

 Agricultural Land Commission	FILL PLACEMENT PROPOSALS FOR SOIL BOUND AGRICULTURE – FILL PLACEMENT PLANS AND TECHNICAL DOCUMENTATION	POLICY P-15 June 2026
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This policy is intended to provide information for applicants or agents submitting proposals to place fill for soil-bound agricultural purposes as part of a soil or fill use application within the BC Agricultural Land Reserve ("ALR"). This policy aims to ensure that fill placement applications include sufficient information for the Commission to effectively evaluate them, and that proposals incorporate best management practices for fill placement on ALR land and its reclamation to agricultural use.

The agricultural capability of the land is a very important consideration when determining if a fill placement activity is consistent with the Commission's purposes and priorities of preserving agricultural land for farming and ensuring fill placement use will not negatively impact future agricultural production. Those submitting proposals related to fill placement should therefore be aware that failure to submit a fill placement plan with an agricultural capability assessment may adversely affect the application.

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1.0 Fill Placement Plans and Agricultural Capability Assessments

The Commission must give priority to protecting and enhancing the size, integrity, and continuity of the ALR when evaluating proposals (Agricultural Land Commission Act ("ALCA") s. 6). Placing fill on ALR land can significantly impact its long-term agricultural productivity. Improper or excessive fill placement can negatively impact soil structure, reduce agricultural capability, alter drainage patterns, and create off-site hydrological effects. Proposals must demonstrate that such risks have been avoided or effectively mitigated.

As such, proposals to place fill for soil-bound agriculture should include a detailed plan showing how the fill placement will impact the agricultural potential of the land.

In considering fill placement proposals - in particular those where large volumes of fill would be placed over a contiguous area (often referred to as bulk or widespread filling), or where filling would occur across an entire parcel - the Commission gives weight to plans that are developed by qualified registered professionals ("QRP") with demonstrated expertise in soil management, reclamation, and agricultural capability assessments (as outlined in [ALC Policy P-10: Criteria for Agricultural Capability Assessments](#) ("Policy P-10")).

Fill placement plans should be based upon a baseline agricultural capability assessment and include prescriptions for soil salvage, fill placement and reclamation to ensure that the proposed agricultural end land use will be achieved.

Fill placement to address agricultural limitations (e.g., excess soil moisture) should be considered a measure of last resort. Proposals must demonstrate that reasonable alternatives, including but not limited to surface and subsurface drainage improvements, land shaping, or other soil management practices, have been evaluated and are not feasible or sufficient to achieve the intended agricultural outcome.

Fill Placement Plans should include the following:

- a) A detailed soil survey (supported by soil test pits and photos) and agricultural capability assessment of the land(s) to be impacted by the fill placement activity, completed to the standards set in [Policy P-10](#). The agricultural capability analysis should include discussion of all existing resource information (e.g. government or publicly available soil survey and agricultural capability mapping) in the context of the soil survey. The agricultural capability assessment must clearly identify pre-fill and post-fill capability classifications, including subclass limitations.

- b) An inventory and description of the existing land use within the proposed fill placement area and surrounding lands.
- c) Identification of the height of the water table where fill is proposed to address drainage, excess moisture, or wetness limitations.
- d) The volume, area, and depth of fill being proposed. These values should be consistent throughout the proposal materials and should be reflected in the cross sections and justified by the agricultural capability analysis.
- e) A detailed assessment of reasonable alternatives to fill placement, including surface drainage, subsurface drainage (tile), and land shaping. This assessment must explain why such alternatives are not feasible, effective, or sufficient given the site conditions, and why fill placement is necessary to achieve the proposed agricultural end land use.
- f) A detailed explanation of site preparation, operating, and reclamation activities consistent with Appendix A: Best Management Practices for Fill Placement Activities Occurring in the Agricultural Land Reserve. This should include, but is not limited to:
 - i. A topsoil and subsoil management plan addressing stripping, storage and replacement of soil;
 - ii. Fill certification procedures and site control measures to ensure that only site-appropriate fill material is accepted;
 - iii. Erosion control measures for the entire site during all phases, to ensure protection of topsoil stockpiles;
 - iv. A weed management plan;
 - v. A plan for crop establishment;
 - vi. Detailed drainage plans for the site to ensure optimum surface and subsurface drainage conditions;
 - vii. Final proposed agricultural capability and end land use.

Fill placement plans that do not meet the standards listed above may be deemed incomplete or may be given reduced weight in the Commission's decision-making.

2.0 Other Technical Documentation

Documentation that provides visual and technical information about site characteristics, the proposed fill placement operation, and the proposed end land use is critical for the Commission to effectively evaluate proposals for fill placement for soil-bound agriculture.

In addition to the fill placement plan and agricultural capability assessment, proposals should include the following technical documentation:

- a) **Site Plan:** This is a visual representation of the property and proposed fill placement activities. It must show a clear and accurate measurement of proposed areas to be impacted by any part of the fill activity and volumes of fill placement. The site plan should also show:
 - i. Compass direction;
 - ii. Proposed area under application with all existing land uses, adjacent land uses, buildings/structures and main physical features (e.g., water courses);
 - iii. Parcel number/address, and;
 - iv. Any existing or proposed buildings or infrastructure (e.g., fences, ditches or drains).
- b) **Cross Sections:** These are plans showing original undisturbed grades, current grades (if different from undisturbed grades), final grades in relation to adjacent natural grades, volume of fill to be placed, and proposed slope gradient (%) drawn at an appropriate scale and prepared by a Professional Engineer or Registered BC Land Surveyor. The plans should take into account the configuration of the proposed fill placement area and provide an appropriate number of cross sections (east-west, north-south) to give an accurate overview of the entire proposed fill placement area and its location on the property.

See Appendix B: Example Cross Sections

3.0 Related Policy

[ALC Policy P-10: Criteria for Agricultural Capability Assessments](#)

[ALC Policy P-11: Expert Opinions in Agricultural Land Commission Matters](#)

[ALC Policy P-12: Soil and Fill Publications and Reference Materials](#)

[ALC Policy L-23: Placement of Fill for Soil Bound Agricultural Activities](#)

4.0 Glossary

The following key definitions are relevant to this policy:

"agricultural capability assessment" means an assessment conducted as per the Land Capability Classification for Agriculture in BC (Kink, 1983) to determine, confirm, or reassess the agricultural capability classification rating of agricultural land.

"fill" means any material brought onto ALR land other than materials exempted by the ALCA regulations (ALCA s. 1).

"levelling" means reshaping the soil surface within a field or parcel of land to eliminate high and low areas and resulting in a uniform field level (that is, cutting high spots and filling in low spots).

"Notice of Intent" means a notice of intent submitted to the Commission's chief executive officer ("CEO") under s. 20.3(1)(c)(ii) of the ALCA, in the form and manner that the CEO requires.

"placement of fill" or "fill placement" means to deposit, place, store, or stockpile directly or indirectly, fill on any land in the ALR, where that fill did not previously exist.

"Qualified Registered Professional" or **"QRP"** means a person registered with a professional association including the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of BC, the Corporation of the Province of British Columbia Land Surveyors, and the British Columbia Institute of Agrologists.

"soil" includes the entire mantle of unconsolidated material above bedrock other than minerals as defined in the Mineral Tenure Act (ALCA s. 1).

"soil amendment" means compost, fertilizer, manure, mulch and soil conditioners.

"soil bound agriculture" means production of agricultural crops in soil (does not include nursery crops produced in containers).

"soil conditioner" means organic or inorganic matter that has beneficial effects on the biological, chemical, or physical properties of soil.

"soil or fill use" means the removal of soil from, or placement of fill on, agricultural land, and does not include a farm use or residential use.

"Soil or Fill Use Application" means an application for permission made for the removal of soil or placement of fill.

"stockpile" means a man-made accumulation of soil, fill, or other organic materials held in reserve for future use, distribution, or removal.

Appendix A

Best Management Practices for Fill Placement Activities Occurring in the Agricultural Land Reserve

This appendix is intended to provide best management practices for fill placement in the ALR. This information should be used to assist the development, operation, and reclamation of fill placement operations, in particular where widespread or bulk filling is occurring over a contiguous area. This information should also be used to inform the fill placement plan that is created to support an ALC application for fill placement in the ALR, as per ALC Policies L-23 and P-14.

This document provides recommendations on:

- Soil management techniques
- Recontouring and subgrade preparation
- Soil replacement (topsoil, subsoil if applicable)
- Seedbed preparation and surface rehabilitation
- Drainage and water management
- Weed management

SOIL MANAGEMENT

Prior to fill placement, all existing topsoil must be salvaged under the direction of the qualified registered professional ("QRP") for use during reclamation. Additional salvaging of upper subsoil may be necessary where topsoil is shallow. The recommendations for soil handling procedures are as follows:

- On-site supervision by a QRP with expertise in soils reclamation during the soil salvaging, stockpiling, storage, and soil replacement process.
- Soil should not be salvaged, moved, stockpiled or replaced during conditions of adverse soil moisture content including when the soil is saturated, frozen or powdery dry.
- Topsoil should be salvaged from all the following areas:
 - The proposed fill placement area;
 - The access road;
 - Stockpile areas and laydown areas
- Topsoil should be salvaged and stored separately with separation between piles being at least 2 m, or by a physical barrier approved by the QRP.

- Topsoil salvage depth should be determined prior to earthworks as part of the agricultural capability assessment (following Policy P-10).
- Topsoil should be salvaged using an excavator with a cleanup bucket.
- Materials should be transported to an appropriately designated storage area (for stockpiling) that will not be disturbed by fill placement activities, to avoid double-handling materials.
- The area required for stockpile storage should be based on estimates of initial soil salvage volumes.
- Stockpile locations should be sited where they will not be disturbed or subject to erosion and will not impede site drainage.
- A uniform layer of bark, mulch, or sawdust should be laid down in the storage area prior to stockpile placement.
- Stockpiled soil should be windrowed.
- Stockpiles should be set back from watercourses in accordance with applicable regulations.
- Drainage from, onto, and around the stockpiles should be controlled by ditches, drains, or intercepts.
- Stockpiled soil must not be removed from the property without written permission from the ALC.
- Stockpiles should be limited in height to 3 m . Higher piles must not exceed 3H:1V slope (horizontal to vertical) unless otherwise approved by the ALC.
- Stockpiles should be seeded and established with an appropriate plant cover (i.e. non-weedy species), or a suitable erosion control measure must be applied to protect the stockpiles from wind or water erosion.

FILL QUALITY

The fill should have the following characteristics:

- Be of mineral origin only (organic soils are not recommended as fill material but can be used as a top-dress);
- Have a coarse fragment content less than 5% with no boulders >25 cm in the top 1 metre of the soil profile; and
- Be no coarser than loamy sand and no finer than silt loam.
- The following are prohibited materials in the ALR and must not be used as fill:
 - Concrete or demolition waste, including masonry rubble, concrete, cement, rebar, drywall, and wood waste;

- Asphalt;
- Glass;
- Synthetic polymer;
- Treated wood; and
- Unchipped lumber.

FILL PLACEMENT

General Recommendations

- To assist the machine operator in placing fill to the approved fill placement depth, flagging stakes should be placed throughout the fill placement area.
- Fill materials should be end-dumped and leveled with low ground pressure equipment such as tracked bulldozers.
- Vehicles and equipment should be restricted to designated roads or routes.
- Random repeated running of equipment over leveled areas must be minimized whenever possible.
- Upon completion of backfilling the fill subgrade should be chisel plowed or ripped with a subsoiler to a minimum depth of 60 cm in two directions at right angles.

Topsoil Placement

- Once the fill materials have been regraded, available topsoil should be used to provide suitable growing media for crop or vegetation establishment. Topsoils and subsoils must be replaced in the reverse order from which they were removed.
- Soil compaction levels should be similar to or better than adjacent undisturbed land.
- If necessary, soil amendments (i.e., fertilizer or suitable organic matter) should be top dressed over the fill placement area. This organic matter may be added in the form of animal or poultry manure or as a cereal or forage cover crop and turned into the top 15 cm of soil.

SEEDBED PREPARATION/SURFACE REHABILITATION

If the fill placement area is not immediately returned to agricultural use upon completion, a seedbed must be prepared, and the area(s) seeded with an appropriate vegetation species, using cover crops when necessary to reduce erosion on slopes, and fertilized.

Seed preparation and surface rehabilitation should take place as follows:

- Till the seed bed just prior to seeding to minimize the time in which the soil surface will be exposed to water and wind erosion.
- Tillage should be completed only under specific soil moisture conditions (not powdery dry or excessively wet).
- The following equipment is suitable depending on the specific soil conditions:
 - Tillage equipment - plows and discs that lift and invert the soil;
 - Cultivators and harrows that lift and stir without inverting the soil; and,
- Soil tillage should be carried out across (perpendicular to) slopes to reduce the runoff velocity and the potential for rill formation.
- The rate of application, type of seed mix, and fertilizer are to be determined by the QRP.
- Cereal cover crops such as spring barley, oats, winter wheat or fall rye germinate and develop rapidly. If seeded in mid to late summer, they provide cover by fall but will not generally set seed and will not take over the stand the following year if turned over before seed set.
- Fertilizer (nutrients) should be applied based on soil testing results.
- Use supplementary irrigation to establish and maintain a complete cover.

DRAINAGE/WATER MANAGEMENT

Drainage and water management must be considered for the site and a plan should be prepared by an appropriate QRP to ensure that water is appropriately managed on and offsite. The following drainage and erosion control measures should be considered when designing the plan; however, this will vary depending on specific site conditions:

- Interceptor drains and grassed water runs to slow the velocity of runoff water and prevent erosion.
- Placement of toe slope drains to collect and remove seepage from the subsoil.
- Use of temporary diversion drainage on new areas of topsoil and seeded areas.
- Sedimentation impoundments to protect water quality in downstream areas. The size and location of impoundments are determined by runoff volumes, erosion rates, and required retention times.
- Installation of a soil drainage system (subsurface drainage as needed). This will depend on the end use and agricultural capability.
- Installation of a layer of porous drainage material to reduce the amount of water in the soil.

- The fill placement area should be monitored by the QRP following re-seeding to determine whether sufficient drainage has been provided. If poorly drained areas persist, it may be necessary to install additional drainage structures.

WEED MANAGEMENT

- Weed control must be practiced at all times in conjunction with erosion and sediment control.
- Weeds must be controlled before seed set. The most common practices include:
 - Reseeding with an appropriate vegetative mix that can out-compete weeds; and,
 - Mechanical methods such as tillage, mowing, mulching or use geotextile sheeting; and chemical methods such as the use of herbicides.
- All newly reclaimed areas should be reseeded as soon as possible after soil replacement.

Appendix B

Example Cross Sections

