

Setting goals, assigning priorities and identifying preliminary conservation actions for ecosystems in British Columbiaⁱ

The Conservation Framework has three overarching goals, with the intent to focus effort and resources across each of them:

- 1) Contribute to global efforts for species & ecosystem conservation.**
- 2) Prevent species & ecosystems from becoming at risk.**
- 3) Maintain the diversity of native species & ecosystems.**

1.0 Assigning Priorities to each Ecological Community

The prioritization tool ranks ecological communities for conservation and management action(s) based on several criteria: global status-rank and provincial status-rank (see Appendix I), trend and/or threat (see Appendix II), stewardship responsibility (see Appendix III), and biological feasibility (biological likelihood of successful maintenance of the species or ecological community) (see Appendix IV). These criteria are applied in different ways for each goal, resulting in three initial priority scores (one for each goal) for each species and ecological community. The species or ecological community is subsequently assigned to the goal in which it receives the highest score.

Every ecological community is assigned a score under each of the three goals. The ecological community is assigned to the goal under which it scores the highest priority. Priorities run from 1 (highest) to 6 (lowest).

Goal 1: Contribute to global efforts for species & ecosystem conservation

Prioritized based on global and sub-national status-rank, and modified by biological feasibility and stewardship responsibility.

The matrix for Goal 1 is largely based on the global rank (G-rank) to reflect the goal's global nature. The initial priority scores that arise from those communities with G4 or G5 ranks have an additional split in the prioritization by subnational rank (S-rank) – this is intended to further focus resources to ecological communities that have additional importance in BC. The G-rank / S-rank matrix assigns the highest initial priority scores

ⁱ Extracted from: Everett, K., C. Cadrin, and T. Lea. 2009. Ecological Community Prioritization – Technical Methods Paper. BC Ministry of Environment. Victoria BC.

for communities with the greatest global rank (G1) and decreases in priority scores down to the lowest global and subnational rank of G5S5.

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
G1	G1S1	-	-	-	-
G2	G2S1	G2S2	-	-	-
G3	G3S1	G3S2	G3S3	-	-
G4	G4S1	G4S2	G4S3	G4S4	-
G5	G5S1	G5S2	G5S3	G5S4	G5S5

Initial Score	
2	2
2 or 3	2 or 3
2, 3 or 4	2, 3 or 4
3,4 or 5	3,4 or 5
4 or 5	4 or 5
4, 5 or 6	4, 5 or 6
5 or 6	5 or 6
6	6

Step 1: Using the combined **G and S-rank** assign the initial priority score. For a rank with a range (e.g., S1S2), use the higher rank (e.g., S1). Note that for some combinations of G and S-ranks, two or three priority scores are possible. At this step, retain all possibilities.

Step 2: Adjust the initial priority score (from Step 1) with biological feasibility, using the following rules:

- If **biological feasibility** = Lower, and there is a single choice from the initial priority, move the initial priority down one score (i.e. add 1 to the score)
- If **biological feasibility** = Lower and there are three choices for initial priority, choose the lowest priority (highest number)
- If **biological feasibility** = Lower and there are two choices for initial priority, choose the lower priority score
- If **biological feasibility** = Moderate or is Unknown and there are three choices for the initial priority score, choose the middle priority score
- If **biological feasibility** = Moderate or is Unknown and there are two choices for initial priority score, choose the higher priority score (lower number)
- If **biological feasibility** = Moderate or is Unknown and there is only one priority score, choose that priority score
- If **biological feasibility** = Higher and there is a single choice for initial priority score, move the initial priority up one score (i.e. subtract 1 from the score).
- If **biological feasibility** = Higher and there are 2 or 3 choices for initial priority score, choose the highest priority score

Step 3: Adjust the priority scores for stewardship responsibility

- If **Stewardship Responsibility** = High or Very High, move priority up 1 score (i.e. subtract 1 from the score). If score is already 1, do not adjust for stewardship responsibility.
- If **Stewardship Responsibility** = Moderate or Unknown, make no change to priority score
- If **Stewardship Responsibility** = Low, move priority down 1 score (i.e. add 1 to the score).

Goal 2: Prevent species & ecosystems from becoming at risk

Goal 2 focuses on preventing common ecosystems and their values from becoming at risk. Goal 2 is prioritized by provincial status-rank, trend and threat, and biological feasibility.

In Goal 2, the matrix is solely based on S-ranks as the objective is to prevent ecosystems from becoming at risk in the province. Ecological communities with a status of S3 and S4 are given the greatest priorities as they represent ecological communities that are not yet considered imperilled but may have a rank of S3 or S4 because their occurrence is uncommon or they have negative trends or threats. If these trends and threats exist and are addressed immediately it reduces the risk of these communities becoming imperilled in the future. Communities ranked as S3 and S4 are given the same initial priority rank as it's possible that S4 ranked communities may have more significant negative trends or threats than those in S3 as a result of ranking protocols. Further distinction between S3 and S4 ranked communities is then done through adjustments to the prioritization using known trends and threats, and biological feasibility. This will allow for clearer selection of communities where action may be most successful.

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
G1	G1S1	-	-	-	-
G2	G2S1	G2S2	-	-	-
G3	G3S1	G3S2	G3S3	-	-
G4	G4S1	G4S2	G4S3	G4S4	-
G5	G5S1	G5S2	G5S3	G5S4	G5S5

Initial Score	
	2 or 4
	6

Step 1: Using **S-rank** assign the initial priority value. For a rank with a range (e.g., S1S2), use the lesser value (e.g., S1). Note that for S3 and S4 ranked ecosystems, two priority scores are possible. At this step, retain all possibilities.

Step 2:

If the priority values (from Step 1) are 2 or 4, they may be modified based on known, suspected, or potential trend or threat. Use the following rules, in the following order:

- If **Trend** (short-term or long-term) or **Threat** = Yes (i.e., A, B, C, or D according to CDC criteria), choose a priority score of 2.
- If **Trend** (short-term or long-term) = Unknown or **Threat** = Unknown or Low (U, E, F, or G according to CDC criteria), choose a score of 4
- If **Trend** (short-term and long-term) = No (E or F according to CDC criteria) and **Threat** = No (H according to CDC criteria), choose a score of 6

Initial scores of priority 6 do not get adjusted for trend / threat.

Step 3. Priority scores from Step 2 may be modified based on feasibility. If the priority scores are 2 or 4, the priority score (from Step 2) may need to be adjusted for feasibility, using the following rules:

- If **biological feasibility** = Lower, move priority down one priority score (i.e. add one to the score)
- If **biological feasibility** = Moderate or is Unknown, do not adjust the priority score
- If **biological feasibility** = Higher, move priority up one score (i.e. subtract one from the score)

Scores of 6 do not get adjusted for biological feasibility.

Goal 3: Maintain the diversity of native species and ecosystems

The focus of this goal is to retain native ecosystem diversity in B.C. The initial priority score is modified by biological feasibility, and trends or threats, to obtain the CF priority score.

In Goal 3, the initial priority score is modified by feasibility and trends and threats. Although the CDC ranking process considers rarity and risk when assigning S-ranks, a high rank (e.g. S1 or S2) may be assigned because of rarity alone. A moderate risk community may be due mainly to risk factors and not rarity. As such, trends and threats are used to adjust the initial priority score for the Conservation Framework – giving the higher priority for conservation action to those ecological communities that face significant trends or threats.

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
G1	G1S1	-	-	-	-
G2	G2S1	G2S2	-	-	-
G3	G3S1	G3S2	G3S3	-	-
G4	G4S1	G4S2	G4S3	G4S4	-
G5	G5S1	G5S2	G5S3	G5S4	G5S5

Initial Score	
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6

Step 1: Using **S-rank** assign the initial priority value. For a rank with a range (e.g., S1S2), use the lesser value (e.g., S1).

The S-rank matrix assigns the highest initial priority score for communities with the greatest provincial responsibility (S1) and decreases in priority ranks down to the lowest provincial responsibility (S5).

Step 2. The initial priority score (from Step 1) may need to be adjusted for feasibility, using the following rules:

- If **biological feasibility** = Lower, move initial priority score down one score (unless priority score is 6) (i.e. add 1 to the score)
- If **biological feasibility** = Moderate or is Unknown, do not adjust the priority score
- If **biological feasibility** = Higher, move initial priority score up one priority score (i.e. subtract 1 from the score).

Step 3: Priority score from Step 2 may be modified based on known, suspected, or potential **trend** or **threat**. Use the following rules, in the following order:

- If **Trend** (short-term or long-term) or **Threat** =Yes (i.e., A, B, C, or D according to CDC criteria), move the priority score from step 2 up one score (i.e. subtract 1 from the score). If score is 1, do not adjust for threat or trend.
- If **Trend** (short-term and long-term) and **Threat** = Unknown, Low or No, do not adjust the priority score from step 2.

2.0 Action Groups

2.1 Sorting ecological communities into action groups

Sorting is designed to determine what conservation action a particular ecological community requires based on status, present level of knowledge and legal responsibility. Sorting results in the ecological community being assigned an action group, or a series of action groups. A dichotomous key has been constructed to assign each ecological community to groups requiring similar actions to sustain or enhance them. Ecological communities within an action group can then be ordered by their conservation priority. Completion of any assigned action for an ecological community may require re-keying the ecosystem to assign it to a new group, possibly ‘No new action’. The assignment to action groups will be reviewed annually and changes made if the status of the ecological community has changed and/or previously-assigned activities are completed.

Several groups of conservation action have been identified and are listed in Table 1. Action groups have been divided into three broad classes: assessing, planning and acting.

Table 1. Action groups for ecological communities

Ecosystem Conservation Framework Action Groups
Assessing
Review Status Rank to re-evaluate the latest inventory, trend and threat information by the BC Conservation Data Centre (for S ranks and estimated G Ranks) and NatureServe (for G ranks).
Review Classification including classification of newly identified ecological communities and correlation of ecosystem classification with other provinces and states.
Compile Status Report of the trends, threats, ecological function and processes, successional pathways, distribution and description of biotic and abiotic components of this ecological community, including climate change impacts and the identification of information gaps and research needs.
Inventory the ecological community and increase accessibility to existing inventory information (e.g. data warehousing, models, access tools).
Monitor Trends at an interval appropriate to the successional development or natural disturbance regime of the ecological community. Includes monitoring of trends and ecosystem integrity, and the need to monitor for ecosystem change over time. Monitoring should inform other action groups. May include analysis of existing ecosystem mapping to determine trends.

Planning
Planning can include the development or updating of recovery plans or landscape level plans. Landscape-level planning tools can include land use plans and strategies at a broad landscape level, often developed through multi-agency collaborative partnership projects. Recovery Planning can include development or updating of a Recovery Strategy and Action Plan and includes implementing and monitoring of the plan.
Acting
Ecosystem and Habitat Protection: Use legislation, policies and guidelines at all levels that directly or indirectly maintain or conserve ecological communities, e.g., protection of an area, and implementation of legislation, policy, land use orders, standards and formal guidelines.
Ecosystem and Habitat Restoration: Management and/or maintenance that assists with the recovery of an ecological community that has been degraded damaged or destroyed by re-establishing its structural and compositional characteristics and ecological processes. Includes managing for alien invasive species, returning natural fire regimes, allowing succession to reach mature stages, climate change adaptation strategies, etc.
Private Land Stewardship: This group contains a subset of ecosystems from the Ecosystem and Habitat Protection and Restoration action groups that are of conservation concern but occur on private land and /or in situations outside the scope of more traditional legislation, policies, and formal guidelines. These would be ideal targets for activities such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration among partners and other governments at all levels • Promoting use/awareness of existing tax incentive programs • Extension and Education
Review Resource Use: Work in collaboration with resource ministries and land managers to review existing tenures (water use, forestry, grazing, mining and quarrying etc) and determine where existing tenures are contributing to continued decline.
No New Action: No additional conservation action is warranted. Assess whether ongoing programs need to be maintained.

Appendix 1: An explanation of NatureServe G and S ranksⁱⁱ

Basic Ranks

Rank	Definition
G1	Critically Imperiled —At very high risk of extinction due to extreme rarity (often 5 or fewer occurrences), very steep declines, or other factors.

ⁱⁱ NatureServe. 2008. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.0. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available http://www.natureserve.org/publications/ConsStatusAssess_StatusFactors.jsp (Accessed: April 23, 2008).

G2	Imperiled —At high risk of extinction due to very restricted range, very few occurrences (often 20 or fewer), steep declines, or other factors.
G3	Vulnerable —At moderate risk of extinction due to a restricted range, relatively few occurrences (often 80 or fewer), recent and widespread declines, or other factors.
G4	Apparently Secure —Uncommon but not rare; some cause for long-term concern due to declines or other factors.
G5	Secure —Common; widespread and abundant.

Global ranks are assigned by NatureServe, and include international correlation to determine the distribution and status of ecological communities across jurisdictions (e.g., AK, WA, OR, BC, AB). When complete correlation data was not available estimated G-ranks were assigned by expert reviewers based on draft correlation data. Over time this data will be reviewed and updated.

Subnational Conservation Status Definitions

Listed below are definitions for interpreting NatureServe conservation status ranks at the subnational (S-rank) levels. The term "subnational" refers to state or province-level jurisdictions (e.g., British Columbia).

Assigning national and subnational conservation status ranks for species and ecological communities follows the same general principles as used in assigning global status ranks. A subnational rank, however, cannot imply that the species or ecological community is more secure at the state/province level than it is nationally or globally (i.e., a rank of G1S3 cannot occur). Subnational ranks are assigned and maintained by state or provincial natural heritage programs and Conservation Data Centers.

Subnational (S) Conservation Status Ranks

Status	Definition
S1	Critically Imperiled —Critically imperiled in the province because of extreme rarity (often 5 or fewer occurrences) or because of some factor(s) such as very steep declines making it especially vulnerable to extirpation from the province.
S2	Imperiled —Imperiled in the province because of rarity due to very restricted range, very few occurrences (often 20 or fewer), steep declines, or other factors making it very vulnerable to extirpation from the province.
S3	Vulnerable —Vulnerable in the nation or state/province due to a restricted range, relatively few occurrences (often 80 or fewer), recent and widespread declines, or other factors making it vulnerable to extirpation.

S4	Apparently Secure —Uncommon but not rare; some cause for long-term concern due to declines or other factors.
S5	Secure —Common, widespread, and abundant in the province.
SNR	Unranked —Provincial conservation status not yet assessed.

Appendix II: Trend and Threat informationⁱⁱⁱ

Threat:

The threats fields are used to evaluate the impact of extrinsic threats, which typically are anthropogenic but may be natural. The impact of human activity may be direct (e.g., destruction of ecological communities) or indirect (e.g., invasive species introduction). Effects of natural phenomena (e.g., fire, hurricane, flooding) may be especially important when the ecological community is concentrated in one location or has few occurrences.

Threats can be characterized in terms of scope (what proportion of the area is affected), severity (how badly and irreversibly the area of occupancy of the ecological community is affected), and timing (how likely the threat is and how soon it is expected); the term magnitude is sometimes used to refer to scope and severity together. Threats should be considered collectively, and the foreseeable threat with the greatest magnitude is the one to be considered for the Threats fields. Scope, severity, and immediacy of threat are combined into an overall degree of threat (Table 1).

SCOPE OF THREAT

Value that indicates, for the threat with the greatest overall impact on the ecological community, the proportion of the ecological community that is observed, inferred, or suspected to be directly or indirectly affected by this threat within the specified geographic level (i.e., within BC).

Domain values for Scope of Threat are:

High = > 60% of total occurrences, or area affected

Moderate = 20-60% of total occurrences, or area affected

Low = 5-20% of total occurrences, or area affected

Insignificant = < 5% of total occurrences, or area affected

Unknown = Unknown (proportion of occurrences, or area affected is unknown)

(null) = Rank factor not assessed.

SEVERITY OF THREAT

Value that indicates, for the threat with the greatest overall impact on the ecological community, how badly and irreversibly the ecological community is observed, inferred, or suspected to be directly or indirectly affected by the threat within the specified geographic level (i.e., within BC).

Domain values for Severity of Threat are:

High = Loss of ecological community (all occurrences) or destruction of ecological community in area affected, with effects essentially irreversible or requiring long-term recovery (>100 years).

ⁱⁱⁱ NatureServe. 2008. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.0. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available http://www.natureserve.org/publications/ConsStatusAssess_StatusFactors.jsp (Accessed: April 23, 2008).

Moderate = Major reduction of population occurrences or long-term degradation or reduction of the ecological community in area affected, requiring 50-100 years for recovery

Low = Low but nontrivial reduction of ecological community occurrences or reversible degradation or reduction of ecological community in area affected, with recovery expected in 10-50 years

Insignificant = Essentially no reduction of the ecological community due to threats, with ability to recover quickly (within 10 years) from minor temporary loss

Unknown = Unknown (degree of impact on occurrences, or area is unknown)

(null) = Rank factor not assessed.

TIMING OF THREAT

Indicates, for the threat with the greatest overall impact on the ecological community, the imminence of the threat to the ecological community (i.e., how likely the threat to the ecological community is and how soon it is expected to be realized) within the specified geographic level (i.e., within BC).

Domain values for Immediacy of Threat are:

High = Threat is operational (happening now) or imminent (within a year)

Moderate = Threat is likely to be operational within 2-5 years

Low = Threat is likely to be operational within 5-20 years

Insignificant = Threat not likely to be operational within 20 years

Unknown = Unknown (how soon the threat will likely be realized is unknown)

(null) = Rank factor not assessed.

Table 1: Overall degree to which the ecological community is observed, inferred, or suspected to be directly or indirectly threatened within the specified geographic level (e.g., within BC) by the threat with the greatest overall impact on the ecological community.

SEVERITY	SCOPE	IMMEDIACY	VALUE	DESCRIPTION
High	High	High	A	Substantial, imminent threat. Threat is moderate to severe and imminent (within 5 years) for most (> 60%) of the occurrences or area. Ecological community occurrences are directly impacted over a widespread area, either causing irreversible damage or requiring long-term recovery
High	High	Moderate		
Moderate	High	High		
Moderate	High	Moderate		
High	Moderate	High	B	Moderate and imminent threat. Threat is moderate to severe and imminent (within 5 years) for a significant proportion (20-60%) of
High	Moderate	Moderate		
Moderate	Moderate	High		

Moderate	Moderate	Moderate		the occurrences or area. Ecological community are directly impacted over a moderate area, either causing irreversible damage or requiring a long-term recovery.
High	High	Low	C	Substantial, non-imminent threat. Threat is moderate to severe but not imminent (> 5 years) for most (> 60%) of the occurrences or area.
Moderate	High	Low		
High	Moderate	Low	D	Moderate, non-imminent threat. Threat is moderate to severe but not imminent for a significant portion of the occurrences or area.
Moderate	Moderate	Low		
High	Low	High	E	Localized substantial threat. Threat is moderate to severe for a small but significant proportion of the occurrences or area. Ecological community occurrences are directly impacted over a small area, or in a small portion of their range, but threats require a long-term recovery.
High	Low	Moderate		
High	Low	Low		
Moderate	Low	High		
Moderate	Low	Moderate		
Moderate	Low	Low		
Low	High	High	F	Widespread, low-severity threat. Threat is of low severity but affects (or would affect) most or a significant portion of the occurrences or area. Ecological community occurrences are not threatened severely, with changes reversible and recovery moderately rapid.
Low	High	Moderate		
Low	High	Low		
Low	Moderate	High		
Low	Moderate	Moderate		
Low	Moderate	Low		
Low	Low	High	G	Slightly threatened. Threats, while recognizable, are of low severity, or affecting only a small portion of the occurrences or area. Ecological community occurrences may be altered in minor parts of range or degree of alteration falls within the natural variation of the type.
Low	Low	Moderate		
Low	Low	Low		

For many ecological communities, several threats with similar severity and immediacy exist such that more occurrences are threatened collectively (by different threats) than would be threatened by a single threat. In such cases, threats that do exist to the ecological community should be described in the Threat Comments field, and then information should be provided in the Scope, Severity and Immediacy fields to represent the overall threat to the ecological community, taking into account the different threats and their overall scope and their relative severity and immediacy.

If only two of the three parameters are known, the threat value will be calculated by treating the unknown (or not assessed [null]) parameter as **Low**.

If only one of the entries in the three fields is rated (as **High, Moderate, or Low**), the resulting threat value will be **U = Unknown**.

If any of the three entries is **Insignificant**, the resulting threat value will be **H = Unthreatened**.

Trend

Short-term Trend:

Code that best describes the observed, estimated, inferred, suspected, or projected short-term trend in extent of occurrence, area of occupancy, number of occurrences (EOs), and/or viability/ecological integrity of occurrences (whichever most significantly affects the Conservation Status-rank) within the specified geographic level (i.e., range-wide for global, within-nation for national, or within-state or province for subnational). Short-term trends (generally <40 years) may be recent, current, or projected, and a trend may or may not be known to be continuing.

In considering short-term trends, newly discovered but presumably long existing occurrences should not be considered to represent an increasing trend, nor newly discovered individuals in previously little-known occurrences. Also, increases in the number of occurrences due to fragmentation of previously larger occurrences into more but smaller occurrences should not be considered to represent an increasing trend, but instead fragmentation of occurrences should be considered as indicative of a decreasing area of occupancy.

Domain values for Short-Term Trend are:

A = Severely declining (decline of >70% in population size, range, area occupied, and/or number or condition of occurrences)

B = Very rapidly declining (decline of 50-70%)

C = Rapidly declining (decline of 30-50%)

D = Declining (decline of 10-30%)

E = Stable (unchanged or remaining within $\pm 10\%$ fluctuation)

F = Increasing (increase of >10%)

U = Unknown (short-term trend unknown)

(null) = Rank factor not assessed

Long-term Trend:

Code that best describes the observed, estimated, inferred, or suspected degree of change in extent of occurrence, area of occupancy, number of occurrences (EOs), and/or viability/ecological integrity of occurrences over the long-term (ca. the past 150 years or since European settlement) within the specified geographic level (i.e., range-wide for global, within-nation for national, or within-state or province for subnational).

Domain values for Long-Term Trend are

A = Very large decline (decline of >90%, with <10% of range, area occupied, and/or number or condition of occurrences remaining)

B = Large decline (decline of 75-90%)

C = Substantial decline (decline of 50-75%)

D = Moderate decline (decline of 25-50%)

E = Relatively stable ($\pm 25\%$ change)

F = Increasing (increase of >25%)

U = Unknown (long-term trend in range, area occupied, or number or condition of occurrences unknown)

(null) = Rank factor not assessed

Appendix III: Stewardship Responsibility

Stewardship responsibility is a measure of the range of the world wide distribution of an ecological community that occurs in British Columbia and thus becomes a surrogate for the province's responsibility for that ecological community. An ecological community existing exclusively in BC is given a higher stewardship responsibility than an ecological community that only has a small portion of its range in BC. Stewardship responsibility places local occurrences into a global context. The intent is to consider, when all other assessments are equal, allocating greater effort to conserve ecological communities for which BC has greater stewardship responsibility. Stewardship responsibility serves as a planning and priority-setting tool, guiding effort to ecological communities of greatest responsibility.

Stewardship responsibility for ecological communities is broken into four classes. Ideally stewardship responsibility is based on the percent of the range occurring in BC. When this form of range information is not available, stewardship responsibility is based on the number of jurisdictions in which the ecological community is known or expected to occur.

Description of stewardship responsibility classes.

Stewardship responsibility	Description
Very High	Endemic or >95% of the world wide range occurs in BC. If adequate range information is not available: no other jurisdiction* has an equivalent ecological community.
High	50-95% of range occurs in BC. If adequate range information is not available: more than half of all equivalent plant associations occur in BC; or only 1 other jurisdiction has an equivalent ecological community.
Moderate	10 – 49% of range occurs in BC. If adequate range information is not available: there are < 50% of equivalent plant associations, or 2-4 jurisdictions other than BC have equivalent ecological community. (e.g BC, WA, AK, OR, or BC, AK, WA, or BC, AB, MT, etc)
Low	<10% of range occurs in BC. If adequate range information is not available: there are > 4 jurisdictions with equivalent ecological community. (e.g. BC, WA, OR, AK, YK, or YK, NWT, BC, AB, MT, etc)

*Jurisdiction: Province or state which includes at least one equivalent (formally recognized subnational plant association) as part of the internationally recognized plant association.

Appendix IV: Biological feasibility

Biological feasibility is defined as the biological or technical likelihood of successfully maintaining a specific ecological community in BC. This assessment of biological feasibility includes consideration of issues facing an ecological community in order to maintain ecosystem integrity. Biological feasibility is focused on maintaining or restoring a particular ecological community in British Columbia for Conservation Framework Goals 1 and 3. For Goal 2, biological feasibility is focused on preventing a particular ecological community from becoming at risk in the province.

An assessment of biological feasibility is used in the Conservation Framework to help identify the best use of resources by highlighting the ecological communities with the greatest potential for biological success of management action, and similarly identify those ecological communities with a low potential for biological success of management action. Because the assessment of biological feasibility can raise or lower the priority score assigned by the Conservation Framework, only ecological communities that clearly warrant a higher or lower feasibility are assigned those values. Ecological communities, where feasibility is borderline, remain at moderate where feasibility has no effect on the final Conservation Framework priority.

The following three classes of biological feasibility exist:

Higher feasibility (H): A greater than normal likelihood of biological success in maintaining or restoring an ecological community to its natural state. Higher feasibility will increase the Conservation Framework's priority score of an ecological community (unless the score is already 1).

Moderate feasibility (M): A moderate likelihood of biological success in maintaining or restoring an ecological community to its natural state. Moderate feasibility has no effect and will not adjust the Conservation Framework's priority score of the ecological community.

Lower feasibility (L): A lower than normal likelihood of biological success in maintaining or restoring an ecological community to its natural state. Lower feasibility will decrease the Conservation Framework's priority score of an ecological community (unless the score is already 6).

Feasibility is assigned a value of *unknown (U)* if insufficient information exists to make an adequate evaluation of the criteria. An *unknown* feasibility has no effect and will not adjust the priority score of the ecological community.

If no significant threats, or causes of a downward trend, exist a feasibility assessment is *not needed (NAN)* and no modification of the priority score occurs. Feasibility is largely based on our ability to biologically mitigate threats. If there are no threats present – and therefore no action needed – an assessment of biological feasibility is not conducted.