

**Ministry of Agriculture and Food**  
**BRIEFING NOTE FOR MINISTER/ DM/ ADM FOR INFORMATION**

Ref: 198186

Date: 06-16-2022

**Title:** State of Honeybees in B.C., Spring 2022.

**Issue:** Significant winter colony mortality will challenge B.C. beekeepers in 2022.

**Background:**

There are currently approximately 4,300 registered beekeepers in British Columbia that manage an estimated 62,000 colonies. About 130 beekeepers operate 50 colonies or more, while the majority of beekeepers are hobbyists with only a couple of colonies. Of the 62,000 honeybee colonies, it is estimated that only about 15 - 20,000 of B.C.'s colonies are used in crop pollination in the Fraser Valley and Okanagan Valley. B.C.'s fruit growers require an estimated 50,000 colonies to meet their pollination requirements. The shortfall of 25-30,000 colonies has traditionally been met by Prairie beekeepers who bring 40-43,000 colonies into the province every fall for overwintering. In the mid-2010s, beekeepers began reporting productivity problems with colonies that had been used in blueberry pollination. Often, the colonies were in poor condition after pollination service, and many failed to gain strength and productivity for the remainder of the beekeeping season. It was also widely reported that there was increased incidence of European Foulbrood Disease (EFB).

Prior to the arrival of the Varroa mite in B.C. in 1990, the long-term winter colony mortality was about 10 percent a year. After the mite became endemic, average annual winter mortality rose to near 20 percent. In recent years, colony losses have been around 30 percent. While Varroa is a major causal agent, other factors have also contributed to the losses including bee viruses, other pathogens, weather and environmental factors, bee genetics and beekeeper management.

Early reports from other provinces indicate much higher losses ranging from between 50 percent in the Prairies to 60 percent+ in Quebec. No single causal agent has been identified yet.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food (AF) supports the beekeeper community via many collaborative partnerships in the form of grants, programs, and initiatives (see Appendix 1).

**Discussion:**

Since 2017, annual winter colony losses in B.C. averaged 32 percent except for 2020 with a loss of 23 percent. In response to these losses, beekeepers commit time and resources to restore colony numbers at the expense of honey production, crop pollination contracts, queen breeding and other economic opportunities.

High winter losses have become the norm and while the beekeeping industry has shown resilience, recurring losses at these high levels challenge the long-term economic viability of commercial beekeeping operations.

**Summary/ Conclusion/ Next Steps/ Suggested Response:**

- There is a shortfall of bee colonies to provide pollination services to B.C.'s fruit producers,
- There is also a decline in pollinator's due to a loss of habitat,
- Efforts are underway in B.C. and across the country to identify the causes responsible for the high colony losses of 2022, and to develop remedial strategies,
- Ongoing delivery of extension services to promote Best Management Practices (BMPs) will assist B.C. beekeepers of reducing the stressors that lead to high losses,

s.13; s.17

There is a need to understand poor productivity of bee colonies after pollination services, and the use of pesticides by producers. While studies remain inconclusive, the commercial beekeeping community has taken the view that pesticide exposure may be partly responsible for colony weakness (see Appendix 1 for Next Steps: Proposed initiatives & activities for future funding commitments).

Contact: Dr. Paul van Westendorp, Apiculture Specialist, 778 666-0582, Animal and Plant Health Branch; Karina Sakalauskas, Emerging Markets Specialist, Extension and Support Services Branch, 778 666-0587.

ED Dr. Joyce Austin  
s.22

ADM Arif Lalani  
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DM Peter Pokorny

JA

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## Appendix 1

### **Current AF support to the bee sector**

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food (AF) supports the beekeeper community via many collaborative partnership (see Website Resources: [Bees \(Apiculture\)](#)). Support is in the form of grants, programs and initiatives such as:

- **Apiculture Program (API)** to address bee health issues by preventing the introduction and spread of diseases and pests and mitigate their impact on B.C. beekeepers. API administers the relevant provisions of the *Animal Health Act* and Bee Regulation.
- **Bee BC** was launched in 2018 to support small scale regional/community-based projects to research, explore, field-test, and share information about best management practices associated with bee health.
- **Tech Transfer Program (TTP)** to bring standardized knowledge and best management practices in areas of integrated pest management, overwintering, bee health outcomes, effective pollination, breeding for regionally hardy queens and bees, and deliver applied research and services to B.C.'s more than 3,600 beekeepers, bridging the knowledge from evidence-based findings into regionally adapted practices.

### **B.C. Bee-Sector Strategic Analysis**

s.13; s.17



**Ministry of Agriculture and Food**  
**BRIEFING NOTE FOR MINISTER FOR INFORMATION FOR MEETING WITH THE GRIZZLY**  
**BEAR FOUNDATION ON JUNE 29, 2022**

Ref: 198122

Date: June 23, 2022

**Title:** Meeting with Grizzly Bear Foundation (GBF)

**Issue:** Coexistence of grizzly bears and farming, impacts the upcoming changes to *Wildlife Act* may have on grizzly bears and GBF suggested changes to the *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm Act)*.

**Background:**

Nicholas Scapillati, Executive Director of the GBF requested a meeting with the Minister to provide an update on their work related to helping farmers in the Pemberton Valley coexist with grizzly bears, discuss the upcoming changes to the *Wildlife Act* and follow up on questions GBF posed in 2019 in relation to potential changes to the *Right to Farm*. The meeting has been tentatively scheduled for June 29, 2022.

The GBF is a charitable organization that is dedicated to the welfare of the grizzly bears across North America. GBF is guided by science and Indigenous knowledge. GBF works collaboratively to support the conservation of grizzly bears through research, education, and advocacy.

The *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act* does not apply to wildlife that are not in captivity.

Farm practices (*Right to Farm Act*) protects farmer's normal farm practices from local government nuisance bylaws and from injunction liability for nuisance from a normal farm practice. This does not protect farmers from having to comply with any other laws.

The website for GBF and the Pemberton Farmer's Institute does not currently provide information that outlines the issues related to the coexistence of grizzly bears and farmers or the work that they are doing to support this coexistence.

In 2018, the GBF solicited the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (AF), Business Risk Management Branch, for funding to study the overlap between grizzly bear habitat and agricultural farmland which leads to grizzlies damaging crops and livestock and grizzly bear death. AF provided \$53,500 to GBF in 2018-2019 to complete both bear hazard assessment in the Pemberton Meadows (see Attachment 1 & 2) and provide a proactive solution to reduce agricultural losses and destruction of bears.

A news release dated March 9, 2022 notes that government introduced Bill 14, the *Wildlife Amendment Act, 2022*, to ensure greater collaboration and reconciliation with Indigenous

Peoples in the management of wildlife in the province. The press release notes that Bill 14 brings in a requirement to consider Indigenous knowledge and establishes a process by which the Province can align its laws with protocol hunting agreements and traditions that long existed. Bill 14, - 2022: Wildlife Amendment Act, 2022, comes into force September 1, 2022.

To date, AF is not aware of any substantive changes having been made to the *Right to Farm Act*.

### **Discussion:**

GBF has noted concerns about the impact on bear habitat from agriculture. For example, agriculture activities may lead to deforestation in order to allow for the creation of fields and planting of crops.<sup>1</sup> Along with the potential loss of habitat that deforestation may cause, the development of agriculture may increase the potential conflict between humans and bears.<sup>2</sup>

Previous funding provided to GBF in 2018 recognized the Ministry's role in helping to minimize the impact of agriculture on wildlife habitat in B.C. Bill 14 set out the requirement to consider relevant Indigenous knowledge as applicable in any decision under the *Wildlife Act*. GBF is guided by both science and Indigenous knowledge. Supporting activities that explore and minimize the impact of agricultural activities on wildlife where it could impact Indigenous peoples and their territories, would honour the intent of Bill 14.

Communities can achieve Bear Smart status under the Provincial Bear Smart Program; the program is focused on reducing or preventing negative interactions between humans and bears. The program is a six-stage process. Conducting a Bear Hazard Assessment (see Attachment 1 & 2), such as the one conducted by GBF, is the first stage. In their meeting with the Minister, GBF will be seeking funding to complete the next stages. GBF will be using the knowledge gained in the assessment stage to facilitate projects which encourage wildlife to use natural habitat rather than domestic agricultural lands and implement techniques and infrastructure resulting in fewer agricultural losses.

### **Suggested Response:**

- We thank GBF for the opportunity to learn about their organization and gain an update on the work GBF does in helping farmers in the Pemberton Valley coexist with grizzly bears.
- We are interested in hearing comments that GBF may have on changes being made to the *Wildlife Act*.
- We are also interested in hearing more about the suggested changes that GBF had made in 2019 in relation to the *Right to Farm Act*.
- Regarding your funding request, the ministry will give it consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> "The State of British Columbia's Forests: A Global Comparison", Haris R. Gilani and John L. Innes, *Forests*, 2020, 11, 316.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Bear Conservation website.

Contact: Tyler Morhart, Manager, Agriculture Wildlife Program, 250 784-2559

DIR BJ                      ADM AL                      DM PP

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Bear Hazard Assessment for Pemberton Meadows, British Columbia, Canada

Attachment 2: Bear Hazard Assessment for Mount Currie, D'Arcy and Seton Portage

## MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

### BULLET POINTS TEMPLATE

**CLIFF#: 198203**

**Client / Writer: Minister Bains**

**Main issues: Unclear – Subdivision of A1 Zoned**

**Property in City to Surrey**

**Bullets prepared by: Jeff Weightman**

**Date prepared: 2022-06-27**

**Date due: 2022-06-29**

- The applicant proposes to subdivide two parcels; one at 7002 – 156 Street and the second at 15896 – 72 Ave both located within the City of Surrey.
- Both parcels are located within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) and are zoned Agriculture 1 (A1) in the City of Surrey's Zoning Bylaw.
- The proposed subdivision parcel boundaries were not provided.
- Based on a review of aerial photographs the parcel was in partial hay production until 2012. No agricultural activity can be observed since.
- No rationale for the subdivision was provided by the applicant.
- The *Agricultural Land Commission Act* (ALCA) outlines the conditions for subdivision in its general regulation Sections 9, 10 and 11.
- No active applications could be found on the City of Surrey's website.
- No active applications were found by Agricultural Land Commission staff.
- Local governments have the authority under the *Local Government Act* and Community Charter to use a variety of planning tools such as zoning bylaws, Official Community Plans, and permit requirements, to determine their short and long-term visions for how they want their community to develop.
- The City of Surrey's Official Community Plan indicates that "Development Considerations for Agricultural: Subdivision (Property Within ALR): Subdivision that creates new lots is discouraged without a demonstrated clear net benefit to Agriculture."



**Ministry of Agriculture and Food**  
**BRIEFING NOTE FOR MINISTER FOR INFORMATION FOR MEETING**

Ref: 198200

Date: June 28, 2022

**Title:** Meeting to discuss North Campbell Heights Development and Heppell's Potato Corp.

**Issue:** 220 acres of actively farmed agricultural land at 3884 – 192 Street is located within the City of Surrey's Campbell Heights Local Area Plan, which is planned for future industrial development.

**Background:**

- The property is currently owned by the Federal Government (managed by the Ministry of Innovation, Science and Economic Development), which is in the process of divesting the property (total property size = 300 acres).
- The property is located within the City of Surrey's Campbell Heights Local Area Plan, which is designated industrial.
- The property is not within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR).
- Heppell's Potato Corp. has leased the land from the Federal Government since the 1970s and is understood to have been farming the property for over 100 years.
- The property is currently producing potatoes, carrots, cabbage, squash, and parsnip.

**First Nations Considerations:**

- The Campbell Heights Local Area Plan includes recommendations to support the growth of Indigenous technology companies.
- South Campbell Heights (related property): Semiahmoo First Nation was opposed and disappointed by the recent decision to approve rezoning for industrial development due to inadequate consultation.

**Discussion:**

- The property produces a significant portion of British Columbia and Western Canada's early-season (May to early July) domestic supply of carrots, cabbage, and potatoes (as per BC Fresh, Canadian Farms, and Heppell's Potato Corp. estimates).
- Annually, the property produces about 10 million servings of fresh vegetables.
- The soils and topography of the site allow field cultivation from February to December enabling the unique production of two crops per season (i.e., potatoes and squash).
- Heppell's Potato Corp. has inquired about purchasing the property but was denied.
- Heppell's Potato Corp. is actively contacting local media sources to increase awareness about the property and garner support for its preservation as farmland.
- Heppell's Potato Corp. is circulating a petition calling for the protection of the property that as of June 28, 2022, had received over 33,400 signatures.

- In a news release on June 22, 2022, the Mayor of the City of Surrey stated that the City would make an offer to purchase the property if the Federal Government made it available and would preserve it as agricultural land.
- Metro Vancouver Agricultural Advisory Committee approved drafting a letter on June 23, 2022, in opposition to the property being developed for industrial.
- South Campbell Heights (approx. 600 acres), immediately south of the existing Campbell Heights Business Park, was approved for rezoning in February 2022 (designated prior as primarily non-ALR agriculture). This rezoning completes the required OCP, RGS and Zoning amendments that provide public hearing/engagement opportunities for the public and stakeholders.

#### **Suggested Response:**

- The property produces a significant portion of British Columbia's early-season vegetables that if developed could be highly detrimental to Heppell's Potato Corp., the local industry and food security.
- The property is federally owned and not within the ALR. While there is a strong interest in preserving the site as agricultural land, it is recommended that messaging from the Minister of Agriculture and Food (if any) focus on encouraging the federal government to consider the views of First Nations (reconciliation) and the views of the agricultural community (food security) in making its decision to dispose of the property.

#### **Attachments:**

- Heppell's Background Document on Subject Property

Contact: Drew Bondar, Metro Vancouver Regional Agrologist, 778-666-0584

A/ED DP                      ADM AL                      DM PP