

January 20, 2019

Ron Wallace, Planner
Provincial Agricultural Land Commission
201 – 4940 Canada Way, Burnaby, BC V5G 4K6

Dear Ron Wallace:

Re: ALC File 54694) – Vegetative Buffer and Fencing Plan (draft for comment)

ALC exclusion condition 25.a. reads, “the Commission receive and approve a vegetative buffer and fencing plan between the Property and adjacent agricultural lands, and that the buffer be on the non-ALR side.”

As the agent working on behalf of the Lot M landowner and a board member of Denman Community Land Trust Association (DCLTA), I am developing the materials needed to satisfy this condition. I will not be providing a formal buffer design plan, because much of the vegetative buffer, as described in Landscaped Buffer Specifications A.6 “Existing Vegetation Retention,” is already in place. In addition, a portion of the proposed buffer configuration follows an existing ditch which drains farmland to the east of Lot M and provides a deterrent to trespass, as outlined in Schedule A.5. “Water Feature and Fence.” (See attachment #1 with the project site plan, aerial photos of the proposed location of the buffer, the existing vegetation for Lot M and the 12 photos of this buffer and ditch.)

I propose that the fencing be placed on the inside of the 3 metre setback buffer area and follow the project’s eastern property line to the project’s northern property line and that the fencing then continue westward the full length of Lot M to the project’s western property line, roughly paralleling the drainage ditch. Thus located, the vegetative buffer and fencing proposal will meet four goals:

- 1) fulfill the ALC conditions of preventing trespass onto ALR land while also addressing the layout and safety concerns of the Seniors’ Affordable Housing Project;
- 2) recognize buffer area features in Lot M’s existing landscape that would discourage trespass by the project’s tenants and provide a visual buffer between the project residential use and the nearby agricultural land;
- 3) acknowledge community concerns regarding perceived hazards associated with use of barb wire and the environmental degradation resulting from the use of pressure treated posts; and
- 4) recognize that, in the experience of local farmers, including myself, it is far more likely that, over time, fencing that is visible will be maintained and repaired as needed and will remain accessible for such ongoing upkeep.

The following offers greater detail regarding points 1 - 4:

1. The portion of the project north of the drainage ditch will not have a residential use. Instead, this area will accommodate the dug well water storage, the wastewater treatment system and the drain field – all respecting the 3 metre setback required in the Denman Island Land Use Bylaw. Once these works are installed, activity will be minimal and restricted to system maintenance and grass cutting to prevent intrusion by invasive plants. I estimate that over 95% of the infrastructure will be underground. Given this proposed use, the vegetative buffer and fencing in the west part of the project property is best located along the drainage ditch, rather than along the property line.

Further, the owner of Lot M, and of the subsequent remnant ALR parcel, has expressed a clear preference for retaining her existing viewscape, which could be impaired or eliminated by a vegetative buffer separating her parcel from the project's non-tenanted area north of the drainage ditch. Also, she has a written agreement with DCLTA for her continued use of an existing path crossing the project parcel to the north of the ditch to allow her easy access the village area.

Additionally, a fenced, 'no-trespass' barrier running east-to-west would address the concern of the Denman Community Land Trust Association (DCLTA) that access to the drainage ditch might otherwise pose a safety concern for project tenants and their visitors.

2. The existing vegetation of grand fir, maple, predominant black hawthorn with its spikes, alder and wild rose in the area proposed as buffer, plus the drainage ditch, appear to fit with ALC Landscaped Buffer Specifications, Schedule A 5 and 6.

Photo # 2 shows that the eastern setback area buffer is a bit thin; this is where DCLTA will plant 3 *Cupressocyparis leylandii* (Leyland cypress). These trees are amenable to pruning, which would prevent unwanted shading of possible ALR farm use or of the project's construction area. In my experience, this tree tolerates a wide range of local soil conditions from wet to dry and requires no deer proofing beyond an initial sleeve to prevent bucks from using the stem to remove velvet from their horns.

The vegetation buffer plan includes sword ferns planted within the buffer area and several evergreen trees and shrubs planted along the setback fence west of the ditch, specifically, 3 Loquat trees and 2 Feijoa shrubs, as recommended by a local nursery specializing in edible landscapes, and 3 *Ceanothus L.* (California Lilac) for the benefit of pollinators. The Denman Island Land Use Bylaw requires a setback of 3 metres from lot lines and 15 metres for buildings and structures located near the ditch, excluding fencing; this facilitates establishing evergreen plants on the project side of the fencing (see photos of areas 5, 6, 9 and 10), which is advantageous, given that these plants will require protection from deer and removal of snow loads that could damage the plants.

3. Fencing in the draft buffer plan combines the requirement in Schedule D 5 but uses no-climb fencing rather than stock fencing and, if required, high-tensile top wire, as described in D 7. The draft plan proposes corner posts, brace posts and gate posts made of cement, using a template and expertise provided by local, second generation farmers John Isbister and John Mather. The draft plan includes two gates: one with a width of approximately 12 feet to access the remainder residence and one with a width of approximately 14 feet to access the project's wastewater and back-up water systems. The plan proposes 6-bar galvanized gates with wired-on faceplate of no-climb fencing.

As noted, the draft plan includes no-climb fencing (which uses wire 'knots' rather than welds). Combined with T-bar supports every 10 feet, the fence should make trespass unlikely by tenants, their visitors or dogs. While no-climb fencing is more expensive, it does not stretch and/or sag, trap wildlife or deteriorate the way stock fencing does.

Regarding barb wire, this community is particularly concerned about the damage that barb wire inflicts on deer and other wildlife. Unfortunately, remnants of barb wire are plentiful on the island as a result of the many farms here years ago. A member of the Denman Island Residents Association's Wild Life Committee spent countless hours removing an estimated 300 metres of derelict barb wire from Lot M, snipping it to unusable lengths and recycling it. Given community misgivings, the buffer design does not use barb wire.

Regarding pressure treated posts, this community has a strong commitment to protection of the environment from potentially damaging chemicals. In another community project, for example, pressure treated posts installed in 2015 to protect a sensitive area were removed and replaced a year later, following expressed community concern.

Although the requirements of the ALC regarding fence anchoring posts could be met by old growth cedar, these posts are a rare find and few islanders (including myself) are willing to split and share this precious resource. Concrete anchoring posts, as proposed in this plan, have been used successfully on this island for more than two decades and provide a satisfactory alternative.

4. I am a farmer with three decades of experience. I have used my experience installing and maintaining no climb fencing to draft details of the buffer plan. I also consulted with two second generation Denman Island farmers and added their views, and I used DCLTA's experience when removing derelict fencing on Lot M.

I would be grateful if you would review this draft plan and give me your comments and suggestions regarding any changes.

Thank you,
Harlene

[Note: this email text is also attached as a pdf]

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From: "Wallace, Ron ALC:EX" <Ron.Wallace@gov.bc.ca>
Subject: RE: May 9.19 Fwd: Apr.23.19 DCLTA's vegetative/buffer plan re file 54694
Date: May 13, 2019 at 9:34:24 AM PDT
To: HHolm <ananke@telus.net>
Cc: Guy Marion <gmarion7@telus.net>, Nancy Hoyano <nhoyano@telus.net>

Hi Harlene,

The Island Panel of Commissioners has reviewed your Vegetative Buffer and Fencing Plan dated January 20, 2019. The Island Panel finds the proposed vegetative buffer and fencing plan to be satisfactory and consistent with its decision by Resolution #359/2018.

Thank you,

Ron Wallace, Planner
Provincial Agricultural Land Commission
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