

SHARED-USE AGRICULTURAL PROCESSING FACILITY

Request for Letter of Support

Lindsay Routledge
March 5, 2025

1.1 Request for Letter of Support

Flat Cat Ranch is applying for grant funding from the Peace Agricultural Impact & Opportunities Initiative Grant and the South Peace Mackenzie Trust for the proposed Shared-Use Agricultural Processing Facility project. As such, a letter of support is kindly requested from the Peace River Regional District prior to the grant application due date of March 31/25. A brief introduction and project description is provided below. If the Board requires any further details, please reach out to Lindsay Routledge at Flat Cat Ranch.

1.2 Introduction

Flat Cat Ranch is an orchard dedicated to growing fruit regeneratively and using it to supply high quality fresh fruit to customers. Flat Cat Ranch will also produce all-natural craft cider for the local craft beverage market. The farm is located at Mile 59 of the Alaska Highway near Charlie Lake, BC in Electoral Area “B” of the Peace River Regional District.

The orchard at Flat Cat Ranch was established in 2021 when over 500 apple and pear trees were planted. The orchard is expected to start producing fruit in 2026, with full production by 2031. Five varieties of berries will be interplanted into the orchard in 2025. Once fruit production begins and the farm’s processing requirements are met, Flat Cat Ranch will also operate as a farm-crafted cidery.

1.3 Project Description

For Flat Cat Ranch to produce craft cider, a processing facility will be required. The challenge is there is no regional infrastructure that supports post-production activities required for the commercial sale of agri-food and beverage products. A processing facility is a considerable undertaking in terms of initial capital investment and long-term economic viability. However, grant and funding support for the agriculture industry is available. Specifically in the Peace Region, unique programming exists for projects that directly benefit the agricultural community, agrifoods economic activity, and job creation.

As such, Flat Cat Ranch is proposing the construction of a shared-used agri-foods and beverage processing facility (“the facility”). The on-farm facility would contain a wash/pack station, fruit pressing/juicing equipment, commercial kitchen, tasting room, and storefront. A facility of this nature would not only meet the processing needs of Flat Cat Ranch but would include additional specialized processing equipment to meet the needs of other agricultural producers and agri-food and beverage businesses in the region.

In addition to producing value-added products at the shared-use facility, regional producers would be able to sell their products at the facility’s onsite tasting room and storefront. The farm’s location along the Alaska Highway makes it easily accessible for Charlie Lake community members, tourists, and those travelling the highway daily for work.

Essentially, a facility of this type in the Peace Region would provide producers with affordable access to production space and specialized equipment for processing agricultural commodities. While at the same time, increasing a growing horticulture industry that would not only diversify the economy further, but also create jobs and support local food security.

Upon successfully securing funding, construction of the facility at Flat Cat Ranch would begin in the fall of 2025. The facility would be operational by the end of 2026, with full project completion by the fall of 2027.

1.4 Industry Overview

In 2017, the North Peace Economic Development Commission released an evidence-based business case addressing the commercial viability of the horticulture sector in the region, with an emphasis on food production. The study, titled *North Peace Horticulture Sector Business Case and Marketing Strategy* “revealed a strong foundation for growing the commercial horticulture sector in the North Peace region; however, it also identified...critical gaps affecting...sector development”. Four of the seven gaps could be addressed with the proposed facility, including:

- 2) There is no regional infrastructure that supports post-production activities required for commercial horticulture sales, including a connection to the province’s food and beverage processing industry.*
- 3) There are no regional education and training opportunities for commercial horticulture.*
- 4) There are no northern horticulture research and science facilities or initiatives.*
- 7) Marketing and promotion of the region, the sector and the products originating in the region is negligible.*

1.5 Market Research

In January of 2025, agricultural producers in the PRRD were invited to participate in a survey related to the proposed shared-use processing facility. Twenty-three responses were received. Please see the attached Appendix A for cumulated responses to the question related to processing equipment needs. The specialized equipment identified is being included in the project proposal.

1.6 Regulatory Requirements

Please see the attached Appendix B for project related email correspondence with the PRRD Development Services Manager, Cody Roberts.

The facility will need to meet the regulatory requirements of the following agencies during construction:

- Agricultural Land Commission (Permitted Use & Soil Removal)
- Peace River Regional District (Building Code)
- Northern Health (Commercial Kitchen)
- BC Liquor Permits

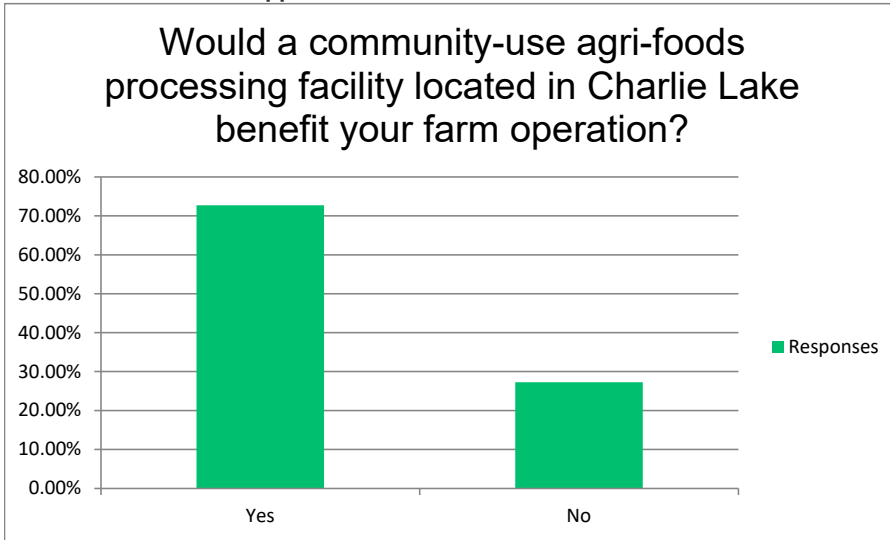
1.7 Appendices

Appendix A

Community-Use Agricultural Processing Facility

Would a community-use agri-foods processing facility located in Charlie Lake benefit your farm operation?

Answer Choices	Responses	Count
Yes	72.73%	16
No	27.27%	6
If yes, what type(s) of processing equipment w		16
Answered		22
Skipped		1



Respondent ID	Response Date	If yes, what type(s) of processing equipment would be useful?	Tags
118809476333	Feb 26 2025 11:33 AM	Cider, wine, juice making & bottling equipment. Commercial kitchen. Sausage, jerky making & packaging equipment. Canning, preserving, & fermenting equipment.	
118789856730	Jan 28 2025 07:59 PM	Juice press, bottler, bottle label machine, cold smoker, vacuum sealer	
118789719762	Jan 28 2025 03:23 PM	Possibly. We just finished a project to meet our needs for juice and preserves but not our freeze-dried. If that was an option in Charlie Lake, we may be able to benefit from it.	
118788869216	Jan 27 2025 02:27 PM	Freeze dryer	
118788672895	Jan 27 2025 10:37 AM	.	
118788341990	Jan 27 2025 01:19 AM	Dehydration and packaging	
118788287871	Jan 26 2025 09:47 PM	A slaughterhouse/ meat cutting facility	
118788281308	Jan 26 2025 09:13 PM	Grain grinder	
118788154909	Jan 26 2025 01:04 PM	Meat Slicer, Grinder, dehydrator, smoker, cider & wine making equipment, commercial kitchen, freeze dryer	
118787918266	Jan 25 2025 07:51 PM	Charlie Lake is a bit far for us, however, a facility that could be used for mass production of baked goods would be helpful.	
118787899585	Jan 25 2025 06:08 PM	commercial kitchen facilities, meat processing	
118787767925	Jan 25 2025 10:15 AM	For me it is too far away, but I absolutely support the idea for the local residents	
118787524235	Jan 24 2025 05:51 PM	Meat grinder, cutter and smoker.	
118786843640	Jan 23 2025 08:12 PM	I live off solar, power would be crucial to have machines going.	
118784166333	Jan 20 2025 01:43 PM	Stove, fridge, canning equipment	
118784054659	Jan 20 2025 10:45 AM	Cider making equipment, certified commercial kitchen	



Cidery

Lindsay Routledge <flatcatranch@gmail.com>
To: Cody Roberts <Cody.Roberts@prrd.bc.ca>

Wed, Mar 5, 2025 at 1:09 PM

Hi Cody,

Thank you for confirming that the proposed facility is allowed under the PRRD zoning bylaw. It will also meet allowable usage as per the ALC regulations given that produce from the property will be used.

Angele's Drafting & Design is helping me with the calculations related to soil removal. I've provided her with the dimensions for all of the buildings on the property. If required, I will file a NOI with the ALC at least 60 days prior to construction. I will keep you posted.

Thank you for the building permit application. Our intention is to obtain a permit, even though we are not in the mandatory area.

Kind regards,
Lindsay

On Wed, Mar 5, 2025 at 11:49 AM Cody Roberts
<Cody.Roberts@prrd.bc.ca> wrote:

Good morning Lindsay,

I apologize for missing your phone calls, I have been looking into the proposal for zoning compliance as well as building code compliance. It looks to be allowed under our zoning bylaw 1343,2001, and it is an allowable usage under the ALC regulations if produce from the property is used. I have attached the regulations for your review.
https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/30_2019 Section 13 has the details.

I think an NOI for the soil removal will be needed if the area to be removed is above 1000m². https://www.alc.gov.bc.ca/assets/alc/assets/legislation-and-regulation/information-bulletins/information_bulletin_07_-_soil_or_fill_uses_in_the_alr.pdf

The property is outside of our mandatory building permit area, for this reason obtaining one is not required but it is available if requested.

The application can be found here, <https://prrd.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/page/development-services/Simple-BP-Application-Package.pdf>

If you have any questions, I am available tomorrow to discuss.

Thank you,

Cody Roberts, RBO | Development Services Manager

Direct: 250-785-8084 | Cody.Roberts@prrd.bc.ca

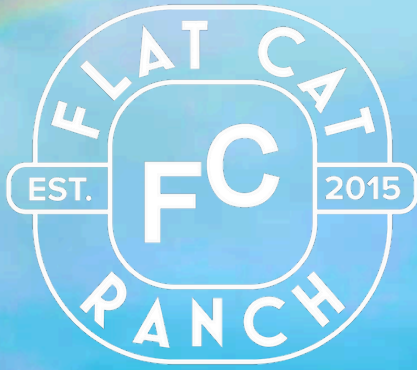
PEACE RIVER REGIONAL DISTRICT | 9505 100 Street Fort St. John, BC V1J 4N4

Toll Free: (24 hrs): 1-800-670-7773 | Office: 250-785-8084 | Fax: 250 785-1125 | prrd.fsj@prrd.bc.ca



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SURVEY LINK

Copy and paste link:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LDB72CX>

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

We're excited to announce plans for a Community-Use Processing Facility designed to support the agricultural sector in the Peace Region. The regulated facility will include the following amenities:

- Agri-foods processing equipment
- Commercial kitchen
- Local farm store

Currently, we are seeking feedback from the local agricultural community. Your input will help us:

1. Demonstrate community support for the project
2. Identify the types of processing equipment producers need

Please complete our short survey **prior to March 21, 2025**.
Please consider writing a letter of support. Letters can be emailed to FlatCatRanch@gmail.com

ABOUT US

Flat Cat Ranch is a regenerative orchard dedicated to growing quality tree fruits and berries that will be used to craft distinct local cider, perry, and value-added products. The farm is located at Mile 59 of the Alaska Highway near Charlie Lake in the Peace Region of British Columbia.