



THE HOLM TEAM *Agriculture Economics Journalism Trade Int'l Cooperation*

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October 11, 2013

To Delta Mayor Lois E. Jackson and Council

Councillor Sylvia Bishop
Councillor Robert Campbell
Councillor Scott Hamilton
Councillor George Hawksworth
Councillor Jeannie Kanakis
Councillor Ian L. Paton

Re: Southlands Re-Zoning, RCS Amendment and OCP Amendment Bylaws

Dear Mayor and Council:

On October 23, 2009, almost four years ago to the day, I wrote Delta Council concerning the agricultural importance of the Southlands. In that letter (page 7 of the attached), I noted that protection of farmland is a policy priority in Metro Vancouver, and the fact that protection of farmland not in the ALR rests squarely on the shoulders of local government. I reviewed studies by Professional Agrologists that demonstrated the agricultural capability of the Southlands is excellent, for both soil-based and non-soil based agriculture. I concluded that the protection of the Southlands for farming was an opportunity for Delta Council to set a precedent throughout the Lower Mainland. And birthed a new idea.

My recommendation was to create an apprenticeship cooperative for young farmers. Its members would be BC universities, who would then send students to do a post-graduate apprenticeship at the cooperative farm. Further information concerning this proposal is presented in [Apprenticeship Cooperative Discussion Paper](http://www.theholmteam.ca/Apprenticeship.Cooperative.pdf).¹ (Live link for convenience, also presented as attachment to this letter.)

I am saddened to see not only has the opportunity to create a much needed, university-aligned apprenticeship space for new young farmers been ignored, but that Council is giving serious consideration to a proposal that will squander the public interest in this high capability farmland.

Prompted by the concerns of community members and professionals, I have reviewed the extensive documentation on the Corporation of Delta's website and, on that basis, am writing to urge Council to TABLE THIS MATTER for 9 months and give me the mandate to engage BC universities in a dialogue to see if an education coop is in the cards. By this letter, I commit to doing this pro bono.

¹ <http://www.theholmteam.ca/Apprenticeship.Cooperative.pdf>

WHAT IS WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE

The developer's glossy "farmville-for-realville" brochures paint a pretty picture. The material presented on the website suggests otherwise. To recap, some of the faults raised by others include:

- As BCMAFF notes, the applicant alleges housing will be put on the land with the worst agricultural capability. This is not supported by the agricultural capability mapping. Tantamount to saying: *we'll just use the worst of the best.*
- As BCMAFF points out, the report *Delta Community-Based Farm District – Planning Southlands as a Regionally Significant Model for Metro Vancouver* (CBFD) does not capture costs associated with drainage and irrigation. The report notes the applicant is offering \$9 million in an "amenity contribution" to cover such costs, yet Delta's Associated Engineering report estimates drainage and irrigation costs of close to \$13 million. Will taxpayers be levied the remaining \$4 million? Will the source be potable municipal water? This has unexplored implications both for irrigation and for the community.
- As noted by BCMAFF Agrologists in their submission to Council of May 2013, Council cannot rely on the economic analysis presented in the proposal:

"...the report utilized the Ministry of Agriculture's Planning for Profit Enterprise Budgets to calculate the potential revenue for most of the proposed crop/livestock types. These budgets are in 2002 or 2008 dollars and were intended for individual farm planning at farms of a certain scale, using conventional production methods and a mix of wholesale and direct farm marketing. The report did not adjust the dollar amounts for inflation, or adjust for organic production costs (including higher labour costs) or lower organic yields, or for product slippage at 100% direct farm marketing. If these adjustments had occurred, the report's conclusions about the economic viability of these crop/livestock types would have been significantly different."

- Again as was pointed out by BCMAFF, the costs for hedgerow planting and maintenance (which would be incurred by the Corporation of Delta in Phase 2 and 3 of the plan) have been significantly underestimated:

"...The report utilized a 2003 California publication and came up with planting costs (for a 4 to 5 meter wide hedgerow) at \$2.36/linear foot, and operating costs of \$0.52/linear foot. Costs incurred by the Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust in planting a 4 metre wide hedgerow in 2012 were \$43.14/linear foot. The Trust's hedgerow maintenance costs are also significantly higher than the reported \$0.52/linear foot."

- BCMAFF is correct in their observation that the plan to put restrictive covenants on the land to restrict farming practices is shortsighted. Once farmers are limited in their practices by urbanites' views of what agriculture should look and smell like, they are crippled in their choices of commodities, which in turns impacts their chances of actually making a living from their farming activities.

- Equally, putting trails and urban access roads through agricultural land will negatively impact farmers, by compounding trespass problems and hampering farm equipment movement.
- As noted by BCMAFF, the public will not necessarily appreciate and engage in agriculture by living adjacent to it, particularly small-scale, organic plots. Indeed, the opposite outcome is more likely.

"...Farm operations of all types and sizes will almost certainly utilize machinery and manure, generating a variety of annoyances for non-farm neighbours including odours and noise. In addition, many farms do not welcome the public, for theft, vandalism, and/or biosecurity reasons. Ministry of Agriculture staff have years of experience with the agricultural/urban edge and their research has found that most people like seeing agriculture from a distance. Both farmers and their non-farm neighbors favour a consistent and clear delineation of activities. The Ministry's "Guide to Edge Planning" recommends establishing vegetated buffers and residential building setbacks to ensure compatibility over time, particularly as individual homeowners and farm businesses change."

In March of this year, Mayor Jackson was quoted in the Delta Optimist as saying "...We cannot afford to lose any more prime agricultural land..." What better example of prime farmland than the former Spetifore Farm? Council has an important opportunity in this application to make a difference....

To guide you in this decision, Council must seek the objective and rational advice of Agrologists and experienced members of Delta's farming community. And to fully engage the public interest in this decision, Council must consider it in the context of other, more significant, public policy options...

WE NEED TO GROW FARMERS TOO

The farm apprenticeship co-operative is a good idea. I commit to donating my time over the next nine to convene discussions with BC's university community to see if there is a collective will to create a farm apprenticeship co-op. This new EDUCATION COOPERATIVE would then buy the land from the developer and direct it instead to serving the needs of young farmers, the community and our collective, sustainable future. In perpetuity.

I urge Council to give this land a chance.... I urge Council to TABLE this application until September 1, 2014 and give me a mandate to see what really can be done here. Pro Bono. Nine months to birth a better solution...

Yours sincerely,



Wendy Holm, P.Ag.

Cc: Southlands the Facts
Save Our Southlands



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Discussion Paper:

An Apprenticeship Cooperative for the former Spetifore Farm

November 2, 2009

1. Background

The former Spetifore Farm - also referred to as The Southlands - is a 537-acre tract of prime farmland in South Delta. It was removed from the Agricultural Land Reserve by a committee of provincial cabinet ministers almost 30 years ago, but remains in Metro Vancouver's Green Zone and is zoned Agricultural in Delta's OCP.

A proposal by Century Holdings seeks to construct 1,900 homes on a third of the property, allocate another third to amenities, and donate a third back to the community for agricultural purposes.

Under normal farm management practices (liming, drainage, irrigation), 99% of the site is high-capability, Class 1 to 3 farmland that will support a wide variety of crops (see attached soils maps showing unimproved and improved ratings).

The goal for policymakers is to find the right fit that puts this good farmland to high public-benefit use.

The idea of an apprenticeship cooperative arose as a result of a request I received by a group of Tsawwassen residents to provide Delta Council with my professional opinion concerning the agricultural capability of the land.

This discussion document is intended to provide some context to that vision with the intent of sparking further discussion. There are of course other questions. If the concept of an apprenticeship cooperative has resonance with educators, stakeholders and the community, the next step is to convene the dialogue to begin to address them in a more structured way.

2. Why an apprenticeship program?

Farmers are getting older. Young people have a hard time entering farming. Buying land is out of reach and the cost to lease land is steadily climbing (more than \$500 per acre in Richmond, for example) as residential owners use leases and the tax shelters they provide as a way to recoup mortgage costs. Apprenticeship programs to provide young farmers with the skills to succeed are

common in European countries. UBC, Kwantlen, SFU, University of the Fraser Valley, BCIT, Capilano, UNBC and others that offer programs in sustainable food production have lots of interested students with very little or no farm experience. And no real opportunity to get that experience. Consumers want safe, nutritious, sustainably produced local food and would support young apprenticing farmers who can provide that. The rich farmlands of the former Spetifore farm offer a perfect place where these ideas can converge.

3. Why a cooperative structure?

It makes sense to share this resource across the platform of institutions that offer applied agriculture programs. Each institution on its own (Kwantlen, UBC) can only reasonably graduate 10-12 interns per year. This will not offset the huge number of farmers retiring in the next 10 years. By working cooperatively, sharing curriculum, educators can increase the number of graduates without a huge increase in costs.

Cooperative ownership is the most enriching way to facilitate that. And for the same reasons, it makes sense to extend that structure to the students in the apprenticeship program. There is a strong tradition of such programs in Europe. Agriculture in Emilia Romagna, built on the cooperative model, is amongst the most prosperous in Europe, and the integration of agriculture with the urban economy and society provides a model to draw upon. In ER, the largest economic players are cooperatives because it has been long recognized that the "zest" added by a co-operative structure creates a solid business case for its adoption as an organizational form.

That "zest" is a compelling reason to introduce it in an apprenticeship program that is — by its nature — based on group learning, sharing of ideas, and mutual support for personal growth and leadership training.

BC agriculture, with its great diversity of products, relatively small and diverse farms by Canadian standards, soil and climatic regions like those of the lower mainland and Vancouver Island adjacent to large urban markets for farm products, all provide conditions lending themselves to an apprenticeship cooperative.

4. What might an apprenticeship cooperative look like?

Owned by consortia of local educational institutions — with perhaps other partners such as land trust, the province, the regional district — each college or university would hold a number of shares that they would allocate to their post-grad students enrolled in a 1 to 2 year apprenticeship program. The cooperative would be comprised of students from all of the participating institutions.

5. What might it offer to students?

A unique space where students who have finished their program and want to farm are assigned a plot of land, a farm "mentor" (an experienced person in the farm community whom they could call for advice), are given access to support from the institutional partners, and spend one to two years running their own show — working in cooperation with peers to gain experience in cropping,

livestock, farm machinery operation and repair, fencing, minor electrical, plumbing and carpentry, budgeting and bookkeeping, and the rest of the skill set needed to farm.

Plot size would be commensurate with farming interest. For example, someone wanting to go into peri-urban, small scale, intensive vegetable production might apprentice on 2-3 acres, someone wishing to raise rotational pasture-grazed poultry and eggs might need 5-8 acres, someone who wanted to produce beef or milk might apprentice on 10 - 15 acres.¹ After successful completion of their apprenticeship, students would be given assistance to start farming (e.g. an interest free loan to purchase farmland).

6. What might it offer to institutions?

A unique, competitive edge in agricultural program offerings. A living incubator. A place that could be shared and enriched by all who are preparing students to enter farming as a profession.

7. What might it offer to the community?

Fresh, healthy, nutritious, organic products sold in on-site farmers markets by the young farmers who produced them. A healthy, productive use of this entire prime farmland parcel.

8. How many apprentices are we talking about?

At this point very hypothetical, but perhaps 50 to 60? Of the 537 acres, I am advised that approximately 100 are forested - 75 in the SW corner and a bit more in the SE corner. Assuming another 37 acres for infrastructure, barns, machinery sheds, educational buildings, farm markets, roadways and the like, this would leave 400 acres for the apprentices to farm. Assuming the below plot categories and an even distribution of students across the categories, the project could accommodate 48 students at the upper limit and 60 at the lower limit of the hypothetical plot sizes.

- Large Plots of 12 to 15 acres for rotational pasture grazed organic dairy, beef, etc.
- Medium plots of 8 to 10 acres for rotational pasture grazed organic poultry, eggs, hogs etc.
- Small plots of 3-5 acres for vegetables, potatoes, berry crops, flowers, herbs, medicinals, etc.
- Micro-plots of 1- 2 acres for raised bed or soil bound urban agriculture, beeyards, etc.

9. Does this mean the land should also be returned to the ALR?

Not necessarily. Cooperative ownership of the nature envisaged here would provide ample protection. Further it must be run according to the needs of the training cooperative, not ALC rules that apply to individual landholders. The cooperative management would for example want to be particularly careful to ensure that apprenticeship plots are zoned to ensure commodities with

¹ The only types of farm apprenticeship this program could not support would be capital-intensive indoor production systems such as greenhouses, mushrooms etc. For students wishing to apprenticeship in these areas, arrangements might be made to expand opportunities with existing enterprises in the FV.

differing characteristics and needs are appropriately matched to site and soil conditions. It would for example seem to make sense to zone farm markets, community engagement (e.g. organic community gardens , community extension) and raised-bed or in-ground urban agriculture (including flower production) at the perimeter, while placing livestock nearer to the centre.

10. If the land is so productive, how come no one is farming it?

Actually there is some farming activity on a portion of the land, but basically the land is being held for development. Fortunately, the economic options for this parcel of farmland have improved since George Spetifore had to haul his peas, bean, corn and potatoes thru the Massey Tunnel to Fraser Valley processors. Today, fresh, locally produced farm products sold direct to area residents through farmers' markets offers a new economic option. An organic-only mandate will assure area residents of a continuous supply of fresh, nutritious food produced in a way that respects the soils, teaches new skills to the young farmer-apprentices, and gives back to the community and the environment.

This is precisely the reason why economics ("can't afford to farm it") is not a reason to withdraw land from the ALR. Economics change. Sustainable communities hold farmland resources in perpetuity for the benefit of the community. There could not be a better example of this than the former Spetifore Farm.

11. What will this all cost?

If the above has resonance with local educational institutions, a preliminary study would be needed to estimate costs to acquire the property (cash, land swaps, density bonuses, tax deductions), equip it for the apprenticeship program and operate it on an ongoing basis. This would then include necessary improvements such as drainage tiles and ditch deepening/cleaning where needed, basic machinery and farm buildings, an education centre, ALR-approved portable houses (basically a trailer) for apprenticeship students, etc..

12. Bells and Whistles

Lots more could be said here. But that is up to an extended dialogue. Some intriguing bells and whistles that the Apprenticeship Cooperative could easily support include:

- A local "Young Farmers of Canada" Farmers' Institute
- Ongoing leadership training for the apprentices (offer regular seminars by prominent farm leaders such as Harold Steves, Art Bomke, Dave Sands)
- A local 4-H club for children from nearby residential community.
- Year round farmers' market
- Community extension (e.g. Saturday morning workshops, seed exchanges, dialogues on how to grow food in yards/balconies/laneways)
- Community gardens (organic, for use by area residents)
- Community kitchen
- Small-scale value-added enterprises (e.g. cheese making)

13. Next Steps:

Identify an entity to convene a meeting of BC educational institutions to dialogue the above, gauge interest, flesh out ideas and, if positive, identify funding opportunities.. Given that the land is in Metro Vancouver's Green Zone, it may be appropriate for Metro Vancouver to open this dialogue.

If there is sufficient interest, I am prepared as an Agrologist to volunteer my time to help further this discussion.

ATTACHMENTS

October 23, 2009 Op-Ed, Vancouver Sun

October 24, 2009 Holm letter to Delta Mayor and Council

October 24, 2009 slides presented to Tsawwassen Area planning Committee Open House (Holm)

ISSUES & IDEAS

Tsawwassen land should remain agricultural

Even in the guise of 'new urbanism,' development is not the best use for this fertile patch

BY WENDY HOLM

Long after George sold it, the 536.7-acre Spettifore farm fronting Tsawwassen's Boundary Bay (now known as "The Southlands") is still one of the largest parcels of prime agricultural land in the Lower Mainland. And it's still making headlines.

If developer Century Holdings has its way, one-third will become housing, one-third will be allocated to "amenities" and one third offered up for "agricultural purposes."

Community concern over the fate of the farmland has been simmering for close to 30 years. The pot will likely boil over this Saturday as the Tsawwassen area planning committee meets with residents to discuss the future of the Southlands at the South Delta Recreation Centre, 1720 - 56th Street, Tsawwassen from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

When the gentle residents of Tsawwassen first came together in the late 1980s to review a development on this land, they mixed it loud and clear. Today's Century proposal is of equal scale (1,900 homes) but, thanks to a Miami-based design team, has been dressed in the savvy clothes of "new urbanism": replete with leafy green pathways, farmers' markets, community gardens, sports fields and an education centre.

It looks like a pretty wonderful community to live in. Problem is, it's just not good public policy. This 537.5-acre block of farmland has productive soils, an extremely favourable climate and sits on the doorstep of a huge (and hugely interested) urban market.

Cultivated for farming by Samuel Spettifore in the Dirty '30s, the first crop was potatoes. They began milking cows a few years later and it continued as a dairy farm until 1965, when they switched to cash crops. When a potato processing plant seemed like a good



The Southlands in Tsawwassen has been farmed since the 1930s and can still be productive as farmland.

way to add value for Delta farmers, George built one. But when he later went to Victoria for support to help the plant compete with deep-pocketed rivals to the east, the Social Credit government said: "You have assets — go sell some farmland." An exclusion application, supported by Delta council, followed. The Land Commission turned it down flat, but within 10 months, cabinet had reversed it.

Although no longer in the ALR, the property remains in Metro Vancouver's Green Zone and is designated agricultural in Delta's Official Community Plan.

In an attempt to persuade local government to remove these designations, developers have attacked the quality of the farmland, alleging that poor soils, salinity and drainage problems make it uneconomic to farm.

As every soils agrologist who has looked at this land has attested, 99 per cent of the soils have unimproved ratings of Class 1-5. Under normal farm management practices (drainage, irrigation and liming), the Class 4 and 5 soils improve to Class 3. This is good farmland.

This week, thought leaders from around the world gathered in Vancouver to discuss Resilient Cities and the quest for more livable, sustainable communities. The goal is not to build communities that give a livable experience to a handful of people able to afford homes in a tony, upscale, "neighbourhood-by-the-sea."

Nor to pay out the expectations of developers, who, after all, purchased it with farm zoning in place and should not feel aggrieved if their attempts to remove it from our farmland inventory fails.

The goal for policymakers is to find the right fit that puts this good farmland to high public-benefit use.

Farmers are getting older. Young people have a hard time entering farming. Consumers want safe, nutritious, sustainably produced local food and are eager to support local farmers who can provide that. UBC, Kwantlen, Simon Fraser, University of the Fraser Valley and others offering programs in sustainable food production have lots of interested students with very little or no farm experience. And little opportunity to get that experience.

Here's a thought: Why not encourage B.C.'s universities and colleges to come together — with support from local, provincial and federal government — to acquire and run the Southlands as an "apprenticeship cooperative," a space where people who want to farm are given a plot of land, assigned a farm "mentor" (someone they could call for advice in the farm community of Delta), have access to support from institutional partners, and spend two to three years running their own show — working in cooperation with peers to gain experience in cropping, livestock, farm machinery operation and repair, fencing, minor electrical, plumbing and carpentry skills, budgeting and bookkeeping, and the rest of the skill set needed to farm.

An organic-only mandate would assure area residents of a continuous supply of fresh, nutritious food produced in a way that respects the soils, the farmers, the community and the environment.

Century Holdings has put a pretty picture on the table. Problem is, it pales in comparison to what the picture could look like if institutions, governments and residents pulled together.

The Southlands decision — whatever it is — will set a precedent for Green Zone agricultural properties throughout the Lower Mainland.

Wendy Holm is an award-winning agrologist, farm columnist and speaker.



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October 23, 2009

To Delta Mayor and Council

Mayor Lois E. Jackson
Councillor Robert Campbell
Councillor Scott Hamilton
Councillor George Hawksworth
Councillor Heather King
Councillor Bruce McDonald
Councillor Anne Peterson

Dear Mayor and Council;

RE: Agricultural Importance of The Southlands

I was asked by the Save our Southlands Committee to provide an opinion to Delta Council concerning the agricultural importance of the 536.7 acre parcel of Tsawwassen farmland now referred to as The Southlands.

I agreed to this request because, as an Agrologist, I believe the decision Council makes on the proposed development of these lands is an important one that will resonate throughout Lower Mainland municipalities. I am pleased to have an opportunity to put information before councilors that will better equip them to participate meaningfully in this important decision.

I am an Agrologist with an M.Sc. in Agricultural Economics from UBC and 36 years of experience (BC and Ottawa). I am a recipient of the 2009 Rosemary Davis Award (Farm Credit Canada), the Distinguished Alumni Centenary Award (University of British Columbia, 2008), the Agrologist of the Year Award (BC Institute of Agrologists, 2000), two Queens Medals (1993, 2002) and six national journalism awards (Canadian Farm Writers Federation). I am a Senior Associate with the International Centre for Sustainable Cities and a Director of both Vancity Credit Union and Vancity Community Foundation.

The agricultural land base of the Lower Mainland/Fraser Valley is disappearing at an alarming rate. Parcel by parcel, ALR exclusion and municipal re-zoning applications are eating into our supply of productive farmland

As municipalities in the Metro Vancouver R.D. transition from our present Livable Region Strategy to our emerging vision for 2040, it is important that all proposals to remove agricultural designations from farmland – ALR or Green Zone - be dealt with in a concise, consistent and transparent manner. This analysis is intended to clarify and facilitate Council's decision with respect to the Southlands proposal by setting forth the key issues that must be considered.

Is the protection of farmland for food production a policy priority?

Delta's Official Community Plan, the Tsawwassen Area Plan, Metro's Livable Region Strategy, the BC Ministry of Agriculture - all contain clear policy statements calling for the protection and preservation of local foodlands.

From Smart Growth BC's Position Statement on productive farmland (in this case, in the ALR but this applies equally to lands in the Green Zone):

A productive, secure and economically viable agricultural land base in British Columbia requires that:

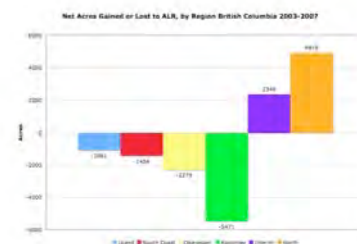
1. There is no net loss of Agricultural Land Reserve land to urban encroachment or other non-farm uses;
2. Agriculture is recognized as the priority use in the ALR;
3. Urban growth occurs through intensification, in-fill and re-development of existing urban lands rather than through expansion onto agricultural lands;
4. Regional Growth Strategies are developed that direct growth into existing urban areas and away from the Agricultural Land Reserve;
5. The Agricultural Land Reserve designation reduces in perpetuity the economic pressure of urban land speculation on agriculture and thus provides farmers with the certainty that is needed for continued investment and prosperity;
6. The Agricultural Land Reserve boundary receives special planning treatment to reduce urban/rural conflict while maximizing the potential of the agricultural lands adjacent to the interface;
7. Communities formally recognize agricultural working lands as an economic engine rather than a land bank to provide for further urban expansion; and
8. Local citizens and community groups recognize the fundamental importance of agriculture in their community and actively advocate for its long-term protection.

Whose responsibility is it to protect the public interest in good farmland?

In the case of farmland within the ALR, the buck stops at the Agricultural Land Commission. In the 36 years since the ALR was created, there has been ample time for fine-tuning.

Prior to the fall of 2002, and when not over-ruled by Cabinet (e.g. Spetifore lands, 6 Mile Ranch) and/or golf courses, the Agricultural Land Commission and its staff have done a good job defending food production as the highest and best use of farmland in this province.

On Nov 1, 2002 the provincial Commission was replaced by six regional panels. Since that time, 10,215 acres of prime farmland have been withdrawn from Vancouver Island, Fraser Valley, the Kootenays and the Okanagan and 7,267 acres has been added in the North and the Interior.



Does the fact that the land is not in the ALR make a difference?

Often, but not always, farmland has both ALR and Green Zone designations. When farmland is in the Green Zone but not the ALR, the responsibility for farmland protection falls squarely on the shoulders of local government and Metro Vancouver R.D.

The former Spetifore Lands - originally in the ALR but released by cabinet - are the largest block of non-ALR farmland in the Lower Mainland.

What is the agricultural capability of the Spetifore lands?

Over the past 30 years, reports and submissions of BC Agrologists with professional expertise in soil fertility, soil physics and hydrology, crop production and land use have consistently confirmed the 537.5 acre former Spetifore farm is highly productive farmland blessed with an extremely favourable climate (longest frost free days in Canada; shared with the Niagara Peninsula) and is capable of producing a wide range of crops. Moreover, it sits on the doorstep of a huge (and hugely interested) urban market.

Husdon Report

The Husdon study which accompanied Spetifore's 1980 exclusion application reports an unimproved capability rating of 1 to 5 for 99 percent of the land. The major limitations noted are poor natural drainage on the low-lying soils and droughtiness on the sandy soils. Irrigation and drainage - standard farming practices - will improve the Class 4 and 5 soils to Class 3 or better.

The acreages reported by Husdon for each of the various soil capability classes were consistent with those reported by Herb Luttmerding in the BC Ministry of Agriculture's Fraser Valley Soil Survey (Bomke). And later (2008) by Masselink Environmental Design. All studies confirm the land is good quality farmland ideally suited for the production of food.

Expert Findings on Specific Soil Issues

1. Soil Fertility

The two soil fertility problems noted in the studies are salinity and acidity. Drainage and liming are common management practices in the Fraser Valley to address these problems. (Bomke, deVries. 1981)

2. Drainage and Soil Structure Problems

The Husdon Report notes poor natural drainage on the low-lying soils as the major limiting factor in the viability of the Spetifore lands. Bomke explains that improved drainage of the Spetifore Farm will correct this and "will lead to better soil tilth and reduced salinity problems."

In an April 1979 critique of the Husdon Report, Brian Carson, Soils Specialist with BC Ministry of Agriculture, notes:

A serious flaw in the whole report that undermines its credibility is that the major limitation for over 80% of the property is one of wetness and minor salinity problems. The Kitter, Spetifore, Delta and Ladner (soil) series are among the best soils in the Delta region, when adequately under drained and provide regional outlets. ...all soils rated as class 4 and 5 due to wetness and salinity would be improved to at least Class 3 with proper drainage.

3. Soil Variability

Actually a benefit – allows for the production of wide range of crops including early vegetable crops.

Carson's critique contains the following statement:

"The report's repeated reference to the great difficulty in managing "15 soil types and 23 soil complexities" lacks practical knowledge of BC soil conditions. This type of argument might be used on the prairies where very large machinery and large field sizes are common and crops limited. However the vast majority of BC soils are complexes of different soil series and in most cases farmers have easily adapted o these situations. The majority of the sol complexes mentioned... would require no exceptional farm management in order to provide uniform and at least average yields for most crops grown in the Delta area."

4. Irrigation

Bomke and deVries found that under good management regimes the fine-textured lowland part of the farm would require little or no supplemental irrigation. Areas of sandy soils will require supplemental irrigation.

Bomke and deVries conclude:

The main limitation of the lowland part of the farm to high productivity is poor natural drainage and associated salinity. However this limitation has been largely eliminated by the installation of sub-surface drainage system and pumped ditches. Maintenance of this system in conjunction with good soil management would result in the elimination of limitations that result from excess water and salinity. Soil management measures such as liming would remove limitations resulting from soil acidity. A positive attribute is the excellent climate of the area. Most of the area is prime agricultural land. Therefore the zoning change decision must be based on criteria other than the quality of the land. (1981).

On February 10, 1989, Bomke and deVries provided the following assertion of the agricultural capability of the Southland property.

This is to certify that in terms of soils and microclimate, and corresponding agricultural production potential, most of the land in the subject area is at least as good as or better than agricultural land in W. Delta in genera. In fact, our field observations in 1981 showed that a significant portion of the Spetifore land had already been improved with under-drains, pumps and ditches.

Masselink Report – 2008

In an agricultural capability evaluation of the Southlands property, Agrologist Derek Masselink and Robert Maxwell, as did Bomke and deVries some 25 years earlier, confirm all previous soils analysis of the property:

"On April 10 and 1, 2008, soils specialist Robert Maxwell P.Ag. assisted by agricultural planner Derek Masselink P.Ag. conducted a field survey I order to review the site's existing soil mapping. Much of the property was traversed and a total of 61 soil pits were dug. Results suggested that the existing soil mapping was reasonably accurate and very informative. As a result of the survey only a few slight soil boundary adjustments and some soil description changes within soil map units were made"

“Currently, the overall unimproved capability of Southlands’ soils has been rated between Class 3-5, which is considered to be low to moderate. However, with reasonable management inputs such as drainage, irrigation and the addition of organic matter, these overall agricultural capability ratings can be significantly improved to Class 3 to 1 (moderate to very high). This suggests that with careful management and the judicious application of certain management inputs, the property could have substantial areas of high potential agricultural capability soils.”

Below are the Unimproved (on the left) and Improved (on the right) soil maps.



As have other Agrologists, who have looked at this land, Masselink concludes “the property has significant agricultural potential.”

What kind of crops are these soils capable of producing (Masselink, 2009)

Summer and fall field vegetables e.g.

beans	peas	potatoes	pumpkins	squash	spinach	lettuce	cucumber
carrots	beets	chard	flowers	s. herbs	brassicas	specialty Asian vegetables	

Seed production (annual flowers, vegetables, herbs)

Grains - summer/fall

Winter Vegetables

leeks	kale	hardy lettuce	w.brassicas
rhubarb			

Winter herbs e.g.:

oregano	sage	thyme	fennel	rosemary	valarian	parsley
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Some berries and treefruits

Forage crops and winter wheat

Agroforestry

forest mushrooms	floral botanicals	berries	cedar products
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non-soil-based intensive agericulture

Greenhouses	plant propagation	mushrooms	poultry	swine
cheese making	small scale dairy	composting/	manure	veg processing

Livestock

dairy cattle	chicken	turkeys	ducks	geese	ostrich	rheas
beef cattle	pigs	horses	sheep	goats	rabbits	

It's not about hauling spuds thru the Massey Tunnel anymore...

Economics is not a reason for withdrawal of land from the ALR for a very good reason: economics change. Its not about losing vegetable packing houses and processing infrastructure for the peas, beans and corn farmers need to successfully crop high quality table potatoes (the early whites, summer reds and fall Burbanks Delta once grew). It's not about hauling heavy farm inputs (pesticides, fertilizers) into Tsawwassen and hauling bulky, heavy product out.



The economic future of the former Spetifore farm is today tied to the market demand for local, organic, fresh, nutritious and community accessible food that includes a relationship with the farmer that grew it

The returns to small scale, local, sustainable, organic farming are reportedly robust: the figure net \$30,000 an acre is quite frequently cited, studies are now underway to document this.

It's just not about hauling spuds thru the Massey Tunnel anymore.

The Role of Local Government

The goal is not to build communities that give a livable experience to a handful of people able to afford homes in a tony, upscale, "neighbourhood-by-the-sea." Nor to pay out the expectations of developers, who, after all, purchased it with farm zoning in place and should not feel aggrieved if their attempts to remove it from our farmland inventory fails.

The goal for policymakers is to find the right fit that puts this good farmland to high public-benefit use.

The Future of Southlands

Obviously, this land has many productive options for the production of food for the community. Here is one example of a very high public policy use for the lands:

PROBLEM: Farmers are getting older. Young people have a hard time entering farming. Consumers want safe, nutritious, sustainably produced local food and are eager to support local farmers who can provide that. UBC, Kwantlen, Simon Fraser, University of the Fraser Valley, Capilano University and others offering programs in sustainable food production and urban agriculture have lots of interested students with very little or no farm experience. And little opportunity to get that experience.

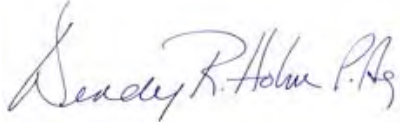
SOLUTION: Why not encourage B.C.'s universities and colleges to come together -- with support from local, provincial and federal government -- to acquire and run the Southlands as an "apprenticeship cooperative:" a space where people who want to farm are given a plot of land, assigned a farm "mentor" (someone they could call for advice in the farm community of Delta), have access to support from institutional partners, and spend two to three years running their own show -- working in cooperation with peers to gain experience in cropping, livestock, farm machinery operation and repair, fencing, minor electrical, plumbing and carpentry skills, budgeting and bookkeeping, and the rest of the skill set needed to farm -- be it in our cities or our countryside. An organic-only mandate would assure area residents of a continuous supply of fresh, nutritious food produced in a way that respects the soils, the farmers, the community and the environment.

Century Holdings has put a pretty picture on the table. But it pales in comparison to what the picture could look like if institutions, governments and residents pull together and exercise leadership.

Rejecting the Century Holding's proposal is a leadership decision. And that decision is in your hands. One way or another, it will set a precedent for Green Zone agricultural properties throughout the Lower Mainland.

As an Agrologist, I urge you to support a more connected and sustainable future for the former Spetifore Farm that will generate real social capital for the community.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Wendy R. Holm P.Ag." The signature is fluid and cursive, with the initials "P.Ag." written in a slightly different style than the first name.

Wendy Holm, P.Ag.

cc: Tsawwassen Area Plan Committee (TAPC)

Cllr. Bruce McDonald, Chair –
Cllr. Heather King, Vice-Chair –
Fernand Beaulac
Neil Crellin
Andrew Jackson
Helen Kettle
Barbara Lindner Coates
Dorothy MacDonald
Carla Marshall
Joe Muego
Ian Robertson
Laura Dixon, School Trustee

Staff Liaison

Thomas Leathem, Director - Community Planning & Development
Barry Konkin, Planner 2 - Community Planning & Development

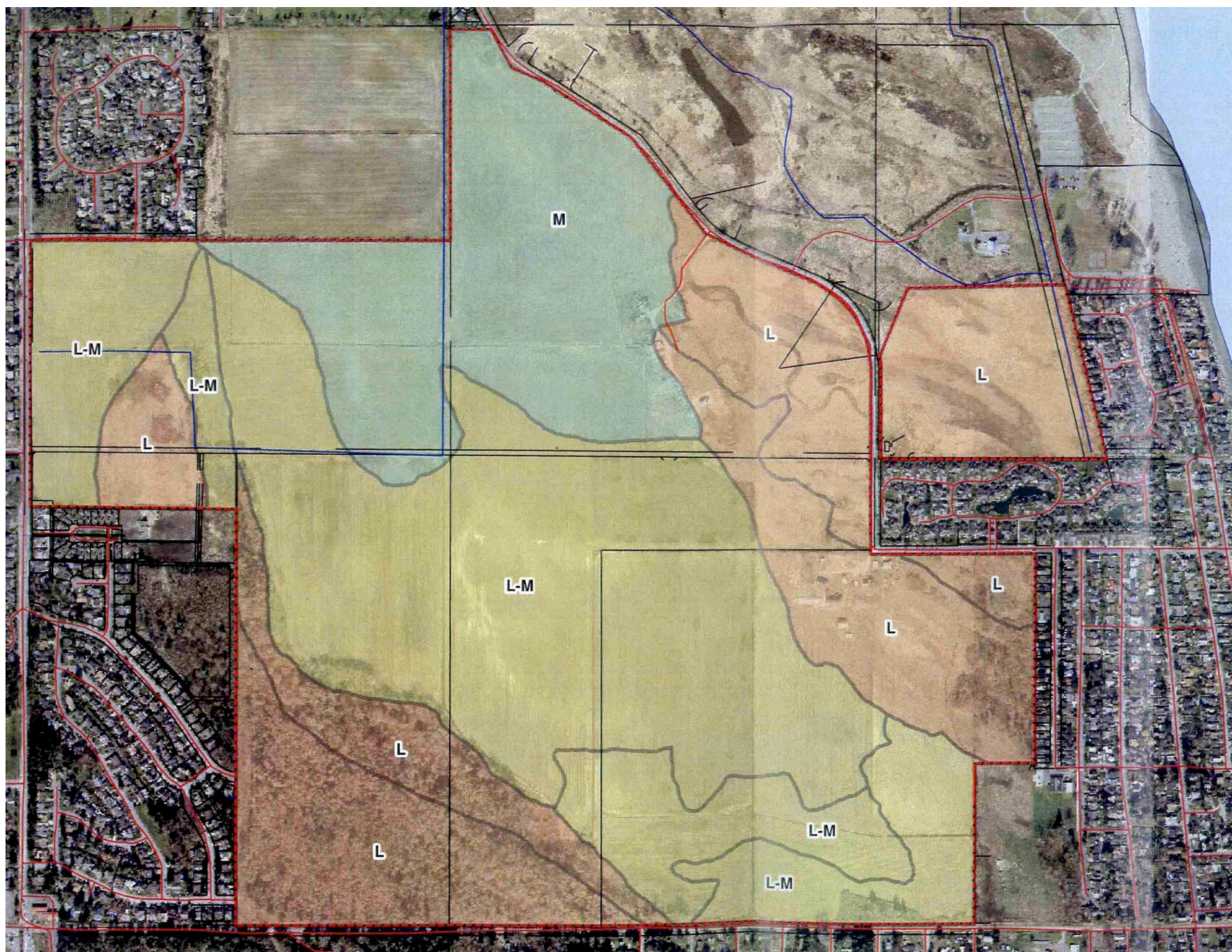
Reference Material:

Documents

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3. 1980. ALC rejection of exclusion application.
4. March 1981. Bomke &, deVries. Letter to GVRD on ORP amendment application
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6. November 1988. Bomke. Presentation to Delta Council on rezoning of Spetifore Lands
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15. History of the Agricultural Land Reserve. Legislative Library of British Columbia. August 2006
16. Metro Vancouver Future of the Region Sustainability Dialogues. Agriculture. Nov 19, 2008. Wosk Centre. Issues Summary Notes.
17. Creating Healthy Communities. Smart Growth BC. 2009
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22. Southlands Preliminary Agronomy Study – April 2008 Masselink Environmental Design



Map 4
Generalized Unimproved
Agriculture Capability
Ratings

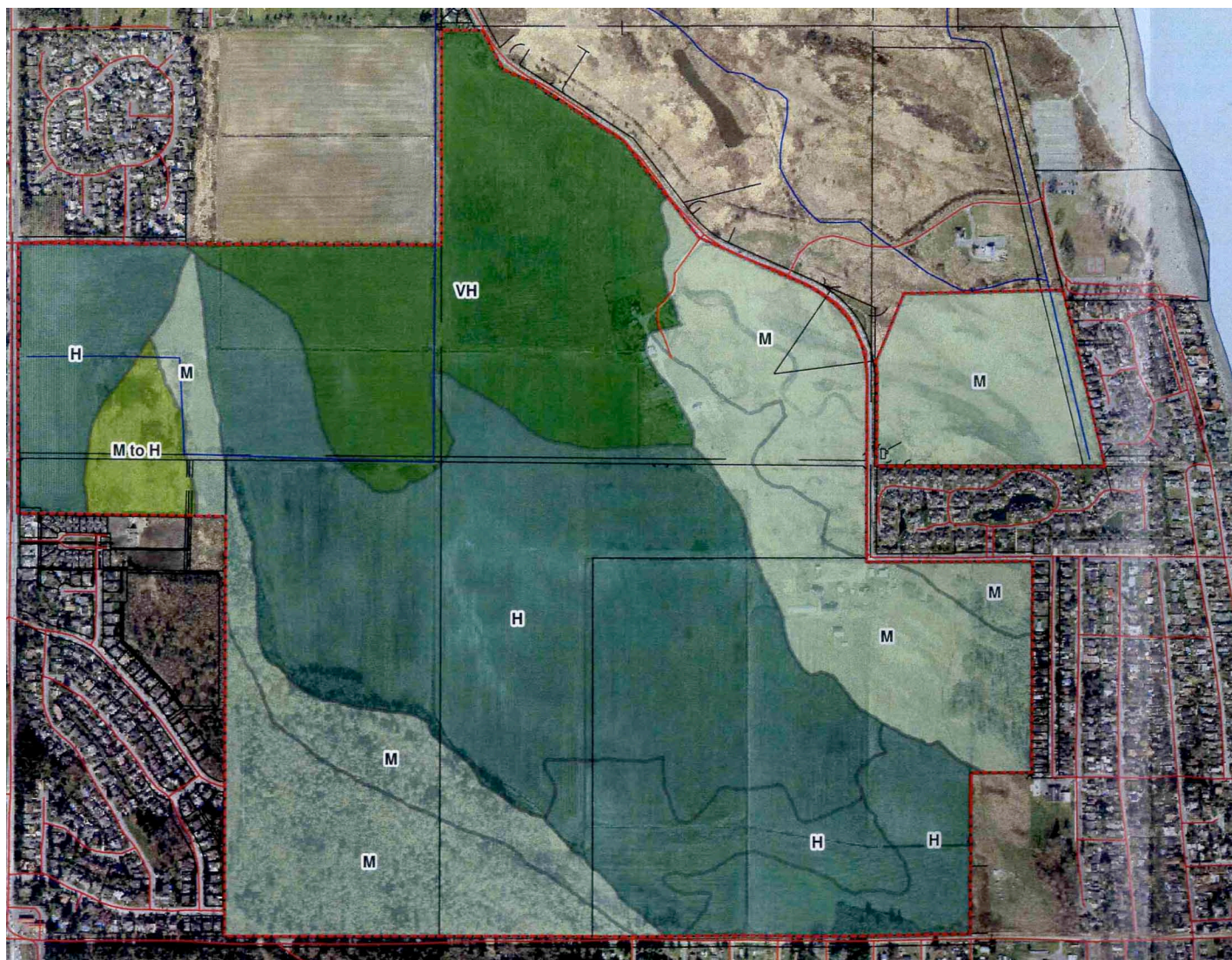
- Study Boundary
- Road
- River/Canal
- Cadastral Lines
- General Units
- Ocean

Scale: 1:7,000

Metres
 0 50 100 200 300

Legend

Rating	Description	Unimproved Ag Capability Clas
M	Moderate	3 and 4
L-M	Low to Moderate	4 and 5
L	Low	5 and 4



Map 6
Generalized Improved
Agriculture Capability
Ratings

- Study Boundary
- Road
- River/Canal
- Cadastral Lines
- General Units
- Ocean



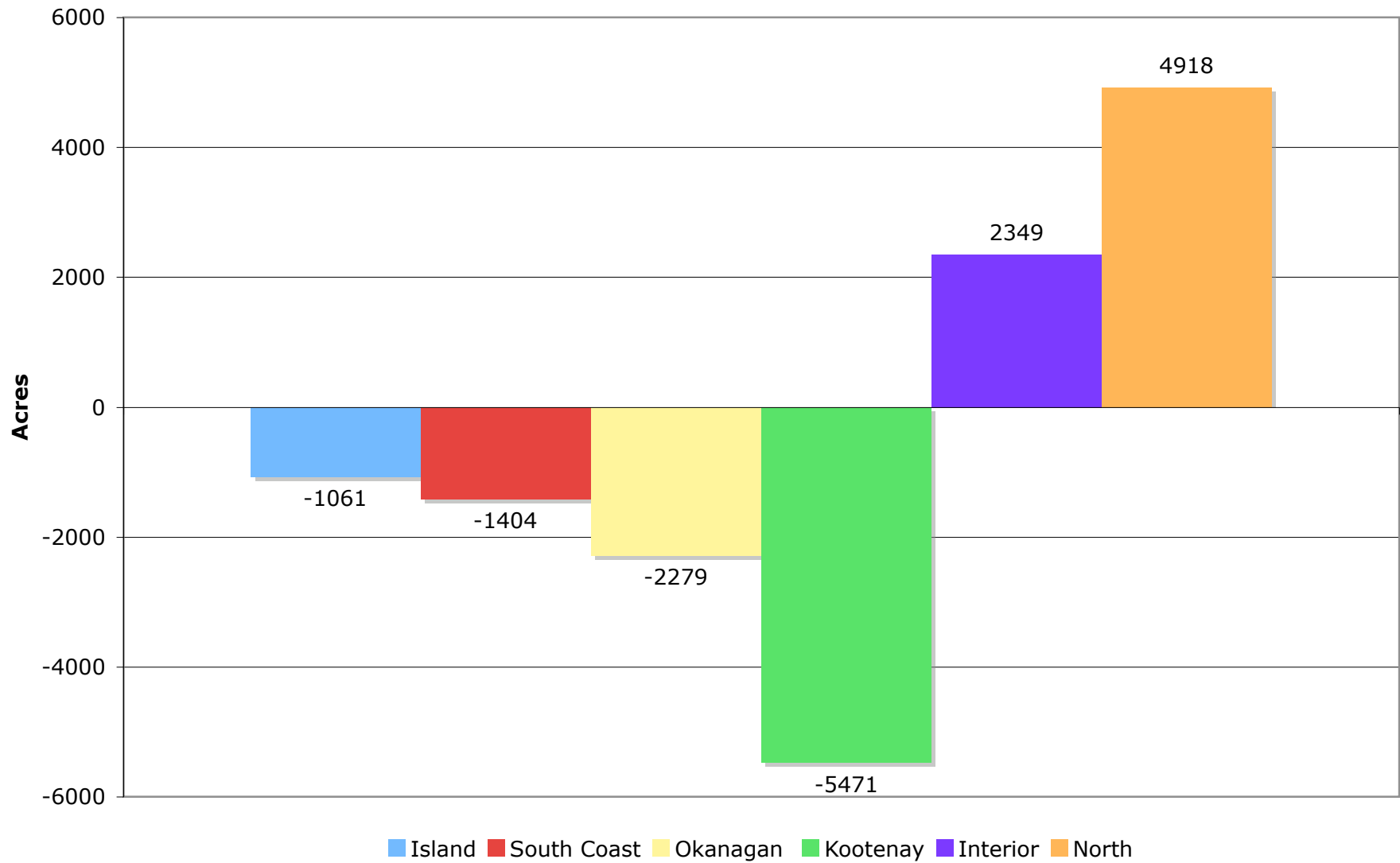
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0 50 100 200 300 Metres

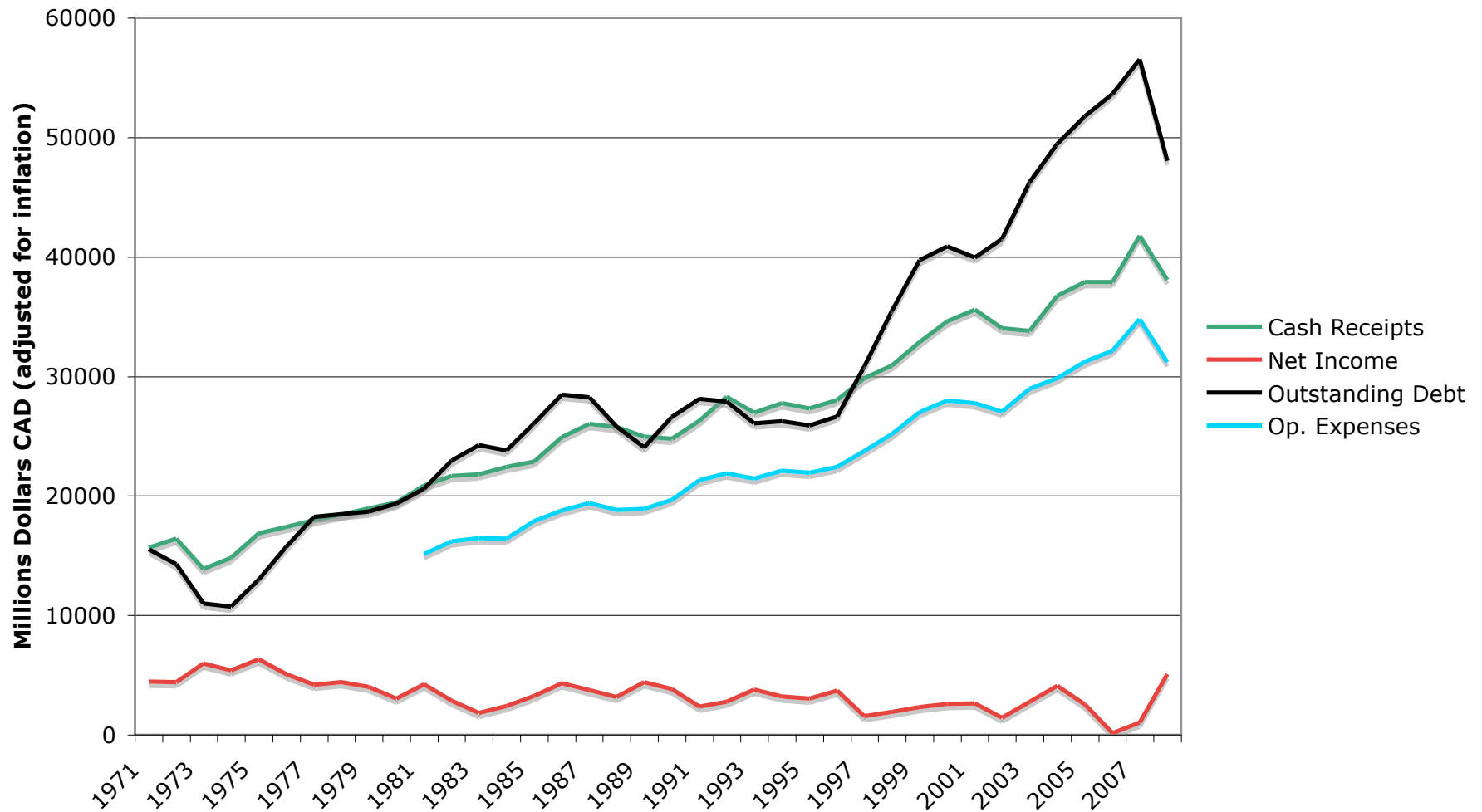
Legend

Rating	Description	Improved Pot. Ag. Capability Class
VH	Very High	1 and 2
H	High	2 and 3 with some 1
M-H	Moderate to High	3 with some 2
M	Moderate	3 and 4

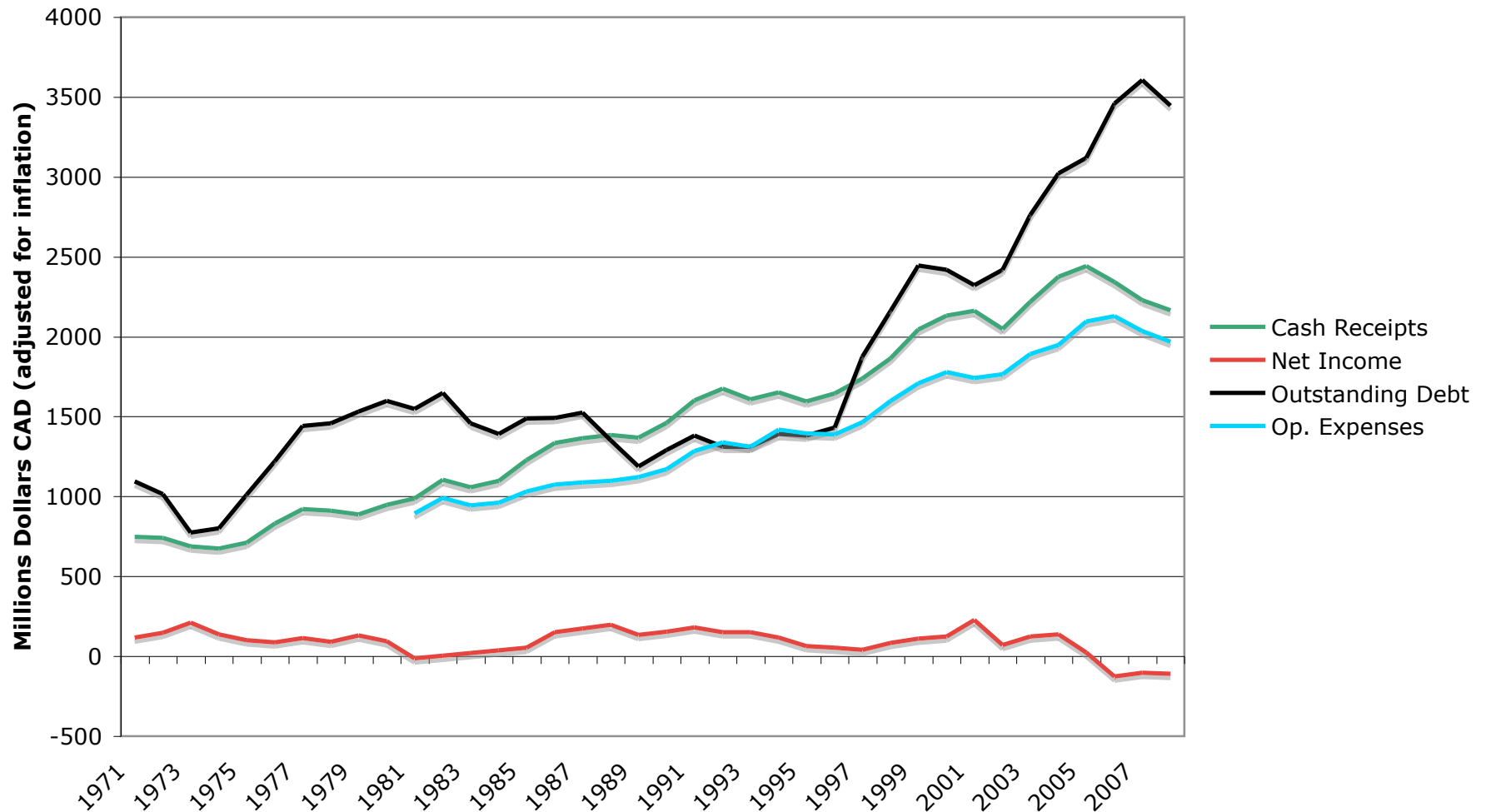
Net Acres Gained or Lost to ALR, by Region British Columbia 2003-2007



CANADA
FARM RECEIPTS, EXPENSES, NET INCOME AND DEBT, 1971 - 2008
 (millions of dollars, adjusted for inflation by FPPI)



BRITISH COLUMBIA
FARM RECEIPTS, EXPENSES, NET INCOME AND DEBT, 1971 - 2008
 (millions of dollars, adjusted for inflation by FPPI)



Source: Statistics Canada

Table 002-0009: Income of farm operators from farming operations, annual;

Table 002-0008: Farm debt outstanding, annual;

Table 002-0022 Farm product price index (FPPI) annual