

LOCAL GOVERNMENT:

RDOS Electoral Area F

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 F. It should be used in conjunction with the Area F 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 F, Rural Summerland offers many unique physical features as such as Okanagan Lake, Trout Creek and the silt benches. The sensitive ecosystems include 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 F. 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

- New areas have received Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory Mapping.
- About 75% of Electoral Area F's land base contains ecosystems ranked high or very high.
- 8 % of these highly sensitive ecosystems are within Watercourse Development Permit Areas and there are no the Environmentally Sensitive Development Permit Areas designated.
- Only about 6% of the high and very high conservation ranking areas have been designated as Open Space or protected as Conservation Lands through parks or zoning.

Relative Biodiversity – Areas of Greatest Ecological or Biodiversity Significance

- Almost 19% of Area F is has a very high or high relative biodiversity.
- Compared to the rest of the RDOS, Area F contains 5% of the very high and 6% 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.

Connectivity – linkages between natural areas and corridors for wildlife

- North south wildlife corridors on the West side of Okanagan Lake are being pushed towards higher elevations due to Highway 97, agricultural and urban development. Low elevation connectivity is reduced by West Bench, Summerland and the growing development around the Rural Growth Area of Greata Ranch.
- The Trout Creek valley is an important connection to the Chain Lakes and Similkameen to the West. The South-facing grassland slopes are valuable areas for biodiversity, and the river is a major source of fish and water for the Okanagan.
- Shingle Creek is also important for fish and wildlife.

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 do not exist in Area F. It is currently one of only two OCPs in the RDOS that does not have ESDP areas, although the information for establishment is available and current.

- 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.
- Opportunities exist for improving ESDP guidelines and policies based on implementation experience to date.

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 F:

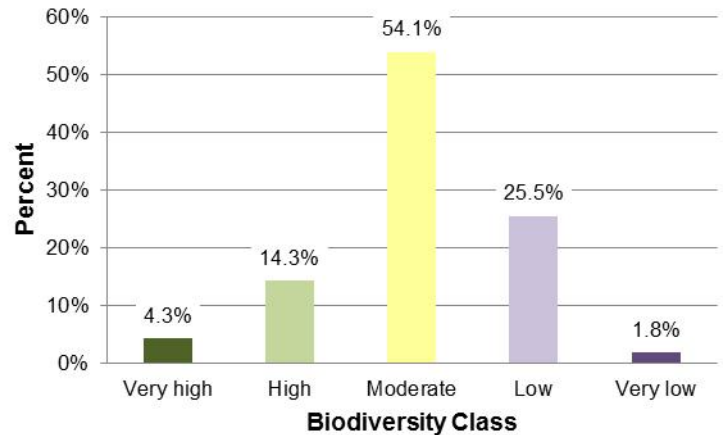
- Focus active long range and development planning in valley bottoms and associated areas that are limiting for nature.
- Use future land use maps in OCP reviews to signal where conservation or less detrimental land uses are more appropriate than the current OCP and zoning designations.
- Establish Environmentally Sensitive Development Permit areas.
- North south wildlife corridors on the West side of Okanagan Lake above and below Highway 97. Seek opportunities for corridors through Greata Ranch, West Bench and Summerland and above the highway. Work with Summerland and Pentiction Indian Band to maintain continuous corridors.
- Maintain the Trout Creek corridor through zoning and development permits, with particular attention to the south-facing grasslands.
- Identify and implement restoration opportunities to maintain and restore water flows and fisheries in Trout Creek, with partners.

Electoral Area F

Biodiversity Class Summary

Biodiversity class	Area (ha)*	% of Electoral Area F
Very high	2,821	4.3%
High	9,321	14.3%
Moderate	35,190	54.1%
Low	16,601	25.5%
Very low	1,163	1.8%
No Data	4	0.0%
Total	65,100	

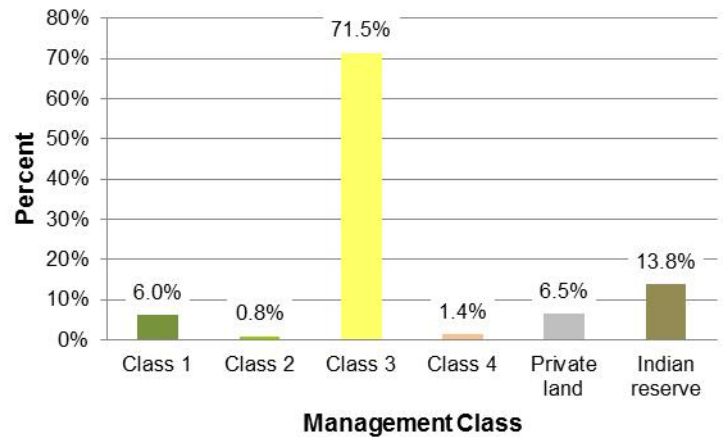
*area statistics exclude large lakes (>50ha)



Management Class Summary

Management class	Area (ha)*	% of Electoral Area F
Class 1 - Conservation Lands	3,924	6.0%
Class 2 - Dedicated Open Space	552	0.8%
Class 3 - Public Resource Lands	46,527	71.5%
Class 4 - Agriculture & Crown Leases	887	1.4%
Private land	4,216	6.5%
Indian reserve	8,962	13.8%
Undefined	33	0.1%
Total	65,100	

*area statistics exclude large lakes (>50ha)



Conservation Ranking Summary

Conservation ranking	Area (ha)*	% of Electoral Area F
Very high - Class 1	16,932	26.0%
High - Class 2	31,908	49.0%
Moderate - Class 3	15,408	23.7%
Low - Class 4	708	1.1%
No Data	144	0.2%
Total	65,100	

*area statistics exclude large lakes (>50ha)

