

Protect the Blenkinsop Valley Forever!

"A Rural Space in an Urban Place"



WHAT IS THE BLENKINSOP VALLEY?

- The Blenkinsop Valley is located in the District of Saanich, Greater Victoria, in the traditional territory of the WSANEC and Lekwammen Nations.
- This is a culturally significant area with abundant wildlife, high terrestrial bird diversity and some of the best and most fertile farmland in Canada.
- Much of the Blenkinsop Valley is located within the Agricultural Land Reserve, provincial legislation to preserve the landbase for the purpose of food production and restrict other uses.
- Provincial legislated protection is supplemented by District of Saanich municipal zoning bylaws, planning policy and motor-vehicle regulations (see details below), which recognize "rural and agricultural uses" in the Blenkinsop Valley.

WHAT IS GOING ON NOW?

- Saanich Council is failing to monitor, fine and address the industrialization and non-permitted uses in the A-1 zone, which is responsible for the degradation, compaction, and pollution of soils and water ways. Some residents are also paying farm tax rates on lands with non-permitted uses.
- Trucks over 4500 Lbs. are not permitted to park on A-1 zoned lands in the Blenkinsop Valley, but Saanich is failing to monitor land use and business licences, resulting in a proliferation of non-permitted parking lots (at last count, there were at least 9 in the valley). The longer these non-permitted parking lots are not addressed, the greater the damage to farmland soils, and the more difficult it becomes to restore the land to permitted agricultural use.
- There is also a growing phenomenon of large commercial trucks passing through the valley, notwithstanding a 12,000 kg vehicle weight restriction on Blenkinsop Road. Saanich is failing to monitor and enforce industrial vehicle use, leading to degradation of the roadway and conflict with farming and rural uses in the valley.

Background Material: District of Saanich Zoning and Planning Policy

In 1977, the District of Saanich adopted a resolution defining the Blenkinsop Valley area and committing to rural and agricultural uses in perpetuity. Council acknowledged that the "significant acreage of agricultural use and potential, was deemed to be of irreplaceable value to the future well being and self sufficiency of the Capital Region" and that "agricultural uses and pastoral pursuits which have preserved the peculiar charm of the Valley are threatened with extinction through the intrusion of urban and extraneous uses of land and other operations."

Saanich's Official Community Plan Bylaw, unanimously adopted by Council in 2008, includes the Blenkinsop Local Area Plan, which states:

"The Blenkinsop Valley is a cherished rural and natural community in the Municipality of Saanich. The residents' commitment to the valley is evident in their continuing use of the land for farming and for other rural activities, and in their desire to preserve the remaining natural environment. The Municipality of Saanich actively supports the rural nature of the valley. Saanich works in partnership with other jurisdictions and authorities to ensure that residents of Greater Victoria and visitors to the Region enjoy the benefits of a rural space in an urban place. Visitors, and those who pass through, understand the unique character of the valley. They accept their responsibility to behave in a manner that shows respect for farm activities, livestock and the wild plants and animals that share the valley's fields, trails and roadways."

The Blenkinsop Local Area Plan includes the following policies:

4.0 Urban Containment - Policies

- 4.1 Do not support further amendments to the Urban Containment Boundary in Blenkinsop.

5.0 Agriculture - Policies

- 5.1 Do not forward applications to the Land Reserve Commission to exclude land from the Agricultural Land Reserve.
- 5.2 Refer to General Plan 1993, policy 5.3, when considering applications to subdivide within the Agricultural Land Reserve.
- 5.3 Do not support Agricultural Land Reserve applications or rezoning to permit new nonagricultural uses such as golf courses and/or institutional uses that generate significant traffic.
- 5.4 Undertake a process to develop appropriate regulations and guidelines for agri-tourism activities in consultation with peninsula municipalities and other stakeholders (see policy 8.2).
- 5.5 Continue to regulate the retailing of agricultural products that are not grown on-site.
- 5.6 Consider amending the Official Community Plan Appendix N – Development Permit Area Justification and Guidelines to designate a new Development Permit Area for the protection of farming.
- 5.7 Support improvements to water service where necessary to ensure a viable water supply to agricultural operations.
- 5.8 (a) Support managed irrigation from Blenkinsop Lake to balance agricultural, environmental and aesthetic interests.
- (b) Undertake a process to reduce water licences on Blenkinsop Lake having regard for the potential impact on agriculture.
- 5.9 Plant hedgerows or install appropriate fencing within trail rights-of-way to address concerns about public access to adjacent agricultural land and monitor their effectiveness.
- 5.10 Continue to support education programs to increase public understanding of the scarcity of agricultural land, the long term impacts of the loss of food production, the importance of the soil and climate for agriculture, and the hazards associated with farming.
- 5.11 Support efforts to improve the relationship and understanding between the various users and interest groups in the Blenkinsop Valley about the need to co-exist.
- 5.12 Work with farmers and other land owners to encourage best farm practises, reduce the use of pesticides and other chemicals that have the potential to harm the environment, buffer, restore, and protect watercourses and maintain and enhance other significant habitat on agricultural parcels, while maintaining the economic value of the agricultural resource and respecting the farmers' right-to-farm.