

Farmland Defense League Supports ALR Inclusion for the Southlands

Written by Donna Passmore
Tuesday, 01 March 2011 16:44



Dear Mayor and Councilors:

I am confident that by now you will have heard directly from the Farmland Defense League's Delta Directors, Susan Jones and Wilma Haig. I write on behalf of the thousands of our supporters around the province who view the Southlands as an integral piece of British Columbia's food security picture.

In 2006, the BC government's British Columbia's Food Self-Reliance Report told us that we need 240,000 more acres of urban farmland than the province then had, in order to feed ourselves. Since that time, the Metro Vancouver area has gone in the opposite direction, losing thousands of additional acres of urban farmland for the Gateway Project, urban housing (Maple Ridge's Jackson Farm, Langley's Tuscan Farm), commercial/industrial development (30 acres for Superstore Warehousing in Surrey, 25 acres of riverfront farmland Mission and the combined 9 applications the Board of Metro Vancouver approved for Green Zone exclusion in Maple Ridge), academic expansion (Trinity Western University sprawl), Surrey road expansion (90 acres) and hundreds of acres that have been secretly purchased by the BC government in Richmond and Delta for port expansion. We've been pedaling backwards at a gravely suicidal rate.

Returning Southlands to the ALR will be an vitally important step toward achieving food security.

Every loss of farmland has a feedback loop, and nowhere is that more true than in Boundary Bay, declared by the international scientific community as #1 of Canada's 587 "Important Bird Areas". Every acre of farmland lost intensifies competition for food between the human population and the 5.2 million migrating birds that stop in Delta each year during annual migration.

The community's rich biodiversity has drawn thousands of people to make their homes and raise their families in Delta. That biodiversity is significantly threatened by the loss of old field habitat, a type of farmland inhabited by certain rodents and small mammals that are important food sources for a number of wildlife, including hawks, eagles and owls. The Gateway Project and port expansion have already cost Delta 1/3 of its old field habitat.

There were many distinctions that welcomed the 2nd decade of the new millennium, not the least of which was the declaration by social service agencies and our federal consumer affairs department that sharp increases in the cost of food - already experienced and with more to come - herald the Canadian arrival of the global food security crisis.

At the same time that we have been recklessly destroying our foodlands, we have witnessed significant climate change induced agricultural collapse around the world. Predictably, large

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areas of warmer regions (India, Africa and South America) experienced climate change triggered flooding or drought that destroyed more than \$20 billion worth of crops in 2008-2009. Central and southern USA has also been affected, to such an ironic extent that California farm workers were lining up at food banks because their jobs had been climatically destroyed.

Of the 52% of the province's food supply that is imported, the 70% of the produce that British Columbia imports from the US comes from California. We also import fruit, vegetables, rice, tea, sugar and coffee from tropical and near-tropical areas that have experienced agricultural collapse.

We can no longer be cavalier about the increasingly vital role our foodlands play in the ability of British Columbians to feed ourselves and our children. Putting the Southlands back into the ALR is an important step toward reclaiming the 240,000 acres of urban farmland needed to reach our food security objectives.

With thanks and kind regards,

Donna Passmore
Campaign Director
Farmland Defence League of BC

<http://www.dailyreckoning.com.au/food-crisis/2008/02/25/>