

LOCAL GOVERNMENT:

RDOS Electoral Area H

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 H. **It should be used in conjunction with the Area H 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 H, Rural Princeton, offers many unique physical features as such as Similkameen River, and many local lakes and creeks. The sensitive ecosystems include grasslands, riparian areas, forest and wetlands. Area H is a transition area from the dry interior to the wetter coast and it is the transition of these habitats that contribute to a wide diversity of species, both common and rare, that are found within Electoral Area H. In response to the increasing threats to, and rarity of, native plants, wildlife, and ecosystems, the RDOS has developed Watercourse Development Permit Areas, it has also increased the Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory coverage in this area.

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 61% of Electoral Area H's land base contains ecosystems ranked high or very high in importance for conservation.
- 6.8% of these highly sensitive ecosystems are within Watercourse Development Permit Areas, and further areas are being considered for Environmentally Sensitive Development Permit Areas under the current OCP review.
- 10% has been designated as Open Space or protected as Conservation Lands through parks or zoning

Relative Biodiversity – Areas of Greatest Ecological or Biodiversity Significance

- Almost 17% of Area H is has a very high or high relative biodiversity.
- Compared to the rest of the RDOS, Area H contains 34% of the very high and 41% of the high relative biodiversity area.
- 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.
- Electoral Area H is very large with a small population concentrated in the valley bottoms.

Connectivity – linkages between natural areas and corridors for wildlife

- The grasslands around Princeton and to the north of town act as a hub or core habitat area with multiple valleys connecting and distributing out. These areas are important corridors for connectivity in all directions.
- Increasing development at Otter Lake and Chain Lakes is decreasing the biodiversity values in those areas, and the valley corridors they are part of.

Current Tools and new Opportunities for Conservation

Official Community Plan Bylaws

Watercourse Development Permit Areas requires landowners to apply for a permit before subdividing, construction, or altering the land within a riparian area (e.g. 30m from stream top of bank). This development permit area is specifically designed to comply with the provincial Riparian Areas Regulation, under the provincial *Fish Protection Act*.

- Opportunities exist for improving WDP guidelines and policies based on implementation experience to date.
- The RDOS should continue to support joint lake foreshore inventory and classification initiatives.
- The RDOS should also re-initiate stream mapping to improve base maps and to ensure that only appropriate lands are being flagged for WDPs.

Environmentally Sensitive Development Permit Areas the updated RDOS Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory (SEI) Mapping and preliminary results from this analysis will be used to develop ESDP

areas in the current OCP review. The grasslands are an important factor that is well mapped beyond the SEI.

- Conservation rank high and very high lands should be used to update ESDP areas. Where there are gaps in the connectivity of these areas, medium rank lands should also be added to ESDP areas as opportunities for restoration and enhancements.

Zoning Bylaw

Riparian Assessment Areas, Setbacks for Buildings, Structures and Areas for Farm uses, and Floodplain regulations are all used to regulate land use around water.

Cluster Development is allowed in certain circumstances with the intention that new development can “cluster” on a portion of the new properties away from sensitive ecosystems. See *Keeping Nature in our Future* for more ideas on effective clustering.

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 in decision making. The RDOS also has requirements for subdivision services and development permits with some subdivisions. Based on the OCP, the RDOS can also provide information in the public interest as part of their referrals to the subdivision approving officer.

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 H:

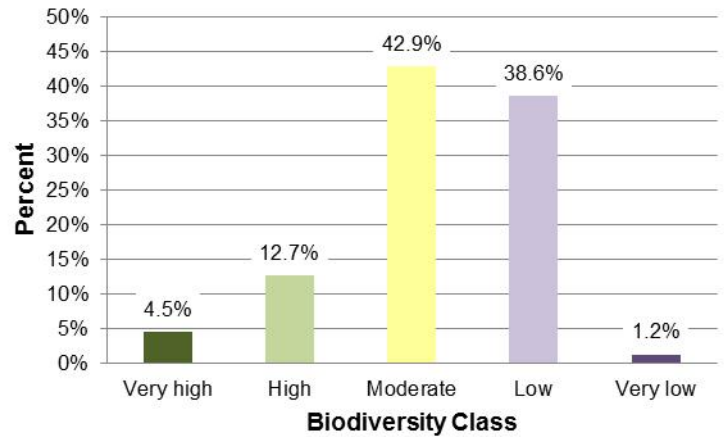
- Focus active long range and development planning in valley bottoms and associated areas that are limiting for nature.
- Use future land use maps in OCP reviews to signal where conservation or less detrimental land uses are more appropriate than the current OCP and zoning designations.
- The grasslands around Princeton and to the north of town are some of the rarest habitats in BC and should be included in the new Environmentally Sensitive Development Permit Areas.
- Otter Lake and Chain Lakes are becoming bottlenecks and opportunities to maintain corridors and habitats should be established through the OCP process.

Electoral Area H

Biodiversity Class Summary

Biodiversity class	Area (ha)*	% of Electoral Area H
Very high	21,426	4.5%
High	60,839	12.7%
Moderate	205,723	42.9%
Low	185,284	38.6%
Very low	5,903	1.2%
No Data	244	0.1%
Total	479,420	

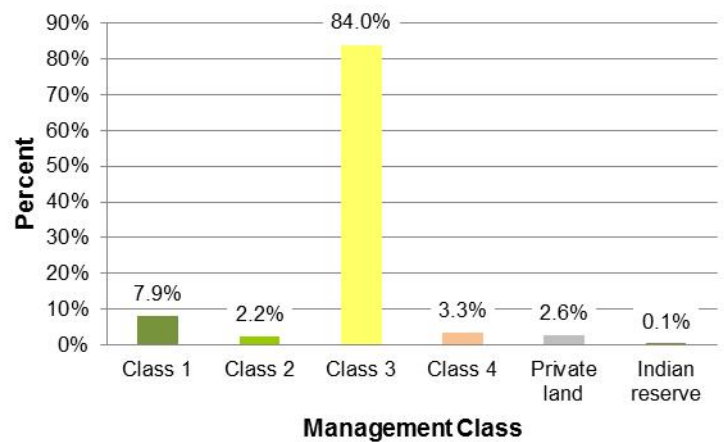
*area statistics exclude large lakes (>50ha)



Management Class Summary

Management class	Area (ha)*	% of Electoral Area H
Class 1 - Conservation Lands	37,825	7.9%
Class 2 - Dedicated Open Space	10,326	2.2%
Class 3 - Public Resource Lands	402,524	84.0%
Class 4 - Agriculture & Crown Leases	15,913	3.3%
Private land	12,504	2.6%
Indian reserve	306	0.1%
Undefined	22	0.0%
Total	479,420	

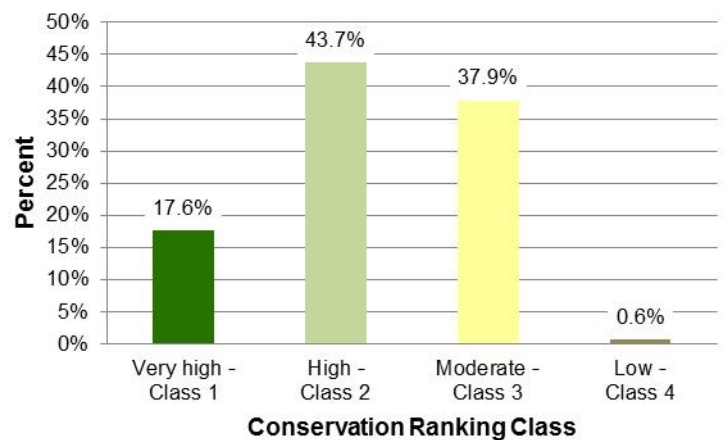
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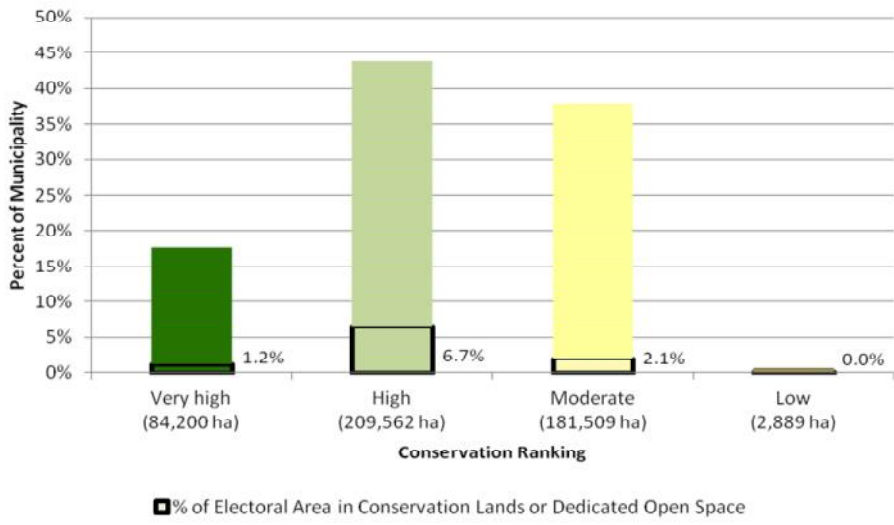
Conservation Ranking Summary

Conservation ranking	Area (ha)*	% of Electoral Area H
Very high - Class 1	84,200	17.6%
High - Class 2	209,562	43.7%
Moderate - Class 3	181,509	37.9%
Low - Class 4	2,899	0.6%
No Data	1,250	0.3%
Total	479,420	

*area statistics exclude large lakes (>50ha)



Percentage of Conservation Rankings, Conservation Lands, and Dedicated Open Space in Electoral Area H



Percentage of Conservation Rankings and ESDPAs in Electoral Area H

