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Agricultural Land Commission
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Agricultural Land Commission



I am pleased to present the 2004/05 – 2006/07 Service Plan of the Agricultural Land Commission, an agency reporting to me but operating under its own enabling legislation, the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*. The Commission is charged with preserving agricultural land and encouraging and enabling farm businesses throughout British Columbia.

It accomplishes these goals by managing the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) in partnership with local governments, public agencies and other stakeholders. A protected land base provides opportunities for the expansion of agriculture and other compatible activities, to help achieve economic growth throughout the province.

The Commission's Service Plan goals support the government's goals of "a strong and vibrant provincial economy" and "safe, healthy communities and a sustainable environment."

The Commission has worked hard over the past year to bring its decision-making closer to those affected by its decisions. Commissioners have met with hundreds of applicants on their lands, and with many of the local governments who have joint responsibility for land use regulation of the ALR. It has worked closely with many of its stakeholders, including some First Nations that are at the agreement-in-principle stage of treaty negotiations. The Commission has delegated some decision-making for oil and gas development in the ALR to the Oil and Gas Commission, while ensuring the agricultural land base continues to be protected.

Growth in BC's agriculture sector has outperformed growth in many other economic sectors. A secure land base provided by the ALR is critical to the continuing growth of this sector. The supply of safe, high quality, BC farm products and economic opportunities in our rural and urban fringe areas will be assured through the ALR. BC's reputation for quality food exports from this land base will continue to rise.

Government supports the growth of agriculture, its jobs and its contributions towards sustainable communities and economies. The work of the Agricultural Land Commission and its partners in land use planning is fundamental to the achievement of a strong and vibrant agricultural economy in BC.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "George Abbott".

Honourable George Abbott
Minister of Sustainable Resource Management
February 4, 2004

Accountability Statement

The 2004/05 – 2006/07 Agricultural Land Commission Service Plan was prepared under my direction in accordance with the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act*. I am accountable for the basis on which the plan has been prepared. All material fiscal assumptions and policy decisions as of January 30, 2004 have been considered in preparing the plan and I am accountable for achieving the specific objectives in the plan.



Honourable George Abbott
Minister of Sustainable Resource Management

February 4, 2004

Commission Overview

The Agricultural Land Commission is the provincial agency responsible for administering the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), a provincial land use zone in favour of agriculture. The Commission's purpose is to preserve agricultural land and encourage and enable farm businesses throughout British Columbia. Its purpose, role and responsibilities are contained in the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* (ALCA). Government revised the legislation governing the Commission in 2002, and at that time re-affirmed its responsibilities to manage the ALR in the public interest.

The Act sets out processes for land use approvals including the inclusion or removal of land from the ALR, non-farm uses and subdivisions. The Act is supported by the Agricultural Land Reserve Use, Subdivision and Procedure Regulation, which details procedures for applications and defines permitted land uses and land subdivisions within the ALR. The new regulations have broadened uses permitted in the Reserve, providing for more diversified and value-added agricultural activities and expanded economic opportunities. These and other changes have resulted in a substantial decrease in regulatory requirements for land in the ALR.

In addition to deciding land use applications under the ALCA, the Commission reviews plans and bylaws of local governments and other agencies to ensure that the ALR is properly identified and that local policies are supportive of the ALR and farmland preservation. The Commission works with many stakeholders including individuals, farm organizations, local governments and First Nations to support farm development and to remove unnecessary obstacles to farm expansion in their areas.

The business of the Commission is carried out through three functional areas¹:

Strategic Planning and Corporate Policy

The Commission develops policy and participates in the agricultural planning and policy initiatives of other ministries, agencies and local governments;

Regional Operations

The Commission reviews and decides applications under the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*, and enforces compliance with the Act and regulations;

Administration and Information Systems

This function includes administrative support and records management. The Commission maintains an application database and ALR maps for the province.

The Commission's functions and services are intended to meet the objectives and deliver the outcomes described in this plan, and to support the government's strategic direction.

¹ The Commission operates under a single sub-vote of MSRM as specified in the *Estimates*.

Strategic Priorities

The Commission has improved its methods of doing business in response to government priorities. Current strategic priorities include:

- Building certainty and stability for the Agricultural Land Reserve through continuing focus on protecting agricultural land;
- Maintaining the regional panel structure of the Commission so that decisions for the ALR are informed and regionally responsive;
- Continuing to assess and consider community needs, in balance with the provincial interest in preserving agricultural land; and
- Working with local governments, ministries and agencies, and First Nations when requested, to:
 - plan for agriculture;
 - encourage and enable successful farm businesses; and
 - increase economic opportunities in rural and urban fringe areas.

Plans for the next three years

The Commission and its staff have worked hard to implement changes to its program and services over the past two years. All of the strategic shifts directed by government through Core Review will have been implemented by the start of this service plan.

Over the next three years the Commission will be working towards the following outcomes and results:

- Agricultural land will be preserved — the net area of the ALR should remain substantially unchanged although some additions and deletions will be made;
- Economic opportunities for agriculture and compatible activities in the ALR are likely to expand — the province expects continuing growth in farm cash receipts to exceed the average over the past five years;
- The operation of the Commission based on a six panel structure will continue to improve regional responsiveness;
- The Commission will eliminate additional red-tape — to date it has reduced the number of regulatory requirements by 67 per cent with anticipated further reductions;
- The Commission will work towards a results-based process for the review of local government plans and bylaws, to achieve consistency with the ALR;
- The performance management system will be enhanced by collecting new application related information, tracking trends and reporting results;
- The Commission will continue to meet with applicants on site before making decisions and will meet with local governments and stakeholders to build partnerships and seek more positive outcomes;

- The Commission did not meet last year's target for delegating some decision-making to local governments — it has revised its target to focus on those local governments that have expressed interest in delegation;
- Under a delegation agreement with one public authority — the Oil and Gas Commission — the Agricultural Land Commission will monitor and review results according to criteria outlined in the delegation agreement;
- Each of its staff (20 full time equivalents) has implemented Employee Performance and Development Plans — the Commission will review and revise plans as needed; and
- The Commission will continue to streamline operations in response to available budget resources.

Resource Summary

	2003/04 Restated Estimates ¹	2004/05 Estimates	2005/06 Plan	2006/07 Plan
Operating Expenses (\$000)				
Total	2,296	1,957	1,957	1,957
Full-time Equivalents (FTE's)				
Total	22	20	20	20
Capital Expenditures (Consolidated Revenue Fund) (\$000)				
Total	43	50	50	50

¹ These amounts have been restated, for comparative purposes only, to be consistent with the presentation of the 2004/05 *Estimates*.

The Agricultural Land Commission budget forms part of the budget of the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management (MSRM). The Commission operates under a single sub-vote of MSRM as specified in the *Estimates*.

Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Results

During the next three years the Commission will focus on achieving the goals and objectives outlined below. These goals and objectives are consistent with the Commission's vision of "a provincial agricultural land reserve system that fosters economic, environmental and social sustainability."

Key strategies and performance measures are related to the goals and objectives and help the Commission and others determine whether the public interest objectives are being met by the program.

There are many factors outside the Commission's control that influence the ultimate outcomes. Because the Commission works in partnership with many others, including local governments and other provincial ministries and agencies, their programs and actions also affect outcomes related to the Commission's mandate of preserving agricultural land. The performance measures provided for the goals are broad indicators rather than specific measures of performance. These indicators help government ascertain the general level of success the ALR program is achieving over the long term.

The strategies outlined below continue the work of the Commission and incorporate the strategic shifts directed by government. These shifts were designed to reform the management of the Commission to make it more effective, and to increase the regional responsiveness of the Commission to community needs. Key strategies and their corresponding measures are given to provide information about the more immediate outcomes of the Commission's work and how it addresses government priorities.

All the goals and objectives from the previous service plan are retained in this plan. Some strategies and performance measures have been refined, based on the Commission's experience over the past year.

The Commission's mission is "to preserve agricultural land and encourage and enable farm businesses throughout British Columbia". The Commission expects to achieve its mission through the realization of four complementary goals:

Goal 1. *Preservation of agricultural land.*

Goal 2. *The encouragement and enabling of farm businesses.*

Goal 3. *A provincial agricultural land reserve system that considers community interests.*

Goal 4. *Sound governance and organizational excellence.*

Goal 1: *Preservation of agricultural land.*

Agricultural land in BC is protected through the Agricultural Land Reserve which is a provincial land use zone in favour of agriculture. The ALR is managed by the Agricultural Land Commission, a provincially-appointed body operating under the *Agricultural Land Commission Act*. The ALR provides a sustainable agricultural land base that supports, and creates opportunities for, a safe and secure source of food and other agricultural products. The protected land base also provides for agricultural expansion and compatible economic activities.

Outcome/Key Indicator (Goal Level): *A protected agricultural land base provides opportunities for the expansion of agriculture.*

Indicator	2003/04 Actual/Base	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
Total land area in ALR ¹ .	4.75 million hectares	4.75 million hectares	4.75 million hectares	4.75 million hectares

¹ Area reported is net, inclusive of additions and deletions.

Objective 1: *Lands suitable for agriculture are retained in the ALR.*

This objective relates directly to the primary goal and purpose of the Commission — to preserve agricultural land by ensuring that lands suitable for agriculture are retained in the ALR. The Commission decides applications for land use changes in the ALR. The Commission also reviews plans and bylaws of local governments and other agencies to ensure that the ALR is properly identified and that the policies are supportive of the ALR and farmland preservation. Review of related plans and policies helps to further the Commission’s mandate.

Performance Measure	2003/04 Actual/Base	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
Net changes in the ALR (see Appendix 2 for ALR area by region).	4.75 million hectares	Less than 0.1% change	Less than 0.1% change	Less than 0.1% change

- Strategies:** 1. *Adjudicate applications based on land suitability and capability for agriculture.*
2. *Review the suitability of ALR lands for agriculture in response to planning reviews and improved information.*

Objective 2: *Land use changes do not significantly diminish land capability and use for agriculture.*

The Commission manages the ALR through the application process and the review of relevant planning documents. It endeavours to make decisions consistent with its purpose to preserve agricultural land. Land use changes approved by the Commission should therefore have minimal negative impacts on the ALR and its suitability for agriculture and related uses.

Performance Measure	2003/04 Actual/Base	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
Application refusals due to anticipated significant impact (measure under development) ¹ .	46% (estimate)	48%	50%	50%

¹ This measure tracks one (of five) reasons for Commission decisions and indicates the percentage of applications that are refused because of an anticipated negative impact on agriculture.

Strategy: *Assess the potential impact of decisions on the lands' use for agriculture.*

Objective 3: *Expansion of economic opportunities for agriculture and compatible activities.*

This objective relates to both Commission and government-wide strategic goals. A land base protected for agriculture provides opportunities for the expansion of farming and ranching, and for compatible economic activities such as agri-tourism and oil and gas extraction. The yearly growth in agricultural activity provides an indication of the success of the government-wide goal, the encouragement of economic activity, particularly in the province's rural areas. However, the continuing growth of this sector is influenced by many factors beyond the Commission's and government's control. The indicator and targets are consistent with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries' projected growth in the industry.

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Indicator	2003/04 Actual/Base	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
Per cent yearly growth in agriculture (farm cash receipts).	\$2.23 billion farm cash receipts (2002)	3% growth	5% growth	5% growth

- Strategies:**
1. Consider compatible or complementary activities in the ALR.
 2. Where appropriate, consider compensating benefits for agriculture when approvals are granted.

Performance Measures	2003/04 Actual/Base	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
Estimated number of new oil and gas wells in ALR (annual).	272 (estimate)	15% increase	15% increase	15% increase
Applications approved with compensating benefit.	6% (estimate)	8%	10%	10%

Goal 2: *The encouragement and enabling of farm businesses.*

This goal relates to the second part of the Commission’s purpose which is “to encourage farming on agricultural land in collaboration with other communities of interest”. The Commission shares the responsibility for encouraging farm use of agricultural lands with its key partners. These include local governments, the agricultural sector and its professional organizations, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management, other ministries and agencies, Agriculture Canada and other federal agencies, and some First Nations. Growth in agricultural GDP is dependent on many factors including supply and demand cycles, international trade rules, weather, disease and other factors beyond government control or influence. The targets for this goal are established by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries.

Outcome/Key Indicator (Goal Level): *Growth in gross domestic product (GDP) for agriculture.*

Indicator	2003/04 Actual/Base	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
Growth in agriculture GDP.	\$1.16 billion (2002)	3% growth	3% growth	3% growth

Objective 1: *Plans, policies and activities of local governments, agencies and First Nations encourage, enable and accommodate farming.*

To contribute to the success of the agricultural sector, the Commission works to ensure that the plans and policies of its key partners permit and enable the use of the ALR for agriculture. The Commission is working towards results-based processes, for example, by establishing guidelines to ensure that the provincial interest in encouraging farming is addressed by local governments and others with land use responsibilities.

Performance Measure	2003/04 Actual/Base	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
Local government plans are consistent with provincial ALR guidelines.	Completion of guidelines by end of fiscal.	At least 70% of plans are consistent.	At least 80% of plans are consistent.	At least 85% of plans are consistent.

Strategies:

1. *Distribute guidelines to local governments to guide plan development and apply guidelines to plan reviews to ensure provincial ALR interest is met.*
2. *Discuss potential treaty settlement lands that are in the ALR with First Nations and negotiators.*

Objective 2: *Improved local government capacity to plan for agriculture and support farm businesses.*

The Commission helps to build the capacity of its key partners, particularly local governments, to plan for agriculture. The Commission has a close working relationship with local governments whose jurisdictions include ALR. Through its various activities, the Commission encourages local governments and others to adopt policies that support and do not hinder agricultural use of the ALR. It encourages local governments to incorporate planning advice from the farm community in its land use decisions. The Commission also works closely with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries to help reduce regulatory barriers to improve the industry's economic viability.

Performance Measures	2003/04 Actual/Base	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
Number of advisory committees with majority farm sector representation.	19	21	23	25
Number of local government agricultural area plans.	13	15	18	21

- Strategies:**
1. *Communicate and provide assistance to local governments on ALR regulatory changes, policies and processes.*
 2. *Encourage local governments to include farm community representatives in planning, including their participation on Board or Council advisory committees.*
 3. *Encourage and assist local governments in the preparation of agricultural plans.*

Goal 3: *A provincial agricultural land reserve system that considers community interests.*

This goal relates to the Commission’s purpose to work with others to preserve agricultural land, while at the same time, considering community interests. The support of local governments and the public for the ALR is essential to the success of the provincial program. Where significant community needs are demonstrated and documented, the Commission considers those needs when it makes decisions for change of use applications in the ALR.

Outcome/Key Indicator (Goal Level): *Local government support for the Commission’s program and performance / concurrence between local government recommendations on applications and Commission decisions.*

Indicator	2003/04 Actual/Base	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
Concurrence between local government recommendations and Commission decisions. ¹	54% (estimate)	58%	60%	62%

¹ This measure is based on direct concurrence or agreement between a local government recommendation and a Commission decision and does not include approximately 25 per cent of applications on which local government does not comment or make a recommendation.

Objective 1: *Increased awareness of community issues within the Reserve.*

The Commission works to increase its understanding of community issues within the ALR. The Commission panels meet regularly with local governments in their regions and this helps Commissioners understand the needs of communities. The Commission’s six region panel structure, implemented in Spring 2002, placed decision-making in the regions, closer to those affected. This also afforded the Commission the opportunity to become more familiar with and knowledgeable about the communities that are impacted by its decisions.

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Performance Measures	2003/04 Actual/Base	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
Number of meetings with local governments and stakeholders.	60 (estimate)	60	60	60
Per cent applications decided after site visit (74% 2002/03).	70% (estimate)	80%	80%	80%

- Strategies:**
1. *Meet with local governments and stakeholders to discuss balancing community interests with preserving agricultural land.*
 2. *Build regional responsiveness of the Commission through increased presence in the regions and meetings with applicants.*

Objective 2: *Community issues and needs factored into decision-making.*

Under this objective, the Commission considers community needs when making decisions but balances those needs with the provincial interest in preserving agricultural land. The Commission also works closely with local governments in community planning processes, where community needs can be identified and substantiated.

Performance Measure	2003/04 Actual/Base	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
Per cent applications approved for which community need is a factor.	14% (estimate)	16%	18%	20%

- Strategies:**
1. *Work with local governments to identify and address community needs, particularly through community planning.*
 2. *Develop and apply dispute resolution processes for unresolved conflicts between the Commission and local government.*

Objective 3: *Increased participation of local governments and public authorities in ALR decision-making under delegated authority.*

The Commission works to establish delegation agreements with local governments and public authorities. Under such an agreement a local government or public agency may voluntarily assume subdivision and land use decision authority for those ALR areas within its jurisdiction. With local governments and others making decisions for the ALR, under guidelines that protect the ALR, the Commission can focus more effectively on the results of its program.

Performance Measures	2003/04 Actual/Base	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
Number of delegation agreements with interested local governments ¹ (total).	1 agreement	3 agreements	6 agreements	8 agreements
Number of delegation agreements with public authorities (total).	1 agreement	2 agreements	2 agreements	3 agreements

¹ Of the 135 local governments with land in the ALR, 14 have expressed interest in negotiating a delegation agreement with the Commission. This measure has been revised from the previous Service Plan.

Strategy: *Negotiate delegation agreements in priority areas with interested and supportive local governments and public authorities.*

Goal 4: *Sound governance and organizational excellence.*

This operational goal describes how the Commission achieves its purpose. The Commission goal is to serve the public interest through sound governance and organizational excellence. Achieving this goal improves the Commission’s services to the public and its many partners. The Commission is responsible for this goal and objectives, subject to budget and resource constraints.

Outcome/Key Indicator (Goal Level): *Responsive, effective and efficient operations.*

Indicator	2003/04 Actual/Base	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
Local government survey — Commission panel structure improved responsiveness.	82% (2003)	84%	86%	88%

Objective 1: *A responsive, effective and accountable Commission.*

The Commission continues its efforts to become more responsive, effective and accountable. In addition to reducing regulatory requirements, it is working towards reducing its workload by delegating some land use and subdivision decisions to local governments and other agencies. The Commission is preparing to adopt the government-wide risk management system.

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Performance Measures	2003/04 Actual/Base	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
Number of regulatory requirements (2001 base — 900).	296 67% reduction	250 72% reduction	250	250
Implementation of three phase ERM planning.	Initial phase: identify key risks.	Initial phase continued.	Developmental phase.	Developmental phase continued.
Application response time (66% of applications decided within 90 days 2002/03).	79% (estimate)	80% of applications decided within 90 days.	80% of applications decided within 90 days.	80% of applications decided within 90 days.

- Strategies:**
1. *Reduce regulatory requirements.*
 2. *Develop an enterprise risk management system (ERM).*
 3. *Provide timely and efficient responses to applications and inquiries.*

Objective 2: *Performance focused staff.*

The Commission delivers its mandate with performance-focused staff and has a Human Resource Management Plan to help it achieve this objective (See Appendix 3). The Commission values its employees and works to ensure that all staff have the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities in a supportive, safe and healthy work environment.

Strategy: *Continue implementation of employee performance and development planning (EPDP) system, review results and revise as needed.*

Performance Measure	2003/04 Actual/Base	2004/05 Target	2005/06 Target	2006/07 Target
EPDP's implemented.	Fully implemented.	Review and revise.	Review and revise.	Review and revise.

Related Initiatives

Risk management

The Commission has identified and is addressing several risks to the successful delivery of its program and the accomplishment of its primary goal, to preserve agricultural land.

While the Commission has a specific objective to promote the benefits of sharing decision-making between the Commission and local governments, most local governments have not been very receptive. The political risks and various factors perceived by some of them are such that the Commission may be unable to realize its objective to delegate significant decision-making to local governments. On the other hand, with delegated authority in place, the Commission may also increase the risk to the agricultural land base if a local government or public agency makes decisions contrary to the purposes of the program. However there are checks and balances in place in each delegation agreement to avoid this outcome.

The government has renewed its commitment to the treaty settlement process. Several agreements-in-principle that involve ALR lands have been reached or will be reached in the near future. The issue of ALR lands within treaty settlement areas is considered a high risk one for the Commission's mandate of preserving agricultural land. The Commission is managing the risk by proposing new authority and new processes to consider applications by First Nations and by working to resolve some land selection issues that involve ALR, prior to treaty agreements-in-principle.

The Commission and government respond to legal challenges as required. A constitutional challenge of the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* is currently before the courts. The Commission has successfully defended its authority and actions in previous court cases over the past 30 years. In 2002 government amended the legislation and regulations to clarify the Commission's purpose, its authority to act in the provincial interest, its responsibilities and legal remedies. These revisions and further changes implemented through the Administrative Justice Office will help reduce the exposure of the Commission to risks from legal challenges.

The Commission will develop a three-phase enterprise risk management plan, commencing in 2004/05. It will follow the government-wide risk management planning process.

Deregulation

The Commission shares government's commitment to achieve a one-third reduction in regulatory requirements across government by the end of 2004/05. The Commission accomplished significant deregulation during 2002/2003 as a result of the adoption of new legislation and regulations for the ALR. Through these changes, the number of regulatory requirements was reduced by 10 per cent in 2002.

Further reductions were realized in November 2003 with the passage of new legislation, the *Private Managed Forest Land Act*, by the legislature. The regulation of forest practices on private forest lands by the Commission is being replaced with a results based process managed by a new council appointed by both government and private forest landowners. This reduces regulatory requirements under the Commission's responsibility by over 500; however some of these requirements will be transferred elsewhere in the Ministry. In addition, the implementation of a delegation agreement between the Agricultural Land Commission and the Oil and Gas Commission, anticipated by April 2004, will realize further regulatory reductions for the ALR.

Appendix 1. Strategic Context

Vision, Mission and Values

Vision

A provincial agricultural land reserve system that fosters economic, environmental and social sustainability.

The Agricultural Land Reserve provides a sustainable agricultural land base that supports, and creates opportunities for, a safe and secure source of food and other agricultural products. The protected land base provides for agricultural expansion and compatible economic activities. It helps build healthy and sustainable rural and urban communities.

Mission

Preserve agricultural land and encourage and enable farm businesses throughout British Columbia.

The Agricultural Land Commission is the provincial agency responsible for administering the provincial land use zone in favour of agriculture — the Agricultural Land Reserve. In pursuit of its vision and mission, the Commission adjudicates change of use applications, reviews plans and bylaws to ensure consistency with provincial objectives; and works with local governments and others to encourage and enable farming of agricultural lands. The preservation of agricultural land and encouragement of farming is a provincial interest that has widespread public and industry support.²

Values

The following values describe how the organization and its employees interact with clients and with each other.

- **Integration** — Policies and programs foster long-term sustainability by considering a range of economic, social and environmental values.

² “British Columbia Agri-business Survey No. 3, June 2002” by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business reported 89 per cent of respondents (BC agri-business members) support leaving the ALR in place.

- **Accountability and fairness** — The Commission sets performance standards, monitors compliance and reports on progress. The Commission acts fairly and in the public interest.
- **Transparency** — The Commission establishes open decision-making processes; the bases of all decisions are public information.
- **Science and knowledge** — Agricultural Land Reserve boundaries and decisions are based on biophysical criteria, local knowledge and site specific circumstances.
- **Responsiveness** — In carrying out its responsibilities, the Commission considers the needs of farmers, landowners, applicants, First Nations, local governments and others.
- **Shared responsibility** — The Commission strives to develop positive working relationships with local governments, First Nations and others and to ensure consultation with all stakeholders in its decisions and activities.
- **Certainty** — The Commission makes clear and timely decisions within a predictable and understandable regulatory framework.

Planning Context

In developing this service plan and making decisions, the Commission has considered the following strengths, challenges and opportunities.

Strengths

- The ALR provides the land base necessary for ongoing and expanding farm and related forest production, which are important contributors to the provincial economy.
- A protected land base provides the opportunity for developing new markets in agriculture, and also provides a competitive advantage, as most other jurisdictions have fewer powers and programs for the protection of farmland.
- Agriculture is an important contributor to the BC economy in terms of jobs, income generated and other steady, non-cyclical contributions. BC's growth in agriculture has outpaced the national growth rate over ten years and in 2002 generated revenues of more than \$2 billion.
- BC agriculture is diverse, produces a wide range of commodities and takes advantage of the province's varied topography, soils and climate.
- During the past ten years employment and production in agriculture have remained constant or continued to grow when other sectors have declined or lost market shares.
- The Agricultural Land Reserve has been in place for more than 30 years, and provides an important and consistent foundation for the planning of both rural and urban areas.
- The consistent, long-standing protection of agricultural lands has led to the development of more compact communities, with associated savings in road and infrastructure costs.

Challenges

Ongoing challenges for the Commission include:

- The continuing reluctance of the vast majority of local governments to assume more decision-making responsibility within the ALR.
- Continuing development pressures on agricultural lands, particularly near urban areas; and the increasing importance of protecting farmers' rights-to-farm in the ALR.
- Fluctuating farm commodity prices combined with the demand for lands to diversify the economic base of communities, which results in continuing and sometimes mounting pressure to release lands from the ALR.
- Public demand for the protection of environmental values on private farmlands, which directly reduces farm income and business viability.
- Public demand for the recreational use of farm and range lands which often negatively impacts farm and ranch operations, and the lack of sufficient funds to appropriately mitigate these impacts.
- Competing demands on Crown ALR land for timber harvesting and environmental protection make significant areas of Crown land unavailable for agricultural use.
- Uncertainty around the treaty settlement process, and the potential for treaty settlements to include large tracts of land designated as ALR.
- The need for an internal cultural shift and the transition to new business processes including results-based regulation, and the availability of fewer resources.

Opportunities

- Continuing support by local governments, farmers and the public for protecting farmlands will result in additional opportunities for cooperative partnerships.
- Increased awareness by local governments of the need to plan for agriculture, and an improved rate of development and acceptance of agricultural and rural area plans.
- Other government initiatives will result in opportunities to strengthen the land reserve system and deliver services more efficiently and effectively.
- Policies and programs are being implemented that make Crown ALR lands available for agricultural development and expansion through an improved lease, license and purchase program.

Highlights of Strategic Shifts and Changes from Previous Service Plan

The Commission achieved the strategic shifts directed by government in fiscal 2002/2003. During this period government implemented new legislation for the Commission — the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* — which re-affirmed the Commission's purpose and provided it with some additional tools to preserve agricultural land and enforce compliance with the Act. Since May 2002, the Commission has operated with six panels, appointed from and making decisions in six regions of the province. Together with several other changes, this has made the Commission more regionally responsive to community needs and has improved operational efficiency and accountability.

The Commission and government continue to work towards phasing out the Forest Land Reserve. Legislation to implement a new results-based process to regulate forest practices on private forest lands was passed on November 6, 2003. The *Private Managed Forest Land Act* provides for the establishment of a new council (whose members will be appointed by both government and private forest landowners) which will assume, in 2004, responsibilities and duties for forest practices regulation now performed by the Commission.

The Commission is on track to achieve the key components outlined in the 2003/2004 to 2005/06 Service Plan published last year. Changes from that plan now incorporated in this plan include:

- Further development and refinement of the Commission's performance management system;
- Modifications to the Application Tracking System (ATS) have provided some baseline data for 2003/2004 to help measure results for the current plan and determine trends;
- Elimination of the performance measure and targets for the percentage of applications approved for compatible uses; this measure was unworkable as many of the compatible uses are now allowed outright in the ALR and thus cannot be statistically tracked;
- Revision to the performance measure and targets for the number of delegation agreements negotiated with local governments to reflect the lack of interest in assuming delegated decision responsibilities by many local governments;
- Elimination of the performance measure and targets for the workload measure (number of applications) to reflect the fact that many factors outside the Commission's control influence the volume of applications submitted to the Commission; and
- Introduction of a strategy to implement the government-wide risk management system.

Consistency with Government Strategic Plan

The Agricultural Land Commission's objectives and strategies are aligned with two of the three government goals outlined in the *2003/04 to 2005/06 Government Strategic Plan*.

Government Goal 1: *A strong and vibrant provincial economy.*

The Agricultural Land Commission, through its management of the ALR, provides a secure land base that is a prerequisite for a strong and expanding agriculture industry in BC. Successful agriculture is further enabled by broadening the range of farm uses and compatible economic activities that are permitted in the ALR. A strong agricultural sector contributes to the economic health and vitality of rural and regional economies, and is also a significant and steady contributor to the provincial economy.

Government Goal 3: *Safe, healthy communities and a sustainable environment.*

The Agricultural Land Reserve contributes to this goal by helping to:

- maintain productive soils in a working landscape;
- promote the orderly development of communities, both urban and rural;
- encourage farming, which contributes to the reduction in greenhouse gases, thus mitigating climate change concerns; and
- provide environmental benefits such as habitat and water conservation functions on farmland.

Appendix 2. Supplementary Performance Information

Summary of ALR Area by Region

Commission Panel Region	ALR Area as of April 1, 2003 (hectares)
Island	103,391
Okanagan	227,383
South Coast	176,872
Kootenay	384,865
Interior	1,494,260
North	2,366,082
Total for BC	4,752,853

All figures are in hectares and are provisional. ALR statistics will be revised and reconciled with the anticipated completion of digital ALR mapping for the province.

Appendix 3. Summary of Related Planning Processes

Commission Human Resource Management Plan

The Commission has a human resource management plan with the following goals and strategies:

Proactive and visionary leadership:

- Develop a clear understanding of Commission goals and plans with staff
- Build capacity within the Commission to ensure leaders have the skills to fulfill their responsibilities

Performance focused workforce:

- Establish clear goals, expectations and feedback for staff to support Commission and individual goals

Flexible and motivating work environment:

- Recognize and reward employees for contributions to the Commission's success
- Plan for succession and find capable people to be considered for Commission work opportunities

Learning and innovative organization:

- Ensure staff have the skills to do their jobs and are improving their skills with new and challenging opportunities

Progressive inter-relationships in the workplace:

- Share responsibility for flexible, motivated work environments by building mutual trust and respect
- Minimize the impact of workforce adjustment on staff and the organization

Commission Information Resource Management Plan

The Commission has adopted the following strategies for information management:

- Meet the demand for improved access to, and efficient delivery of, public information through web-based services
- Manage within a limited budget with creative approaches in office computer systems
- Use standard information technology, infrastructure and management approaches to ensure stable, secure and functional computer systems

Major information management projects include:

- Application files imaging: Reductions in staff and office space have resulted in off-site storage of historical application files. Scanning technology is used to capture the critical content of files as they are recalled for research, thus reducing future costs for file retrieval;
- Mapping conversion: The Commission is working with the Integrated Cadastral Initiative (ICI) to ensure that digital ALR data conforms with the ICI framework, within three months of local government sign-off of its cadastral data; and
- Replacement of legacy systems: The Commission will review the need for replacement of its main business application. The intent is to enable future web-based access to application information by clients and to provide for the electronic filing of applications.