

# EXTENSION COMMITTEE

Minutes of the **Extension Committee** held virtually via Teams on Tuesday April 8, 2025.

## **Members Present:**

Asha Wareham  
Evan Esch (CO-CHAIR)  
Isabella Rivero  
Jesse MacDonald  
Lindsay Hainstock  
Kate Durisek  
Kellie Garcia (CO-CHAIR)  
Matt Walz  
Naomi Delury  
Ruth King  
Shelby Austen

BC Agricultural Climate Action Research Network  
Okanagan-Kootenay Sterile Insect Release Program  
BC Wine Grape Council  
Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada  
BC Ministry of Agriculture & Food  
BC Wine Grape Council  
Cross-Commodity Leadership Support Project  
Terralink Horticulture  
Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada  
UBC Okanagan  
Cross-Commodity Leadership Support Project

## **Regrets:**

Gail Nelson  
Barbara Hall  
Beth Cavers  
Chris Zabek  
Juliana Cao  
Nick Ibuki  
Sera Lean  
Love-Ese Chile

BC Fruit Growers' Association  
UBC Okanagan  
BC Cherry Association  
BC Ministry of Agriculture & Food  
BC Food Web  
Summerland Varieties Corp  
Evergro – Nutrien Ag Solutions  
BC Agricultural Climate Action Research Network

## **1. WELCOMING REMARKS**

## **2. REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS**

ACTION ITEMS		
MEMBER	ACTION REQUIRED	STATUS
Chris Zabek/Shelby Austen	Connect RE: 2025 Agriculture Tour	✓
All members	Provide grower recommendations to Shelby RE: Industry Discussion	✓

## **3. MEMBER ROUND TABLE UPDATES**

- Evan shared that the Tree Fruit Production Guide meeting is scheduled for tomorrow, led virtually by the Ministry and BCFGa. He also noted that OHAG has resumed hosting industry breakfasts, now rotating between different valley locations.
- Jesse provided an update on AAFC's two new five-year projects that have been funded by the Ministry. One project will focus on protected agriculture systems, while the other will aim to enhance cold hardiness. The initial step involves establishing steering committees for both initiatives. He also mentioned plans to organize commodity days at the research centre, which will include presentations, discussions, breakout sessions, and field walks. These events are scheduled to take place during apple and cherry harvest to allow

for trials of new varieties. Additionally, next week the centre will host an in-person session to share research results for the grape cluster.

- Ruth inquired about the leads for the two new projects. Jesse confirmed he is co-leading both—partnering with Kirsten Hannam on the protected agriculture systems project and with Ben-Min Chang on the cold hardiness project.
- Matt reported that fertilizer, oil, and fungicide applications are underway, with growers preparing for a heavy crop. He stressed the importance of planning ahead due to the closure of Growers Supply, as other suppliers lack comparable walk-in service. He added that many growers are struggling to source honeybees again this year. Bumblebees are available through Biobest, but they are costly and challenging to manage.
- Lindsay reminded the group that KTT funding is available and noted a contractor has been hired to update the irrigation sections of the production guides, with data collection this season and a launch planned for January. The cover crop ID flip chart is progressing well and should be ready for spring workshops. The SIHS is confirmed for February 10–12. Lindsay also mentioned increased interest from ag tech companies for Okanagan trials, including Vivid Machines, which may be testing vineyard tools for mildew and crop load management.
  - Evan noted SIR's interest in collaborating, as they have ATVs driving every apple orchard.
- Ruth shared that most of her time is currently focused on grant writing and developing micro-credentials in sustainable viticulture and agro-business management. She's also working on website updates. She noted that the Canadian Society for Horticultural Science (CSHS) and the Canadian Society of Agronomy (CSA) will hold their joint conference in Kelowna from June 23–26.
- Isabella shared that BCWGC's new website is now live, and she is currently updating the pesticides section of the best practice guide.
- Asha shared that extension is winding down for summer and she's looking forward to supporting grant writing with Ruth and launching a research project with CCLSP. She's also developing a user-friendly and public facing ACARN database to serve as a hub for connections and active projects, expected by the end of summer.
- Kate shared that a new account manager has been hired for SWBC, with a focus on onboarding new members. Phase one of the WGITF project—focused on strategic planning, governance, and engagement—is wrapping up. Work is also underway to improve domestic rootstock availability through the Canadian Grapevine Certification Network.
- Naomi shared that year two of the value-added products project is underway and asked for referrals to producers working in this area, as she's looking to engage with them.
  - Kate suggested connecting with the [BC Beverage Technology Access Centre](#) at Okanagan College, who are doing a beverage industry waste survey, and will send an intro email. Ruth mentioned a laser being trialled for winery cleaning and a mobile juicing unit from Kalala and Little Straw that could support trials.

**Upcoming Events Mentioned in the Roundtable Discussion:**

For more information on upcoming events, please visit the [CCLSP Events Calendar](#).

BC Tree Fruit Production Guide Meeting	April 9, 2025
Grape & Wine National Research Users Meeting	April 17, 2025
CSHS & CSA Joint Conference	June 23-26, 2025

ACTION ITEMS	
MEMBER NAME	ACTION REQUIRED
Evan/Lindsay H	Connect RE: Vivid Machines & SIR

#### **4. OLD BUSINESS**

##### **a) 2025 EXTENSION CONFERENCE**

Shelby reported that the recent conference and industry discussion were successful, with 58 participants from 30 organizations - a strong step in expanding engagement. The event opened with a conflict resolution workshop by Jump Outta Bed Inc., followed by a session on extension priorities using the roadmaps framework.

Day two featured a keynote and interactive session on farmer-to-farmer networks led by Hannah Wittman and Jessica Chiartas (UBC) and concluded with an industry-wide discussion to refine priorities.

Staff are working on a summary report that will be shared soon but preliminary results highlight five key issues across groups:

- Pest management
- Business planning
- HR and labour
- Water, soil, and nutrient management
- Crop protection and quality

##### **b) SOUTH OKANAGAN AGRICULTURE TOUR**

Shelby shared that the most recent agriculture bus tour was held in Penticton, focused on engaging elected officials. The tour welcomed 48 participants from 35 organizations and featured two stops to allow for deeper discussion: Brarstar Orchards with Deep Brar and Township 7 Vineyards and Winery with Mary McDermott. Topics included urban-rural conflicts, labour, pest and waste management, and more. A notable moment occurred at Brarstar Orchards, where Deep highlighted damage caused by a nearby road being raised—an issue some attending councilors hadn't realized was linked to their earlier decision.

The day concluded with small group discussions at the Convention Centre to reflect and explore next steps. A summary report is in progress and will be shared with attendees soon.

- Kate noted that the wrap-up session was well received and highlighted the value of constructive dialogue. She emphasized the importance of having RDOS at future tours. Shelby added that over 100 local government representatives were invited, including RDOS staff and council, but no one from RDOS registered.
- Jesse asked about the tone of the discussions. Kellie responded that while there were a few awkward moments, the conversations were respectful and productive. A key topic was the role of AACs, which are valuable but face challenges with volunteer engagement. Jesse added that while AACs currently focus on development, they could also help flag potential road impacts and other issues to council.
- Kellie suggested that having a local government staff person dedicated to liaising with producers would be beneficial, even if shared between municipalities. Asha noted that a similar project led by ACARN on Vancouver Island resulted in the creation of a permanent regional ag support position.

##### **c) BC DAS EXPANSION TO WINE GRAPES PHASE 1**

Kellie informed the committee that Phase 1 has successfully concluded, with recommendations in place to proceed with Phase 2.

- Evan asked whether the consultant explored grape IPM beyond the Okanagan. Kellie confirmed that about 30 interviews were conducted with contacts from regions including Washington, Oregon, and New York. A list of grape-specific models is included in Appendix B of the report.

## **5. NEW BUSINESS**

### **5.1 PROPOSED PROJECTS**

#### **a) HERBICIDE TECHNOLOGY & EXTENSION**

Kellie informed the committee that the project will be seeking approval on Thursday. While little work has been done to date on herbicides, the proposal includes conducting trials and developing a prototype sprayer to improve herbicide application in orchards and vineyards and reduce reliance on glyphosate. The project will include trials, demonstrations, outreach, and a final report.

- Lindsay noted that the Ministry has a herbicide specialist who could help with the proposed project.

<b>ACTION ITEMS</b>	
<b>MEMBER NAME</b>	<b>ACTION REQUIRED</b>
Kellie/Lindsay	Lindsay share Ministry herbicide specialist contact with Kellie

#### **b) ABAZYNE ABIOTIC STRESS DEMONSTRATION TRIALS**

Kellie informed the committee that she is working with the BC Cherry Association and ABazyne Bioscience to develop this project application but will connect with Jesse regarding the related AAFC project.

<b>ACTION ITEMS</b>	
<b>MEMBER NAME</b>	<b>ACTION REQUIRED</b>
Kellie/Jesse	Connect RE: Cold hardiness projects

#### **c) DATA STRATEGY**

No update provided.

## **6. ADJOURNMENT**

The next Extension Committee meeting will be held on June 17, 2025, from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm.