

## SEI Update

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### A publication of the Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory Project February 1998

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#### Using SEI data in an OCP: The District of Highlands Experience

Looking at an SEI map of the District of Highlands is a very colourful experience - about 60% of the municipality is in SEI sites. At first glance, this looks like a real planning challenge.

But the District has embraced the SEI data, and is one of the first municipalities to include it in their Official Community Plan (OCP), adopted in July 1997. The OCP includes a map based on the SEI sites showing older forest, herbaceous vegetation and mixed woodland, and states that Sensitive Vegetation Areas will be "protected from the impacts of development or other human activity by the following policies: The preservation of native plant communities and intact stands of trees is encouraged. Sensitive vegetation areas will be designated as Development Permit Areas."

Older second growth areas (covering 43% of Highlands) are used for broad land use, rezoning and greenways planning rather than for development permit designation.

"The SEI provides a valuable layer of information," says planner Kevin Key. "Previously, we just had information on slopes, watercourses and wetlands - now we have information on vegetative cover as well. It also provides us with direction for focussing resources to protect priority sites on private land."

Key stresses that the SEI data is just a flagging tool.

Where a development application includes an SEI site, the District may require the applicant to provide (and pay for) a report from an independent certified professional that will assist in determining any conditions or requirements that may be imposed as part of the permit. This field check will also identify the boundaries of the site, and check the condition of the ecosystem - in some cases, the site may have changed significantly since it was originally identified.

One-third of Highlands is already protected in provincial and regional parks, and the District has successfully used conservation covenants to protect 104 ha of private land, including smaller ecosystems not part of the SEI. For Kevin Key, a flexible approach is essential - protecting ecosystem values may involve park dedication, density transfer and clustering, conservation covenants or siting buildings and roads away from sensitive areas.

The SEI data is still a relatively new planning tool, but with Council and community support, it will be another mechanism to maintain the natural character of the Highlands.

*For more information please contact Kevin Key, District of Highlands, phone (250) 474-1773, <http://www.highlands.bc.ca/>*

### Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory: Preliminary results

Sensitive Ecosystems	Comox_Str-VI <sup>1</sup>		Nanaimo-VI <sup>2</sup>		Cowichan-VI <sup>3</sup>		Capital-VI <sup>4</sup>		Islands <sup>5</sup>		Study Area	
	ha	%	ha	%	ha	%	ha	%	ha	%	ha	%
Coastal Bluff (CB)	34.1	<0.1	43.7	<0.1	41.8	<0.1	312.1	0.5	611.2	0.9	1042.9	0.3
Terrestrial Herbaceous (HT)	1327.3	1.2	446.0	0.5	744.0	0.9	1042.6	1.7	641.4	1.0	4201.3	1.0
Older Forest (OF)	1117.0	1.0	1463.4	1.5	729.7	0.9	5031.9	8.1	2263.3	3.5	10605.1	2.6
Riparian Ecosystem (RI)	2818.0	2.6	2146.5	2.3	1323.8	1.6	381.7	0.6	36.5	<0.1	6706.4	1.6
Sparsely Vegetated (SV)	92.7	<0.1	48.9	<0.1	24.6	<0.1	38.0	<0.1	136.2	0.2	340.4	<0.1
Woodland (WD)	24.3	<0.1	82.0	<0.1	357.2	0.4	1156.3	1.9	898.9	1.4	2518.8	0.6
Wetland (WN)	3271.4	3.0	1556.8	1.6	1196.2	1.5	537.9	0.9	491.6	0.8	7053.9	1.7
TOTAL sensitive ecosystems	8684.8	8.0	5787.3	6.1	4417.3	5.4	8500.5	13.8	5079.1	7.8	32468.8	7.9
<b>Total land area</b>	<b>108,154.8</b>		<b>95,048.1</b>		<b>81,973.4</b>		<b>61,792.7</b>		<b>65,157.5</b>		<b>412,126.4</b>	

Other Ecosystems	Comox_Str-VI <sup>1</sup>		Nanaimo-VI <sup>2</sup>		Cowichan-VI <sup>3</sup>		Capital-VI <sup>4</sup>		Islands <sup>5</sup>		Study Area	
	ha	%	ha	%	ha	%	ha	%	ha	%	ha	%
Second Growth (SG)	8594.2	7.9	7736.3	8.1	3294.1	4.0	10754.8	17.4	14552.8	22.3	44932.2	10.9
Seasonally Flooded Fields (FS)	491.4	0.5	953.8	1.0	772.5	0.9	325.2	0.5	232.9	0.4	2778.7	0.7
TOTAL SG/FS	9085.6	8.4	8693.1	9.1	4066.6	5.0	11080.0	17.9	14785.7	22.7	47710.9	11.6
<b>Total land area</b>	<b>108,154.8</b>		<b>95,048.1</b>		<b>81,973.4</b>		<b>61,792.7</b>		<b>65,157.5</b>		<b>412,126.4</b>	

These figures are the results of preliminary analysis. Final results may vary slightly.

<sup>1</sup> Regional District of Comox-Strathcona, Vancouver Island portion only.

<sup>2</sup> Regional District of Nanaimo, Vancouver Island portion only.

<sup>3</sup> Cowichan Valley Regional District, Vancouver Island portion only.

<sup>4</sup> Capital Regional District, Vancouver Island portion only.

<sup>5</sup> Gulf Islands in the SEI study area.

### Getting to know the SEI maps...

Now that the SEI maps have been published, one of our main goals is to ensure that people in the study area are aware of the maps and know how to use them. The first round of orientation sessions held in Victoria, Cowichan Bay, Nanaimo and Courtenay reached more than 125 people, including local government planners and representatives from First Nations and nongovernment organizations.

We hope to provide more of these sessions.

*If you would like a speaker for a coming event, or more information on sessions in your area, please contact Judith Cullington at (250) 391-8772.*



### Reminder!



### Attention digital SEI users

#### 'Read-only' TRIM files available soon - we hope!

The licensing agreement that we have with Geographic Data BC does not allow us to redistribute TRIM information to unlicensed users. We are in the process of translating our modified SEI TRIM layer into a 'read-only'(.tif) image for use by those of you who do not own TRIM files. It should be noted that although the quality of the 'tif' maps will not match a TRIM map, it will allow you to 'see' an SEI site in relation to features such as roads, streams, contours and coastline. Please bear with us - we are still working this solution.

*For further information please contact Peggy Ward, Canadian Wildlife Service (see contacts page 4.)*

**IMPORTANT: DON'T FORGET TO CHECK FOR SECONDARY ECOSYSTEMS.** The colour of the SEI site on the map refers to the dominant or primary ecosystem. If it is also marked with diagonal lines, this means that more than one ecosystem type is present, and the "Ecosystems Classification" table at the right hand side of the mapsheet will tell you what the secondary ecosystem is.

A common example of two ecosystems found in combination would be a woodland (WD)site interspersed with terrestrial herbaceous rocky outcrops (HT:ro) . Additional field checking would be needed to determine the extent of the secondary ecosystem.

## In preparation...

**SEI Website** - We are still working on the development of SEI website. We will let you know when we're only a mouseclick away.

**Technical Report**- This report will describe how the maps were produced, the ecological significance of the ecosystem types mapped and provide a summary and analysis of results. It is currently in draft format and should be ready by late spring.

**Conservation Manual** - This will describe the guidelines for protecting sensitive ecosystems, and the tools available. Work has now started on this manual, but is not expected to be ready until later this year.

### For more information:

- *on ground truthing and change forms:*

#### Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks Conservation Data Centre

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- *on the SEI project and consultants:*

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- *on the SEI project and digital data:*

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## Errata

We have found minor errors in the digital files and are working to correct these. An updated database will be available soon. In the meantime, the following corrections should be noted on the hardcopy maps:

N 1239 (*map 92F.038*) listed incorrectly in table (at right-hand side of map) as N1230; change Primary Ecosystem to SG:mx, Secondary Ecosystem to OF:co

S0108B (*map 92K.014*) listed incorrectly in table as S1088; change Primary Ecosystem code to CB:cl

V0543 (*map 92B.071*) listed incorrectly in table as V0453; change Primary Ecosystem to SV:cl, Secondary Ecosystem to SG:co.

V0269 (*map 92B.081*) site number incorrect on map and table; change both to V0296, change Primary Ecosystem code to WN:sp and add \*



### To order maps, please contact:

#### Clover Point Cartographics

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