

LOCAL GOVERNMENT:

RDOS Electoral Area G

Keeping Nature in Our Future – A Biodiversity Strategy identifies where there are opportunities to conserve biodiversity throughout the South Okanagan and Similkameen.

As part of the Strategy, this primer provides specific findings and opportunities for Electoral Area G. It should be used in conjunction with the Area G Conservation Opportunities Maps, and the Regional Relative Biodiversity map which identify:

- Sensitive ecosystems ranked in importance for conservation ('Conservation Ranking'),
- Sensitive ecosystems already included in Environmentally Sensitive or Watercourse Development Permit Areas, Conservation Lands or Dedicated Open Spaces;
- Linkages among natural areas for wildlife ("Habitat Connectivity"); and,
- Areas of greatest ecological and biodiversity significance ("Relative Biodiversity").

The natural environment of Electoral Area G, Rural Hedley, offers many unique physical features such as BC's pocket desert, the meandering Similkameen River, steep mountains and sensitive ecosystems such as grasslands, riparian areas, forest, wetlands, shallow-soiled rock outcrops and ridges. It is the close proximity of these diverse habitats that contribute to a wide diversity of species, both common and rare, that are found within Electoral Area G. There are increasing threats to native plants, wildlife, and ecosystems.

Conservation Ranking

Maps show the ecosystems that are of more importance to conserve. The maps highlight where important, rare and sensitive ecosystems have already been identified in development permit areas, or designated as dedicated conservation lands, open spaces, parks and protected areas. It is recommended that the areas ranked high and very high for conservation be used to update the Environmentally Sensitive Development Permit areas.

Relative Biodiversity

Maps show the areas of greatest ecological and biodiversity significance, essentially "hotspots". This mapping provides a more comprehensive picture of important areas for nature - starting with important ecosystems (conservation ranking) and adding information such as special features (eg. wetlands), selected important species habitat and known locations, habitat size, and distance to roads. These maps will be useful for parks, neighbourhood and site planning.

Habitat Connectivity

Habitat connectivity describes the degree to which ecosystems and habitat for wildlife are linked to one another to form an interconnected network across the land. This network provides opportunities for wildlife movement through habitat corridors. Breaking these linkages results in habitat fragmentation thereby reducing biodiversity, ecosystem functions and the ability for species to fulfill their needs for food, shelter, and reproduction.

Highlights for Biodiversity Conservation

Conservation Ranking- Areas of Important Sensitive Ecosystems

- About 70% of Electoral Area G's land base contains ecosystems ranked high or very high.
- None of these highly sensitive ecosystems are within Environmentally Sensitive or Watercourse Development Permit Areas.
- 20% of the high and very high conservation ranking areas have been designated as Open Space or protected as Conservation Lands through parks.

Relative Biodiversity – Areas of Greatest Ecological or Biodiversity Significance

- Almost 19% of Area G has a very high or high relative biodiversity.
- Area G contains 14% of the very high and 21% of the high relative biodiversity area in the RDOS.
- Almost 50% of very high relative biodiversity areas are found in the valley bottoms which are only about a quarter of the RDOS land base.

Connectivity – linkages between natural areas and corridors for wildlife

- East west connectivity across the valley bottom is suffering, but is more viable than the Okanagan. The density of housing and agriculture in the Keremeos area is the most highly impacted.
- A north-west to south-east travel corridor exists along the Similkameen River.
- The Cascade Provincial Park has large holdings in the higher elevations, but there is a lack of protection in the valley bottoms.
- Some connectivity remains to the Okanagan in the east.

Current Tools and new Opportunities for Conservation

Official Community Plan Bylaws

Electoral Area G does not have an Official Community Plan. If an OCP were developed, opportunity exists to use the mapping products from ***Keeping Nature in Our Future*** to identify areas of importance and to plan and maintain connectivity throughout the valley, using tools such as Development Permit Areas.

Zoning Bylaw

Keeping Nature in Our Future – A Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for the South Okanagan Similkameen

Primers to Accompany Conservation Opportunity Maps 2012

There is currently only a small area of Zoning in Electoral Area G. If zoning is brought in, there are opportunities to adopt Riparian Assessment Areas, setbacks for buildings, structures and areas for Farm uses, and Floodplain regulations, as have been used in other parts of the Regionals District.

Subdivision Bylaw

Subdivisions in rural areas are ultimately approved by an independent approving officer in the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. There is an obligation for the approving officer to consider the environment, and public interest, even where the local government does not have planning bylaws.

Opportunities for Biodiversity Conservation

In addition to the Strategic Directions made in section 4.1 of *Keeping Nature in our Future*, consider the following opportunities for action for Area G:

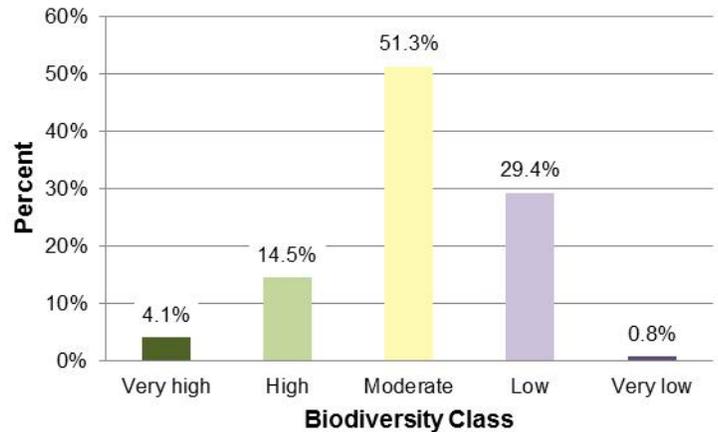
- Incorporate the resources from *Keeping Nature in Our Future* into current and future community planning processes.
- Electoral areas G and B are the only areas in the RDOS that have the opportunity to establish OCP's and zoning bylaws that consider the environment at the outset, without having to change historic zoning.
- There are currently limited options for biodiversity protection at the local government level as there is effectively no planning or parks planning.

Electoral Area G

Biodiversity Class Summary

| Biodiversity class | Area (ha)* | % of Electoral Area G |
|--------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Very high | 8,750 | 4.1% |
| High | 31,129 | 14.5% |
| Moderate | 110,307 | 51.3% |
| Low | 63,109 | 29.4% |
| Very low | 1,637 | 0.8% |
| No Data | 3 | 0.0% |
| Total | 214,935 | |

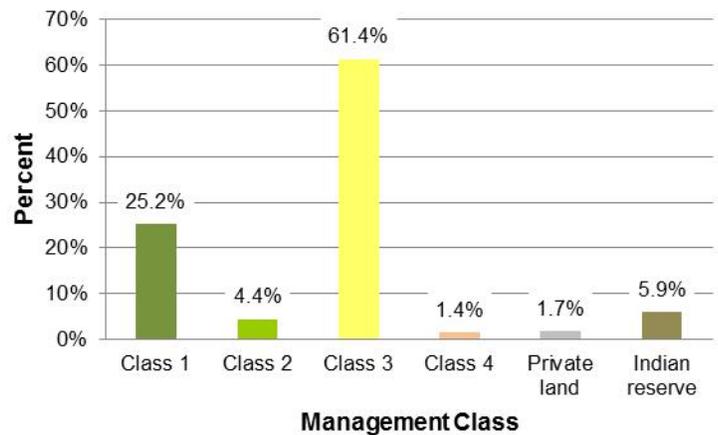
*area statistics exclude large lakes (>50ha)



Management Class Summary

| Management class | Area (ha)* | % of Electoral Area G |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Class 1 - Conservation Lands | 54,198 | 25.2% |
| Class 2 - Dedicated Open Space | 9,403 | 4.4% |
| Class 3 - Public Resource Lands | 131,937 | 61.4% |
| Class 4 - Agriculture & Crown Leases | 2,990 | 1.4% |
| Private land | 3,635 | 1.7% |
| Indian reserve | 12,772 | 5.9% |
| Undefined | 0 | 0.0% |
| Total | 214,935 | |

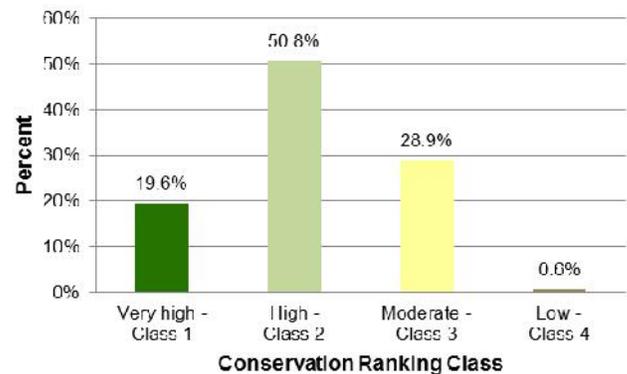
*area statistics exclude large lakes (>50ha)



Conservation Ranking Summary

| Conservation ranking | Area (ha)* | % of Electoral Area G |
|----------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Very high - Class 1 | 42,139 | 19.6% |
| High - Class 2 | 109,251 | 50.8% |
| Moderate - Class 3 | 62,181 | 28.9% |
| Low - Class 4 | 1,229 | 0.6% |
| No Data | 135 | 0.1% |
| Total | 214,935 | |

*area statistics exclude large lakes (>50ha)



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Primers to Accompany Conservation Opportunity Maps 2012