

# **LOCAL GOVERNMENT:**

## ***RDOS Electoral Area B***

***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 B. **It should be used in conjunction with the Area B 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 B, Rural Cawston, offers many unique physical features as such as BC's pocket desert, the meandering Similkameen River, steep mountains and sensitive ecosystems (grasslands, antelope brush, 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 B. In response to the increasing threats to, and rarity of, native plants, wildlife, and ecosystems, the RDOS has developed Environmentally Sensitive and Watercourse Development Permit Areas. The RDOS can use this primer to improve and introduce tools based on the most recent and best science.

### **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***

- 79% of the land base in Electoral Area B contains ecosystems ranked high or very high in importance for conservation.
- Area B has a higher proportion of lands that are a priority for conservation compared to the total amount within the RDOS (66.1%).
- 29% of the ecosystems identified as highly sensitive in Area D have been designated as Open Space or protected as Conservation Lands through parks or zoning.
- None of the highly sensitive ecosystems are within Environmentally Sensitive or Watercourse Development Permit Areas.

### ***Relative Biodiversity – Areas of Greatest Ecological or Biodiversity Significance***

- Almost 46% of Area B is has a very high or high relative biodiversity.
- Area B contains 8.6% of the very high and 4.8% of the high relative biodiversity (hotspot) areas found in the RDOS.
- Almost 50% of very high relative biodiversity areas in the study area are found in valley bottoms, which make up only about 25% of the RDOS land base.

### ***Connectivity – linkages between natural areas and corridors for wildlife***

- East west connectivity across the valley bottom has been compromised, but is more viable than the Okanagan. Housing and agriculture density in the Cawston area is the highest.
- North south travel corridors on either side of the Similkameen River are in slightly higher elevations due to agricultural development. Although there is still opportunity between the cultivated areas for movement.
- The South Okanagan Grasslands Protected Area has large holdings, but there is a lack of protection in the valley bottoms.
- Some connectivity remains to the Okanagan in the east, but active planning is needed to maintain it with increasing growth.

## ***Current Conservation Tools and New Opportunities***

### ***Official Community Plan Bylaws***

Electoral Area B does not have an Official Community Plan, although one is being considered for the Cawston area. Opportunity exists to use the mapping products from this report to identify areas of importance and to plan and maintain connectivity throughout the valley, using tools such as Development Permit Areas.

## ***Zoning Bylaw***

There is currently no zoning in Area B. 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 has been done in other parts of the Regional 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 the public interest in the decision, even where the local government does not have planning bylaws. Bylaws would provide more guidance in this Electoral Area.

## ***Opportunities for Biodiversity Conservation***

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

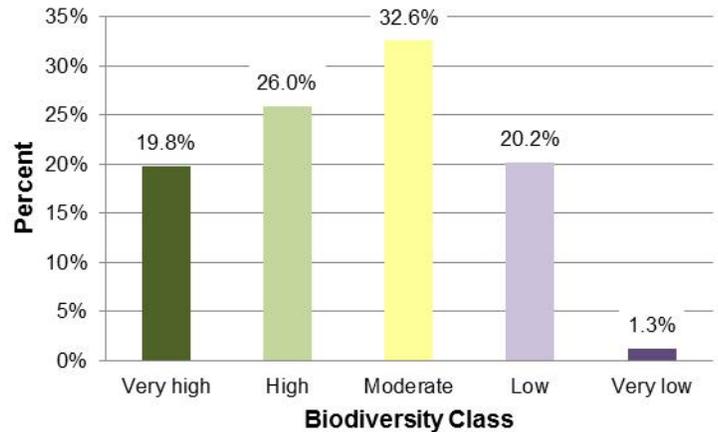
- Incorporate the resources from *Keeping Nature in Our Future* into current and future community planning processes.

## Electoral Area B

### Biodiversity Class Summary

Biodiversity class	Area (ha)*	% of Electoral Area B
Very high	5,422	19.8%
High	7,094	26.0%
Moderate	8,921	32.6%
Low	5,531	20.2%
Very low	350	1.3%
No Data	7	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>27,324</b>	

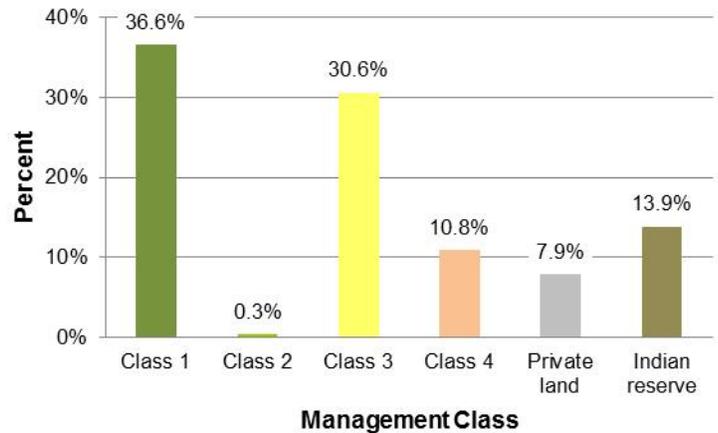
\*area statistics exclude large lakes (>50ha)



### Management Class Summary

Management class	Area (ha)*	% of Electoral Area B
Class 1 - Conservation Lands	9,987	36.6%
Class 2 - Dedicated Open Space	83	0.3%
Class 3 - Public Resource Lands	8,363	30.6%
Class 4 - Agriculture & Crown Leases	2,960	10.8%
Private land	2,146	7.9%
Indian reserve	3,785	13.9%
Undefined	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>27,324</b>	

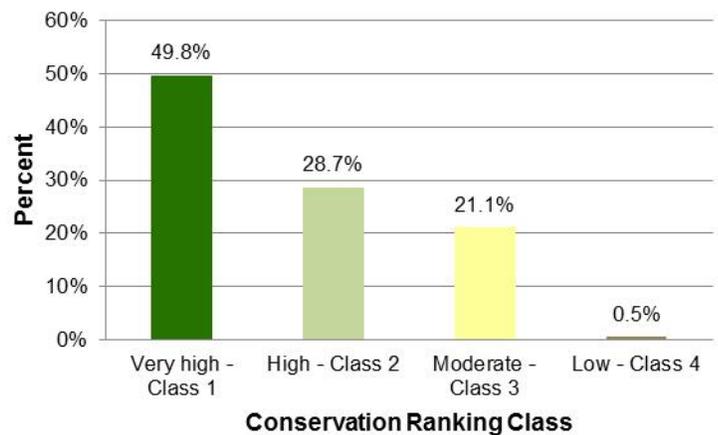
\*area statistics exclude large lakes (>50ha)



### Conservation Ranking Summary

Conservation ranking	Area (ha)*	% of Electoral Area B
Very high - Class 1	13,597	49.8%
High - Class 2	7,834	28.7%
Moderate - Class 3	5,753	21.1%
Low - Class 4	138	0.5%
No Data	1	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>27,324</b>	

\*area statistics exclude large lakes (>50ha)



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

Primers to Accompany Conservation Opportunity Maps 2012