



Agenda No: 9.1

Mtg. Date: Sept.23, 2013

## Regional Board Report

**TO:** Regional Board

**FROM:** Murray Kopp  
Director – Parks & Police Services

**DATE:** September 11, 2013

**SUBJECT:** RDCO Directors Item Response – Proposed RDCO / Province of BC Land Swap in Support of a Friends of Fintry Agri-Tourism Venture at Fintry Provincial Park

Prepared by: Risti Lesperance, Community Relations Liaison/Parks Interpreter

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### RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Regional Board not pursue further discussions with BC Parks in regards to a possible land swap between the RDCO and Province of BC for lands currently identified as Fintry Provincial Park.

### Purpose:

For information only.

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### Implications of Recommendation:

General: At the Regional Board Meeting of July 18, 2013 the following action item was brought forth:

#### *8.2 Fintry Fair*

*Director Baker noted that the Fintry Fair was held last Saturday. It was noted that many volunteers are aging and that there is a need for 'other' revenue streams for the Friends of Fintry Provincial Park Society. More emphasis of Regional District ownership is needed, and getting it back to a working farm which has been discussed in the past. It would be difficult for this to occur in the upper portion of the park and it was questioned whether discussions should be raised with BC Parks for consideration of this and a possible land swap.*

There followed discussion about whether it is time to approach BC Parks to initiate discussions regarding a possible land swap within Fintry Provincial Park, that is, to swap the Regional District's 129.5-hectare parcel above Westside Road in exchange for BC Parks' Fintry Delta. For some time the Fintry Delta has been viewed as an ideal location for a possible agri-tourism venture whereby aspiring farmers could receive training at an incubator farm. The Friends of Fintry

would then somehow use the farm to generate revenue. However, BC Parks is not in support of such a venture.

The recommendation to not pursue discussion with BC Parks regarding a possible land swap would mean that the Regional District would not be in a position to assist the Friends of Fintry in an agri-tourism venture on the Fintry Delta.

### **Background:**

The Regional District had an agreement with BC Parks, and contributed \$2-million, to purchase a 129.5-hectare property above Westside Road. Under said agreement, the 129.5-hectare parcel is operated and managed by BC Parks as part of Fintry Provincial Park. The Regional District has no direct relationship in the ongoing annual operation and management of Fintry Provincial Park.

In 2011, the Friends of Fintry developed a proposal outlining their interest in commercial scale agricultural use of the hayfields on the Fintry Delta, a concept termed Fintry New Farm. BC Parks considered the proposal and found the scope of activities to be inconsistent with management direction for the Park as well as park legislation and communicated this to the Friends of Fintry in January 2012. The Friends of Fintry revised their *Heritage Development Plan* in 2013 acknowledging that BC Parks does not support farming use and focussing instead on recreational opportunities involving the heritage structures.

The *Heritage Development Plan (2013) for the Fintry Estate & Fintry Provincial Park*, prepared by the Friends of Fintry, under the heading "Agri-Tourism Potential" states:

*The possibility of re-introducing agriculture to the Fintry Delta was explored quite thoroughly by the FoF [Friends of Fintry] on the initiative of a representative of the Economic Development Commission of the Regional District of Central Okanagan. The concept was to form an incubator farm where aspiring farmers could get training and 'cut their teeth'. An essential element was that farmers be trained to work within the current economic realities of the industry. The concept that some of the produce would be sold outside of Fintry proved unacceptable to BC Parks. However, without some income the farming operation would be totally dependent on grants, which FoF judged to be unsustainable in the longer term. A summer market for campers, while appropriate for the site, was judged insufficient.*

The above excerpt summarizes findings to show that the revenue generated from an incubator farm would be insufficient to sustain the concept in the long run.

Recent correspondence from the North Westside Ratepayers Association raises concerns about the viability of an agri-tourism venture, as well as the effects such a venture might possibly have on the drinking water supply in the Fintry Delta. Such concerns would need to be fully investigated.

Recent discussions with BC Parks indicate that a land swap would need to meet the requirements of the *Provincial Protected Area Boundary Adjustment Policy*. BC Parks has already stated that an incubator farm or other such agri-tourism venture is inconsistent with

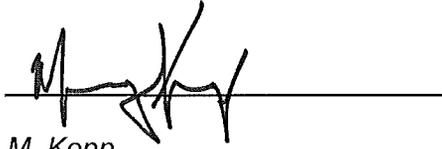
management direction for the Park as well as park legislation, thus not making it seem favourable that the Minister would grant approval to a proposed adjustment to protected area boundaries.

**Conclusion:**

It appears that after considerable study on the matter, both BC Parks and the Friends of Fintry would like to move in a different direction when pursuing possible revenue streams for Fintry Provincial Park, such as heritage and recreational opportunities. Furthermore, the immediate neighbourhood does not appear to be supportive of agricultural pursuits on the Fintry Delta. Finally, BC Parks has previously communicated to the Friends of Fintry that the proposed agricultural venture is inconsistent with Park legislation and management objectives, thus deeming it unlikely to receive approval for a protected area boundary adjustment. In light of these facts, it is recommended that no further discussion be initiated regarding a possible land swap within Fintry Provincial Park.

This is for your consideration.

Submitted by:



*M. Kopp*  
*Director – Parks Services*

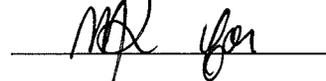
Attachments:

- 1 – Correspondence from North Westside Ratepayers Association

**Considerations not applicable to this report:**

- Strategic Plan
- Organizational
- Financial
- Policy
- Legal/Statutory Authority

Approved for Board's Consideration



Brian Reardon, CAO



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Mr. Robert Hobson, Chair  
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July 22, 2013

Dear Mr. Chair/Board Members:

Re: Fintry Provincial Park/Land Swap for Agricultural Purposes

Board Highlights from the July 18th Meeting stated in part: "The Regional Board has adopted a resolution to approach the Provincial Government to initiate discussions regarding a possible land swap within Fintry Provincial park. In 1995, in an agreement with the Province, the Regional District contributed \$2 million to purchase a 129.5 hectare property above Westside Road which is included as part of the Provincial Park. The Regional Board has asked staff to begin talking with the Province to see if that property could be exchanged for a lowland field property within the park in order to explore a possible agricultural use that would be in keeping with the history of the former Dun-waters Estate."

We (North Westside Ratepayers Association) immediately sent some initial emails asking basic questions but they were not answered. The NWRA is requesting the following information.

- 1) Is this 129.5 hectare parcel the "Fintry Protected Area?"
- 2) How many hectares could you possibly trade for this 129.5 hectares? The low field area is quite small particularly if you take into account the private property and the camping area which frankly could be expanded. Would this be a 129.5 hectare trade for say 10 or 20 hectares?
- 3) What would it cost to keep a farm going on the Delta? You would need farm hands, machinery, etc. etc. Who would do the health testing and what would that cost be? Would it interfere with the drinking water supply? Fintry is a delta afterall.
4. Is this motion even valid? There was no documentation nor was this item even on the Agenda. We understand that it was a "Directors' Item" but has far

too many ramifications to be dealt with so lightly. We feel this issue needs to be given far more forethought and analysis *before* it is discussed with anyone.

I do not need to remind each of you that Fintry is one of the largest and most used parks in Western Canada. People come to Fintry to boat, swim, hike and yes to take in the history. I believe that is presently being accomplished.

The idea of dairy cattle is benevolent however what would you do with the manure, flies and even mosquitoes particularly if irrigation is needed. Mosquitoes are already problematic at Fintry Park. Of course there is also the odor associated with farming particularly in the stifling heat.

From the audio I get the sense that this "agriculturism" of Fintry park has already been discussed with politicians, bureaucrats and even UBC! We are asking the Board to revisit this item as an Agenda Item with supporting documentation and that it be given more forethought before beginning even initial discussions with anyone political. We also wish to remind all Regional Directors that this 129.5 hectare property (presumed to be Fintry Protected Area) needs to remain under the stewardship of the RDCO for its intended purpose.

The NWRA has sent this letter to each of you as it appears initial discussions have already taken place by some Board members and we feel we need to act expeditiously.

Yours truly

Diane Baldwin (for) Board  
NORTH WESTSIDE RATEPAYERS ASSOCIATION

cc Mary Jane Drouin  
Ron Fralick