

SEI Update

A publication of the Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory Project No. 4 August 1999

Using the SEI in the Cowichan Valley

If you are the proud owner of a sensitive ecosystem in the Cowichan Valley, expect a call from the E-team!

The **Cowichan Community Land Trust (CCLT)** is embarking on a program to contact landowners with sensitive ecosystems on their property. The purpose is to inform landowners that they have something very special on their land, and offer the opportunity to learn more about these ecosystems and ways to protect their natural values.

Six knowledgeable and enthusiastic young people have been hired using E-team funding. And because they cannot cover the entire region, they will focus their efforts on ecosystems identified by the Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory (SEI).

E-team member Nadine King notes that "Many people in the area don't realize they have something special on their property. We are trying to help educate and to give people another source for information."

Over the next few months, the E-team will meet with landowners, answer their questions, conduct research, develop a brochure, conduct workshops and give presentations.

This is the fifth year for the CCLT's landowner contact program. Project coordinator Valerie Harrison says that the SEI maps provided the perfect focus for this year's work. "This builds on our previous efforts and enables us to build community education around these unique and special areas."

The **Cowichan Tribes** are also hiring a six-person E-team to gather ecosystem data on their reserve lands, remove exotic vegetation, and plant native species. The SEI will be used to identify sites where field data needs to be collected. The team will be able to share data on existing SEI polygons and sites not previously included in the inventory.

The Cowichan Tribes E-team will also be using both traditional and contemporary environmental teachings to build awareness in the community about sensitive ecosystems and their stewardship. Coordinator Jana Kotaska says, "Once we understand the impacts of our actions on the land and resources we depend on, we are open to looking for less destructive ways to do things."

SEI staff are providing training and support to both E-teams.

For further information contact Valerie Harrison, CCLT, (250) 746-0227 or Jana Kotaska, Cowichan Tribes, (250) 748-3196.

SEI Technical Report Now Available

Ward P., G. Radcliffe, J. Kirkby, J. Illingworth & C. Cadrin 1998

Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory: East Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands, 1993 - 1997

Volume 1: Methodology, Ecological Descriptions and Results

Technical Report Series Number 320, Canadian Wildlife Service, Pacific and Yukon Region, British Columbia

This publication is the first of two reports to accompany the Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory maps and database.

Volume 1: Methodology, Ecological Descriptions and Results describes the inventory and mapping methods used, briefly discusses the ecological characteristics of the mapped ecosystem types, and summarizes and analyzes the inventory results. The inventory results strongly support claims that natural areas and habitats are fast disappearing. Today, less than 8% of the entire study area can be considered relatively unmodified - and even many of these sites are substantially degraded by fragmentation, human use and introduced species. Another 0.7% of the study area is mapped as seasonally flooded agricultural fields, and 10.9% is occupied by large stands of older second growth forests.

The companion report (Volume 2: Conservation Manual) (in production) will discuss more fully the values of the ecosystems mapped, provide management guidelines and describe tools and mechanisms available for implementing appropriate land management on identified sites.

If you wish to purchase a copy of the Technical Report, please contact Jan Kirkby, e-mail Jan.Kirkby@gems9.gov.bc.ca, or phone (250) 387-0732.

Please copy us ...

... and reference the SEI correctly

We are delighted that so many people are using the SEI data as the base for their planning and inventory work. To ensure that the SEI database is not confused with additional inventory information, please ensure that the SEI is referenced correctly as one source of the information shown. The acknowledgement should read: "The Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory of East Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands (1997) was produced by Environment Canada and the B.C. Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks. Major funding was provided by Environment Canada and the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund."

Please keep copying us!

N.B. When depicting SEI polygons on maps, please ensure that cross-hatching is used to show polygons in which more than one ecosystem is present - otherwise the results may be misleading. Identify both primary and secondary ecosystems on the map legend.

Help! I Need More Information On An SEI Site!

Help is just a phone call away. Approximately 30% of the SEI polygons were field checked during the inventory process. This information has recently been entered into a database, which is linked by polygon ID number to the main database. A field data report can now be generated for any of these fieldchecked sites. Look at the table on the right hand side of your SEI map - if the polygon number has an asterisk beside it, it has been fieldchecked.

This information is available to all users. If you have MS Access, we can transfer the database to you electronically, so that you can do your own queries and generate your own reports with the user-friendly report form provided. If you do not have MS Access, let us know which polygon number(s) you are interested in, and we can fax you a copy of the report. We can also provide assistance with interpretation of field data.

For information contact Jan Kirkby, Conservation Data Centre, phone (250) 387-0732, fax (250) 387-2733, e-mail Jan.Kirkby@gems9.gov.bc.ca

The Georgia Basin Ecosystem Initiative

Under the Georgia Basin Ecosystem Initiative (GBEI), Environment Canada and the B.C. Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks have embarked on a partnership to conserve and protect habitat and species in the Georgia Basin. This expands on a number of already successful partnerships and programs such as the Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory.

There are three goals to help maintain wildlife populations, biodiversity and related human quality of life:

- "to sustain the abundance and diversity of wildlife through the securement and management of a network of protected areas;
- to work with landowners and provincial, local and regional governments responsible for land and water use decisions to ensure the needs of wildlife and open space are integrated into sustainable land use decisions; and
- to increase the public's understanding of the importance of habitat conservation and healthy and diverse ecosystems, to encourage communities to demand, support and commit to, and take action on, conservation."

This will be achieved in a number of ways, including some acquisition of key habitats, management agreements with government and individual landowners, and educational tools for public and community groups.

The GBEI hopes to achieve a number of measurable results, such as:

- "community-based voluntary stewardship programs implemented in Cowichan Bay and Comox;
- ten remnant ecosystems on Vancouver Island, including two of the remaining Garry oak habitats, will be secured;
- outreach programs and materials will be delivered to local and regional planners to facilitate the use of the Vancouver Island Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory; and

- a Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory will be developed for the Sunshine Coast."

For further information contact Environment Canada, phone (604) 713-9528, or check their website at <http://www.pyr.ec.gc.ca/GeorgiaBasin/>