

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

As requested by Mr. Rod Webber (the Landowner) a detailed Soils on Site Inspection of the property at 3590 Webber Road, Westbank, BC (the Subject Property) was carried out by Catherine Orban, MSc, PAg on August 12, 2009. The purpose of this inspection was to assess the agricultural capability and suitability of the Subject Property. The Landowner requested this inspection as a component of his application to the Regional District of Central Okanagan and the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) to exclude the Subject Property from the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR).

The Subject Property is one of several adjacent lots that were purchased by the Webber family in 1931. Today, the Subject Property, which is 4.1 ha in size, is almost entirely surrounded by non-ALR land, most of which has been developed into small-lot residential subdivisions.

Five soil test pits (TP1 to TP5) were excavated to depths of 120 to 160 cm by a small tracked excavator. The test pits were located on sites that represented variations in topography, aspect, vegetation and land use. Eight representative soil samples were taken from four of the test pits and submitted for laboratory analysis of soil nutrients and physical characteristics.

The Subject Property was found to have moderate to poor agricultural capability (AC) that is further compromised by the irregular configuration and fragmentation of some of the better AC units throughout the parcel. In general, moderate to severe soil moisture deficiencies were determined to be the primary limitations to agricultural capability. Excessive stoniness and adverse topography were influential but less extensive limitations on the Subject Property. The agricultural capability ratings ranged from: Class 5 A, T and/or P improvable to Class 3 A, T and/or P (using the modified tree fruits and grapes classification); to Class 7ATP, unimprovable; and Class AN (anthropogenic alterations).

The agricultural suitability of the Subject Property was determined to be poor. The primary factors used in determining the agricultural suitability were the agricultural capability ratings, the proximity and abundance of small lot residential subdivisions, the small parcel size, the historical land use and the irregular and fragmented distribution of some of the better areas of the Subject Property.

A number of potential conflicts that commonly occur when agricultural properties are not sufficiently buffered from encroaching suburban and urban development were identified as they applied to the Subject Property. The potential primary concerns for agricultural activities on the Subject Property were anticipated to be the health and safety of livestock, increased trespassing by local residents and their pets, and public pressure to minimize hours of operation, noise, odours and dust. Some of the neighbourhood concerns that may be expected in cases such as these are noise, odours, increased traffic and issues associated with various pest control measures.

Under the current circumstances, no commercially viable agricultural uses were identified for the Subject Property. The current use of the Subject Property as a small hobby farm is considered to be the most suitable agricultural use of this parcel. However, the Landowners need to be cautious in ensuring the safety of any livestock or exotic animals kept on site due to the high population density in the immediate vicinity.

The Subject Property is not currently connected to any local or regional agricultural operations. Therefore, the exclusion of the Subject Property from the ALR is not anticipated to have any adverse impacts on local or regional agricultural operations or productive capacity.

The exclusion of the Subject Property from the ALR would only potentially set a precedent for other properties in the area that have similar conditions including a location where they are surrounded by non-ALR small-lot residential subdivisions, marginal agricultural capability and poor agricultural suitability. Therefore, this exclusion is not expected to set a precedent for future applications by other properties that are located in dedicated agricultural areas with less severe limitations.

- The agricultural suitability of the Subject Property was determined to be poor. The primary factors used in determining the agricultural suitability were the agricultural capability ratings, the proximity and abundance of small lot residential subdivisions, the small parcel size, the historical land use and the irregular and fragmented distribution of some of the better areas of the Subject Property.
- A number of potential conflicts that commonly occur when agricultural properties are not sufficiently buffered from encroaching suburban and urban development were identified as they applied to the Subject Property. The potential primary concerns for agricultural activities on the Subject Property were anticipated to be the health and safety of livestock, increased trespassing by local residents and their pets, and public pressure to minimize hours of operation, noise, odours and dust. Some of the neighbourhood concerns that may be expected in cases such as these are noise, odours, increased traffic and issues associated with various pest control measures.
- Under the current circumstances, no commercially viable agricultural uses were identified for the Subject Property. The current use of the Subject Property as a small hobby farm is considered to be the most suitable agricultural use of this parcel. However, the Landowners need to be cautious in ensuring the safety of any livestock or exotic animals kept on site due to the high population density in the immediate vicinity.
- The Subject Property is not currently connected to any local or regional agricultural operations. Therefore, the exclusion of the Subject Property from the ALR is not anticipated to have adverse impacts on local or regional agricultural operations or productive capacity.
- The exclusion of the Subject Property from the ALR would only potentially set a precedent for other properties in the area that have similar conditions including a location where they are surrounded by non-ALR small-lot residential subdivisions, marginal agricultural capability and poor agricultural suitability. Therefore, this exclusion is not expected to set a precedent for future applications by other properties with less severe limitations that are located in dedicated agricultural areas.

## 8.2 Conclusions

The Subject Property has never supported a commercially viable agricultural operation. For this, and several other reasons as described in this report, the exclusion of the Subject Property from the ALR is not anticipated to have any impacts on the local or regional agricultural productive capacity or infrastructure. Furthermore, this exclusion is not expected to set a precedent for other properties in the community that have not become isolated islands in the midst of intensive residential developments.

There are virtually no prospects for commercial agricultural activities on the Subject Property under the current circumstances. Although the soils, climate and terrain related limitations as identified in this assessment range from moderate to severe, the greatest obstacle to agriculture on the Subject Property is that it is a small parcel without any buffering that is located in a suburban residential neighbourhood. This parcel has become a victim of "urban sprawl", along with all the issues commonly associated with land use and lifestyle conflicts when urban and suburban developments encroach upon agricultural land.