

Engagement Summary Report

Denman Island Farming Regulation Review Project



JUNE 2022



upland agricultural consulting

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1.0 Executive Summary

The engagement portion of the Denman Island Farm Regulation Review targeted key farming and food system players on the Island as well as the broader community. Engagement aided the project team in understanding the local farming context, and the preferences of community members regarding the main components of the Farm Regulations Review.

Engaging with the Denman Island farming community and with residents occurred through four main activities:

- Zoom meetings with Advisory Planning Commission (APC) and Growers and Producers Association (GPA) members
- Individual stakeholder interviews by phone – 8 interviews
- Community questionnaire (online and hard copies) – 164 responses
- Community Information Meeting (in person) – 7 attendees

Regular presentations were also provided to the Local Trust Committee (LTC) to provide updates regarding project progress.

Engagement centred around three key topic areas:

- Definitions of Agriculture, Horticulture, and Intensive Agriculture
- Housing, Secondary Dwellings, and Tourist Accommodations in the ALR
- Setbacks from Watercourses

Based on the assessment of the feedback obtained during engagement, the following directions have emerged to inform the recommended changes to the Farm Regulations Review.

Definition of Agriculture

- Consider revising the definition of “agriculture” to make it more concise and align it with the same definition used on Hornby Island.

Definition of Horticulture

- The current definition of “horticulture” (status quo) will likely suffice.

Definition of Intensive Agriculture

- Consider keeping the current definition of Intensive Agriculture as a permitted use in the ALR.
- Consider criteria of minimum lot size and livestock stocking density for Intensive Agriculture in R1 and R2 zones .

Principal Dwelling Size in the ALR

- Align principal dwelling size limitations to ALC Act and regulations (e.g. 500 m² maximum).

Secondary Dwellings in the ALR

- Align secondary dwelling allowances to ALC Act and regulations.
- Ensure that all new secondary dwellings have adequate potable water and septic capacity (or equivalent).

Agri-Tourism Accommodations in the ALR

- Align agri-tourism accommodation allowances with ALC Act and regulations.
- Ensure that all agri-tourism accommodations have adequate potable water and septic capacity (or equivalent).

B&Bs within a Principal Dwelling

- Retain status quo regulations with regards to B&Bs contained within a principal dwelling (up to 3 bedrooms).

Setbacks from Watercourses

- Revisit this topic when the Denman Island Land Use Bylaw is updated and revised, along with other Development Permit Areas.

2.0 Key Engagement Steps Completed

Engaging with the Denman Island farming community and with residents occurred through four main activities:

1. Zoom meetings with Advisory Planning Commission (APC) and Growers and Producers Association (GPA) members
2. Individual stakeholder interviews by phone
3. Community questionnaire (online and hard copies)
4. Community Information Meeting (in person)

These are each described below.

2.1 Zoom Meetings with APC and GPA Members

Members of the APC and GPA were invited by Islands Trust staff to a Zoom meeting in January 2022 to be introduced to the consulting team and to discuss some key issues involving the Farm Regulations Review. The draft Engagement Plan was presented and leaders of the farming community were identified. A second Zoom meeting is planned for June 2022 to present the engagement results and draft recommendations.

2.2 Individual Stakeholder Interviews

The consultant team invited 14 stakeholders to participate in an interview. A total of 8 individuals accepted. Most interviews were conducted by phone, and 2 or 3 via email. Half of

the individuals interviewed were farmers. The remaining were educators, APC members, GPA members, Trustees, and other members of the community.

2.3 Community Questionnaire

There were 164 responses received to the Denman Island Farm Regulation Review community questionnaire. The questionnaire was available from early March to early May 2022. It included an overview of the objectives the project, explanations of the regulation(s) in question and provided an opportunity for respondents to provide their opinions and feedback on the review. Responses to the questionnaire came from a good distribution of residents within and outside of the ALR and in the Agriculture Zone. Just over a third of respondents were located within the ALR and the Agriculture Zone, with another 6% within the A Zone but outside the ALR.

2.4 Community Information Meeting

An in-person community information meeting was held on Denman Island on April 21, 2022. It was advertised through a community mailout and via the Driftwood as well as online through social media. The event was attended by 7 community members and the 3 LTC Trustees, as well as Islands Trust staff and 2 members of the consulting team. The consultants provided an overview of the project objectives, and a summary of the preliminary community questionnaire results. Discussion during the meeting addressed the topics of farming outside the ALR (R1 & R2 properties), agricultural and farming definitions, secondary dwellings and agritourism.

3.0 Key Themes and Directions

The key themes explored throughout engagement and the emergent directions are briefly described below. Much of this feedback was informed by the farming community and/or those who live in the ALR and for whom the Farm Regulations will directly affect. In addition to the interviews conducted with farmers, 65 of respondents to the questionnaire indicated that they were located in the ALR and/or the A Zone.

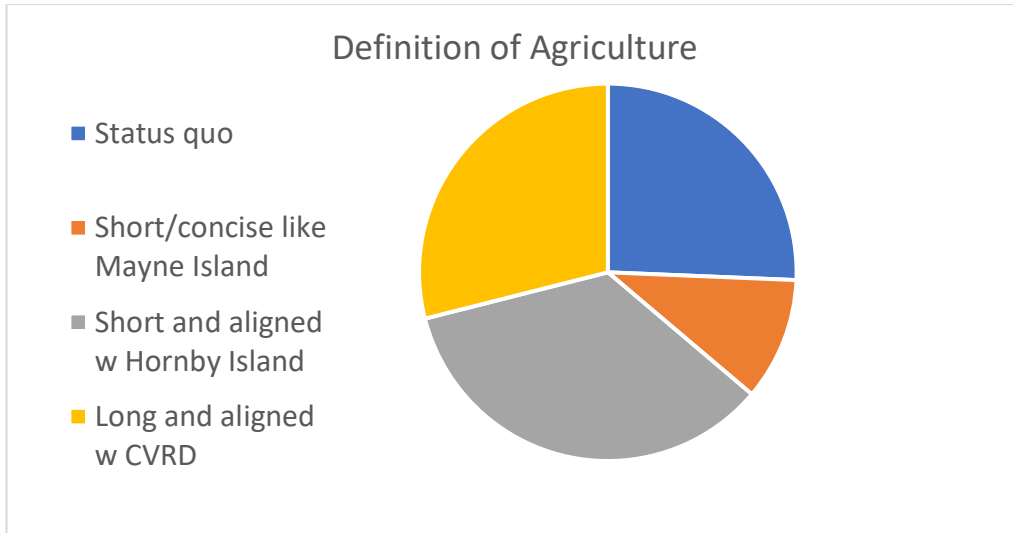
3.1 Definitions

Denman Islanders support many definitions related to farming which already exist in the regulations (status quo) and where changes to current regulations are proposed or offered, opinions tend to be split down the middle.

Definition of Agriculture

The most popular option is to use the same definition as Hornby Island (35% support), which is much more concise than the status quo (25% support).

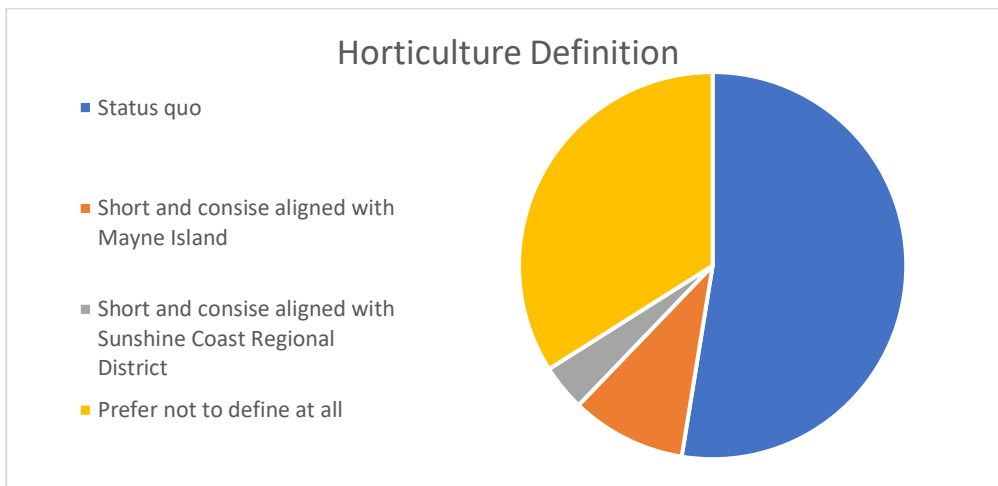
- *Direction: Consider revising the definition of “agriculture” to make it more concise and align it with the same definition used on Hornby Island.*



Definition of Horticulture

More than 50% support the current definition of Horticulture (status quo).

- *Direction: The current definition of “horticulture” will likely suffice.*



Definition of Intensive Agriculture

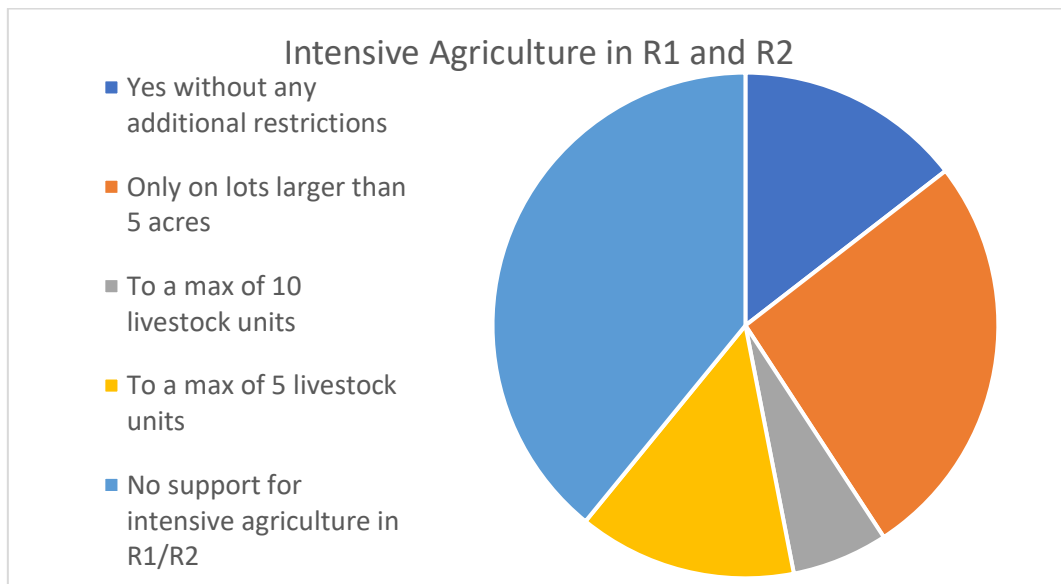
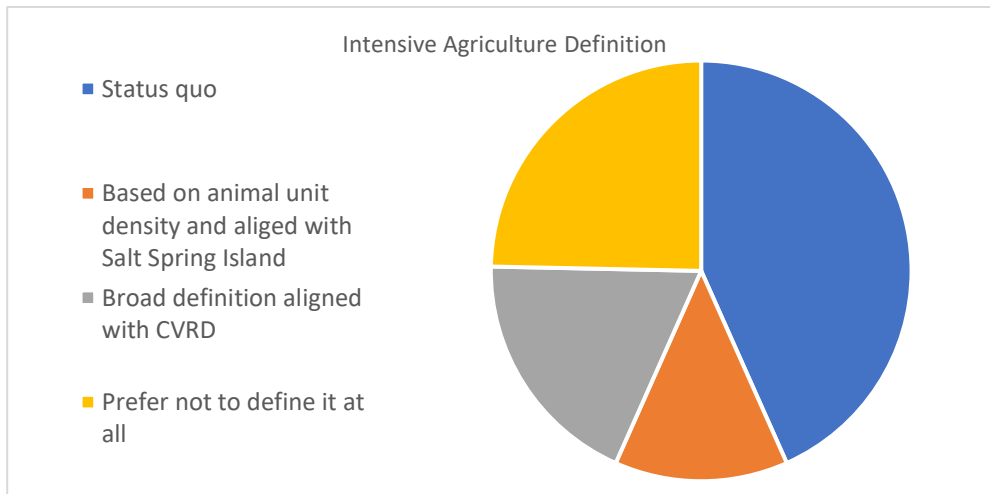
43% support the current definition of Intensive Agriculture (status quo) while 25% prefer that it not be defined at all. Based on provincial regulation, Intensive Agriculture is always allowed in the ALR. It is up to local governments to determine whether or not to allow it in areas outside the ALR (such as R1 and R2).

54% of respondents would support intensive agriculture in R1 and R2, albeit most would support it only with some restrictions in place. The balance (46%) do not support Intensive Agriculture in R1 and R2 zones at all. This would mean that no barns or livestock enclosures would be allowed in zones R1 and R2.

Directions:

- *Consider keeping the current definition of Intensive Agriculture as a permitted use in the ALR.*

- Consider criteria of lots size and livestock stocking density for Intensive Agriculture in R1 and R2 zones .



Other comments and feedback regarding definitions could be grouped into specific themes – these are presented in order of the frequency they were heard:

1. Providing less restrictive definitions
2. Providing more specific definitions
3. Prohibiting intensive agriculture on Denman Island (note that it is not possible to restrict intensive agriculture within the ALR)
4. The importance of clear and consistent communication
5. Prohibiting intensive agriculture on small lots
6. Site specific considerations for intensive agriculture in R1 and R2 zones
7. The importance of growing and distributing food locally
8. No changes wanted, keep the status quo

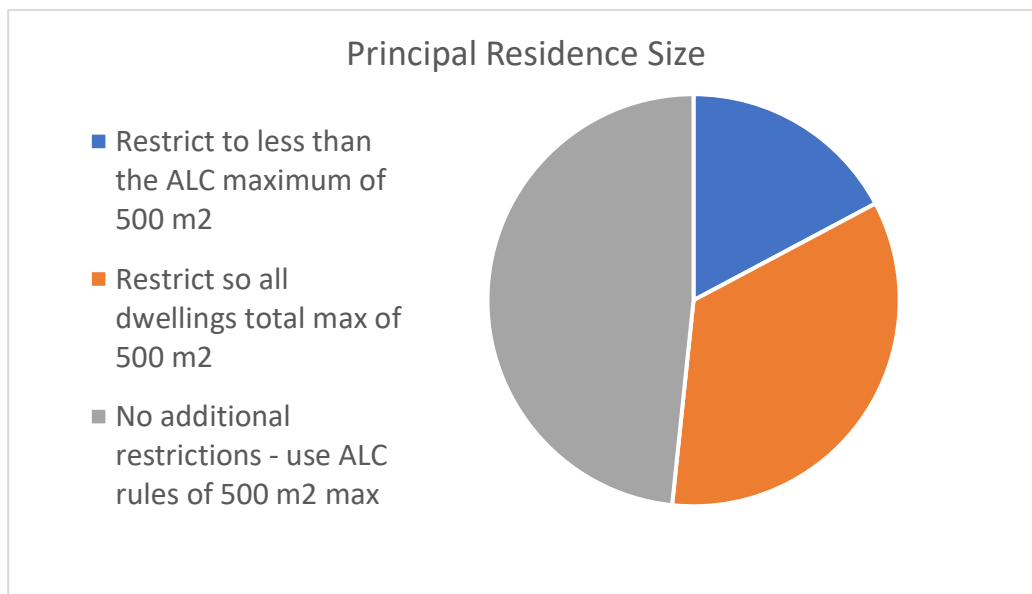
3.2 Housing, Secondary Dwellings, and Tourist Accommodation

Principal Dwelling Size

Support for additional restrictions to the maximum size of the principal dwelling was pretty evenly split, with about 52% preferring some additional size limits and 48% preferring no additional limits.

Direction:

- *Align principal dwelling size limitations to ALC Act and regulations.*



Secondary Dwellings

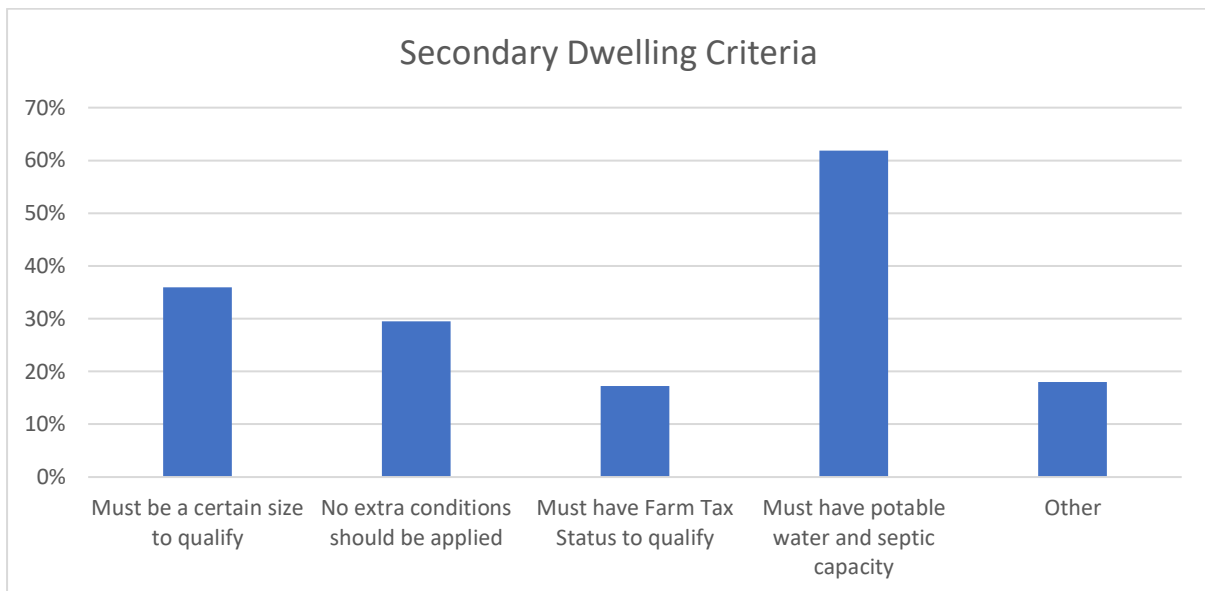
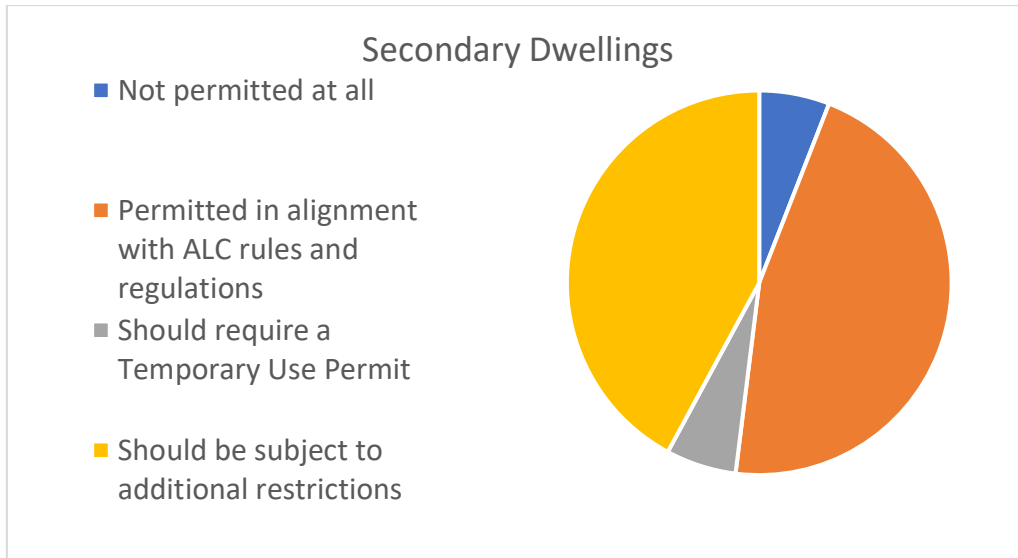
Most respondents felt that secondary dwellings should be allowed in alignment with the ALC Act and regulations, and a subset of respondents would also like to see some additional criteria placed on secondary dwellings. The support for requiring a Temporary Use Permit was low.

For respondents that would like to see additional restrictions put in place for secondary dwellings, the majority are for ensuring that there is adequate potable water and septic capacity in place. There is also some support for considering the size of the property and only allowing secondary dwellings on properties over a certain size (e.g. 5 acres).

Those who responded “other” most often noted that alternatives to conventional septic systems may also be adequate (e.g. composting toilets). Other comments noted the importance of clustering principal residences with secondary dwellings to protect the viability of farmland and to consider setbacks from neighbouring lots.

Directions:

- *Align secondary dwelling allowances to ALC Act and regulations.*
- *Ensure that all new secondary dwellings have adequate potable water and septic capacity (or equivalent).*



Other comments and feedback regarding secondary dwellings in the ALR included:

1. Ensuring affordability of housing is prioritized
2. Consideration of who can live in secondary dwellings, such as farm workers or those experiencing housing challenges currently
3. Ensuring that water and other utilities required for the additional dwellings do not impose scarcity on existing residents.
4. Limiting short term rentals (e.g. AirBnBs)

Agri-Tourism Accommodation

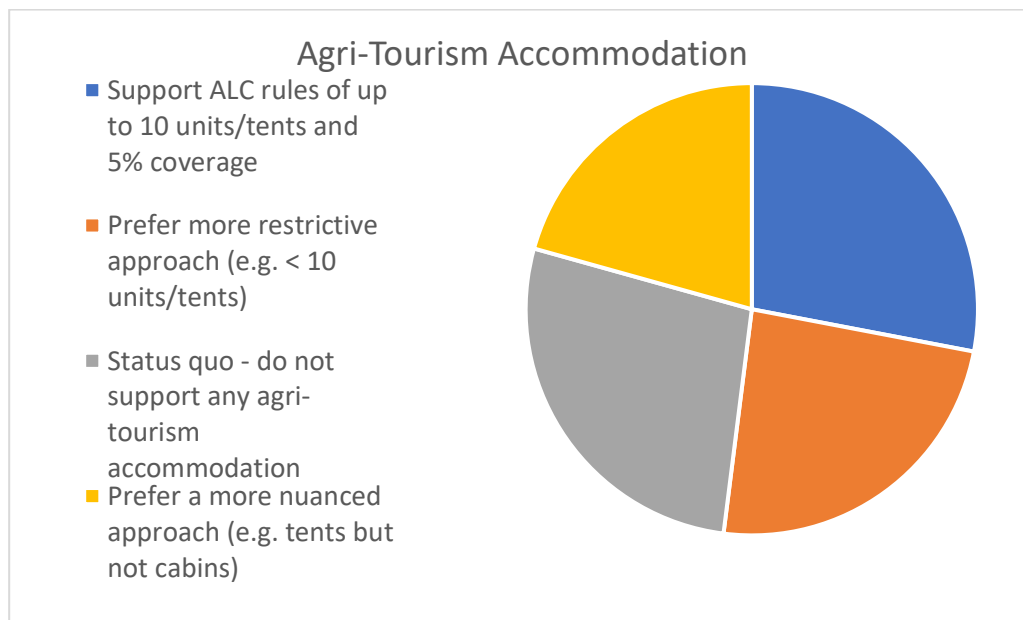
Based on ALC regulations, agri-tourism accommodation must be directly related to an agri-tourism activity and the property must have Farm Tax Status. The total area used for the accommodation must be less than 5% of the parcel and list limited to a max of 10 sleeping

units (e.g. a bedroom, trailer, or tent) but can be restricted to less by local governments. This accommodation must be provided on a seasonal (specific time of year, but not all year) or short term (less than 30 consecutive days per tourist) basis only.

Agri-tourism was largely supported by 73% of respondents, though opinions on restrictions were divided and most concerns centered around availability of water, septic, set-backs from neighbors and minimum lot size. This is a shift from the status quo, whereby agri-tourism accommodation is currently not allowed on Denman Island.

Directions:

- *Align agri-tourism accommodation allowances with ALC Act and regulations.*
- *Ensure that all agri-tourism accommodations have adequate potable water and septic capacity (or equivalent).*

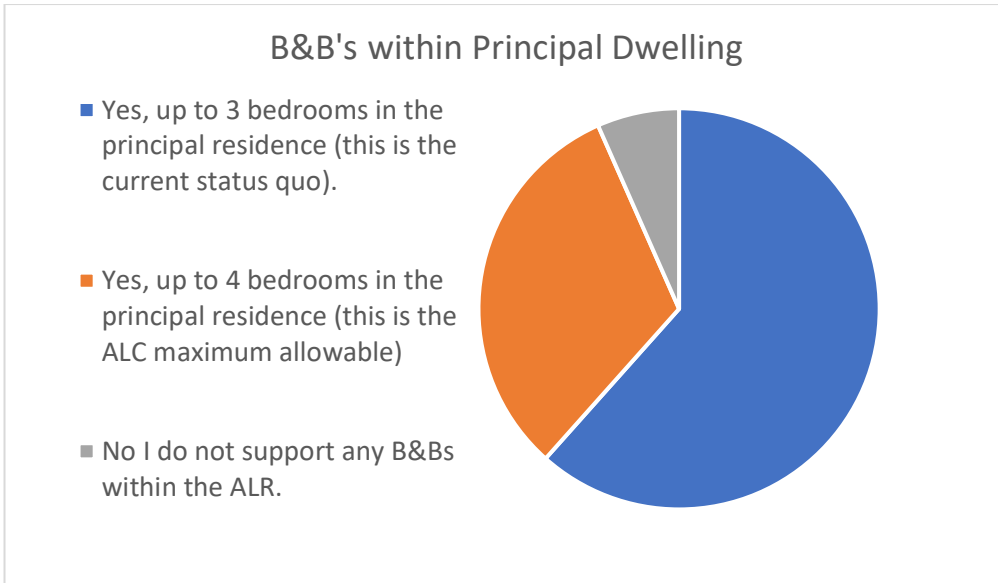


B&Bs within a Principal Dwelling

The majority of respondents are comfortable with the status quo, whereby up to 3 bedrooms within a principal dwelling can be used for Bed and Breakfast purposes. The ALC does not regulate this type of accommodation in the ALR, it is up to local governments to determine if they are an allowed use.

Direction:

- *Retain status quo regulations with regards to B&Bs contained within a principal dwelling.*



3.3 Setbacks from Watercourses

A majority (78%) of respondents were open to updating Denman Island’s Development Permit Area #4 (Streams, Lakes, and Wetlands) to include requirements for fencing and/or other measures to keep livestock and poultry out of waterways and/or to establish riparian buffers within specific setback areas

However, of those not in full support of the DPA update there was a desire for more information, clearer definitions, and wider protection for watercourses. Many also pointed to existing regulations and restrictions imposed by other levels of government and questioned the ability for compliance and enforcement.

Direction:

- *Revisit this topic when the Denman Island Land Use Bylaw is updated and revised, along with other Development Permit Areas.*

