

ACRD Agricultural Plan Implementation Project

Final Report - Phase 2
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Executive Summary

A viable and thriving agricultural community is the long term goal of the Alberni Valley Agricultural Plan. As phase 2 of the Agricultural Plan Implementation Project nears completion, there is assurance that work towards this end will continue, thanks to the dedication and investment of Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD) board and staff, consultants, and a passionate and energetic community. This report aims to highlight achievements from Phase 2 of the Agricultural Plan Implementation Project and offer action priorities for moving forward in 2016/2017.

Over the past 8 months, there have been significant developments in previously identified project focus areas. Funding has been secured for work towards solving one of the top concerns of regional farmers - that of ensured access to quality and affordable fresh water resources. The relationship between Alberni Valley and West Coast communities has been bridged in areas related to food security and production. In addition, the current state of the maritime production industry has been assessed, with stakeholders engaged in discussion about opportunities for future growth. Finally, the Alberni Valley is now in the desirable position of hosting the Island Agricultural Show in February 2017, a tremendous opportunity which will encourage external investment and interest in the industry and community.

There has also been a huge increase in external interest and inquiries about agricultural opportunities in the region. The ACRD is the only community on the island with dedicated Agricultural Support Workers, and while the Saanich Peninsula and Comox and Cowichan Valleys are currently the Island's highest profile agricultural communities, the Alberni-Clayoquot region is definitely on the radar.

Fulfillment of the goals of the 2011 Alberni Agricultural Plan is no small task. It will continue to require dedicated time and community support for the development of both physical assets and social infrastructure. Significant amounts of time, both paid and volunteer, have already been dedicated to the project by ACRD staff, Agricultural Supports Workers, and community members. It is the collaborative and adaptive approach, and the willingness of the community to work together, that has fueled the successes thus far.

<u>Measuring Success - Phase 2 evaluation</u>	
Public events assisted with	10
Newsletters published - agricultural info	4
Reports published	12
New land-based producers	8 and counting
Subscribers to email list	95
Facebook page likes	375
Local media articles/ videos about project	6
Grant funding secured	\$19,550

Project Background

In 2011, the Alberni Agricultural Plan set a target of 40% regional food security by the year 2031. It described 12 primary goals and recommended action plans for each. The Agricultural Plan Implementation Project began in the summer of 2014 when a team of consultants (the Agricultural Support Workers) was hired on a six month contract to initiate implementation of the plan. In the summer of 2015, a second contract was issued to continue with phase two of the project.

Agricultural Support Workers work with a broad cross-section of stakeholders from around the region. Monthly meetings with the Agricultural Development Committee help to guide the project and provide for feedback and community resources. Other stakeholders include individual farmers and business, community organizations, First Nations and municipal governments.



Section One - Phase Two Objectives and Achievements

Summary of Phase Two Aims and Objectives

Phase Two of the Agricultural Plan Implementation Project began in July of 2015 and focused on the following ten areas:

1. Continued community networking and support for food security related projects,
2. Securing and developing public sites for community agricultural use,
3. Seeking to host Island Agriculture Show in 2017,
4. Supporting regional Farmers' Markets and improving public perception of markets,
5. Implementing a regional Buy-Local campaign,
6. Working with Young Agrarians and otherwise to promote local agriculture and interest new farmers,
7. Facilitating workshops and events,
8. Encouraging and supporting urban farming initiatives,
9. Investigating options to support agricultural use of water, and
10. Working towards the development of a West Coast Agricultural Plan.

Phase Two Achievements and Outputs

Details of achievements in the ten focus areas are as follows:

1. Networking and community support.

- Agricultural initiatives were the subject of presentations to and meetings with; the Alberni Valley Farmers' Institute (AFI), Alberni Valley Transition Towns Society (AVTTS), Eat West Coast, Tofino Community Food Initiative (TCFI), Mayor's breakfast group, City of Port Alberni Climate Change and Food Security Committee, regional Farmers' Markets boards, Alberni-Clayoquot Health Network (ACHN), and others.
- ACRD Agricultural Support Workers assisted with Family Farms Day, an agricultural promotional event at an Alberni Valley Bulldogs game, the Alberni Fall Fair, West Coast Farm and Garden Show, and Tofino Edible Garden Tour, a proposal for development at Clutesi Haven Marina, rainwater harvesting workshops in coastal communities, school garden initiatives, a local food directory project, and others.
- Continued public updates were provided through an email list serve, newsletters, and the 'What's On Your Fork' Facebook page.
- Monthly reports were published about local agricultural initiatives and there was regular monthly attendance by members of the Agricultural Development Committee (ADC) meetings.
- A general community presence and availability to the public was maintained via phone, email and internet and there was an increase in public inquiries about new and existing agricultural operations and initiatives.

2. Public Sites for Community and Agricultural Use

- A concept plan for an indoor/outdoor public and Farmers' Market was drafted and discussions were held with the Port Alberni Port Authority with regards to including such a facility in the upcoming development project at Clutesi Haven Marina.
- Various stakeholders were met with, to gauge and create interest in a public community space that would feature a year round local farmers' market, fish sales, community fridges/freezers and other agricultural assets.
- The Hupacaseh First Nation was assisted with the development of a proposal for development at Clutesi Marina that included various agricultural elements.
- Opportunities were investigated into establishing an on-line forum for regional agricultural resources, with a resulting commitment by View Street Markets to include some of those resources on their website.
- The community was engaged in discussions about new and existing community gardens.
- An opportunity for a community food lab was identified, with sponsorship from the Small Scale Food Processors Association

3. Island Agriculture Show, 2017

- A successful application was made to host the 2017 Island Agricultural Show on February 3rd and 4th, 2017
- Planning for the event began and partner organizations such as the Alberni Valley Fall Fair, City of Port Alberni, Alberni Farmers' Institute, Alberni Valley Transition Town Society, Heritage Society, Tractor Club, 4H, and West Coast Aquatics were solicited.
- The Glenwood Center and Fall Fair sites, including the Kinsmen Hut and Kinsmen Community Hall, were secured for the event.

4. Support Farmers' Markets and Improve Public Perception of Markets

- In general, Agricultural Support Workers (ASW) worked to improve public perception of markets and develop a bridge across markets.
- Regional Farmers' Markets were supported via social media and advertising campaigns.
- Newspaper ads were secured highlighting events or special features at all local markets.
- ASWs worked with the Tofino Community Food Association to assist in coordination of the delivery of Alberni Valley products to a West Coast Market, ensuring that products were pre-ordered and delivered to a common depot for pick up.
- A consumer market survey, using rapid market assessments, was conducted at five markets within the region in August and September 2015, with results were published in a summary document.
- New markets, such as the View Street Online Market, were supported in order to both work towards the establishment of an on-line food buying/selling platform and to assist farmers looking to expand their markets.



5. Implement a Regional Buy Local Campaign

- Olivia Szostek, a UBC student, created a valuable document describing the elements and implementation process of a regional branding campaign as part of her directed field studies, with guidance from the Agricultural Support Workers.
- T-shirts with the 'What's On Your Fork?' logo were made up, worn and distributed at a Bulldogs hockey game, the Island Agriculture Show, and a local newspaper photo opportunity.
- Restaurants were engaged, during a forum style event, in dialogue around the use of a regional logo and increasing access to and the use of local food.
- A draft 'Brand Agreement' for use of the 'What's on Your Fork' logo was finalized.

6. Work with Young Agrarians to Promote Local Agriculture and solicit new farmers

- Articles and promotional material were posted on the Young Agrarians website and social media outlets, advising of agricultural initiatives within the ACRD.
- A land access workshop was hosted to facilitate land access for, and community engagement of, young farmers and community gardeners.
- A database of potential land leasing opportunities and people looking for land was created.

7. Facilitate workshops, tours and educational events

- Two workshops were hosted by Agricultural Support Workers during phase two of the project.
- The first event was held November 8th from 1-4. This 'Farmer Meet-Up, Social & Discussion Group' was designed to bring together farmers and restauranteurs to discuss community collaboration, formation of a co-operative, the use of a branding trademark, and to support farmers looking for land linking opportunities. In total, 39 farmers, restauranteurs, and other relevant stakeholders attended the event.
- The second free event welcomed anyone looking for land, looking to offer land for food production, or just looking to find out more about local opportunities in agriculture. 31 people attended the 'Land Access Event' at the Echo Center and many more were engaged in the project through social media and email.
- A summary report was published for both events
- A series of agricultural education videos was recorded at the West Coast Farm and Garden Show for airing on both You Tube and the Alberni Shaw TV community channel in spring of 2016.



ALBERNI-CLAYOQUOT REGIONAL DISTRICT

FARMER MEET-UP, SOCIAL, & DISCUSSION GROUP

Farmers, Restauranteurs and other interested parties are welcome to attend this free event!

8 NOV 1-4PM

A facilitated discussion with a social and community building focus.

- Brainstorm a model for a local farmer co-operative
- Find out about product and delivery needs of local restaurants (chefs in attendance)
- Help develop a branding agreement for a regional local food logo
- Find farmers with land, or a new farmer who needs some!

At the Echo Park Fieldhouse, 4200 Wood Ave
Light snacks and refreshments provided

8. Encourage and Support Urban Farming Initiatives

- Agricultural Support Workers met with the City of Port Alberni's Food Security and Climate Disruption Committee about urban agricultural initiatives and attended an Edible Garden Tour in Tofino.
- General support and information was offered to small farmers looking to access urban land for production or interested in community initiatives such as tool sharing or cooperative marketing.
- General support and information was offered to individuals and groups working on school garden initiatives in both the Alberni Valley and on the West Coast, and a letter of support for the implementation of a district wide school garden policy was issued by the Agricultural Development Committee.

9. Investigate Options to Support Agricultural Use of Water

- A successful grant application was submitted to the Real Estate Foundation of BC for a comprehensive project in support of the agricultural use of water. The project will include analysis of the new BC Water Sustainability Act, alternative distribution systems for agricultural use, development of educational material for the public, and development of policy for a rainwater harvesting rebate program which would include larger scale on-farm systems.
- An Agricultural Water Demand Model Project has also been approved for completion in summer 2016, with funding by the Ministry of Environment and Partnership for Water Sustainability in BC.
- An Agricultural Support Worker assisted with rainwater catchment workshops in Ucluelet and Tofino.
- A potential pilot project for on farm, large scale agricultural water storage was identified and explored.

10. Agriculture in Coastal Communities

- An experienced sub-contractor drafted an important and comprehensive overview of regional aquatic resources, describing the barriers to, and opportunities for, local aquatic production and marketing. Some of this information was included in the March issue of Island Farm and Garden magazine.
- Agricultural Support Workers met with the mayors of Ucluelet and Tofino and identified interest in collaboration on coastal agriculture initiatives including rainwater harvesting programs, assessment of barriers to aquatic producers, and composting initiatives.
- Agricultural Support Workers worked closely with Tofino Community Food Initiative and Eat West Coast to identify barriers to, and opportunities for, agriculture on the West Coast and assisted with food security initiatives that bridged West Coast and Alberni Valley communities.



Summary of Additional External Funding Secured in Phase Two

Funding Agency	Project	Amount
Real Estate Foundation of BC	Agricultural Use of Water Policy Review and Project Development	\$7,950
Partnership for Water Sustainability in BC	Agricultural Water Demand Model	\$7,000
Strategic Outreach Funding, Min. of Ag./Growing Forward 2	West Coast Farm and Garden Show	\$4,600
Total		\$19,550

Summary of Reports, Newsletters, and Documents Published

Name of Report	Date
Newsletter	August 7, 2015
ADC Monthly Report For August	September 2, 2015
ADC Monthly Report For September	October 6, 2015
Newsletter	October 10, 2015
Farmers' Market Rapid Assessment Survey Results	October 16, 2015
Preliminary Concept Plan for an Alberni Valley Public and Farmers' Market	November 3, 2015
ADC Monthly Report For October	November 4, 2015
A Regional Buy Local Brand for the Alberni Valley and West Coast Communities (Olivia Szostek)	November 5, 2015
Newsletter	November 6, 2015
Farmer Meet-Up, Event Summary	November 19, 2015
ADC Monthly Report For November	December 4, 2015
Newsletter	December 18, 2015
ADC Monthly Report For December	January 7, 2016
Land Access Event Summary	February 1, 2106
ADC Monthly Report For January	February 4, 2016
Support for Shellfish and Marine Culture in the ACRD (Robert Gunn)	February 4, 2016
Draft Brand Agreement, What's on Your Fork Logo	February 4, 2016
Final Report - Phase Two	March 3, 2016

Section Two: Moving Forward - Phase Three Priorities

The Alberni Agricultural Plan Implementation Project has proceeded, thus far, through combination of a planned approach and an allowance for emergent initiatives. Initial goals have been set for each phase of the project, however adaptation of action plans has occurred as external projects and opportunities arise. This allowance for project adaptation ensures that the needs of stakeholders are met, surges in energy are captured, and new resources and opportunities identified and taken advantage of. It is expected that the emergent and adaptive nature of the project will continue.

Priorities for moving forward in 2016 and beyond

1. Island Agriculture Show, 2017

- This large scale event will draw many people from around British Columbia, allowing the region to showcase its assets and attracting community investment.
- Agricultural Support Workers will continue to work with the Agricultural Development Committee to organize and plan for the event, soliciting assistance and participation from other organizations from both within the community and beyond.
- It is expected that there will be high involvement of Coastal Communities in the event and in particular, a showcasing of the region's marine production.

2. Continue to support existing and ongoing projects

- Including the Agricultural Use of Water-Policy, Procedure, and Pilot Project, Agricultural Water Demand Project, Abattoir Feasibility Study, and Buy-Local campaign

3. Work towards an Agricultural Plan for Coastal Communities

- Continue to develop relationships, gather information, and provide support towards a goal of increased marine and agricultural production in coastal and offshore communities, including Bamfield and First Nations communities.
- Submit grant applications towards 2017 completion of a Coastal Agricultural Plan

4. Continue to network, share resources, and encourage new farming operations

- Ensure agricultural resources are available online (land linking database, community kitchens, publications, coolers, directories, and other)
- Provide public updates via email list and Facebook site
- Respond to requests and inquiries from the public

5. Support projects which enhance or provide agricultural assets within the ACRD

- Including both physical assets, such as potential development of Clutesi Marina, and the agriculture or food security related initiatives of other community organizations
- All regional Farmers' Markets will continue to be supported, and information distributed to the public about the times and location of each
- Assist with or coordinate workshops and tours related to land and marine production, as possible

Conclusion

The social, financial, cultural, and environmental benefits of a thriving agricultural community are many. The Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District covers a diverse and expansive terrain, and boasts tremendous land and sea assets. While assurance of environmental integrity of these assets is of primary importance, capitalization on the current interest in their development for agricultural purposes will result in increased local food sovereignty and fulfillment of the goals of the 2011 Alberni Agricultural Plan.

The Island Agricultural Show will highlight the area's agricultural industry to a wide British Columbia community in February of 2017. By that time, it is expected that the industry will be well on its way to unshakeable success, and that coastal communities of the region will be actively included in regional agricultural and food security initiatives. Plans will be in place to ensure both affordable and consistent access to water and increased availability of physical assets for the use of the agricultural community.

The scale of the Agricultural Plan Implementation Project is vast, and issues are too complex to be solved by one organization alone. A collaborative effort is required to truly capitalize on existing opportunities and to stimulate the development of more. Continued commitment and dedication to the agricultural community by Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District's board of directors, staff, consultants and community members will help to ensure all area residents with an increasingly healthy, sustainable, and resilient community.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone who has assisted with this project. Many ACRD community members and organizations have offered valuable information, opinions, feedback,, time, space, responses to surveys, and resources. This work could not have been completed without you.

Particular thanks to members of the Agricultural Development Committee, ACRD planning staff, Alberni Valley Farmers' Institute, Alberni Valley Transition Towns Society, Tofino Community Food Initiative, Young Agrarians, Eat West Coast, Olivia Szostek, Robert Gunn, the City of Port Alberni Economic Development Office, and all area farmers.