

GROWING OPPORTUNITIES

Bulkley-Nechako Agriculture Update



February 2025 - Issue 24

Agriculture Coordinator Update

Happy second or third false spring! Planning has been the main work taking place at the RDBN over January and early February. Much of the discussion with people throughout the region has focused on strategic thinking about food security and sustainable agriculture.

Project updates -

- We have hired Upland Agricultural Consulting for the RDBN Water Assessment and Irrigation project taking place around Vanderhoof. Upland Agricultural Consulting has included Bruce Naka on their team for this project. Many of you will have met Bruce Naka while he was up in our area doing irrigation workshops.
- Michelle Roberge and I have teamed up again to coordinate a gathering with food-producing, not-for-profit organizations throughout the region in March. We will be sending out invitations shortly by email.
- I have been attending Northern BC Ideas Lab for Food Systems Transformation meetings with others in the northwest interested in local food security and agricultural sustainability. The RDBN has partnered with Making Agriculture Sustainable in the Hazeltons to pitch an exciting project idea focused on livestock processing in central and north-west B.C. Stay tuned!

Canadian Forage & Grassland Association (CFGa)

On-Farm Climate Action Fund

The CFGA has announced that Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada has renewed funding for the [On-Farm Climate Action Fund](#) for three years. Their partner in BC is the [BC Forage Council](#). The CFGA is recommending that producers interested in cost-share funding for nitrogen management, cover cropping, and/or rotational grazing beneficial management practices familiarize themselves with the [Advanced Grazing System](#) educational resources and complete their own [grazing plan](#). [BC Grazing Mentors](#) are available throughout the province to assist producers with the development of a grazing management plan - [Chris Solecki](#) out of Burns Lake is the Grazing Mentor for our region.

Habitat & Biodiversity Assessment Tool

Interested in maintaining natural diversity on your farm or ranch? The CFGA is leading a six-year long project, currently in its last year, building a tool for producers that will assist them in identifying and maintaining habitat and biodiversity on the lands that they manage.

A two-page backgrounder describing the Habitat & Biodiversity Assessment Tool (HBAT) can be found below. The HBAT for British Columbia is currently in progress and should be finished in the latter part of 2025.

[HBAT Backgrounder](#)



Summer Student Farm Worker Bursary

Thinking about hiring a student this summer? The Summer Student Farm Worker Bursary program is now accepting applications through to June 9, 2025. Go through the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC portal to fill out an application or find out more information. Students must be over 16 years of age and work a minimum of 250 hours. The amount of the bursary depends on hours worked: \$1,500 for 250 hour minimum, \$3,000 for the maximum of 500 hours.

[Summer Student Farm Worker Bursary](#)

Producer Organization Spotlight:

Nechako Valley Regional Cattlemen's Association

The Nechako Valley Regional Cattlemen's Association (NVRCA) works hard to strengthen and support the cattle industry making their home in the Nechako Valley. They address issues facing the industry at the local, provincial, and federal levels.

The NVRCA is comprised of ranchers from four local cattle organizations: Cluculz Lake Livestock Association, Fort Fraser Livestock Association, Sinkut Mountain Cattlemen's Association, and Punchaw Cattlemen's Association.

The NVRCA are currently working on several initiatives to address member concerns about access to shavings, water resource management, and issues with elk damage to stored feed, standing forage, and new seeding.



Are you cattle producer living in the Nechako Valley? Please consider filling out the survey below.

[Elk Conflict Survey](#)

Soil Health - What is your soil pH and why does it matter?

Soil pH is an active measure of hydrogen ions in soil solution. The pH scale goes from 0 to 14 where 0 is highly acidic and 14 is highly alkaline (see Figure).¹ Soil pH is determined by a variety of factors,

including soil parent material and amount of rainfall (atmospheric gases, in particular CO₂, will come into equilibrium with rainwater, resulting in a pH of about 5.6).

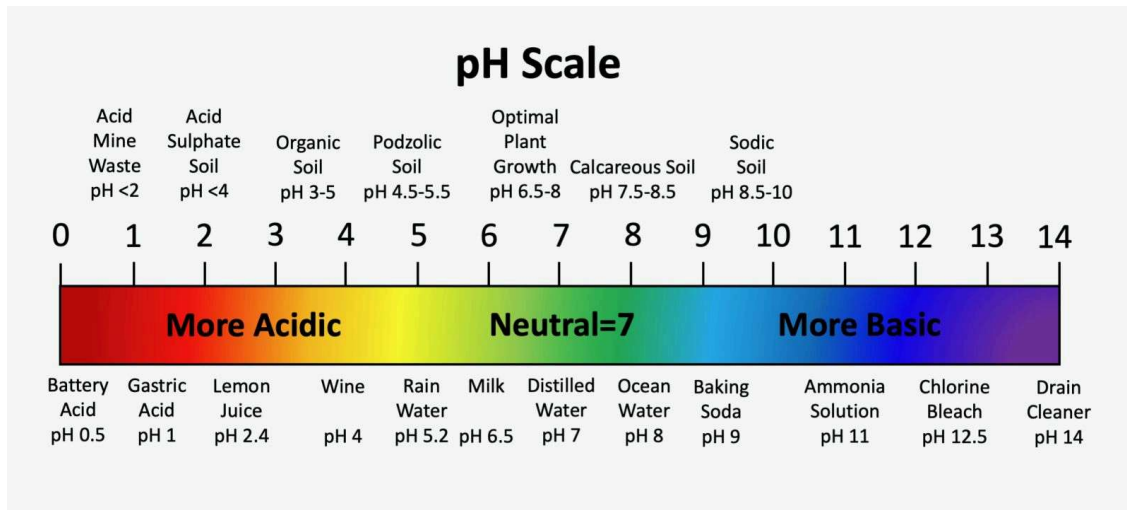


Image Credit: The pH scale with some common materials and soils. Adapted from Brady and Weil (2010). Adapted by Lewis Fausak and licensed under a [CC BY \(Attribution\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) license.

There is a correlation between nitrogen and soil pH.² Although there is less risk of loss of nitrogen when spreading ammonium-based fertilizers on the soil surface, the over-use of ammonium-nitrate or ammonium-sulphate, when combined with too much water, can increase soil acidity.

Although plants may grow outside of their optimal pH range, the majority of crops in our region prefer a pH between 5.5 and 8.2.³ Soil pH affects nutrient availability - a pH range of 6.5 to 8 is considered ideal for ensuring that most nutrients are available for plant uptake. The BC Ministry of Agriculture has published a factsheet on soil pH that indicates the preferred pH range for several crops (see below).

¹ Krzic, M., Walley, F.L., Diochon, A., Paré, M.C., & Farrell, R.E. (Eds.) 2021. [Digging into Canadian soils: An introduction to soil science](#). Pinawa, MB: Canadian Society of Soil Science.

² BC Ministry of Agriculture. 2015 (revised). [Nitrogen Fertilization as Related to Soil pH](#). Factsheet 631.001-2

³ BC Ministry of Agriculture. 2015 (revised). [Soil pH](#). Order No. 637.100-1





Please let us know what you'd like to see in the next Growing Opportunities eNewsletter!

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