

## **2. (a) Rural Settlement Areas**

The *Rural Settlement Areas* encompass all lands within the electoral areas outside of *Core Settlement Areas* that are not otherwise designated as *Agricultural Areas*, *Resource Areas*, or *Provincial Parks*. In order to maintain the rural character and function of these areas, it is important to establish appropriate policies with regard to land uses and lot sizes.

With regard to lot sizes, there is existing and ongoing pressure to subdivide lands within *Rural Areas* for the purposes of creating small lots of less than 4 hectares in size. A preponderance of such lot sizes will make it increasingly difficult to maintain medium and large-size farm enterprises in the Comox Valley and will begin to change the character of *Rural Areas* as they become denser. The biggest concern is that small lots will result in the unintentional conversion of *Rural Areas* into estate residential areas, with ongoing conflicts created between residential and agricultural uses.

### **MG Policy 2A-1 – Rural Character of Rural Settlement Areas**

All new development within *Rural Settlement Areas* must maintain the rural character of its surroundings and support the function of a working rural landscape. This requires careful consideration of the permitted uses, the form and scale of development and lot sizes.

### **MG Policy 2A-2 – Minimum Lot Sizes in Rural Settlement Areas**

The Comox Valley Rural OCP shall establish minimum lot sizes in Rural Settlement Areas ranging between 4 hectares and 20 hectares, subject to soil conditions, ground water capacity, extension of existing subdivision areas, interface fire hazards and suitability of lands for rural development.

### **MG Policy 2A-3 – Alternative Minimum Lot Sizes for Agricultural Purposes**

In limited circumstances, OCP policies that allow for lot sizes less than 4 hectares, but no smaller than 2 hectares, may be considered where it is demonstrated that such lot sizes will create opportunities for small-scale, land intensive and entry-level farming. Conditions will be established for all subdivisions less than 4 hectares to secure that such lots will be used for farming purposes, and maintained as such over time, and will not become estate housing.

An overall cap on 2 hectare lots within Rural Settlement Areas should also be established. There should be regular monitoring of farm sizes to ensure that 2 hectare lot sizes are being used for farming and that there is an adequate supply of larger farm parcels (20 hectares or more). To assist with implementation, an inventory of all Rural Settlement Area parcel sizes should be conducted as part of the agriculture plan review to ensure a balanced distribution of parcel sizes that maintains the

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rural nature of these areas and determines the success of developing small scale agriculture operations through 2-hectare subdivisions.

#### **MG Policy 2A-4 – Land Uses within Rural Settlement Areas**

The Comox Valley Rural OCP shall establish a range of permitted uses within *Rural Settlement Areas* as follows:

- (a) Agriculture and related uses shall be permitted. Such uses include food processing establishments, distribution centres, farmers markets and agricultural research facilities;
- (b) Lots smaller than 4 hectares, but not smaller than 2 hectares, may be permitted provided lands are farmed and agriculture is the primary use on the property. The OCP policies should provide direction and definition for farming to set these conditions.
- (c) Non-residential and non-agricultural-related uses shall be limited to land and servicing capabilities. These will mainly be associated with on-site businesses, home-based businesses, small-scale accommodations, small-scale tourist-related uses. Commercial uses should be clustered within specific service areas (e.g., Merville, Black Creek, Fanny Bay).
- (d) Resort developments shall be permitted subject to restrictions on the overall size of development and conditions that such development do not include full-time residential uses, is not located in drinking watersheds and do not locate adjacent to the Inland Highway.
- (e) Renewable energy infrastructure and facilities (e.g., windmills, solar farms) shall be permitted on all lots, as determined by each local government.

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