

May 19, 2014 Sooke Region Farmer Meeting

Attending: Natasha Bingham, Chuck Minter, Gary Cherwonka, Teresa Willman, Marika Nagasaka, Mary Alice Johnson, Maartan Dankers, Amy Rubridge representing 6 farms.

Regrets: Mary Coll, Kirsten

A more formal group with set meetings: The group felt we should formalize ourselves as an organization representing Sooke Region Farmers. To date, we have met informally and as an advisory committee to Sooke Region Food CHI. Suggested name, Sooke Region Farmers Club (with badges and salutes no less). We think we can benefit from just sitting around and talking about what is working or not working at each of our farms. Even more, we can encourage Sooke Home Hardware to bring in the supplies we have to travel out of Sooke to get, purchase bulk items together, visit each others farms, speak as one voice when the need is there.

Political action: We discussed the recent articles in the Mirror and Times Colonist about Ed Shaw <http://www.timescolonist.com/business/sooke-farmers-call-for-agricultural-land-reserve-revamp-1.1065236> saying he felt it is important for farmers to be able to take land out of the ALR because if he sold it as farmland the price would not cover his mortgage. However, as a group we believe it is important to preserve farmland. The ALR's job is not to ensure that a farmer does not have financial difficulties. We recognize that most farmers have to have a second income coming in to survive financially in our current market but that it is important that we preserve our farmland and produce as much food locally as we can. The group suggested Mary write a letter to the editor stating this.

Sooke Food CHI has funds from our Value your Farmer, Buy Local project to get good PR out into the community promoting local farm products and we decided getting an article written about this topic would be a good use for that money. We also support continuing producing a short film about farmers issues in our community.

Farm Input Purchases: Gary who works at Sooke Home Hardware said the store would like to support local farmers by bringing in as many of the inputs we need as they can. Right now they are selling Organic Sunshine Mix bales at \$29.95 which is the same price we pay in Saanich. They have floating row cover and animal feed. Gary has agreed to be the go-between to let the owners of the store know which products we would like them to stock and the current prices we have to pay outside of Sooke to see if they are a match those prices. Send to Garycherwonka@gmail any items you currently use a lot.

Teresa's caterpillar tunnel: The group took a lot at the tunnel 14'x70' which we put together at ALM after working with Teresa on hers. We have the list of supplies needed, costs, and suppliers as well as photos which is available to the group. Costs work out to about \$1/square foot, about half the price of a Harnois or Slip Tube greenhouse

Next Meeting; July 21st, Monday at 7 pm. Venue to be decided. Pass the word on and let us know who all should be invited.