



Minister of Agriculture Lana Popham (centre) with Richmond FarmWatch leaders Michelle Li, Kelly Greene, Laura Gillanders and John Roston in Victoria.

## ***Intro to this Revitalization Survey guide***

The ALR Revitalization Committee asks you to take part in the process. Please do [their online survey](#). It has two values:

- It informs you about the current challenges and promising future of the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR).
- It lets you help make the promise a reality. Your thoughtful feedback will inform and strengthen the hand of the committee and the Minister of Agriculture, who is firmly pro-ALR.

In this guide, the intro text on each page is straight from the survey. The advice will help before you start the survey or while you do it.

When you go to [the online survey](#), you can zip through the welcome to the first questions. We suggest you do all the multiple-choice items—but pick your spots to write comments.

Whether you spend five minutes, half an hour or an hour on the survey, you will learn while being a good citizen.

Thank you for making our community and province better!

[Click here for the ALR Revitalization Survey](#)

## ALR and ALC Revitalization Survey ([Online 2018](#))—Content and Analysis

Question	Suggestions for pro-ALR responding
<p><b>What group(s) do you identify with?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Farmer or Rancher</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural Processor</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture industry group</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural interest group</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Farm land preservation group</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture sector specialist (e.g. Agrologist)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> General public</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Local government</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> First Nation government</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Elected official</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer</li> </ul>	<p><b>Suggestion:</b> If you identify with farming at all, include agricultural groups. (Speculators who buy ALR land do that all the time.)</p> <p>Example:</p> <p><b>What group(s) do you identify with?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Farmer or Rancher</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural Processor</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture industry group</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agricultural interest group</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Farm land preservation group</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture sector specialist (e.g. Agrologist)</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> General public</li> </ul>
<p><b>What is your age group?</b></p>	<p>Notice there is a considerate “Prefer not to answer” option.</p>
<p><b>Do you own land in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR)?</b></p>	<p>If not, consider the “Prefer not to answer” option.</p>
<p><b>Do you lease or rent land in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR)?</b></p>	<p>If not, consider the “Prefer not to answer” option.</p>
<p><b>In what region of the province do you live?</b></p>	<p>It’s helpful to answer this question. Metro Vancouver is <i>South Coast</i>.</p>
<p><b>Would you consider your property to be in a rural, urban, or urban fringe area?</b></p>	<p>If the correct answer can possibly be <i>Rural</i> or <i>Urban fringe</i>, it may be best to choose one of them, as you may have ALR proximity.</p>

## Theme and question, plus suggestions for pro-ALR responding

### Theme 1: A Defensible and Defended ALR

During the past 45 years, the ALR boundary has been refined through early boundary reviews, local government land use planning exercises and over 48,000 individual applications. The ALR boundary is often viewed as temporary and adjustable. The perspective that the ALR is available for urban uses perpetuates land use pressure on farmland. Continued speculation of this nature results in a focus on applications made by individual landowners to modify the ALR and detracts from pro-active work such as focussing on regional-level land use planning, analysis of permitted uses and the preservation and encouraging farm use mandate.

**Do you have any comments about ensuring a defensible and defended ALR into the future?**

**One comment example:** *Apply the Foreign Buyer Tax to farmland.*

**Note re the example:** We hear excuses related to trade deals. If there's a will, there's a way. Let's give the powers-that-be a willpower boost.

**Suggestions:** The point about the Foreign Buyer Tax is especially important.

We suggest coming back to this after answering questions on the other themes. Use your comments on this sweeping question to state pro-ALR steps that you don't manage to include in other answers.

### Theme 2: ALR Resilience

Pressure for non-agricultural uses persists on the ALR land base and on the administrative body (the ALC) that oversees it. The ALR, ALC, and agriculture in BC should be stable and resilient for generations to come.

**What do you see as the top three challenges to ALR and ALC resilience into the future?**

**Suggestions:** Come back to this after answering the final question, if at all. After Theme 10, the survey asks you to choose the three most important themes. The *themes* are *challenges*, so you could copy/paste your three key themes here as your top three challenges.

**In summary:** Don't get bogged down in Themes 1 and 2. At the end, you can click the "Previous" button to come back here if your time allows.

### Theme 3: Stable Governance

The ALC governance and decision making model can be easily changed through legislative amendments and changing government direction. The ALC's independence is often threatened from interests outside of the ALC. Independence is vital to strengthening the ALC and ALR into the future. More information about ALC governance can be found on the [ALC Operations & Governance webpage](#).

**Do you have any comments on ensuring stable ALC governance into the future?**

**A comment example:** The 2014 changes to the ALC Act (Bill 24) included many provisions that would waste the time of the ALC Chair and staff and reduce ALC independence. The Ministers of Agriculture since then have chosen not to apply those provisions, but deleting them from the act would make it harder for future Ministers of Agriculture to hinder the Chair and control the ALC.

### Theme 4: Efficacy of Zones 1 and 2

The passage of Bill 24 in May 2014 introduced amendments to the Act that included the division of the ALR into Zone 1 and Zone 2.

Zone 1: Includes Vancouver Island, South Coast, and Okanagan Panel regions.

Zone 2: Includes Interior, Kootenay, and North Panel regions.

In Zone 1, land use decisions are based on the agricultural purposes of the ALC laid out in section 6 of the ALC Act. The Act considers preservation of agricultural land, encouraging farming in collaboration with other communities of interest; and encourages local governments, First Nations, and other agencies to enable farm use and uses compatible with agriculture in their plans, bylaws and policies.

In Zone 2, the Commission is required to consider the agricultural purposes of the Commission (Section 6 of the Act as identified above), as well as Section 4.3 of the Act pertaining to economic, cultural and social values, and regional and community planning objections.

More information about Bill 24 amendments can be found on the [ALC Act and ALR Regulation webpage](#). For example, the Regulation was amended to include additional uses that allow a residential lease for a retiring farmer to remain on their property subject to conditions, and to allow a second single family dwelling if the property is at least 50 hectares and subject to conditions of siting of structures.

**What are your thoughts on the current two-zone approach?**

**Comment example:** The ALR is a provincial land-use zone. "Zone 2" was a label to put much of the ALR zone into a semi-ALR sub-zone. Much of "Zone 2" is prime farmland that will become increasingly productive and essential with climate change. In any case, an ALR panel always takes local factors into account, with no need for a sub-zone.

## **Theme 5: Interpretation and Implementation of the Act and Regulation**

As drafted, parts of the Act and Agricultural Land Reserve Use, Subdivision and Procedure Regulation (the Regulation) are 'permissive', which means that it lists the activities that are permitted in the ALR without requiring approval of the ALC; it does not list what activities are not permitted. In some instances, definitions, criteria, thresholds, and intent of the Act and Regulation are interpreted differently by local governments, ALR land owners, farmers and ranchers and the general public across the province. There is a need for clearer regulations and consistency in interpretation. The ALC is not aware when a permitted activity takes place or when a permitted activity is misinterpreted.

**Do you have comments or suggestions for improving clarity and consistency?**

**Comment example 1:** Both permitted and non-permitted uses should be listed, and anything not listed should require an application to the ALC. Any interpretation of a listed use should be made by the ALC.

**Comment example 2:** Work with technical editors who have thorough ALR knowledge and commitment. The BC Food Systems Network (BCFSN) is suited for this in whatever roles they recommend. KISS: Keep It Simple—Succeed!

(Disclosure: This survey responder has a minimal connection with the BCFSN. It consists of being on their mailing list and appreciating the remarkable work of BCFSN leaders like Kathleen Gibson, Linda Geggie and Arzeena Hamir. )

## Theme 6: Food Security and B.C.'s Agricultural Contribution

Concern over the source and quality of food we eat has raised public attention to the issue of food security and to the long-term ability of the ALR to provide a safe and adequate agricultural land base to accommodate continuous, secure food production for domestic consumption and export. Often agriculture's vital role in the B.C. economy and the potential for export and trade opportunities is forgotten in the discussion around competing land uses. More information on B.C.'s Agriculture and Seafood Sector contributions can be found on the Ministry of Agriculture's Agriculture and Seafood Statistics webpage.

### What is your level of agreement with the following statements?

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important	Not sure
How important is the province's ability to produce and provide food to the residents of BC?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How important is the province's ability to produce and provide food for export?	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Do you have any additional comments about food security and B.C.'s agricultural contribution?

**Comment example 1:** To our leaders on the ALR Revitalization Advice Committee: Help us all to celebrate our diversity and unity as supporters of the ALR for a range of ALR-permitted reasons. Almost all British Columbians support the ALR, and we support all the permitted uses.

**Comment example 2:** Personally, I think it's great that the ALR is friendly to ecological conservation too (along with conservation for agriculture).

## Theme 7: Residential Uses in the ALR

Additional dwellings, farm worker housing, “mega homes” and ‘lifestyle estates’ in the ALR occupy agricultural land. In some circumstances additional dwellings are necessary for intensive agricultural operations; however there is also demand on the ALR for additional dwellings solely for residential purposes. When there is a subdivision of ALR land, it is usually for development of another parcel and residence. In addition, the large footprint occupied by “mega homes” and acreages purchased for lifestyle estates (with little or no agricultural production) has raised concerns about use of arable land for housing and increased residential assessment values of ALR land. While not currently legislated provincially, some local governments have adopted restrictions on sizing and siting of residential uses in the ALR.

**Should residential uses in the ALR (such as number, size and siting) be regulated?**

Yes

**Who should regulate residential land uses in the ALR?**

- Local governments
- Provincial government
- The ALC
- All the above

**Do you have any additional comments about residential uses in the ALR?**

**Suggestion:** The provincial government should regulate residential land uses in the ALR, with priority over local zoning. Local governments should have leeway to be more restrictive, but they should mainly have a monitoring and enforcement role, in collaboration with the ALC.

**Comment example:** Act *immediately* to stop the rapid and unconscionable loss of ALR land use to residential uses. Don't wait for the revitalized *ALR Act* to be proclaimed. Use every means: *ALC Act, ALR Regulation, Guide for Bylaw Development in Farming Areas*, etc. For instance, act on the advice, with draft wording, that the ministry has received from Richmond conservation groups.

### Theme 8: Farm Processing and Sales in the ALR

The Regulation permits landowners in the ALR to process and retail farm products on a parcel of land subject to criteria that attempts to ensure that the product is associated with the farm or a registered co-operative. The Regulation affords farmers and ranchers the ability to produce “value added” products (e.g. berry processing, alcohol production, farm stands). Processing and retail facilities range in size and sometimes incorporate other ancillary uses such as parking lots, food services, patios, galleries, event spaces, meeting rooms, etc.; however, there is concern that some facilities are occupying large areas of arable ALR land with little connection to agricultural production on the farm. There is also concern that ALR land is purchased for the other ancillary permitted uses, but there is no agricultural production (i.e. building a retail store with extremely limited farm products for sale).

#### Should ancillary uses on the parcel be tied to agricultural production?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes
- Not sure

#### Do you have any additional comments about farm processing and sales in the ALR?

**Comment example 1:** The concerns stated above are matters requiring more enforcement. Effective enforcement is essential, with a focus on the spirit of the regulations.

**Comment example 2:** The *ALR Regulation* includes specific regulations that require a balance—so that much of the basic agricultural product that’s processed on the farm was produced on the farm. That is reasonable.

**Comment example 3:** Farm product storage, packing, preparing, processing and winery, cidery and brewery operations should be severely limited in size of farmland occupied, with small operations permitted. Industrial-size operations must take place on industrial land, not farmland. Similarly, greenhouses on an industrial scale must take place on industrial land.



## Theme 9: Unauthorized Uses

Agricultural land is sometimes used for unauthorized non-agricultural uses and some landowners expand beyond what is permitted. ALC Compliance and Enforcement officers currently handle between 300 to 400 files annually related to complaints, investigations, or actions on unauthorized uses. Some of these unauthorized uses include illegal filling (e.g. dumping soil, construction waste, concrete), commercial uses (e.g. commercial truck parking, recreational vehicle storage, scrap vehicle yards), and residential uses (e.g. additional dwellings). These activities may directly damage the agricultural land base and in some cases the damage is permanent.

**What do you think would decrease the instances of unauthorized use in the ALR? (can choose multiple)**

- Awareness and education
- Fines and penalties
- More enforcement
- Ticketing
- Other sanctions

**Do you have any additional comments on unauthorized uses in the ALR?**

**Comment example 1:** There should be an anonymous hot line to report infractions like Crime Stoppers. In many cases, the person reporting the problem knows the perpetrator.

**Comment example 2:** Clearly there is a need to ensure the ALR regulations are implemented better. That involves hiring enough regional ALR officers to do inspection, promote awareness, liaise with local governments and agricultural bodies, establish expectations and do enforcement. It may require a process of getting the methods right with a proven ALC employee who prototypes the role and then leads the orientation and performance improvement of additional officers.

## Theme 10: Non-Farm Uses and Resource Extraction in the ALR

Other activities, from agri-tourism and agri-tourism accommodation to resource extraction such as oil and gas and aggregate (sand and gravel) can take place in the ALR. Concerns about cumulative impacts of these activities and remediation of agricultural land have been raised.

**Do you have any comments about non-farm uses and/or resource extraction in the ALR?**

**Comment example 1:** Agri-tourism is desirable. Resource extraction is inevitable, and the enforced expectations need to result in the ALR land being left in a condition that is better than the original one (or, if need be, at least close to it).

**Comment example 2:** Agri-tourism should only be permitted if it represents less than 50% of the farm income. We have a mega-mansion owner in Richmond with a small plot of blueberries who wants permission to use his mega-mansion bedrooms for supposed agri-tourism to admire the blueberries. Resource extraction should only be permitted with provincial approval.

**After considering each theme, please select what you think are the top three (3) most important themes to be addressed:**

- Theme 1: Defensible and Defended ALR
- Theme 2: ALR Resilience
- Theme 3: Stable Governance
- Theme 4: Efficacy of Zone 1 and Zone 2
- Theme 5: Interpretation and Implementation of the Act and Regulation
- Theme 6: Food Security and B.C.'s Agricultural Contribution
- Theme 7: Residential Uses in the ALR
- Theme 8: Farm Processing and Sales in the ALR
- Theme 9: Unauthorized Uses
- Theme 10: Non-Farm Uses and Resource Extraction in the ALR
- Other

If you said "Other", please specify

**Comment example:** All are important.

- I chose Theme 5 because it expresses a particular need well while also being an umbrella that covers several other themes.
- I chose Theme 6 because it expresses the actual goal we are aiming for, as opposed to the means to the goal.
- I chose Theme 7 because it is so time-sensitive, with related harm—sometimes irreversible—occurring daily.

**Suggestions:**

This would be a good time to use the “**Previous**” button to go back to the beginning to do the Theme 1 and Theme 2 parts (if need be) and/or do a quick final review.

Notice that the bottom-right button is “Submit,” *not* “Next.”

**Thank you for doing the survey well!**