

## Provincial Agricultural Land Commission — Staff Report

Planning Issue: 46408

Tony Pellett – 2011-04-11

**Issue:** Coquitlam's Partington Creek has been flooding some farmland along Cedar Drive north of De Boville Slough. Partington Creek flows down from Burke Mountain then along the foot of the mountain to De Boville Slough. Historically there was another stream channel, the remnant of which can be seen to the southeast, but the upper part of that stream has been reclaimed for blueberry production. It is not clear whether that was originally the main stream or just an overflow course. When Cedar Drive was constructed just below the foot of the mountain ± 100 years ago, the creek was confined above it, leaving no room for natural stream movement—thus since then any flooding has always crossed the road and randomly inundated land on the lower side. Since 1974, the lower side is entirely in the ALR; the upper side is entirely outside the ALR; at no point is the creek itself within the ALR.

When Burke Mountain was originally logged, the volume of water in the creek increased, the overflow and the land across Cedar Drive flooded, but the land was not being intensively farmed at that time. There is again some clearing of land on Burke Mountain even though the Partington Creek watershed is still entirely rural. Coquitlam recognizes its responsibility to deal with the flooding problem before it proceeds with planned urban development within the Partington Creek watershed. The City is committed to accommodating urban runoff in the urban area, but doing so will not entirely eliminate the existing flooding issue. Because Partington Creek is a salmon stream (and even if that were not so, because of the local topography) the only effective way to rectify the problem involves moving the road slightly into the farmland—not as an entirely new road in the ALR, but as a right-of-way shift slightly into the ALR. Coquitlam has not yet raised the issue that farm expansion is one of the reasons that the creek no longer has its natural overflow course, but I believe it is an issue which could be taken into account in relation to any loss of farmland resulting from the road reconstruction.

**My advice to Coquitlam has been that they should submit a fully documented “transportation corridor” application complete with full details and proposing mitigation and compensation measures. City staff are reluctant to do so until they have some assurance on a planning basis that the Commission recognizes the problem and will not arbitrarily refuse any reasonable solution out of hand.**

A Google Earth map of the affected area is attached. Note that despite the large area in blueberry production, most of the land immediately adjoining Cedar Drive is not in any intensive form of agriculture.

**My recommendation is that the panel respond to the planning issue by advising the City of Coquitlam that when the Commission receives an application for relocation of Cedar Drive into the ALR, it will expect**

- 1. that the loss of farmland will be as small as possible, recognizing that relocation is intended primarily to resolve a flooding issue adversely affecting the ALR and only incidentally to increase traffic capacity,**
- 2. that the project design will be directed to resolving the existing flooding issue, with any future runoff from urban development being accommodated without direct or indirect impact to the ALR, and**
- 3. that throughout the project, from the design phase to completion, the City will work closely with the Commission, the farm community and any other ALR landowners.**

*KA Pellett*

