

Sensitive and Terrestrial Ecosystems Labels. Table with columns for Polygon Number, Structural Stage, and Site Unit Name. Includes a legend for field sample completion status.

What is a Sensitive Ecosystem? For the purpose of this study, an ecosystem is considered to be a portion of the landscape with relatively uniform dominant vegetation.

Rationale Ecologically significant lands and important wildlife habitats are fast disappearing throughout the lowlands surrounding the Strait of Georgia. Intense development pressures fuelled by population and economic growth have fragmented and degraded many terrestrial ecosystems.

Purpose The purpose of the Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory (SEI) of the Sunshine Coast is to identify, classify and map sensitive terrestrial ecosystems along the coastal lowlands (including the adjacent islands) from Howe Sound to Desolation Sound.

Methodology The mapping methods are based on the Vancouver Island SEI project and the Resources Information Standards Committee (RISC) Standard for Terrestrial Ecosystem Mapping (TEM) in BC.

Data Limitations The SEI is a tool to alert decision makers to the existence of sensitive ecosystems, however when land-use changes are proposed detailed site-level assessments are necessary.

What can be done to protect sensitive ecosystems? Direct and indirect impacts to these ecosystems can be avoided by: Retaining or creating vegetated buffers around sensitive ecosystems to isolate them from outside disturbance.

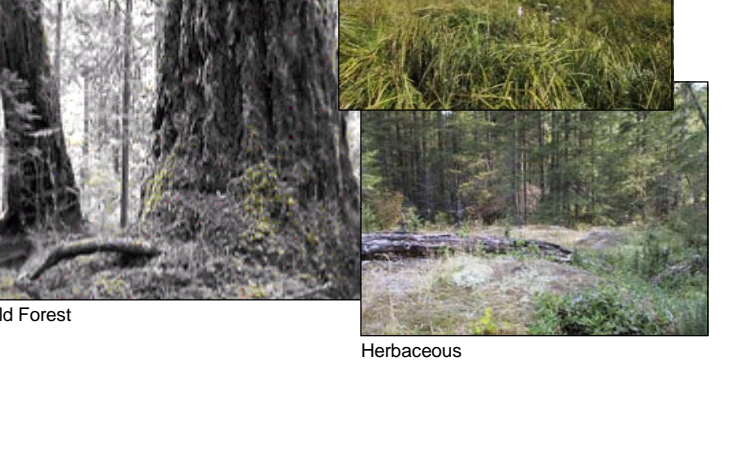
Plan and implement all development activities in a manner that will not adversely affect or disturb the sensitive ecosystem. Consult a qualified professional to interpret the ecological inventory data and work to incorporate designs that maintain the functions and values of the natural ecosystem.

A decision-maker (such as a politician or resource manager) ensure that protection of remaining sensitive ecosystems is a priority at all levels, and support programs, plans and operational activity that will help protect sensitive ecosystems.

A volunteer participate in educational programs, conservation fundraising, or in programs to remove invasive species. A scientist use your expertise to help identify sensitive ecosystems, define sites that need to be addressed, formulate conservation plans, contribute to the development of conservation and management strategies and explain to other professionals and the public the importance of sensitive ecosystems.

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Sensitive Ecosystems

Sensitive ecosystems are fragile and/or rare, or are ecologically important because of the diversity of species they support.

Old Forest (OF): Conifer-dominated dry to moist forest types, structural stage 7 (see table), generally >250yrs. Subclass: of (over forest dominated) - greater than 75% coniferous species.

Woodland (WD): Dry open forests, generally between 10 and 30% tree cover, can be conifer dominated or mixed conifer and shrubs. Subclass: of (over forest dominated) - greater than 75% coniferous species.

Herbaceous (HB): Non-forested ecosystems less than 10% tree cover, generally with shallow soils and often with herbaceous coverings. Subclass: of (over forest dominated) - greater than 75% coniferous species.

Riparian (RI): Areas adjacent to water bodies (rivers, lakes, ocean, wetlands) which are influenced by factors such as erosion, sedimentation, flooding and/or subterranean intrusion due to proximity to the water body. Subclass: of (low bench floodplain) - flooded at least every other year for moderate periods of growing season.

Wetland (WN): Areas that are saturated or inundated with water for long enough periods of time to develop vegetation and biological activity adapted to wet environments. Subclass: of (low bench floodplain) - flooded at least every other year for moderate periods of growing season.

Cliffs (CL): Very steep slope, often exposed bedrock, may include steep sided sand cliffs, habitat for rare species. Subclass: of (low bench floodplain) - flooded at least every other year for moderate periods of growing season.

Other Important Ecosystems: Other important ecosystems have high biodiversity values. Subclass: of (low bench floodplain) - flooded at least every other year for moderate periods of growing season.

Mature Forests (MF): Usually conifer-dominated, occasionally deciduous, dry to moist forest types, structural stage 6, generally >250yrs. Subclass: of (low bench floodplain) - flooded at least every other year for moderate periods of growing season.

Seasonally Flooded Agricultural Fields (FS): Annually flooded cultivated fields or hay fields; important migrating and wintering waterfowl habitat. Subclass: of (low bench floodplain) - flooded at least every other year for moderate periods of growing season.

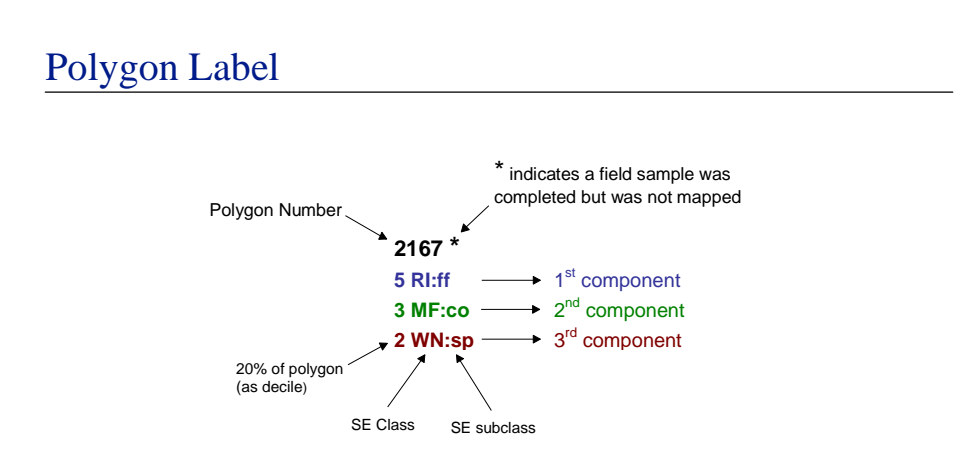
Other Mapped Ecosystems: Other mapped ecosystems occur in mosaic with sensitive ecosystems and are not possible to delineate separately at the mapping scale. Subclass: of (low bench floodplain) - flooded at least every other year for moderate periods of growing season.

Young Forests (YF): Limited to areas of young forest dispersed among sensitive and other important ecosystems. Subclass: of (low bench floodplain) - flooded at least every other year for moderate periods of growing season.

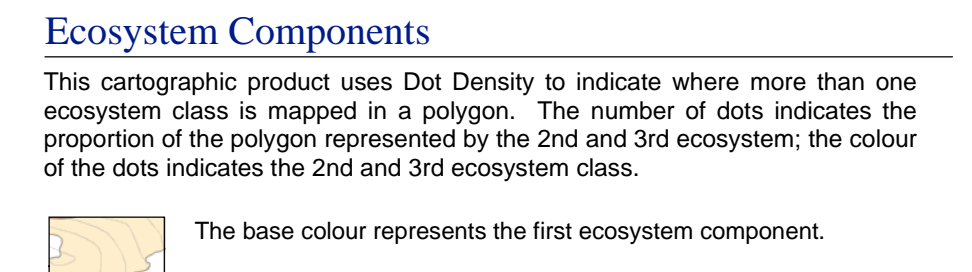
Polygon Label: indicates a field sample was completed but was not mapped. Subclass: of (low bench floodplain) - flooded at least every other year for moderate periods of growing season.

Some polygon labels will have class and subclass repeated up to three times. This is not an error; it reflects the variability in site units and structural stages occurring within a polygon.

Ecosystem Components: The cartographic product uses Dot Density to indicate where more than one ecosystem class is mapped in a polygon. The number of dots indicates the proportion of the polygon represented by the 2nd and 3rd ecosystem; the colour of the dots indicates the 2nd and 3rd ecosystem class.



Biogeoclimatic Units: Coastal Douglas-fir Moist Maritime Subzone, Coastal Western Hemlock Eastern Very Dry Maritime Variant, Coastal Western Hemlock Dry Maritime Subzone, Coastal Western Hemlock Submontane Very Wet Maritime Variant.



Ecosystems: GEL Georgia Lowlands Ecosystem, SOG Strait of Georgia Ecosystem, QJF Outer Fjordland Ecosystem, SPR Southern Pacific Ranges Ecosystem.

Map Symbols: Polygon Boundary, Biogeoclimatic Boundary, Ecosystem Boundary, Study Area Boundary, Roads, 20m contours, TRIM streams, Additional streams, Intermittent/Seasonal Stream, Drainage Route.

