



THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF PEEL
PEEL AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY WORKING GROUP

MINUTES
PAAWG 2021-04

The Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group (PAAWG) met on October 13 at 7:00 p.m. Due to efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19, only the Chair of PAAWG and Regional staff were in attendance at the Mississauga Room, 10 Peel Centre Drive, Suite A, Brampton, Ontario. Others participated in the meeting via Microsoft Teams.

Members Present: Gary Mountain, Chair, Peel Soil and Crop Improvement Association
Tom Dolson, Peel Federation of Agriculture
Manjari Mehta, Citizen-at-Large
Paul Risebrough, Citizen-at-Large
Ed Russell, Peel Soil and Crop Improvement Association

Members Absent: Kristen Carberry, Peel Federation of Agriculture
Stephen Dasko, Regional Councillor
Karen Hutchinson, Caledon Countryside Alliance
Jennifer Innis, Regional Councillor
Merissa Nudelman, Ecosource
Michael Palleschi, Regional Councillor
Brian Wannamaker, Citizen-at-Large

Staff: Don Campbell, Principal Planner, Region of Peel
Marco Di Nizio, Junior Planner, Region of Peel
Brent Kuefler, Junior Planner, Region of Peel
Ricardo Razao, Intermediate Planner, Region of Peel
Melanie Williams, Principal Planner, Region of Peel
Stefania Mirza, Council and Community Relations Officer, Region of Peel
Nadine Abrams, Rural Clean Water Program Coordinator, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
Patrick Esson, Rural Clean Water Program Coordinator, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
Victoria Kramkowski, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
Mark Eastman, Senior Coordinator, Agricultural Outreach, Credit Valley Conservation
Holly Shipclark, Coordinator, Agricultural Outreach, Credit Valley Conservation

Ben Roberts, Economic Development, Town of Caledon

Guests: None

1) Welcome and Opening Remarks

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by Gary Mountain who called the roll.

2) Declarations of Conflict of Interest

None declared.

3) Review and Approval of October 13, 2021 Agenda

Moved by Tom Dolson.

That the Agenda for the October 13, 2021, meeting of the Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group be approved.

Carried PAAWG 2021-21

4) Review and Approval of Minutes from August 2021 Meeting

Moved by Tom Dolson.

That the Minutes of Meeting 2021-03 of the Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group, held on August 26, 2021, be approved.

Carried PAAWG 2021-22

5) ALUS Peel Pilot Project - Update

Don Campbell, Research and Analysis, Region of Peel

Don Campbell provided an overview of the history of ALUS across Canada and Ontario. Mr. Campbell mentioned that ALUS is a non-profit organization whose mission is to support farmers who undertake projects providing ecological services to their communities. Mr. Campbell set the context of how ALUS is complementary to the Peel Rural Water Quality Program (PRWQP) and provided information on the development of the ALUS Peel Pilot to date.

The Memorandum of Understanding between ALUS Canada and the partners (TRCA, CVC, and Region of Peel), was described. PAAWG will be responsible for advising the partners on program implementation and for approval of annual

payments. PAAWG will help set yearly program and project targets. The MOU is a three-year pilot project that will be evaluated at the end of its term.

Questions/Discussion

None.

6) ALUS Peel Pilot Project – Draft Guidelines

*Nadine Abrams, Toronto and Region Conservation
Patrick Esson, Toronto and Region Conservation
Mark Eastman, Credit Valley Conservation*

Mark Eastman made a presentation on the guidelines developed by staff for implementation of the ALUS Peel Pilot. He noted that ALUS Peel is a three-year pilot with a five-year annual payment program. This is a unique situation as ALUS Canada is partnering with an established stewardship program. The draft guidelines establish four PRWQP project categories that will be eligible for additional funding from ALUS Peel. The PRWQP will provide the grant to establish the project, while ALUS Peel will provide for the annual payments. Applicants will need to apply to both the PRWQP and ALUS Peel to be eligible for the annual payments, or the applicant can choose to apply to only the PRWQP. It is recommended that ALUS Peel be integrated within the existing fabric of the PRWQP guidelines. Conservation Authority staff who are involved with the PRWQP will continue to work with the applicants and present projects anonymously. PAAWG's role is to provide the review and approval for both PRWQP and ALUS projects. PRWQP and ALUS Peel guidelines will apply.

Annual payments

Annual payments are to be set at or below rental market value, based on local land rental rates. In Peel, rental rates fluctuate in and out of the Greenbelt Plan area. It is proposed that a \$150/per acre rental rate be selected as an average.

Questions/Discussion: PAAWG felt that this rental rate was fair and a sufficient incentive to participate in the ALUS Peel program. An assessment of rental rates between Caledon and Brampton/Mississauga was not undertaken but the review of rental rates within and out of the Greenbelt Plan area captures this difference. Rental rates and annual payments are not connected to the soil productivity of the land. PAAWG concluded that five-year terms may be more appropriate than three-year terms. PAAWG requested the ability to reassess the annual payment to reflect changes in rental rates. Staff indicated that this could be considered but contracts could not be changed mid-term and rate changes would only be applied to a new contract.

Project Eligibility

Annual payment is calculated on a per acre basis of the land that is committed to the project and becomes unavailable for production. Payment is for land that is farmed, reasonably farmed, or could be farmed, that is no longer available for production. Payments will not be given to projects that protect lands that are already naturalized (e.g., woodlot protected by fencing from livestock). Payment is limited to 20% of the applicant's workable land.

Questions/Discussion: PAAWG inquired why the area had to be previously farmed. The lands need to pass a test of being environmentally beneficial for retirement or could be land used for agriculture. Payments cannot be made to simply protect what already exists naturally without influence from the landowner.

PAAWG inquired if there were grants for creating wetlands. There are grants for creating wetlands and it is proposed that wetlands be eligible for ALUS funding.

Project Categories

Erosion control structures, livestock restriction fencing, natural area enhancement and creation, and tree planting are the existing PRWQP project categories that integrate with the ALUS Peel program to receive annual payments. Rates are consistent with the PRWQP but annual payment is a new feature. Annual payments would be reduced for grasslands under the natural area creation category to reflect that there is still profit from the grazing of the land. Tree planting in high priority areas identified by Conservation Authority technical studies will be targeted.

Questions/Discussion: PAAWG indicated that erosion control structure projects along municipal drains would be beneficial to landowners, as municipal drains are having a large impact on farm fields. PAAWG felt that the guidelines needed further clarification on the types of native grasses and rotational periods an applicant should anticipate following as herd health is to be considered in grassland maintenance and grazing access timelines. PAAWG expressed concern over the creation of naturalized areas that could have impacts on neighbouring properties (e.g., creation of a wetland placing a regulated area onto another property). There is a position paper forthcoming from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture on this concern.

ALUS Peel Conservation Agreements and Monitoring

Landowners participating in ALUS Peel will be required to sign conservation agreements. ALUS-Peel conservation agreements are not registered on property

title but can be transferred to a new landowner. However, carbon and ecological offset credit rights are held by ALUS Canada. Landowners and ALUS Peel can terminate their agreements, however, costs and payments will be pro-rated and recouped. Projects will be monitored, and ALUS Peel staff will have permission to access the sites. Participants are required to monitor and self-report on the project, but they may also be subject to review by AgriCorp.

Questions/Discussion: PAAWG requests that program staff ensure landowners are notified before land is accessed for monitoring as trespassing on agricultural lands has become a large issue in Peel.

Annual Payments for Past Projects

ALUS Canada allows for past PRWQP participants (back to 2004) to enroll land from a past project for annual payments, if a new project is approved under ALUS Peel of the same acreage or greater. Retroactive payments are an opportunity to re-engage past PRWQP participants in new projects, highlight early adopters, and showcase matured past projects. However, retroactive payments are subject to available dedicated funding from ALUS Canada to the ALUS Peel program.

Questions/Discussion: PAAWG was supportive of retroactive payments. It was noted that annual payments are taxable which is different than the PRWQP grant. PAAWG would like annual payments to be tax free as ALUS grants must be disclosed by farmers as income on their income tax files. This comment will be passed along to ALUS Canada.

Motion

Moved by Paul Risebrough.

That the Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group endorse the ALUS Peel Pilot Project Guidelines.

Carried PAAWG 2021-23

7) **Caledon Employment Survey** *Ricardo Razao, Intermediate Planner, Region of Peel*

Ricardo Razao began by explaining that the employment survey as a voluntary survey on behalf of the Town of Caledon. The overall purpose of the employment survey is to collect and analyze data to monitor economic trends, service requirements, analyze local sectors, and inform policy changes. There will be a change in the methodology compared to previous surveys where the Region will hire a call centre consultant to collect information from farms in Caledon through phone calls. The survey was postponed in 2020 due to the

pandemic. The calls are going to begin in late October. Letters will be emailed to businesses with a link to an online survey. The survey contains general questions and farm business questions.

The next steps are to reach out to the Peel Federation of Agriculture to send the online survey link to its members and to have consultants administer the calls.

Questions/Discussions

None.

8) Adjournment

Moved by Ed Russell.

That the October 13, 2021, Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group meeting be adjourned.

Carried PAAWG 2021-24

The meeting stood adjourned at 8:48 pm.

The next Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group meeting will be held on November 18, 2021, at 7:00 p.m.