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Water licence angst

Experts sound alarm with time ticking on well registration

KATE AYERS
& PETER MITHAM

DUNCAN – It’s been more than three years since Ken Ellison applied for licences to draw water from the three wells on his farm in the Cowichan Valley as part of a new groundwater management regime introduced under the Water Sustainability Act in 2016.

With water restrictions in his area becoming more common, the idea of having priority access in the event of water restrictions under the first in time, first in right (FITFIR) provisions of the new


See PROVINCE on next page ↩



Green gold

Love it or hate it, asparagus can be a remarkably profitable cash crop for farmers who are not only willing to work hard to get the crop in the ground but have a lot of patience. Sutcliffe Farms in Creston is the province’s largest producer at 100 acres, but owner Doug Sutcliffe says acreage is on the decline thanks in part to cheap imports. Jackie Pearase looks at the state of asparagus farming in BC, starting on page 33. SUTCLIFFE FARMS

Growing more with less water



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Pandemic puts pinch on finances

PETER MITHAM

ABBOTSFORD – With a return to normal operations on the horizon, the BC Agriculture Council is holding the course on spending this year while continuing to support farmers facing financial challenges.

The council unveiled a million-dollar budget at its annual meeting on April 8 that included a deficit of \$223,205. This reflected both a financial pinch from the pandemic as well as high expenses based on expectations regular

meetings would resume by late spring 2021.

“We may have been optimistic on that assumption,” noted executive director Reg Ens in presenting the budget to member organizations. “We could see reductions in some operating expenses.”

Program revenues declined as a result of this year’s agriculture gala moving online and lower sponsorship revenue.


BCAC has also seen base membership dues drop from last year’s expectation of \$376,000 to \$291,225. This

reflects a write-down of dues owed by the Mushroom Growers Society as well as the BC Salmon Farmers Association’s decision to withdraw from BCAC at the end of March. BCSFA cut its own membership dues by 10% in response to COVID-19 and in turn cut expenses by withdrawing from BCAC.

Meanwhile, a levy for public trust initiatives – put on hold last year – was increased from \$75,000 to \$100,000 and spread among the remaining

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