. She noted that the northwest tends to be independent and has substantial production differences in comparison to the southern part of the province of BC. She noted the connection to the BCAC provides an important voice at the provincial level beyond just the connection to the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA). She mentioned that the BCAC works closely with the MoA and the BCAC is the voice for the producer. The BCAC provides support to MoA in moving the voice of the producer/people forward. The region is an area of untapped potential, with the land, water and young energy and innovation that are concerned about food security and access to good fresh food that hasn't travelled a long distance. Ms. Darcy commented on the importance of the northwest to agriculture in the province of BC and being a part of the BCAC will help provide that information to the province to assist them in supporting the northwest. It is important to promote and recognize the innovation of the people and the revenue potential in the region to assist in moving forward for the future in all aspects of agriculture.

As a group - need better access to all the services available to better agriculture in the region.

RDBN Regional Economic Development

- **Topic of Discussion:** Regional Agriculture Support Initiatives
- Corrine Swenson, Manager of Regional Economic Development

Beyond the Market

- Christine Kinney, Project Coordinator

(See attached PowerPoint Presentation)

Regional Agriculture Support Initiatives

- Agriculture was identified in the 2009 Regional Economic Development Action Plan as an area of focus.

Farmers' Markets

- RDBN began working with the region's Farmers Markets as a way of connecting with producers across the region;
- A group was formed with representation from each market:
 - Formalized a name for the group: Bulkley Stuart Nechako Markets;
 - Identified projects and ways the RDBN could support farmers markets;
 - Workshops on board Governance, MarketSafe and Market Coordinator Training;
 - Logo contest was held and the logo was used to create signage;
- RDBN has continued to check in with the markets annually to monitor attendance and success:
 - 2014:
 - 74 market days;
 - 49,318 attendees at markets across the region;
 - 2015:
 - 100 market days;
 - 57,189 attendees at markets across the region.

RDBN Agriculture Plan

- One initiative was to provide a low level marketing campaign;
- Bi-annual Business Forum:
 - Provides presentations on agriculture;
 - Request that caterers purchase and provide locally produced foods and highlight those producers and foods during meals;

Regional Skills Gap Analysis

- In 2014 a Regional Skills Gap Analysis (RSGA) was completed;
 - One key note that was reported:
 - The future employment in the province in agri-foods is expected to include not only family owned farms but increasing numbers of scientists, technicians, analysts, brokers, architects, designers and engineers, in demand to 2021 in the RDBN;
 - A Strategic Workforce Opportunities Team (SWOT) has been formed to implement the actions in the RSGA;
 - Approximately 38 representatives from across all sectors or the region;
 - 2015 – created community and sector profiles as an attraction tool to highlight the region;
 - Utilized at tradeshow and other opportunities;
 - The opportunities.rdbn.bc.ca website;
 - Highlights agriculture;
 - Currently updated information;
 - John Stevenson, Regional Agrologist, MoA is providing assistance.

- Connecting Consumers and Producers Program:
 - To support purchasing locally produced food;
 - Created in 2014;
 - Included the purchase of agriculture specific resources by the libraries in the region;
 - Programs included a list of community events highlighting the purchase of locally produced food;
 - An annual agriculture brochure listing producers in the region and ways to preserve locally produced food.
 - Community Events
 - Fall Fairs, community dinners, consumer workshops at Bulkley Valley Farmer's Market, etc.
 - 2014-2016
 - Total events: 26;
 - Total attendance: 46,697;
 - 3000 brochures distributed
 - Total amount funded \$32,964;
 - Producers: \$20,628
 - Event kits are provided for each event:
 - Includes a locally produced product and the agriculture brochure.
 - Agriculture Brochure
 - 1000 copies per year;
 - Available electronically on the website;
 - Includes:
 - A calendar of in season produce;
 - Ways of preserving the locally produced food to lengthen the time available to eat local;
 - Directory of regional producers:
 - Check with representatives each year to update information;
 - Connecting Consumers and Producers Facebook Page
 - In 2016 started a Facebook Page;
 - Local and regional agriculture information is posted;
 - Sharing producers and markets pages;
 - Shop now button takes people to the agriculture brochure on the website;
- Beyond the Market
 - RDBN provides support for the Beyond the Market Program;
 - Participated on the advisory committee and funded the program annually;

Beyond the Market

- Christine Kinney, Project Coordinator

(See attached PowerPoint Presentation)

Beyond the Market: The Farm Knowledge Network

- Established in 2011;

Project Goals

- Increase:
 - The number of new farmers;
 - The viability and capacity;
 - Improve the succession;
 - Establish sound agri-business management practices that will result in job creation.

Activities

- Training and professional development:
 - o Minimum of 3 workshops and a networking event per year;
- Central Information network:
 - o Website;
 - o Blog;
- Develop financial self-sufficiency:
 - o Support community-run extension services network into the future.

Partners

- Omineca Beetle Action Coalition (OBAC);
- Community Futures Fraser Fort George – hosting organization;
- District of Fort St. James;
- Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako;
- Regional District of Fraser-Fort George;
- Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine.

Developed a proposal to the Provincial Government requesting they operate an extension services network similar to the Beyond the Market model.

Project Activities

- Farm client coaching sessions;
- Regional agriculture advisory services and advocacy;
- Networking and outreach events;
- Training events;
- Website www.beyondthemarket.ca;
- Local farm directory;
- Newsletter and Facebook Page.

New initiative

- Applying to the Rural Dividend Fund:
 - o To continue the program;
 - o Expand the program:
 - Export-ready businesses - to be coached through the development of an export plan.

Plenary Dialogue

Group Discussion Topics

GROUP 1

- WHAT IS THE TOPIC? – define the issue, challenge, or situation:**
- **Raise awareness of agriculture locally and provincially**
 - Create an importance at the Ministerial & Provincial level for agriculture by acknowledgment of its economic and social values to the Provincial sector with tangible support;
 - **Working with schools, high schools and post-secondary, to educate youth in regard to agriculture**
 - Request and facilitate with the School District programs that create core educational opportunities that outreach to the agricultural sector from K to 12;
 - **Consumer Trust – Earning and Maintaining**
 - Create advanced agricultural education outreach at the regional level to support the industry.
 - **More people, understanding education in the region**

GROUP 2

- WHAT IS THE TOPIC? – define the issue, challenge, or situation:**
- **Co-operatives to meet the local food demand**
 - Co-operative use of farm equipment e.g. crop dryers, storage facilities, etc.
 - Assist to reduce costs to individual farmers
 - **Local food across all sectors of the economy can be accessible**
 - Broader beef/hay industry

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Where is this happening or of most concern?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Equipment costs for individual farms across the region – certain pieces of equipment in pods to bests suit the crops being grown | <p>When is it most problematic, from a historical, current and/or future perspective?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Currently and expected to worsen due to demographics of farming communities ▪ Age of farmers ▪ Very little succession from the younger generation |
| <p>Who is responsible, or capable of dealing with it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Co-ops ▪ Cattleman’s Association – or other Associations ▪ Industry | <p>Why should action be considered?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To diversify the economy 2. No money in farming currently 3. To make farming viable 4. Share debt load 5. Sustain rural communities 6. Ensure local food across all sectors of the economy |
| <p>How should action for change begin?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Barriers to agriculture and actions ▪ Identify partners, buyers, contracts ▪ Business Case that will identify Co-ops and partners to identify funding sources | |
| <p>Suggestions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Farm Credit 2. Northern Development Initiative Trust (NDIT) – grant application for Business Case 3. Identify: producers, number of acres, crop type, equipment needed and approach a company such as Flaman Group of Companies to provide equipment 4. Determine market for product: Determine a buyer for a certain product and they invest to bring the product to market. | |

GROUP 3

WHAT IS THE TOPIC? – define the issue, challenge, or situation:

- **Invasive plant management on private land**
 - Spread of invasive plants due to lack of:
 - Education
 - Eradication
 - Enforcement

Where is this happening or of most concern?

- Private Lands
- Right of Ways
 - Pipelines/gas
 - BC Hydro
 - CN

When is it most problematic, from a historical, current and/or future perspective?

- Becoming more of a problem/increasing

Who is responsible, or capable of dealing with it?

- Private land owners
 - Support from: Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako
 - Northwest Invasive Plant Council (NWIPC)
 - Need/Require:
 - Education
 - Enforcement
 - Inventory
 - Treatment
 - Forage seed certification labelling
- Absentee land owners

Why should action be considered?

7. Costing loss of crop productivity
8. Increasing cost to treat
9. Polluting the land
10. Devaluing land

How should action for change begin?

1. **Encourage and lobby for land managers to be funded by** ie. Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (MFLNRO), CN, Ministry of Energy and Mines and Ministry Responsible for Core Review, Ministry of Environment (MoE), BC Hydro to control Invasive Plants
2. **Educate land owners and nurseries to not seed/plant Invasive Plants**
3. **Request more enforcement of some form**
4. **More accountability from NWIPC on use of funding received**
5. **Treat hard and fast to attempt to eradicate as quickly as possible (easier to address when smaller area)**

GROUP 4

WHAT IS THE TOPIC? – define the issue, challenge, or situation:

- **Water Sustainability Act**
 - Recently updated
 - Free licencing expires March 2017
 - Be enforced in 2017

Where is this happening or of most concern?

- Province of B.C.

When is it most problematic, from a historical, current and/or future perspective?

- March 2017

Who is responsible, or capable of dealing with it?

- Beyond the Market has had workshops
- Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations

Why should action be considered?

11. Pricing – fees for monitoring – cost to producers?
12. Water licence – fees? Price on volume?
13. Education – before enforcement comes into place
14. Definitions – what is a dug out? What is not?

How should action for change begin?

- Old maps – showing waterways no longer there
- Water Management
- Availability – aquifers
- Decision making requires good inventory to make proper decisions

Workshops delivered in the communities on regulations, definitions, licensing

GROUP 4

WHAT IS THE TOPIC? – define the issue, challenge, or situation:

- **Planning for the future of agriculture with an awareness of long term planning**
 - Where are we at? eg. Exports

Where is this happening or of most concern?

- Balance Regional/Global – what's the goal? Size of project?
- How work for everyone?
- Provide more jobs smaller scale? or higher paying jobs?

When is it most problematic, from a historical, current and/or future perspective?

- Require long term awareness for every decision
- Contracts that tie up the land for future use

Who is responsible, or capable of dealing with it?

- Provincial government to create policy to protect long term interests and producers for long term planning – Education
- RDBN – Expanded Agriculture Forum:
 - 2 day conference
 - Host yearly

Why should action be considered?

How should action for change begin?

- **Education**
- **Require a good cross section of people – include Northern Health, larger First Nations presence, higher level provincial government policy makers**
- **Northern perspective required – blanket policy for BC doesn't necessarily fit northern BC**

GROUP 5

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>WHAT IS THE TOPIC? – define the issue, challenge, or situation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Recognize the risks and opportunities involved with climate change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Challenge – unusual temperature variability, water (too much or too little), violent weather events (wind, wildfire), potential for supply disruption, political and economic instability | |
| <p>Where is this happening or of most concern?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Globally – changes in fundamental climate patterns | <p>When is it most problematic, from a historical, current and/or future perspective?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recognize that there has always been some variability ▪ Particularly an issue during extreme weather events, but overall adapting will be ongoing process |
| <p>Who is responsible, or capable of dealing with it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All people are impacted – producers groups and local government would be effective platforms to work from | <p>Why should action be considered?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Margins are narrow enough that economic impact of crop failures and drought/flooding/wildfire could destabilize local food system |
| <p>How should action for change begin?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ RDBN could work with producer groups to develop proposal/framework for climate strategies for Northwest that could be funded through climate action initiative for the next Growing Forward agreement | |

GROUP 6

WHAT IS THE TOPIC? – define the issue, challenge, or situation:

- **Subdividing of Agricultural Land**
 - Maximize agriculture land in production
 - Given issues with decision in regard to subdivision, rural residences, non-farm uses, non-agriculture businesses, agriculture land not in production, fragmentation and affordability

Where is this happening or of most concern?

- Throughout the RDBN but areas of focus: Smithers, Vanderhoof, Telkwa
- Type of concern rural residential, non-farm use, idle land

When is it most problematic, from a historical, current and/or future perspective?

- Ongoing, effects futures use
- Some of the challenges have a permanent impact to agriculture
- Aspect of unknown in agriculture practices

Who is responsible, or capable of dealing with it?

- Agricultural Land Commission
- RDBN – Zoning, OCP
- Advisory Planning Groups/ RDBN Directors
- Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
- AGRI
- Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations – Crown Lands

Why should action be considered?

- Not making any more land
- Timely point for action (changes in ALC)
- Direct impact to economic viability of agriculture
- Land value, new entrants, food security
- Permanence
- More future pressure – people leaving/demographics

How should action for change begin?

RDBN and AGRI

- **Promote the new most appropriate new tools under ALC regulations/policies that minimize challenges to incentivize**
 - Eg. Farmer lease, retired farmers

RDBN and Provincial Government

- **Investigate taxation**
 - Land in production vs. not in production
 - Look at assessment valuation information
- Fences on subdivision

RDBN

- Review of OCP's in light of changes to Act

Multitude of agencies

- Encourage linking idle land owners to new entrants
- Agriculture Land Use Inventory (ALUI) for other areas in the RDBN
- Review Agriculture plan and explore options for funding to update

GROUP 7

WHAT IS THE TOPIC? – define the issue, challenge, or situation:

- Update internet information about the area

| GROUP 8 | |
|--|--|
| WHAT IS THE TOPIC? – define the issue, challenge, or situation: | |
| ➤ Foreign and Non-Resident vs. Local land ownership | |
| Where is this happening or of most concern? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako ▪ Cariboo Regional District ▪ Peace River Regional District ▪ Regional District of Fraser-Fort George ▪ Robson Valley – recreation areas ▪ Close to communities and main base of agriculture production areas | When is it most problematic, from a historical, current and/or future perspective? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Current and future – removal from production ▪ Removing support of critical areas ▪ Fabric of community – small business/schools ▪ Reduce opportunities - lower nutrients to land when mass production occurs |
| Who is responsible, or capable of dealing with it? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BC Government – legislation, regulations and policy changes | Why should action be considered? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local food security ▪ Impacts to social and economic benefits for communities (small business/rural schools) ▪ Provincial services |
| How should action for change begin? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Begin dialogue and lobbying ▪ Propose models as solutions ie. Limit size (acreage) /% ownership ▪ Transition for citizenship ▪ Limits to corporation ownership ▪ ALR taxation to encourage farm activity ▪ ALR enforcement | |
| Suggestions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Canadian Agriculture Standing Senate Committee currently reviewing acquisition of farm land – including foreign ownership ▪ Potentially submit a letter providing concerns for the region | |

Mr. Blattner and Chair Parker thanked the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako and staff for hosting the Agriculture Forum. Chair Parker also thanked Mr. Blattner for facilitating the event.

Where do we move forward from today?

- Future Agriculture Forum
 - o Choose 2 to 3 issues in one day
 - o Provide conclusions going forward
- Agriculture Advisory Committee
 - o Issues moving forward to the Regional Board require a conduit to provide the information to those effected
 - o RDBN Agriculture Committee will assist in delivering messages
- RDBN Agriculture Committee
 - o Public meetings
 - o Information on RDBN Website

Chair Parker noted that information can be forwarded to RDBN Directors and staff at any time via e-mail, telephone or mail.

Forum adjourned at 3:10 p.m.