

This report is submitted to the Board of Directors of the Regional District of East Kootenay in accordance with the procedures identified in Section 465 of the *Local Government Act*.

The public hearing for the Skookumchuck Ranch Ltd ALR exclusion application under Section 29 of the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* to exclude 9.54 ha of land from the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) was held on April 21, 2026, at 6:00 pm via Zoom webinar.

The following Regional District representatives attended the public hearing:

Director Jane Walter, Electoral Area E
Director Susan Clovechok, Electoral Area F
Tracy Van de Wiel, Planning Technician 2

The notice for the hearing was published in the Kootenay Advertiser on April 9, 2026 and April 16, 2026.

Staff gave an overview of the application prior to the hearing.

Chair Clovechok convened the hearing at 6:01 pm and Regional District representatives were introduced.

Staff gave a brief overview of the application and read the legal proceedings for the public hearing as set out by the Guidelines from the Agricultural Land Commission and *Local Government Act*. Staff noted that a report of the hearing would be submitted to the Board of Directors at its May 8, 2026 meeting.

Staff advised that three written submissions were received prior to the public hearing. Two were received stating they have no objection to approval of the application and one was received in opposition. The letter of opposition includes a historical perspective and information in dispute of certain aspects of the application.

Members of the public and a few of the proponents (shareholders in the ownership group) attended the public hearing. The Chair invited those in attendance to comment on the application and the following people spoke:

Terry Owen (Shareholder in Skookumchuck Ranch Ltd) – he requested that the letter of opposition be made available to the attendees so they can respond to it in this hearing.

Chair Clovechok authorized staff to read out the contents of the opposition letter.

After hearing the contents of the letter, Terry Owen agreed that there is some historical ‘scar tissue’ between Skookumchuck Ranch Ltd (SRL) and the Drysdale family and said he is hopeful that, if this proposal gets to the point of a rezoning application, they plan to work towards building a more positive relationship. He said he doesn’t know all the history of the property and he can only speak to their knowledge of the property from their purchase date in the 1960s. He said he hadn’t heard anything about previous agriculture (i.e. chickens, ducks, pigs, etc.) and that they are simply requesting that the developed strip of land be excluded from the ALR. He said it’s obvious this land won’t be used for agriculture in future.

Terry said that SRL shares the Drysdale’s concerns about boat traffic and environmental protection. He said the boats primarily come from the public access at the south end of the lake and that this access isn’t likely to change. He said the ALR designation ‘swap’ they’ve offered may use land with different agricultural capability ratings but that the offered inclusion area can still be used by cattle to seek shade

and the developed strip is not agricultural at all. He said the field area behind the developed strip is where the grazing would be. Terry went on to address more points made in the opposition letter by saying that the title linkage offer was made because the RDEK suggested the ALC might consider it to strengthen their application because it would limit the number of future homesteads that could be built on the ALR portion if it was ever subdivided and sold separately from the lakefront strip. Terry offered that, if needed, their agrologist Tim Ross was in attendance at the hearing and could speak further to the agriculture issues. He said their ownership group agrees with the Drysdales on the wildfire hazard issue and that they really only want to remove the ALR layer of regulations from the developed strip of land along the lakeshore and to bring the property into compliance with RDEK land use regulations. He said the buildings on the developed strip were already on the land, they were just moved around and renovated or upkept.

Neil MacKimmie (Shareholder in Skookumchuck Ranch Ltd) – he said he's been going to the lake with his dad and family since the 1960s. He said he's here to support the application and he'd like everyone to remember that this isn't a rezoning application. He said there will be lots of time at the rezoning stage to work through and mitigate any concerns. He said a significant driver for this application is the trouble they'll have rebuilding any of the homes if a catastrophic wildfire was to occur. He said the RDEK needs land use conformance prior to any building permits – even for any renovations. He said they are just trying to remove a layer of regulations so that if a fire came through, they could rebuild more easily. He also said their ownership group vision is almost completely aligned with the Drysdales. He said they've kept the property almost the same as it was since they bought it in the 1960s. He said they've added a few buildings and the footprint has expanded slightly but the main cabins are the same and have just been kept in good shape. He added that this year will be the 100th anniversary of the 'Wolf' cabin (his family's cabin) and that their ownership group has worked to keep the lake as it is. He said their agreement with the Drysdale's foresees family growth and the need for an extra house on the Drysdale property and said their ownership group will keep any new buildings within their own developed strip of land along the lakeshore. He said the ALC has previously asked why they don't just develop on the non-ALR land they own but they don't want to do this because those areas are pristine lakeshore which is what they've all spent 60 years trying to protect.

Don MacKimmie (Shareholder in Skookumchuck Ranch Ltd) – He said there are many things in the opposition letter that they take issue with but that's for a different time. For now, he said their ownership group is trying to maintain the land the way it has been and that they just hope to remove the ALR designation and then work with neighbours and the RDEK to bring the property into conformance with land use regulations. He said the RDEK can't issue any building permits even if they wanted to. He said the RDEK's hands are tied and the ownership group's hands are tied. He said they just want to get this first step done, which is getting the land out of the ALR and, after that, we can have more of an involved process of discussions with neighbours.

Chair Clovechok called three times for any additional speakers, and since no further comments were made, Chair Clovechok adjourned the hearing at 6:43 pm.

Chair Susan Clovechok
Electoral Area F

Tracy Van de Wiel
Planning Technician 2

Alyson Drysdale
4030 Wasa Sheep Creek Rd.
Premier Lake
Skookumchuck, BC [REDACTED]

April 14, 2026

Regional District of East Kootenay
19 - 24 Avenue South
Cranbrook, BC V1C 3H8
Attn: Tracy Van de Wiel, Planning Technician

Re: Public Hearing / Local Government Initiated ALR Exclusion Application: File #P 725 401

I am writing to provide comments regarding the Application by Skookumchuck Ranch Ltd. (SRL) to exclude approximately 9.54 hectares of land (the “Developed Strip”) from the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) at the north end of Premier Lake.

I am the daughter and granddaughter of the original SRL shareholders (Staples/Drysdale) who owned the land in question from the 1920s until 1960. I was ten years old when SRL was sold to a number of the current shareholders. My family then moved to the west side of Premier Lake (the “Drysdale 10 Acres”), where I continue to reside. As such, I have both direct historical knowledge of ranch operations prior to 1960 and long-term observational knowledge of land use since that time.

I understand that the decision before the RDEK is whether to forward this application to the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC). In that context, my comments are intended to give additional perspective to what is contained in the application. There are some statements and broader implications that in my view warrant scrutiny.

Importantly, the application makes clear that the intent of the exclusion is to facilitate future rezoning to allow additional residential development, upgrades, and renovations. This proposal should not be viewed in isolation as a minor ALR boundary adjustment, but as part of a broader, phased change in land use.

My comments also include a brief history of Skookumchuck Ranch Ltd. up to 1960, and address consistency of land use planning as per building restrictions placed on the Drysdale 10 Acres.

The documents I reference are:

- RDEK_Request for Decision/ALR Exclusion Application/Private Landowner/File No: P 725 401_Date: March 2, 2016
- Donald S. MacKimmie/Application Proposal Letter/S Half Diamond Ranch (SRL)_Date: November 14, 2025

- Skookumchuck Ranch Limited (SRL)/ALC Questions and Answers (provided by the applicant)/- ALC application_Date: November 14, 2025
- Excerpts (1 pg.) from Agrologist Report/Executive Summary_(undated/author not identified on page)
- The accompanying maps, plans, reports and proposed exclusion area.

Anything in “*quotations*” comes from the above documents.

A Brief History of Skookumchuck Ranch Ltd. 1920-1960

My sister, Karen Drysdale, and I were born and raised on the S Half Diamond Ranch (legally referred to as Skookumchuck Ranch Ltd.), and we still reside on a portion of the original property that is now known as the “Drysdale 10 acres.” It is my principle residence and Karen’s summer residence.

The Ranch was once a fully operational Dude Ranch owned as at 1920 by our grandparents Claire and Elmore Staples, and later managed/owned by our parents Pamela Staples and Alistair Drysdale, until 1960.

The characterization in the ALC Questions and Answers that “*...the property, including the "Developed Strip", has never been used for agricultural purposes other than grazing horses*” does not reflect the historical use of the property. From the 1920s through the 1950s substantial portions of District Lot 271 and District Lot 8846 were actively used for agriculture.

During its Dude Ranching days SRL was fully self-sufficient and many other farming activities took place. Our parents and grandparents raised chicken, pigs, ducks and rabbits for food. They had dairy cattle for milk and butter. Both Karen and I “helped” our father milk the cows, and watched as kitchen staff churned the cream into butter.

Elmore Staples, and later with Alistair Drysdale, cleared the Fields as shown on the applicant’s maps, and had a large haying operation on them (including that portion of land on DL 271 that SRL wishes to exclude from the ALR) to support over 100 head of horses, and in the 1950’s about the same number of cattle.

Characterization of Historical Development

The Proposal Letter states, “*...In 1973, when the ALR was established, the "Developed Strip" was highly developed and had been since the 1920’s.*” The ALC Questions and Answers similarly states, “*...the area the owners are seeking to exclude has been developed land for recreational purposes since about the 1920’s.*”

I think these claims are somewhat misleading. At the time of sale in 1960, there were no buildings whatsoever on a significant portion of the area (about 1/3 of the "Developed Strip") now proposed for exclusion - that being the portion of District Lot 271 west of the proposed 10 meter lakefront strip identified on the Maps that would stay in the ALR.

The existing residences (5 in total, plus their additions and renovations) in this area were constructed gradually from the 1960s through the 1980s, following the cessation of agricultural use. This pattern of construction reflects a transition to recreational use, not a longstanding, pre-existing developed condition.

Scale and Impact of the Proposed Exclusion

The "Developed Strip" extends approximately one kilometer along the north shoreline of Premier Lake and comprises almost the entire north lakeshore under SRL ownership. The proposal would remove this continuous strip from the ALR, leaving only a narrow 10 meter band.

This represents a substantial boundary change rather than a minor adjustment. Removal from the ALR would potentially increase land value; enable subdivision, redevelopment, and intensification; and establish the area as a continuous, highly marketable waterfront corridor. I don't believe SRL has any plans to sell in the foreseeable future but I think it is worth pointing out that the nature of the subject lands changes dramatically if the exclusion is granted.

Additionally, approval of such an exclusion may set a precedent for similar applications, which could incrementally erode the ALR boundaries in comparable areas.

Environmental and Local Context

While the primary mandate of the ALC is agricultural, there are broader land use considerations relevant to the RDEK's review. The north end of Premier Lake is home to some sensitive species including painted turtles, great blue herons, and rainbow trout habitat.

Premier Lake is a well known recreational fishery in the East Kootenay region, particularly valued for rainbow trout, and supports a range of low-impact recreational uses, including angling, kayaking, and paddle boarding. The south end of the lake, where the provincial park and primary public access are located, is subject to boating speed restrictions designed to support these uses and maintain a quieter recreational environment.

As a result, high-speed motorized watercraft are effectively concentrated toward the north end of the lake where the subject properties are located, and where no comparable speed restrictions are in place. Any increase in residential density and associated recreational use is likely to further intensify boat traffic and may increase shoreline erosion, habitat disturbance, and ecological stress.

I have raised these concerns directly with SRL, which has acknowledged and indicated it shares them. SRL suggests the concerns may be mitigated, but characterizes them as hypothetical and unrelated to the ALC application. That may be so; however, the issues are inherently connected. If the land is excluded from the ALR, SRL will seek a zoning change to permit increased recreational use and development with its attendant stressors on the environment.

Agricultural Capability vs. Proposed Land Exchange

I appreciate that SRL has offered to exchange a comparable area of land which they own in order to offset the area of land they wish to exclude, but I think there are differences in the quality of this agricultural exchange that are worth a second look.

The Canada Land Inventory mapping included in the application indicates that portions of the "Developed Strip" are Class 3 to Class 5 soils, with potential for improvement.

By contrast, the lands proposed for inclusion into the ALR are described as predominantly Class 6 and Class 7, with significant limitations. They are characterized as forested and hilly, and identified as nominally usable for grazing. The applicant acknowledges that grazing of livestock is impractical due to fencing costs and "*...dealing with issues arising from the presence of many existing adjacent dwellings in the "Developed Strip".*"

Accordingly, the proposed exchange would result in the removal of lands with moderate agricultural capability and potential, in favour of lands with substantially lower capability and acknowledged practical constraints to their use. This appears to diminish - rather than preserve or enhance - the overall agricultural value of the land base.

Title Linkage

SRL's offer to link the three titles currently within the ALR is a positive step in principle, as title consolidation can support agricultural land integrity. However, this offer is expressly conditional. SRL has indicated that the linkage would not apply to the "Developed Strip" if it were excluded and later subdivided out of those titles, and that doing so must not restrict such subdivision.

This qualification limits the value of the proposal. Rather than ensuring long term stability, the conditional linkage has the effect of maintaining flexibility for future subdivision and development of the shoreline lands.

Other Considerations Raised in the Application

I would be interested to know if easing on-going management challenges in regards to buildings, and difficulty rebuilding in case of wildfire, are substantive rationale for removing land from the ALR, as

I have these concerns myself. Being at the edge of a lake we do have some natural mitigation advantages in case of wildfire, but we are all understandably paranoid of such an event.

Wildfire risk is a legitimate consideration in forested regions, such as we have here in the East Kootenays. The application cites the potential cost of several million dollars to rebuild after a fire as justification for exclusion, “...*The "Developed Strip" must be excluded from the ALR in order to ensure immediate and necessary post disaster recovery.*” This suggests that removal from the ALR is necessary to support timely recovery and greater flexibility in reconstruction.

Consistency of Land Use Planning

SRL’s current request to expand development stands in marked contrast to the long-standing restrictions imposed on the Drysdale 10 Acres. The subdivision and return of those lands - originally agreed to in 1960 - was not straightforward. Completion of that obligation was delayed for decades and ultimately required legal action to enforce. In 1996, my mother commenced proceedings in the Supreme Court of British Columbia; following her passing, the matter continued in my sister’s and my names and was only resolved by settlement on the first day of trial in 1999.

That history reflects a prolonged and adversarial process simply to secure what had already been agreed. The resulting settlement imposed registered restrictions on our title, including a limitation permitting only one additional home (subject to local government approval). As explained by a Ranch shareholder at the time, these limitations were intended to preserve views, the natural setting, and the quiet enjoyment of adjacent lands.

SRL now seeks to exclude approximately one kilometer of lakeshore from the ALR in order to facilitate increased residential use and density on its lands. This represents a clear departure from the rationale used to justify strict limitations on our property. While these matters arise from a private agreement and are distinct from the ALR decision, they highlight the importance of consistency and transparency in land use planning, particularly when considering cumulative impacts and long-term development along a shared lakeshore.

Conclusion

This application represents a significant proposal that would result in a substantial reconfiguration of the ALR boundary along almost the entire north portion of Premier Lake.

It is intended as a precursor to a rezoning of the “Developed Strip” to accommodate ease of construction and an increase in recreational and residential density on these lands, with corresponding implications for boat traffic and shoreline use which may impact the environment and ecology.

While I don't question certain statements about internal restrictions and wishing to preserve, aside from the contemplated development, the current nature of Premier Lake, SRL's private Shareholder agreements are not enforceable except as amongst themselves, and as such may not be relied on by the broader public and governing bodies as the years go by.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this application. The Drysdale family does not support it.

Sincerely,

Alyson Drysdale

4030 Wasa Sheep Creek Rd

Premier Lake

Skookumchuck, BC. [REDACTED]

Personal Information has been withheld in accordance with section 22(1) of the Freedom of information and Protection of Privacy Act.

Cc. Karen Drysdale

Tracy Van de Wiel

From: Caleb Miller [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, April 8, 2026 12:40 PM
To: Tracy Van de Wiel
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Skookumchuck Ranch Limited - ALR Exclusion Application ID 107153

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

Hi Tracy,
Sorry, my below email should have said 9.5 hectares, not 9.5 acres.
Oops!
Cheers!



Caleb Miller
Pommier Ranch Meadery
3858 Wasa – Sheep Creek Road

[REDACTED]
Skookumchuck, BC [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

<http://www.pommierranchmeadery.ca/>

From: Caleb Miller [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, April 07, 2026 11:48 AM
To: tvandewiel@rdek.bc.ca <tvandewiel@rdek.bc.ca>
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Skookumchuck Ranch Limited - ALR Exclusion Application ID 107153

Hi Tracy,

I am a 50% owner of approximately 80 acres of land located on the east side of Wasa Sheep Creek Road that abuts land owned by Skookumchuck Ranch Limited (SRL). The address for our lands is: 3858 wasa sheep creek road.

I am aware of SRL's application to the Agricultural Land Commission to exclude approximately 9.5 acres of its land from the Agricultural Land Reserve (application ID # 107153), and I have no objection to the application.

Cheers!



Caleb Miller
Pommier Ranch Meadery
3858 Wasa – Sheep Creek Road

[REDACTED]
Skookumchuck, BC [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
<http://www.pommieranchmeadery.ca/>

Personal Information has been withheld in accordance with section 22(1) of the *Freedom of information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

Tracy Van de Wiel

From: Rebecca Pommier [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, April 7, 2026 2:37 PM
To: Tracy Van de Wiel
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: ALR Exclusion Application ID 107153

Hi Tracy:

I am a 50% owner of approximately 80 acres of land located on the east side of Wasa Sheep Creek Road that abuts land owned by Skookumchuck Ranch Limited (SRL). Caleb Miller owns the other 50%. The address for these lands is 3858 Wasa Sheep Creek Road.

I am aware of SRL's application to the Agricultural Land Commission to exclude approximately 9.5 acres of its land from the Agricultural Land Reserve (application ID # 107153), and I have no objection to the application.

Rebecca Pommier