

Chapter 1.0 Methodology

1.1 Background

Over the course of the past few years, the goal of creating a comprehensive Rural Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw has taken shape. Following some initial pre-project planning, InterraPlan Inc. was retained effective March 27, 2003 to undertake an intensive public consultation regarding rural development issues and needs. The Plan will be prepared for portions of Electoral Areas B, D and E (Figure 1). The input received in this process will be used to generate policies to guide the PRRD's response on a range of land-use and community development topics. The key tasks undertaken by the consultant over a 9 month period from April to December included:

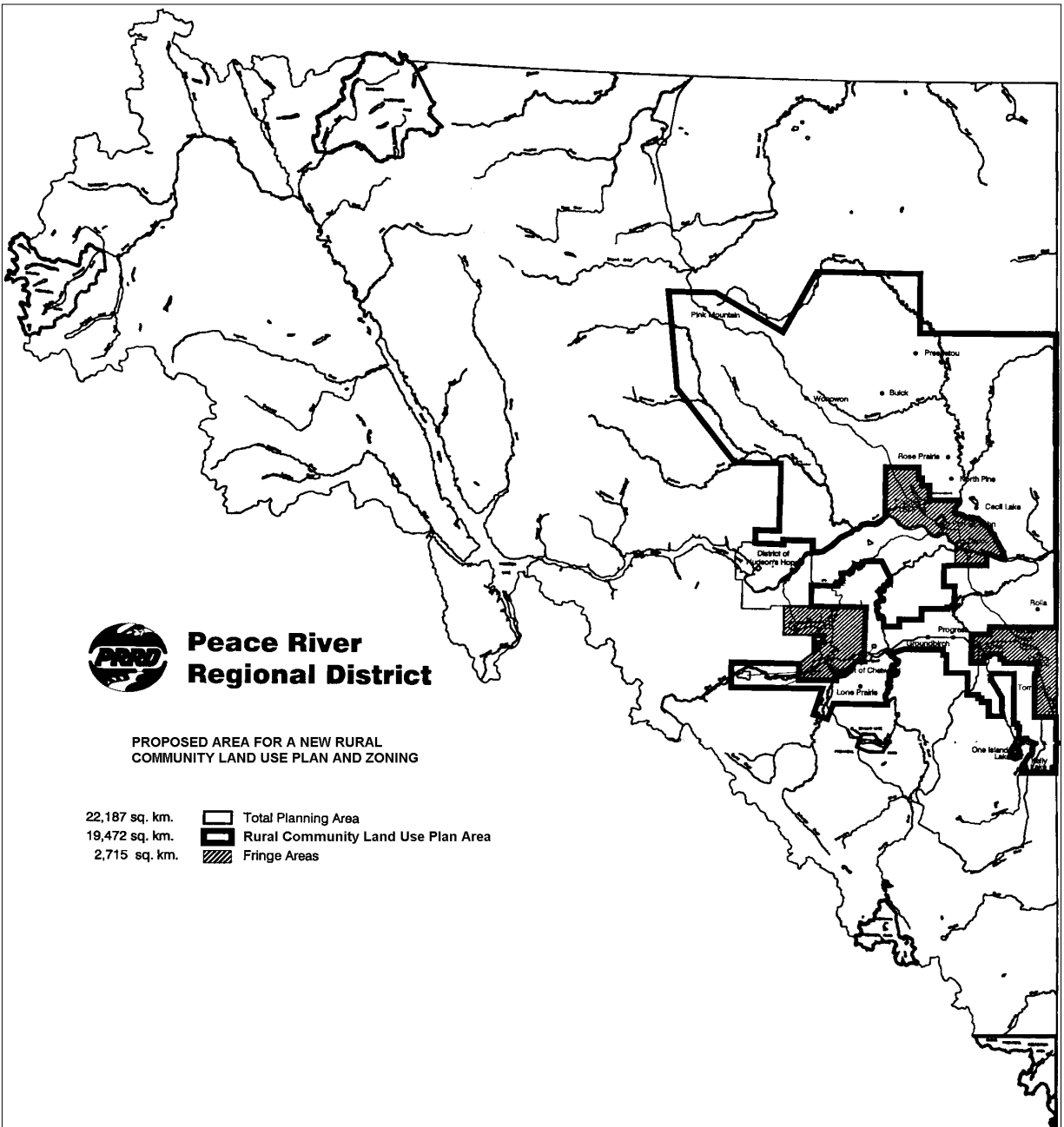
- 1) Project Initiation & Management (consultation with project manager, and Rural Issues Committee for consultation plan development, review of draft outputs including media materials, meeting preparation, and other correspondence);
- 2) Consultation Field Work (Design, distribution and analysis of rural surveys, facilitation, reporting of focus groups and individual public input)
- 3) Key Informant Interviews (Completion of interviews concerning 10 specific sectors)
- 4) Rural Dialogue Workshops (Completion of facilitated meetings in 9 clusters of rural communities around the region; and 4 consultation sessions with Treaty 8 First Nations in the Regional District)
- 5) Compilation of Dialogue Inputs, and preparation of draft and final report.

Other consultant support tasks for this project that were carried out by the project Manager and other PRRD staff including:

- Review and approval of consultation work-plan, project management deliverables, rural survey and
- Preparation of project information brochure, background information & media outputs
- Development of key informant stakeholders list
- Organization and advertising of rural community workshops, and focus groups
- Contract administration, review of draft and final reports

A range of other project-related tasks performed by the Project Manager and staff are not listed in detail here, but involved key informant interviews, internal and external liaison with project stakeholders.

Figure 1: Regional Boundaries for Rural Dialogue Initiative



1.2 Project Initiation & Management

The project involved various management tasks and consultation preplanning outputs including the following:

- **Consultation plan** (including review by Rural Issues Committee to obtain input on location/timing of community meetings, delivery of survey and consultation tasks, and attendance lists – see Appendix A)
- **Project advertising** (input to project summary brochure, prepared article and newspaper ads – see Appendix B)
- **Rural survey design & distribution** (involved development and finalization of rural community survey, review by project manager and staff, followed by testing of survey – see Appendix C)
- **Rural Community Workshops & First Nation Meetings** (developed workshop format and agenda, and First Nations invitation letters – see Appendix D).
- **Key Informant interviews** (prepared list of candidates for capturing specialized input into key sectors of interest, preparation of an interview guide – see Appendix E)
- **Internal reporting** (providing regular updates to project manager, and receiving direction on work-plan implementation)



Karen Goodings in discussion with rural residents



Reviewing Zoning Maps at the Clearview meeting

1.3 Consultation Field Work

1.3.1 Rural Surveys

This phase of work involved design, testing and delivery of a survey questionnaire to rural households throughout the targeted Electoral Areas (B, D & E). The targeted sample size was 150 with a breakdown based upon the three area's respective share of this total sub-regional population using 2001 census figures. This translates to a maximum representative sample target of 54 surveys in Area B (36%), 63 surveys in Area D (42%), and 33 surveys in Area E (22%). By the end of the field consultation period in October, 130 surveys were collected representing 87% of the target sample size. Of this sample, 8 surveys were not eligible as the respondents identified themselves as residing in Area C communities.

A research assistant was retained to administer the surveys using various techniques. Surveys were distributed and completed around the region according to the following methods:

1. Community workshop for completion either there, or later mail-in to the PRRD office.
2. Interview in person (trial surveys conducted during community workshops, and two community functions including the North Peace Rodeo, and South Peace Fall Fair.
3. Telephone interview (random selections from telephone directory according to rural area codes, as per methods outlined below)
4. Postal outlet pick-up with mail-in response (25 registered post-office locations – twice distributed during the project over a 4 month survey period); information packages were available at the questionnaire pick-up location and included both the survey and the project brochure.

Training was provided in how to conduct the telephone survey through practice sessions and use of a basic script for briefly introducing the researcher, the client, the project objectives, anonymity provisions of the survey, and explanation of the response ranking system. An average of 25 minutes was required to complete each survey.

Survey respondents were advised that they could choose to remain anonymous, and were also invited to participate in two prize draws by the consultant if they provided contact information. To remain anonymous, this contact information was removed from the completed survey by the consultant, and only a generalized list of survey participants was generated for reporting purposes. The draw was completed November 20, 2003 as advertised and was recorded with digital photos followed by notification to the winners in Montney and Sunset Prairie, respectively.

The surveys were also coded to later enable identification by rural community clusters, and this enabled recording of additional issues or supplementary comments (Part 1), and open-ended responses (Part 2).

1.3.2 Focus Groups

Three of four planned focus groups were completed as planned. Organization and notification for the focus group meetings were the responsibility of the Project Manager and his staff. The consultant was responsible for development of the focus group agendas/guiding questions, reviewing letters of invitation, preparing workshop materials, facilitating the discussion, and recording the output.

The first session was undertaken on April 29, 2003 with the PRRD's Agricultural Advisory Committee with approximately 8 producer group representatives, plus PRRD Directors (2), and PRRD staff (4) In this session, participants were given an introduction to the Rural Plan by the Project Manager, and the consultant then facilitated a discussion in four break-out groups on issues of concern to the agricultural industry in general, or their specific sector of interest. Opportunity was provided for the group to highlight specific questions or comments that they felt should be relayed to the afternoon focus group session with the Agricultural Land Commission.

The second focus group was held with the BC Agricultural Land Commission on April 29, 2003 and included northern representation from the ALC Board (2) and staff (1), PRRD planners (2) and the District Agrologist with the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food. Both of the agricultural sector focus groups yielded useful information on issues, priorities and recommendations for consideration in the rural plan.

A third focus group was held with the Upper Halfway Community Association Board of Directors was substituted for a key informant interview. This session provided input on community needs, issues and priorities and provided an opportunity to better address concerns since there was a lack of participation at the Wonowon community workshop. Since this meeting was not advertised as a public meeting, no media notices were sent out but rather the consultant was directed to conduct the meeting with the Community Association Directors and any guests they wished to invite.

A fourth session (referred to as an "Interagency Focus Group") was twice planned for delivery in Fort St. John at the North Peace Cultural Centre on Oct. 21, and on Nov.18, 2003, but did not proceed due to the lack of participant confirmations. From the PRRD's list of 20 invited representatives of 9 different provincial government agencies, only 3 had confirmed for the first scheduled session, and 2 for the second planned meeting. Instead, it was agreed that a consultation package would be sent to the various government agency personnel for their individual response. Resource materials prepared for that package included cover letter, project background pamphlets, questionnaire and a public issues information summary derived from questionnaire findings.

1.3.3 Individual Input

An opportunity has also been provided for rural residents in the project area to call or write letters regarding the Rural Plan and additional issues they would like to see on the public record. By the end of the project, there were 3 telephone conversations, 2 emails, 2 letters received, 1 faxed response and 1 personal interview. In addition, a detailed submission was received for the PRRD's future reference, but not included in the report since the respondent indicated that they resided outside the Rural Plan consultation boundaries.

1.3.4 Key Informant Interviews

To date, a total of 31 individuals/organizations were identified by the PRRD and the consultant as having particular expertise about various sectors of interest in development of the Rural Plan. Of the 20 individuals assigned to the consultant, all interviews were completed with key informants. Sectors covered to date include transportation, tourism, environment, heritage, recreation, real estate, economic development, education, water management, and industry. Considerable insight was gained about the topics in terms of current trends, issues and opportunities affecting their sector of interest. Recommendations for policy development were also presented as part of the consultation.



Break-out discussion at Rolla workshop

1.4 Community Consultations

1.4.1 Rural Area Workshops

Over the course of the project, 9 community workshops completed in the following locations with a total of approximately 109 people who signed attendance sheets. We note however, that not everyone attending the workshops signed the registration form. The workshop format and agenda focused on what the participants viewed as rural community features (issues, strengths, needs and opportunities) that should be considered in preparing the Rural Plan.

Meeting Location	Date & Number of Registrants	Communities Represented
Wonowon Elementary School	April 23, 2003 (16)	(Alaska Hwy Mi.73-220 incl.73 Mile, Wonowon, Upper Halfway, Pink Mtn., Sikanni, Buckinghorse, Trutch)
Hudson's Hope Community Hall	April 24, 2003 (16)	(Hwy 29 – Charlie Lk to HH incl. Bear Flats, Attachie, Beryl Prairie, Farrel Ck.)
Chetwynd Recreation Centre	May 13, 2003 (9)	(Hart Hwy; E.Pine to Pine Pass incl. Jackfish Lk., Lone Prairie, Hasler Flats, Willow Flats, Pine Valley, Lemoray)
Tupper Community Hall	May 14, 2003 (11)	(Hwy No. 2 E. incl. Tomslake, Tupper, One Island Lake, Kelly Lake)
Clearview Elementary School	June 23, 2003 (11)	(Cecil Lake Rd incl. Cecil Lake, Goodlow, Clayhurst, Clearview, Flatrock)
Rose Prairie Curling Rink	June 25, 2003 (18)	(Rd. 101 incl. North Pine, Montney, Rose Prairie, Doig, Osborne, Buick Ck. Prespatou)
Parkdale School	June 26, 2003 (9)	(Alaska Hwy Mi.6 – Taylor incl Bessborough, Farmington, Kilkarren, Sweetwater, Tower Lk.)
Rolla Community Hall	Sept. 15, 2003 (10)	Rolla Rd. (Rolla, Doe River, Shearer Dale, Valleyview)
McLeod School & Community Hall	Sept. 17, 2003 (9)	Hart Hwy (E. Pine to Heritage Hwy) – Groundbirch, Fellers Heights, Upper Cutbank, Sunset Prairie, Progress, E. Pine
Total Participants	109	

1.4.2 First Nations Consultations

To enable focus on the regional planning issues, needs and opportunities for Treaty 8 First Nations, meetings have been held directly in the communities. These sessions were undertaken in the following communities.

- **Halfway River First Nation (August 13, 2003):** Meeting with Council, Staff & community members
- **West Moberly First Nations (August 22, 2003):** Meeting with Chief & Council
- **Saulteau First Nations Sept. 4, 2003):** Meeting with staff (Housing & Land-Use)
- **Doig River First Nations (Nov.17, 2003):** Meeting with Council representatives, Band Administrator, & staff (Land-Use, Administration)

The First Nations sessions identified a range of input on land-use, resource mgt., community services and economic development. An open informal dialogue format was used for these meetings and the results summarized according to an non-prioritized list of key topic headings.



**Meeting at the new Doig River
First Nations Community Hall**

1.5 Presentation and Preliminary Analysis of Findings

In presenting results of the community workshops and rural surveys, a basic structure was created using six key land-use and community development themes for which the Regional District has a legislative mandate to address through its official plan, or has the capacity to facilitate resolution through working committees¹. These categories are as follows:

- **Agriculture** (i.e. agriculture related land-use and management)
- **Rural Economic Diversification** (i.e. industrial, commercial & retail business, home-enterprise & related land-use)

¹ In the analysis of Workshop Outputs, separate category for Roads & Infrastructure was included, and a category on Governance was added to reflect concerns about planning, civic representation, etc.

- **Environment** (i.e. protection and/or management of water, air, soil, & wildlife)
- **Social & Recreation** (i.e. social, recreational, heritage etc.)
- **Community Facilities & Services** (i.e. community institutional use, roads, services, utilities)
- **Quality of Life, Safety** (i.e. rural lifestyle, health & well-being, heritage, aesthetics, physical hazards)

In categorizing the input into the above themes or focus areas, our intention was to enable analysis for rural policy and plan development purposes, while avoiding interpretation on the significance of the findings. These categories also correspond to the major areas of land-use policy and zoning within existing Official Community Plans and Bylaws. The reporting format then, is intended to both facilitate ongoing plan development and enable incorporation of ongoing input, or further formal dialogue. It also reflects the open and candid nature of the rural dialogue that 'speaks for itself as a message from the community's grass-roots' and has added value in its raw, unprocessed form. The initiative was presented and advertised as a preliminary or introductory public consultation, and the public was advised that further opportunities would be provided for input to the process.

In summarizing the input, we have not attempted to classify its geographical significance, as this will be a product of further analysis by planning staff. Certain input, therefore, will be viewed as valuable as a unique, site-specific or immediate concern, while other comments were found common to one or more rural communities, and still others may be representative of certain trends (historical, emerging or perceived) across the region. It follows then, that the input will have to be reviewed to determine which issues or perceived problems may require immediate resolution, supplementary statistical research or additional consultation to ascertain the scope, and extent of certain issues or claims. In an effort to facilitate information policy review and information gap analysis, we have also made an effort to highlight certain questions that may require further examination. Finally, we conclude with a few reflections and recommendations for follow-up actions.

Report Review

Review of this report by the Peace River Regional District consisted of: (i) a Progress Report presentation to the Board of Directors on Sept.11, 2003, (ii) Draft Report submission on Jan 16, 2004, and finally (iii) Final Report presentation to the Electoral Area Directors Committee (formerly Rural Issues Committee) on March 18, 2004 (iv) Final Report submission.