

Agricultural Area Plan April 26, 2011

ISSUING ORGANIZATION

This Request for Proposal (RFP) is issued by the Regional District of Nanaimo, 6300 Hammond Bay Road, Nanaimo, BC, V9T 6N2.

INTRODUCTION

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) is a diverse “federation” of municipalities working collaboratively to enhance the environmental, social and economic well-being of the residents and communities it serves. The Region encompasses approximately 208,000 hectares of land on the central east coast of Vancouver Island, in the Georgia Strait-Puget Sound Basin. The Region’s population includes approximately 138,631 people (Statistics Canada Census 2006) inhabiting four municipalities (City of Nanaimo, District of Lantzville, City of Parksville and Town of Qualicum beach), seven unincorporated electoral areas and six Indian Reserves.

Nearly ten per cent (18,700 hectares) of the region’s land base is designated within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), with additional rural lands being farmed outside the ALR. In 2006, there were 461 farms reported in the RDN and approximately one per cent of the regional population engaged in farming (2006 Census of Agriculture – Farm data and farm operator data). In addition to these farming activities, aquaculture is recognized as a significant contributor to agriculture in the Region.

The RDN’s growth management plans and official community plans recognize agriculture as a significant contributor to the region’s cultural landscape and economy. Collectively, these plans express a commitment to the preservation and strengthening of the region’s rural economy and lifestyle, including the protection of lands capable of agricultural productivity. These goals are an integral part of the region’s vision to be recognized for an outstanding quality of urban and rural life and a commitment to environmental protection.

Despite an active agricultural industry and ethic, farmland protection and the promotion of agriculture as a viable economic sector have emerged as significant issues in the region. To better understand these issues the Regional District of Nanaimo Board is requesting proposals from qualified applicants to complete an Agricultural Area Plan (AAP) and provide planning and public consultation services according to the project objectives and work program outlined in this Request for Proposal (RFP). The project will be overseen by the RDN Agricultural Advisory Committee (the Steering Committee).

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this project is to conduct a focused planning process to research, develop policy alternatives and identify tasks, conduct an extensive public review, and draft recommendations for an Agricultural Area Plan (AAP) for the RDN. The Plan should provide detailed guidance on how the RDN can implement the objectives and policies adopted in its existing plans and policies, and it should identify priority actions needed to support the viability of agriculture in the region, and consider future trends and changes. The Plan should also be inclusive and recognize aquaculture as a form of agriculture in the Region.

Startup

- Work with RDN staff and the AAP Steering Committee to develop a detailed work plan and schedule for the AAP process. The Steering Committee will provide local knowledge and expertise, identify issues, assess priorities, review progress, and set objectives for the work program; and,
- Collect and review relevant background documents and information concerning the initiation of an AAP, RDN policies and bylaws that shape agricultural activities in the region, and the strategic goals and priorities of the Regional Board of Directors and the Steering Committee (e.g. reports, zoning bylaws, growth management and sustainability plans, etc.).

Research

- Conduct a Land Use Inventory (LUI), with guidance from RDN planning and GIS staff, to assess the status of agricultural uses, products and farming practices, including but not limited, to a review of regional climate, soils, agricultural capability, water supply and use, regulations affecting agricultural lands and farming practices, local economy, etc;
- The Consultant will also review any relevant LUI base data produced by the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and work with Ministry staff to ensure new inventory data gathered through the AAP process is consistent with Ministry data indexes, wherever practical; and,
- Identify issues, trends, constraints and barriers to opportunities for agriculture in the region.

Consult & Facilitate Input

- Prepare materials and conduct focus group sessions for specific agricultural issues;
- Prepare materials, including advertising, for public consultation sessions. The intent of consultation is to identify issues of concern to the agricultural community and stakeholders, and to seek their input on the Agricultural Plan;
- Attend and facilitate public open houses, workshops, focus group discussions, and presentations to the Regional Board and Steering Committee;
- Present draft recommendations to the Steering Committee and RDN staff for review; and,
- Coordinate consultation with and dissemination of information to member municipalities and neighboring jurisdictions.

Make Recommendations

- Develop strategies to maximize opportunities for agriculture in the region and mitigate challenges;
- Develop policy priorities and recommendations in conjunction with RDN staff, the Steering Committee and Regional Board that will form discussion points for the public consultation process;
- Promote agriculture by enhancing public awareness of its value;

- Make recommendations for amendments to existing policies and bylaws (e.g. Zoning Bylaws and Official Community Plans); and,
- Identify implementation steps and recommend appropriate priorities to address the issues facing farming and agriculture in the region.

Prepare AAP

- Produce a concise Plan document that incorporates background information, land use analysis, mapping and policy recommendations;
- Identify potential revisions to the RDN's OCPs, Land Use Bylaw or other bylaws and policies required to implement and support the AAP; and,
- Work with the Steering Committee and RDN staff to suggest a prioritized strategy for implementation and follow up evaluation of the AAP;

Deliverables

The Consultant is to provide one hard copy with digital versions of all deliverables. Digital files are to include source files that will become the property of the RDN, to be used for future revisions, if needed, and for printing and distribution purposes.

The following deliverables are to be provided:

- Background Report that will inform the AAP (e.g. details of plan area; LUI mapping, regulatory framework for farming and agricultural practices in the region; general review of local issues related to climate, soils, agricultural capability, and water supply and use; agricultural economy, employment, farming activities and products, etc.); and,
- Agricultural Area Plan including a summary of public consultation process, key issues and concerns raised; opportunities and constraints of agriculture in the region; and, strategies for mitigating and overcoming any challenges. The Plan should also articulate a meaningful and inclusive vision for agriculture as a vibrant and sustainable industry in the region.

SELECTION OF A CONSULTANT

The selection of a Consultant, or consulting team, will be based on the following criteria:

- Consultant's qualifications and experience in conducting similar projects;
- Depth and organization of the proposal;
- References for the Consultant; and,
- Proposed remuneration.

The Consultant and his or her sub-consultants may be required to engage in an interview prior to a decision on award. The RDN reserves the right to reject any or all proposals.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

Copies of the following references will be made available to the Consultant as needed:

- RDN Regional Growth Strategy (2003) (currently under review);
- RDN Official Community Plans for Electoral Areas A, C, E, F, G, and H;
- RDN Land Use and Subdivision Bylaws (No. 500 and No. 1285); and,
- RDN Map, including the Sensitive Ecosystems Environmental Atlas, cadastral map data, orthophotos, zoning maps, etc.

LIAISON WITH CONSULTANT

The RDN's Manager of Current Planning (Development Services Division) will be directly responsible for project leadership. Administrative support from planning staff will be provided by the lead project contact, Lainya Rowett (Planner). The AAP Steering Committee will also liaise with the Consultant and review progress. Consultants should address all questions to Dale Lindsay, Manager of Current Planning (Phone: 250-390-6510, Fax: 250-390-7511).

PROJECT COMPLETION DATE

The project must be started by July 4th, 2011, with a draft of the AAP presented by April 27th, 2012 and the final report presented by June 1st, 2012. The objective of the RDN is to have the AAP completed by June 8th, 2012. The Consultant should provide a more detailed schedule of deliverables that reflects these milestones.

BUDGET & PAYMENT TO CONSULTANT

Payment to the Consultant will be upon receipt of written invoices from the Consultant for the completed services, with up to seventy-five percent to be paid upon the acceptance of the draft Plan, and the remainder to be paid upon acceptance of the final Plan report to the RDN. Invoices shall contain a written statement of account showing calculations and the fees and expenses claimed.

SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Proposals must include the following information:

- List of the qualifications of the Consultant / consulting team;
- Detailed break-down of costs by project component;
- Description of the Consultant's experience in conducting similar projects, including a list of clients and applicable references with contact information;
- Outline of project methodology including details of expected participation and contributions from the RDN or others, and identification of software to be used and the format of respective deliverables;
- Draft project schedule of key milestones and deliverables including a process of public consultation; and,
- Summary of consulting team members, if applicable, outlining their roles and responsibilities in the project.

Please submit proposals marked as "Agricultural Area Plan" by 4:30 p.m. Monday, June 13, 2011 to:

**Regional District of Nanaimo
Attention: Dale Lindsay, Manager of Current Planning
6300 Hammond Bay Road
Nanaimo, BC V9T 6N2
Phone: 250-390-6510 Fax: 250-390-7511**