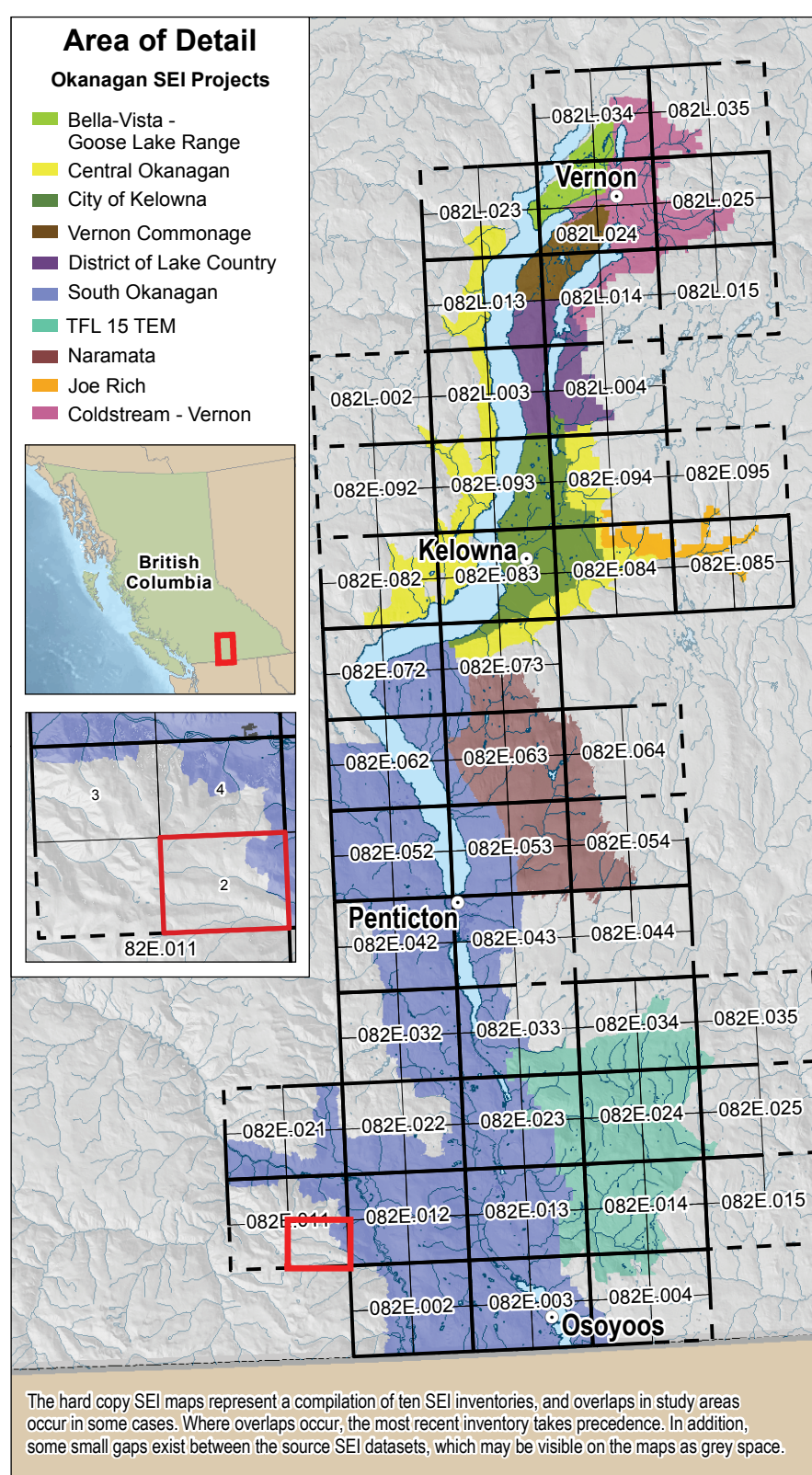


82E.011.2



Map Symbols

- Polygon Boundary
- Study Area Boundary
- Rivers
- Roads
- Highways
- Rail Line
- Outside the Okanagan Study Area

Sensitive Ecosystems (SE) Label

- Polygon Number
- % of polygon
- SE Class
- SE Subclass

The example label above indicates the SE attributes mapped for polygon 13788. 80% of the polygon is 1020a - Coniferous Woodland. 20% of the polygon is 01r - Old Forest.

NS are modified (non-sensitive) landscapes. Please refer to the legend for more information about these areas. Note that one site can be classified as a SE class and outside. Polygon labels on the map do not include the site name.

Ecosystem Components

This 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 ecosystem. The colour of the dots indicates the 2nd and 3rd ecosystem class.

- The base colour represents the first ecosystem component.
- Coloured dots overlaid upon the base colour indicate a second ecosystem class.
- Two colours of dots indicate a second and third ecosystem.

Note: The actual placement of the dots has no significance; they are randomly placed within each polygon.

The SEI data are based on 1:10,000 scale air photos but are displayed here at 1:10,000 scale. The map is not a replacement for detailed on-site assessments. The map is intended as a planning tool, and is not a replacement for detailed on-site assessments. The map is intended as a planning tool, and is not a replacement for detailed on-site assessments.

* Written scales are based on a 30 x 48 inch paper size.

UTM Projection Zone 10 NAD83
February 15, 2010

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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. Sensitive Ecosystems are ecosystems that are ecologically sensitive and/or at risk in the landscape.

The Okanagan Valley region covers one of the most rapidly growing population centres of British Columbia, and development pressure is escalating. The area is under intense pressure due to urban and rural human settlement as well as extensive agricultural conversion and has experienced significant changes to ecosystem structure and function through the spread of invasive alien species and fire exclusion. Very high ecological values, combined with the development pressure on the landscape, underscore the need for careful, conservation-based land use decision making throughout the Okanagan Valley.

Regional and municipal governments of the Okanagan Valley and conservation organizations, assisted by Environment Canada's Canadian Wildlife Service and the B.C. Ministry of Environment, have completed regional and local Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory mapping projects as a means to identify the remaining sensitive ecosystems in the Okanagan Valley. The SEI is intended to provide a tool that uses scientific information and mapping to encourage local governments, landowners, developers, and other citizens to become involved in protecting, conserving, and restoring sensitive ecosystems. Conservation of these ecosystems is increasingly important as rapid population growth in the Okanagan continues to cause fragmentation, degradation, and loss of sensitive ecosystems.

An ecosystem, for the purpose of this inventory, is a portion of the landscape with relatively uniform vegetation and soils. Sensitive ecosystems are those that are ecologically fragile and/or at risk. Criteria for ecological sensitivity include the presence of shadow soils, susceptibility to soil erosion, vulnerability to hydrological changes, sensitivity to the introduction and spread of invasive plants, and sensitivity to recreational activity and other human disturbances. Within the province, at-risk status for species and ecological communities is determined by the B.C. Conservation Data Centre (CDC), a member program of the International NatureServe network. The CDC list of Ecological Communities can help to determine if a particular ecosystem is representative of an at-risk ecological community.

The Okanagan Valley project is composed of a number of individual SEI projects. Bella Vista - Goose Lake Range, Central Okanagan City of Kelowna, Vernon Community, District of Lake Country, Joe Rich, TFL 15, Nanaimo, Coldestream - Vernon, and the South Okanagan. For more information about these projects and the methods used, study results, descriptions of the deliverables include 100 SEI maps at a 1:10,000 scale on a Terrain Resource Information Management (TRIM) base, and a series of reports. The individual project reports detail the methods used, study results, descriptions of the ecosystems, and conservation tools for management (see References section).

The purpose of the SEI Okanagan Valley project is to combine all of the various SEI projects that have been completed in the Okanagan Valley from Vernon to Osoyoos, and to consider and present them as a whole in mapped form to aid use planning and to encourage landscape-level conservation planning. The project reports detail the methods used, study results, descriptions of the deliverables include 100 SEI maps at a 1:10,000 scale on a Terrain Resource Information Management (TRIM) base, and a series of reports. The individual project reports detail the methods used, study results, descriptions of the ecosystems, and conservation tools for management (see References section).

Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory Methods

Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory was developed as a conservation tool. It is flexible and can be completed in a short time with limited funding when necessary, or expanded to incorporate more information for advanced conservation planning and sustainable development.

Most Okanagan SEI projects were developed by first undertaking Terrestrial Ecosystem Mapping (TEM), except in the Nanaimo project area where the SEI polygons were mapped from air photos using a bottom-up approach. TEM provided the foundation for the SEI thematic mapping, and the TEM units were analyzed for at-risk status and ecological sensitivity. Sensitive ecosystems were grouped using the Ecosystem-based Resource Mapping (ERB) table tool. The table below SEI classes and subclasses to be assigned to each TEM unit. If the mapped TEM unit included within an at-risk ecological community as defined and listed by the CDC, or if it is ecologically sensitive, the unit was assigned to one of the applicable ecosystem classes and subclasses. In cases where a given ecosystem falls into more than one class, it is always assigned to the more sensitive class.

The Okanagan Valley is a region of rapidly unreplicated ecological and biological diversity within British Columbia and the rest of Canada. It is home to many at-risk

species and ecological communities, including some ecosystems unique to Canada. Broadleaf woodlands, antelope-brush steppe, sagebrush steppe, wetlands and old forest ecosystems, once well-represented in the Okanagan Valley, have become rare. Historical ecosystem mapping (1800s to present) shows losses of greater than 90% of some ecosystem types in the Okanagan Valley.

Healthy, functioning natural ecosystems play an important role in adapting to and mitigating the impacts of climate change. Climate change adaptations such as reducing stressors, improving ecological resilience, and nature forests remain, many have been altered significantly and therefore few high quality sites remain. The study found many SEIs that have been degraded by fragmentation, human use, livestock grazing, and alien species.

The services and benefits SEIs provide and the wildlife species they support are critically important to the quality of life in the Okanagan. With so few at-risk and fragile ecosystems remaining, it is essential that each site be carefully considered and all land use options be fully evaluated prior to initiating any changes in these areas.

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Inventory Results

Many of the sites identified by the SEI are at high risk of conversion to other land uses or further degradation. Within the study area, 47.9% was mapped as Sensitive Ecosystems (SEI) and 7.9% fell into the Other Important Ecosystems category (see Legend). The inventory results indicated that wetlands, broadleaf woodlands, antelope-brush steppe, sagebrush steppe and old forest ecosystems were extremely rare - covering less than 5% of the study area. Although areas of grasslands, coniferous woodlands, and mature forests remain, many have been altered significantly and therefore few high quality sites remain. The study found many SEIs that have been degraded by fragmentation, human use, livestock grazing, and alien species.

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Terrestrial species that have been included in Schedule 1 of the Species at Risk Act are protected protection on federal lands, and the new B.C. Wildlife Amendment Act will protect their populations and habitats on provincial lands. Protection of Species at Risk and their important habitats on private lands is primarily achieved through careful land use planning and municipal bylaws.

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Non-sensitive Landscapes (NS): (Areas not mapped as sensitive or other important ecosystems are depicted in white)

Non-sensitive landscapes are modified areas not occupied by sensitive ecosystems, and include urban areas, disturbed rural landscapes, and young forests. Urban areas have human-influenced features or disturbances that are dominant across the landscape. Disturbed rural areas can be interspersed with forest, dormant and native vegetation. Young forests are conifer-dominated stands with an age range between 1 and 80 years. Non-sensitive landscapes are shown in white in the areas that are not designated by a sensitive ecosystem. In addition, many sensitive ecosystem polygons close to urban or disturbed areas may have a modified landscape interspersed with the sensitive ecosystem(s), in which the sensitive ecosystems are also used to map individually. These modified areas are depicted as NS (non-sensitive) on the map.