

2.5 Individual Submissions

Throughout the course of the project, opportunities were provided for rural residents to phone, send in, or be interviewed for comments for consideration in the Rural Use Plan. A total of six unsolicited submissions were received by either the consultant or PRRD staff. They are presented in the following section by author, community and order of date received. Only those submissions from residents living with the Rural Plan boundary are included in this report. All written submissions are available on file at PRRD offices.

- Steve Metzger, Hudson's Hope (April 24, 2003 – written submission)
- Ed Forrester, Clearview; (June 12, 2003 – telephone comments)
- Jack Chapman; Farmington (July 8 and August 8, 2003 – telephone comments)
- Karen Goodings; Cecil Lake (July 9, 2003 – written submission)
- Helen Vokaty; 244 Rd (Sept. 30, 2003 – email submission)
- Nor'Pioneer Women's Inst.; Rose Prairie/Cecil Lk (Oct.16, 2003 – fax submission)
- Katarina Keuth; Rose Prairie (Oct 17, 2003 – interview comments)

**Individual Submission: Steve Metzger, Hudson Hope
April 24, 2003**

**RURAL LAND USE IN THE PEACE RIVER REGIONAL DISTRICT
CONCERNS ABOUT COALBED METHANE DEVELOPMENT**

Presented to the PRRD Rural Issues Committee
Public Meeting in Hudson's Hope

24 April 2003

In the face of Coalbed Methane Development (CBM), we feel that it is necessary for the PRRD to increase its authority and control over industrial development on rural lands, especially rural lands that are in use for agricultural or residential purposes. While we are particularly concerned about CBM in the Peace River Valley, and more specifically in the Hudson's Hope area, all land, both Crown and private, within the PRRD must be adequately protected.

CBM development has the potential to drastically alter the environmental, physical, social, and economic conditions that currently exist in the PRRD. The profound transformations of rural landscapes in other areas which have undertaken CBM development point to the need for stringent controls over development on such a large scale. The PRRD has more control over house construction than it does over large-scale developments such as CBM. This situation needs to be rectified.

To build a house in the PRRD the builder must obtain a building permit. Detailed construction plans are required before a permit can be issued. Engineering consultation may be required for foundations in particular soil conditions and for non-mainstream construction techniques. There is a requirement to have a health permit (yet another level of control) prior to a building permit being issued for houses that will not be connected to a public sewer system. All work (construction, electrical, plumbing, and some aspects of landscaping) must be inspected and approved throughout a project. There are penalties for non-compliance.

All of this for one house, which has an insignificant effect on the PRRD when compared to the possible effects of large scale industrial development such as CBM. Without local and regional control of CBM development, the PRRD is in danger of being overrun by a fast-tracked process that will permanently change the nature of the PRRD.

We do not know how the change in control is to be brought about, but we do know that it needs to happen. The Provincial Government controls CBM development through the Ministry of Energy and Mines, the Oil and Gas Commission, and through other relevant government departments. The problem with this arrangement is that the Provincial Government's interests are not always those of the PRRD. The environmental and social costs paid by the PRRD may not justify the economic gains which will accrue mostly outside of the PRRD. The PRRD and municipalities within the PRRD need to fight to gain more power and control over CBM development within their boundaries.

Without increased control we are just pawns to be moved around by larger players, and that is a situation not beneficial to residents of the PRRD. Rural residents have a right to the enjoyment of their lands and the lives they have built. This right is under threat, and we believe it is the duty of the PRRD to act to protect rural residents from the potentially adverse affects of large scale developments such as CBM.

Thank you for the opportunity to make our concerns known.

Steven W. Metzger and Grace Okada

PO Box 113

Hudson's Hope, BC

V0C 1V0

Tel: 250-783-5655 Email: omnorth@pris.ca

Individual Submission: Ed Forrester, Clearview area
Telephone call to Bruce Simard
June 12, 2003

Focus: Agricultural Development: Clearview/Goodlow area

- that agricultural zoning limits ability to subdivide
- would like to see greater opportunity to subdivide; especially where there is good access along roadways; where services are available; i.e., opportunity for some from road
- concerned that new owners from southern Alberta might be developing feedlot operations in the North Peace area (large cattle or pig operations might come and area will be vulnerable to pollution
- concern about potential effects on water, creeks, etc.
- unsure/uncomfortable about existing regulations and their ability to deal with potential problems
- make sure such operations are run properly/safely and at reasonable scale

Water Sources: RE: Faye Spring, Blackfoot Park and Water Flooding

Imperial Oil wells in Peace water flood, 25-mile pipeline; wells accessed from Clayhurst Hill consider taking over this system after Imperial Oil is finished with it; to service local area River being used at Boundary Lake for down hole injection

Individual Submission: Jack Chapman, Farmington Telephone calls to InterraPlan Inc.- July, 8 and Aug. 8, 2003

Mr. Chapman said he had serious concerns about the apparent “growth-management, and urban driven” basis of the Rural Plan. The community has provided input before and is not confident that concerns will be addressed in this process, but rather its just more repetition of the same old attempt to get community acceptance. He questions whether the Rural Plan consultation would be considered a success if the community refuses to endorse it. Specific concerns:

- Objects to subdivision in Farmington (Area D); there’s a speculator in Baldonnel who is driving up and prices (quarters priced higher)
- Concerned about PRRD roles and decision-making process (unfairness about how it works), Rural Directors; there are 8 urban and 4 rural appears to benefit urban people and appears to be an urban tax grab; there is always unbalance of urban to rural representative voting (2:1); rural opinions often get outvoted
- Farmington Hall development is a principal community goal, and he feels that Fair Share funds should be accessible; there are different opinions between sites for location
- Privatization of development/subdivision should be promoted east of Dawson Creek (e.g. One Island Lake, etc.)
- Concerned about tax grab on rural property areas to support development of urban centers.
- Want to keep quality of life – this is the essential value.
- Want to see a more representative local government (e.g. reeve/advisory council) that would allow greater “local autonomy” for non-incorporated areas which could bring concerns directly to the table (PRRD Board); unfortunately, alot of the population are ignorant about local governance and decision-making; need a more fair and equitable way of cities dealing with rural areas (co-signed)
- Specific examples of urban encroachment in Farmington area (north to Rd. 214 at Mile 8 Rd., and sections of land in southern limit of City; around Ted’s Service (Arras, Deverill School); City of Dawson Ck. fringe has expanded;
- Strongly object to “unsightly” bylaw and want it removed, because of how it’s defined; e.g., abandoned truck vs. other activities e.g.; Mile 5.5 (Smith Subdivision) reported as a health hazard by local Health Officer due to activity (trailers, trusses) dangerous; has larger water system, sewer problems (runoff problem)
- Would like to see more voluntary enforcement basis instead; grandfathers’ clauses not dealing with problem; need a less regulatory; more consultative approach which relies more on community cooperation
- Want to see the PRRD to “stop taking a fresh look!” at the community; i.e. always coming back for community input on same old problem; we can enhance and promote the livability and maintain well-being of our communities ourselves; “in the minds of PRRD, they know what’s best for our community, but ...they’re wrong!”.
- Concerned about “success” of Rural Plan if doesn’t lead to Dawson Creek’s prosperity; the people here say “leave us alone”; they are not worried about prosperity, but concerned about farming; Mayors Thorlaksen and Dahlen are too strong, ambitious and political “people diddle about land use issues”

August 8 (Follow-up Phone Call from Jack and Audrey Chapman)

Additional comments:

Want to mention that Farmington Hall is the top priority, and don't want to be hooked up in a hall that's tied to the school, because there's a concern education funding may not be available, therefore concern about school closure, loss of facility; e.g., like Rolla

PRRD claims there's no funding available; we have a property available, but need to be on a prioritized list; perhaps can be negotiated, competing with urban centers who want expanding tax base; e.g. Dawson Creek (should be more fair about understanding rural needs)

Mr. Chapman was advised by the Dept. of Highways Approving Officer that the city can expand onto agricultural fringe, with approval of ALC, and get rezoning from PRRD, but rural communities have less say/control on subdivision, unless negotiated with the city (because they're always outvoted).

Says people in that area really don't want "a Rural Plan", but in fact may want to see it turned down if they don't agree with it; will they be able to do that?

City tax in the rural areas seems like the end result of this rural plan

Mayor's goal is to get more tax money from the rural areas

Industry forces dominate

Bylaws get turned down in the past; counter petitions get defeated – we don't have any confidence that our voices will be heard.

Individual Submission: Karen Goodings, Cecil Lake – letter attached to rural survey (reproduced from original)
Date: July 9, 2003

July 9, 2003

Reg Whiten
Bruce Simard

PRRD Land Use Planning

Dear Reg and Bruce:

As a resident of Area B, I would like to include the following concerns under the heading of Community Strengths.

Cecil Lake is one of the oldest settled areas in the B.C. Peace. The majority of residents are involved in agriculture as their major interest. I believe one of the strengths to be the return of many of our youth (ages 28-35) to the community. They are coming home because they have now married and are raising young families. They want to be able to raise their families in a safe secure environment with the opportunity to school their children at Clearview. The area at Clearview also provides the youth with an opportunity to have good skating ability. An ability of that is Courtney Unruh who is now trying out for the women's Olympic team in hockey.

While the young people are interested in agriculture they also work in the oil patch.

This community, like most of our communities, rely on volunteers to organize their community events. Our volunteers are our backbone. Whether it is the church or the hall or slow pitch family tournaments, it is the volunteers who carry the load. One such organization that is celebrating their 70th anniversary this year is the Nor'Pioneer Women's Institute. The W.I. does an annual banquet, in the fall, to raise money for residents who have emergency situations like medical travel, or homes lost to fire.

So, our most important resource is loving, caring, people with a real sense of community.

Community Challenges:

I want to touch on two areas in particular.

1. In the PRRD By-law No. 820, 1993, under 2.2 Rural Resource – Agricultural.

We need to look at the motherhood statements that are made are really define what we support.

I am referring to support of agriculture and wildlife under the same set of objectives. These two are becoming increasingly difficult to manage.

The increase in the purchase of property by organizations such as Ducks Unlimited in Ag. areas. This could be better defined in the new OCP.

Possibly one of the avenues for control would be a stipulation that these types of organizations would have to have a public process to determine whether this is what a community really wants.

While my second concern is not relevant at this time to Cecil Lake, it is to areas under subdivision. For example, Tea Creek Ridge, Grandhaven, etc.

When I met with Minister Neufeld, I brought up the oil and gas industry and the conflicting (by my estimation) ministries. His comment back to me was to enquire where we were with our OCP. It was as though he would accept an OCP that restricted land tenure sales in subdivisions. I believe that we should pursue this idea with a vengeance.

The conflict comes with the restrictions of the ALC to subdivide except where agriculture is not viable. If they want to have certain areas for subdivision then they need to recognize that we cannot have the O&G industry drilling and producing in the same area.

Thank you for considering my concerns.

Karen

P.S. Bruce, I think you should look at the joint planning process and consider some type of restriction in the area similar to the above.

Individual Submission: Helen Vokaty, 244 Rd. (Hwy 29) – email submission to PRRD, Dawson Ck. Office

Date: Sept. 30, 2003

Bruce Simard
Director of Development Services
Peace River Regional District

September 30, 2003

Dear Sir:

I would like to address the Peace River Regional District's new rural community plan and zoning by-law. It is of the utmost importance that something be done about the proximity of sour gas wells to residential areas. At the moment, it is the Oil and Gas Commission and oil and gas companies who decide where gas wells will be drilled. The danger of continuously breathing even low levels of hydrogen sulphide include permanent brain damage and cancer. You are perhaps unaware that the rural community of Baldonnel has one of the highest rates of cancer in the province, this due to the fact that it is ringed by sour gas wells.

It is unacceptable that this practice continue. In a recent ruling by the Advisory Committee of the Oil & Gas Commission (see Application for Reconsideration FY04-02), the committee addressed the health and safety concerns of residents (in this case, those on Old Hope Road, Charlie Lake), and chastised the OGC for having the same rules for sour gas wells as for other types of wells. They also strongly recommend that in future, the Commission include regional health authorities when decided where sour gas wells are located.

I proposed that the PRRD's new rural community plan adopt a minimum 5 kilometre set-back from residences for all sour gas wells.

Sincerely yours,

Helen Vokaty

Individual Submission: Nor' Pioneer Women's Institute (comments reported via Fax from unidentified woman to Carla Eaton, North Peace Land-Use Planner, PRRD)

Date: October 16, 2003

Hi Reg:

Karen went to a Nor'Pioneer Women's Institute meeting the other night, and they had wanted to discuss our project. As a result, I had a call today from a woman who wanted her thoughts recorded for the project. I'm not sure what you are going to with them, but here they are:

"I don't like the idea of the old trails staying on the planning maps. There are problems during the hunting season with the misuse of trails. We have road systems now, we do not need the old trails. The trails are not recorded on the land titles system, yet so many people are not even aware that these trails are on their property. I do not want the trails on the planning maps – 'historical or otherwise'. I want to keep people from creeping around my land."

Chat to you later,

Carla

Individual Submission: Katarina Keuth, Rose Prairie (submission made by personal interview with Reg Whiten, InterraPlan Inc.)

Date: October 17, 2003

1. Concerned about, and would strongly object to any “historical-use” trails being marked or included in any new Rural Plan – trails are not marked on Land Title but may be registered on Crown land data-base if there is a need for anyone to know that information e.g. there are problems with ATV’s traveling across private land; and the risk of weeds being spread requiring hand-spraying to control.
2. Subdivision of farm quarters is another major concern to Katarina; felt that as population growth expands, recreational use also expands and impacts on farming operations; there is a need to fill existing rural community centres e.g. Farmer’s Institute land in North Pine
3. Water supply and quality issues related to oil & gas development must be addressed in this Rural Plan; new regulations only protect minimum of 15 users connected on small-systems, not individuals or remote group of wells in a common watershed (both treated, and potable sources); given that wells are very expensive to develop and maintain, attention needs to be directed towards assessing and monitoring of water quality/flow impacts.
4. Right-to-farm legislation is critical to protect farm operations; there is existing control but has to be properly re-enforced e.g. storage of oil & gas trucks on rural properties should have collection mats underneath to collect oils from seeping into the soil/water system and impact on farm water supplies;
5. Timber ownership is a “gray” area of interpretation under current laws in B.C.; farmers need to know they have to obtain a “timber-mark” from the government to ensure they own the timber;
6. Serious questions whether this Rural Plan will result in an increase in rural taxes; must ensure that agriculture is protected, and there is full public reporting;
7. The Ft.St.John LRMP does not properly protect agriculture; it has too much emphasis on environmental protection objectives (e.g.. designation of Beaton Hills grazing as part of a protected area); concerned that there was not adequate consultation with agricultural producers;
8. Concerned that wetland development promotes more duck hunting and use of lead shot that can impact on water quality if in high enough concentration of use by hunters; there should be enforced use of “bismuth” by government regulatory agencies as this type of shot is not toxic;
9. Home-based business must have priority for agriculture and not conflict with industrial uses that have environmental impact;
10. More education needs to be done in rural communities by the PRRD about zoning bylaws.

11. Highways has not been spraying ditches, and as a result, thistle & red chamomile growth is expanding (onto farmlands).
12. An issue for foreign landowners is that they have no right to vote, and given that they represent a majority in some rural areas (e.g. perhaps 60 % in Area B), they don't have the same amount of say – so this Rural Plan should reflect the type of ownership.