

Report

Date June 19, 2024
Subject April 23, 2024 Agricultural Advisory Committee

File:

PURPOSE

To receive for information the draft minutes from the April 23, 2024 Agricultural Advisory Committee and consider the Committee's recommended actions.

BACKGROUND

At the April 9, 2024, Committee of the Whole meeting, staff presented Council with a report and presentation on the Richards Creek Ecological Process prepared by the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region Research Institute (Vancouver Island University). At this meeting, Council directed staff to forward the draft report to the Agricultural Advisory Committee and Environmental Advisory Committee for comment and review.

DISCUSSION

Richards Creek Ecological Accounting Process

The Senior Environmental Specialist gave the Committee a summary and presentation on the draft Ecological Accounting Process report for Richards Creek that the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region Research Institute (Vancouver Island University) prepared. Staff answered questions and captured feedback on the report during the Committee's discussions and are bringing those recommendations forward to Council for consideration. Council's endorsement of the recommendations will result in them being passed on to the project team for consideration and incorporation as far as possible.

Ministry of Agriculture & Food Agricultural Land Use Inventories (ALUI)

Following a presentation from the Ministry of Agriculture staff, the Committee recognized the benefits of having up-to-date information and data on agricultural land use in North Cowichan. Accordingly, the committee resolved to advise Council to advocate to the Provincial Ministry of Agriculture and Food for an ALUI to be carried out as soon as possible in the Cowichan Valley, noting that ALUIs have previously been completed in other areas of the province.

It is always beneficial to have updated data on land use matters. Staff support encouraging the Ministry to create an ALUI for our region since any such updates would help inform future agricultural policy development. It is unknown how likely this request will be accepted, nor what the timeframe would be.

OPTIONS

1. **(Recommended Option)** THAT Council
 1. Receives the minutes of the April 23, 2024 Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting;
 2. Directs the mayor to write a letter to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food requesting an Agricultural Land Use Inventory to be carried out in the North Cowichan region as soon as possible.
 3. Accepts the following feedback provided by the Agricultural Advisory Committee on the Richards Creek Ecological Accounting Process report:
 - a. Consider individual site-specific circumstances, such as soil types, in the methodology.
 - b. Utilize the methods prescribed in the Riparian Areas Protection Regulation to determine appropriate setbacks.
 - c. Request that outreach efforts specifically outline ecosystem services.
 - Staff will draft a letter to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food for the mayor's signature.
 - Comments on Richards Creek Ecological Accounting Process will be forwarded to the project team.
2. THAT Council receives the minutes of the April 23, 2024 Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting.
 - No further actions by Council or staff.

IMPLICATIONS

Sending the requested letter has no significant implications other than the benefits of a favourable response. The project team will consider and incorporate comments on the Richards Creek Ecological Accounting Process as appropriate.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council

1. Receives the minutes of the April 23, 2024 Agricultural Advisory Committee meeting;
2. Directs the mayor to write a letter to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food requesting an Agricultural Land Use Inventory to be carried out in the North Cowichan region as soon as possible.
3. Accepts the following feedback provided by the Agricultural Advisory Committee on the Richards Creek Ecological Accounting Process report to:
 - a. Consider individual site-specific circumstances, such as soil types, in the methodology.
 - b. Utilize the methods prescribed in the Riparian Areas Protection Regulation to determine appropriate setbacks.
 - c. Request that outreach efforts specifically outline ecosystem services.

Report prepared by:



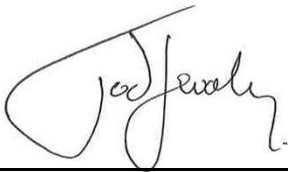
Chris Osborne
Manager, Planning

Report reviewed by:



Amanda Young
Director, Planning and Building

Approved to be forwarded to Council:



Ted Swabey
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment:

- (1) AgAC April 23, 2024, Draft Minutes