



82E.063.2

Map Symbols

- Polygon Boundary
- Study Area Boundary
- Rivers
- Highways
- Municipal Boundaries
- 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 13768. 20% of the polygon is 6 WD-co. Confined Woodland. 80% of the polygon is 10 WD-co. Old Forest. Confined Woodland.

NS are modified (non-sensitive) landscapes. Please refer to the legend for more information about these areas. Note that the area can be converted to a SE class and subclass. Polygon labels on the map do not include the SE label.

Ecosystem Components

- The base colour represents the first ecosystem component.
- Coloured dots overlaid upon the base colour indicate a second ecosystem component.
- 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 a 1:10,000 scale. The SEI data are based on 1:10,000 scale air photos but are displayed here at a 1:10,000 scale. The SEI data are based on 1:10,000 scale air photos but are displayed here at a 1:10,000 scale.

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WHAT IS A SENSITIVE ECOSYSTEM?

For the purpose of the 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.

Rationale

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 expansion, 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.

Ecological Significance

The Okanagan Valley is characterized by a complex landscape of rugged steep, rocky terrain and gently sloping terraces. These formations result from glacial lakes and the movement of materials by melting on during the retreat of the last glaciers. The complex, 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 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, functional ecosystems play an important role in adapting to and mitigating the impacts of climate change. Climate change adaptations such as reducing stressors, improving ecosystem condition, and landscape connectivity contribute to ecosystem resilience and adaptive capacity in the future. The ecosystems mapped in this project are ecologically significant because of their rarity and fragility and also for the important ecosystem services they provide, such as climate regulation, water filtration, productive soil, carbon sequestration, nutrient cycling, pollination, wildlife habitat and more. Sensitive ecosystems must be considered in the context of the overall landscape, which includes other ecosystems that also contribute to ecosystem services.

Study Area

The Okanagan Valley SEI project is comprised of a number of individual SEI projects. The SEI project is comprised of a number of individual SEI projects. The SEI project is comprised of a number of individual SEI projects. The SEI project is comprised of a number of individual SEI projects.

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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 Ecosystems Mapping (TEM), except in the Nanaimo project area where the SEI project was mapped from air photos using a bottom-up approach. TEM provided the foundation for the SEI thematic mapping, and the TEM units were tailored for at-risk status and ecological sensitivity. Sensitive ecosystems were grouped using the Ecosystem-based Resource Mapping (EBRM) table tool. The table allows SEI classes and subclasses to be assigned to each TEM unit. If the mapped TEM unit is 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.

Within the province, species are assessed by the B.C. Conservation Data Centre. Species at risk are identified on the B.C. Red and Blue lists. Red-listed species are endangered, endangered, or threatened. Blue-listed species are of special concern due to low declining populations and are sensitive to human activities or natural events. Nationally at-risk species are tracked by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) as Endangered, Threatened, or of Special Concern. Endangered species have imminent extinction or reduction. Threatened species may become endangered if limiting factors are not reversed. Species of Special Concern are particularly sensitive to human activities or natural events. Endangered or

Threatened 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 in private lands important habitats on private lands is primarily achieved through careful land use planning and municipal bylaws.

Acknowledgements
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References
Information and access to full reports and map products for the Okanagan Valley SEI projects are available at: www.emv.gov.bc.ca/conservation/tem/tem_sei/okanagan/okanagan.htm

Related Publications and Links
Green Bytes Toolkit for Conserving Sensitive Ecosystems and Green Infrastructure: www.greenbytes.ca

The Toolkit contains practical examples of bylaws provisions currently in use in B.C., including model provisions for Regional Growth Strategies, Official Community Plans, Development Permit Areas, Zoning, Tax Exemptions, Environmental Assessment, Stormwater Management and other regulatory tools. It includes several examples and case studies of successful green infrastructure projects and bylaws.

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