



BRITISH COLUMBIA CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Representing the Beef Cattle Industry of British Columbia

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December 11, 2023

Hon. Pam Alexis
Minister of Agriculture and Food
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Victoria, BC V8W 9E2
AF.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Hon. Lana Popham
Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture
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Victoria, BC V8W 9E2
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BCCA File: 2023-052
SENT BY EMAIL

Dear Minister Alexis and Popham,

RE: Supporting Healthy Ecosystems by Regulating Recreational Use of ALR Lands

The Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) in BC provides British Columbians with better assurance of food security and works to create conditions that support farming and profitable farm and ranch business. While not without some challenges, the BC Cattlemen's Association (BCCA) recognizes the importance of this land designation in supporting agricultural productive capacity, particularly in the face of increased development pressures on all land across BC. What is less recognized regarding the ALR, is that over half of the land area of this designation exists on crown land – often associated with agricultural tenures, such as grazing leases and licenses.

As with private ALR parcels, much of the crown ALR land base exists in lower-elevation areas, including valleys where soil productivity is well suited to forage production. While often subject to other overlapping tenure types, including forest tenures, these crown ALR lands create essential resources for farm and ranch business.

Over the past decade, our members across BC have noticed a marked increase in the number of recreational activities across the crown landscape, and particularly in these crown ALR areas. These activities include a variety of non-motorized and motorized outdoor recreation vehicles (ORVs/ATVs), other intensive day-uses and camping. While there have been some efforts made by government over time to ensure that recreation does not compromise other values, there are significant impacts coming as a result unregulated use and, in some cases, non-compliance with existing prohibitions and area designations.

While this trend is noted broadly, these impacts are particularly significant in landscapes like grasslands, where a new tenting site or new trail can cause permanent damage to plants and soils and encourage the continued use of these sites, making rehabilitation impossible. Compounding the negative habitat impacts is the elevated likelihood of the introduction of invasive plant species on disturbed sites, which also have significant on biodiversity and ecosystem health.

Not only do these impacts have negative ecological impacts, but they can also create significant issues for range licensees with the added costs of management created by damage to infrastructure like fences, gates and cattleguards, increased risk of wildfire and impacts to the economics of ranch businesses

through the introduction of invasive plants which diminish the quality and abundance of forage; impacting food security.

Considering the critical importance of maintaining the productive capacity and food security of BC, the need to support healthy ecosystems, and considering the impacts that un-regulated recreational activities are having on our food production capacity, the BCCA suggests that agriculture and food production should be the explicit priority of crown ALR lands, and that new measures be put in place to ensure this.

The BCCA thanks you for your attention to this critical matter and would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues and potential solutions with you and your staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brian Thomas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a yellow highlight on the word "Brian".

Brian Thomas
President, BCCA