

To: Regional and Corporate Services Committee

Date: 2023-09-14

From:Carolynn Lane, Environmental Services Coordinator

File No: 5365-23-013

Subject: CleanFarms Agricultural Plastics Regional Recycling Pilot Project

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Fraser Valley Regional District Board enter into contract with CleanFarms to implement a 5-year agricultural plastics recycling program within the region.

BACKGROUND

As presented in an earlier memo to the Board (April 2023), there is an opportunity for the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) to participate in a region-wide program to assist with the recycling of agricultural plastics. This plastic waste, largely **associated with the dairy industry and termed “Ag plastics”**, includes bale and silage wrap, grain bags, film, and twine. These plastic products are not part of any regulated recycling programs and often end up in burn piles, buried on site, or disposed of in local landfills.

In an effort to address the ongoing issue of Ag plastics in the region, FVRD staff have been engaged in discussions with CleanFarms, a non-profit stewardship organization that delivers recycling programs for agricultural products. CleanFarms have relationships with existing contractors and recyclers, have the ability to create economies of scale for non-regulated products, and have been operating the successful Ag plastics collection program in Agassiz (District of Kent) for the past decade. This program cannot continue to operate without additional funding, and because farms outside of Agassiz could also benefit from a program, a regional approach has been proposed.

DISCUSSION

If funded, the regional pilot program will take place over five years, the duration recommended to adequately onboard interested farmers from around the region, to test program logistics, and to assess outcomes. The pilot project will begin as a continuation of the program already in place in the District of Kent and will allow that program to continue seamlessly. Additional farms throughout the region will be added each year, to eventually include up to 62 participating farms.

Much of the agricultural plastic currently going to landfill or being burned or buried on site has a **market value and can be turned into something useful (Figure 1)**. **Harnessing the value of this “waste”** can result in numerous economic and environmental benefits. When plastic is recycled, it reduces the amount of material needed for new products, saves energy and reduces greenhouse gases. As a

result, less potentially harmful contaminants enter the soil, groundwater, and streams, leading to cleaner air and healthier communities.



Figure 1. Plastic resin from Ag plastics can be made into plastic fence posts, composite lumber, or new agricultural film, among other items.

Goals of the program include:

- Reducing the volume of material landfilled or disposed of on-farm (burial or burning),
- Estimating Ag plastic volumes used in the region,
- Identifying end-markets or other management options for Ag plastics, **and** allowing for new and innovative recycling processes and upcycled products,
- Collecting and analyzing data and information (storage conditions, collection period, level of participation),
- Documenting project learnings and results, and ultimately,
- Utilizing resulting information to lobby the Provincial Government to establish a Province-wide stewardship program for agricultural plastics.

For reference, the CleanFarms proposal is attached.

COST

The total value for this five-year program is \$499,200, half of which will be covered by CleanFarms. If supported, the remaining \$249,600 would be paid by the FVRD from the Regional Solid Waste Budget over the five-year term of the proposed program, as follows:

- Year 1 (2024): \$35,550
- Year 2: \$36,600
- Year 3: \$75,250
- Year 4: \$75,350
- Year 5: \$26,850
- Total: \$249,600

Staff will also continue to explore grant-funding opportunities that could potentially reduce overall program costs to the FVRD.

The Regional Solid Waste budget does not receive funding from general tax requisition like other budgets. Instead, it is funded through a tonnage levy on municipal solid waste that is disposed in or from our region. This funding is intended to be used to enhance waste diversion efforts and the program's Appropriated Surplus account is adequately funded to pay for this initiative.

COMMENTS BY:

Stacey Barker, Director of Regional Services: Reviewed and supported.

Kelly Lownsborough, Chief Financial Officer/ Director of Finance: Reviewed and supported.

Jennifer Kinneman, Chief Administrative Officer: Reviewed and supported.