

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions about:

Berry Processing Facilities

Q: Can I have a berry processing facility on my farm?

A: The Agricultural Land Reserve Use, Subdivision and Procedure Regulation specifically states that the “*storing, packing, preparing or processing of farm products [is designated as farm use for the purposes of the Act], if at least 50% of the farm product being stored, packed, prepared or processed is produced on the farm, produced by an association as defined in the Cooperative Association Act to which the owner of the farm belongs, or feed required for farm production purposes on the farm.*” This use cannot be prohibited by a municipality in the ALR, but can be regulated.

The Abbotsford Zoning Bylaw therefore permits an **Accessory Processing Use** (“*a use accessory to an agricultural use providing for, and specifically limited to, the cleaning, grading and packing for marketing as fresh produce of the crops grown on that and other farm operations*”) in the Agricultural One (A1) and Agricultural Two (A2) Zones, with a condition that the buildings and structures housing the use does not exceed 2,000m² in floor area, and associated unenclosed storage does not cover a lot area exceeding the floor area of the buildings and structures housing the accessory processing use.

The Abbotsford Zoning Bylaw currently permits **Manufacturing** and **Warehousing** in the General Industrial (I2) Zone, which would allow for the industrial processing and packing of farm products without the required farm production of an Accessory Processing Use in the ALR.

Q: Can I discharge processing wastewater from my berry processing facility to the City’s sanitary sewer system?

A: The “Sewer Service Area” (otherwise called sewer boundary) is defined in Schedule “O” of the City’s *Sewer Rates and Regulations Bylaw* (No. 1862-2009).

If a property is located inside of the “Sewer Service Area”, then the processing facility may connect to the City’s sanitary sewer system, subject to availability of downstream capacity in the sewer system.

If a property is located outside of the Sewer Service Area, then the processing facility cannot connect to the City sanitary sewer system, as per the “Sewer Connections for Rural Properties Policy Manual (No. 900-80-01)” adopted by Council on November 4, 2013. Farm buildings, farm use and/or any other uses are not permitted to connect when located outside of the Sewer Service Area.

Q: Can I discharge processing wastewater from my berry processing facility to an onsite septic tank?

A: It depends on the location of the property. Approval is required from one of two authorities based on discharge volumes:

- 1) Fraser Health Authority (for discharges <22.7 m³/d)

The Fraser Health Authority administers the approvals of septic tanks through the *Sewerage System Regulation*, under the *Public Health Act*. More information pertaining to obtaining approvals from the Fraser Health Authority can be found here: <http://www.fraserhealth.ca/health-info/health-topics/onsite-sewage/>

- 2) Ministry of Environment (for discharges >22.7 m³/d)

The Ministry of Environment (MOE) addresses larger wastewater systems through the *Municipal Wastewater Regulation (MWR)*, under the *Environmental Management Act*. To determine whether the MWR applies and whether MOE approval is required for your facility, go to: <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/waste-management/sewage/municipal-wastewater-regulation/register-a-municipal-sewage-discharge>.



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Building Permits & Licences

1st Floor, 32315 South Fraser Way, Abbotsford, BC
T 604-864-5525 E building-info@abbotsford.ca

www.abbotsford.ca

Planning Services

2nd Floor, 32315 South Fraser Way, Abbotsford, BC
T 604-864-5510 E planning-info@abbotsford.ca

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Q: Can I proceed with building my berry processing facility while waiting on approvals from Ministry of Environment?

A: No. Section 6.9 of the Building Bylaw (No. 1274-2003) states: "No building permit shall be issued for construction on any lot... until such lot is serviced with water, sewage disposal, storm drainage, road works, and street lighting...". Therefore, for properties awaiting approval for a Waste Discharge Authorization (WDA) from the Ministry of Environment (MOE) for their proposed septic field, the City will withhold issuance of a the building permit until the WDA is approved by MOE.

Q: If I can't discharge processing wastewater from my berry processing facility to the City's sanitary sewer system or to an onsite septic field, what can I do with my wastewater?

A: You can apply for a holding tank under the City's *Holding Tank Bylaw* (No. 671-98). The *Holding Tank Bylaw* summarizes requirements for the construction, installation, connection, use and maintenance of a holding tank on a property. A holding tank allows for the collection of wastewater without any wastewater being discharged to the ground or to the City's sanitary sewer system. The wastewater must be trucked off site for disposal at a regulated wastewater treatment facility (municipal) that accepts non-domestic waste. Permission to install a holding tank on a property must first be obtained from the Fraser Health Valley Authority before the applicant can apply for a holding tank with the City. Pretreatment may be required prior to discharging to a holding tank (if determined by the Consulting Engineer).

Q: What requirements are associated with discharging my process wastewater to the City's sanitary sewer system?

A: Fees, charges and costs associated with discharging process wastewater to the City's sanitary sewer system include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 1) Connection fees (one-time fee, refer to the City's *Sewer Rates and Regulations Bylaw*);
- 2) Development cost charges (one-time fee);
- 3) Applicable local improvement charges (one-time fee);
- 4) Restrictive covenant registration fees (one-time fee, refer to the City's *Development Application and Service Fee Bylaw*);
- 5) Annual user fees including sewer usage fees and applicable Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) and Total Suspended Solids (TSS) waste fees (ongoing fees, refer to the City's *Sewer Rates and Regulations Bylaw*);
- 6) Purchase, installation and maintenance of sewer meter (if City water is not used onsite); and
- 7) Installation of a sampling manhole and kiosk pad (installed by a developer).

You would also be required to apply for a Wastewater Discharge Permit under the City's *Sewer Rates and Regulations Bylaw* (no charge to apply).

Q: What should I do with my domestic waste (i.e., toilets, washrooms, kitchen sinks, etc.)?

A: One of the most common ways to deal with domestic waste is to discharge it to a septic tank (requires Fraser Health Approval). It could be in the best interest of the farm to separate the domestic waste from the processing wastewater and treat the two waste streams separately. It is up to the owner to determine the best method of disposal for the processing wastewater in accordance with municipal, provincial and federal legislation.

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