

For immediate release
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Regional District adopts Agriculture Emergency Plan to strengthen rural resilience
Project aims to build awareness of disaster risk, increase resilience and improve response alignment in the region

Pemberton, BC – The Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) has adopted a comprehensive Agriculture Emergency Plan (AEP), marking a significant step forward in safeguarding the region's agriculture sector from the impacts of natural disasters, climate change and other emergencies.

Designed to address the unique vulnerabilities faced by farm and ranch operators across the region, the AEP aims to improve emergency preparedness and response capacity in the face of increasing climate-related risks.

The SLRD's Electoral Areas are home to more than 117 commercial farms and ranches, with many more small-scale agricultural holdings contributing to local food security and rural livelihoods. The region's mountainous terrain, challenging transportation network and limited communication infrastructure in rural and remote areas pose significant challenges during emergencies such as wildfires, flood and landslides – all of which are frequent in the SLRD.

"As climate change continues to intensify the frequency and severity of natural disasters, it's critical that our agricultural communities are equipped with the tools and support they need to plan and respond effectively," said SLRD Board Chair, Jen Ford. "The Agriculture Emergency Plan is a vital step toward building resilience and ensuring the safety of both people and livestock, while protecting food security in the region. The AEP is an important piece of our emergency management framework."

The AEP was developed by Upland Agricultural Consulting and involved extensive engagement with farmers, ranchers, horse owners and hobby farmers across the SLRD, along with consultation with First Nations, local, regional and provincial governments and emergency management and response organizations. The AEP supports the SLRD's overall emergency management framework and aligns with municipal and First Nations emergency preparedness efforts, ensuring a coordinated regional approach.

Key features of the Agriculture Emergency Plan include:

- Tailored emergency strategies for farms and ranches in remote areas.
- Implementation scenarios to guide resource allocation, including options for dedicated resources.
- Monitoring and evaluation framework to track progress and ensure accountability.
- Educational resources including checklists, contact lists, livestock relocation guides and emergency roles and descriptions.
- Recommendations in support of building capacity, enhancing communications infrastructure across remote farming areas, identifying livestock relocation zones and updating relocation guides, increasing farm registration in the provincial Premises ID program, supporting

community-specific emergency preparedness efforts and developing tailored emergency education and livestock tracking systems.

The AEP and related materials will be shared directly with the SLRD's Agricultural Advisory Committees, and will be hosted on the SLRD website. Key components of the plan, and supporting educational materials, will be featured on the SLRD's Facebook page to highlight the AEP and support emergency preparedness for the agriculture community.

The SLRD encourages all agricultural operators in the region to review these new emergency preparedness resources and register for the BC Premises ID program.

"This work is the result of extensive collaboration and reflects our commitment to ongoing engagement with the agriculture community and all partners in this important work," added Ford. "We are stronger when we work together, and by working together, we can better protect the region's agricultural assets and rural communities during times of crisis."

For more information and to access the Agriculture Emergency Plan and related materials, visit the SLRD website: <https://www.sld.ca/agriculturepreparedness>

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About the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District

Located in southwestern BC, the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) is a local government federation consisting of four member municipalities (the District of Lillooet, the District of Squamish, the Village of Pemberton and the Resort Municipality of Whistler) and four unincorporated, rural electoral areas (A, B, C, and D). Headquartered in Pemberton, which is the approximate geographic centre of the region, the SLRD delivers a wide range of local, regional and sub-regional services to approximately 50,496 residents (2021 Census as certified by the Minister of Municipal Affairs).

The Squamish-Lillooet Regional District is found within the traditional territories of several First Nations, including the Sḵw̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), St'át'imc and Líl̄wat. Small parts of the SLRD also overlap with the traditional territories of the Stó:lō, Tsleil-Waututh, Nlaka'pamux, Tsilhqot'in, and Secwepemc Nations. While the SLRD does not provide direct services to the residents of the First Nations communities located within the region, the organization is committed to enhancing relations with the Indigenous communities and First Nations within whose territories the SLRD operates.

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