
Regional Parks Landscape Evaluation

Reference Maps



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The Capital Regional District (CRD) Board has directed staff to consider the opportunities for establishing regional parks in areas west of the Sooke River. The only regional park in this area currently is at Jordan River. Staff are undertaking a landscape evaluation to identify areas with high conservation values that represent the diversity in our region and that have the potential to create connection with the existing parks and protected areas in the region. The study area for this work is known as the Growth Management Planning Area (GMPA) which includes all the lands of the CRD on Vancouver Island. This evaluation will be integrated with other interests in the land toward identifying priority areas for consideration in any future parkland acquisition program. The landscape themes represent a focus on physical landscapes and key habitats. The intent is to plan for a protected areas system that represents the regional diversity of landscape features and connects them together as a protected areas network. The current protected areas network includes federal and provincial parks and ecological reserves, regional parks, large conservation focused municipal parks and the Greater Victoria Water Supply area.

To support this work, the CRD has compiled a series of themed maps based on the most current available data describing the natural character and diversity in the region as well as the “human footprint” or human development patterns. Map data will be analyzed to identify areas that support the conservation values we are seeking and that may not be represented in our existing protected areas. The analysis also looks at how we might connect these areas to improve the protected area network. This information package provides a series of maps that describe these landscape themes. Each theme is presented below with a general description of key attributes in the form of a landscape atlas.

We are undertaking a public engagement program to share this work and learn about other values and aspirations for the landscape so that we can incorporate other information, cultural values, local knowledge and expertise to support the development of a new land acquisition strategy after the current strategy expires in 2019.



Bev Hall

Map Themes

Land Evaluation Project Study Area

Physical Landscape

- Elevation

- Slope

- Landscape Position

- Biogeoclimatic Ecosystem Classification

Water Features

- Lakes, Streams and Wetlands

- Watersheds

- Salmonid Species Richness

Land Cover (2017)

- Standard Land Cover

- Forest Stand Age Class

- Forest Leading Stand Species

- Riparian Natural Vegetation


Human Footprint

- Road Density



- Protected Areas

- Other Land Designations – Crown Tenures

- Other Land Designations – Crown Forest Tenures





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Study Area

- The study area for this landscape evaluation is defined by the Growth Management Planning Area (GMPA) which is all the CRD lands on Vancouver Island. The total study area is over 200,000 hectares; about 93 km east to west and 45 km south to north. The Gulf Islands are not included in this analysis. The Islands Trust Conservancy has recently completed a conservation plan for that area.
- The study area has an east/west gradient between concentrated urban and agriculture activity in the east (the Core, Westshore and Peninsula) to a more dispersed and smaller human population along the west coast. The Juan de Fuca Electoral Area is predominantly comprised of “resource lands” that support forest harvesting, mining, quarries and more natural landscapes.
- These patterns are well reflected by our regional population (2016):

Core	248,000
Peninsula	43,000
West Shore	72,140
<u>Juan de Fuca Electoral Area</u>	<u>4,860</u>
<u>TOTAL GMPA</u>	<u>368,000</u>

<u>Gulf Islands</u>	<u>15,000</u>
<u>TOTAL CRD</u>	<u>383,000</u>



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Kilometers

UTM Zone 10N NAD 1983

Elevation - Classes (metres)

0 - 20	450 - 700
20 - 150	700 - 900
150 - 450	900 - 950

Study Area

Protected Areas

Elevation Class (metres)	Study Area (%)	Protected Areas (%)
0 - 20	~8	~5
20 - 150	~22	~18
150 - 450	~32	~45
450 - 700	~25	~25
700 - 900	~10	~8
900 - 950	~2	~1

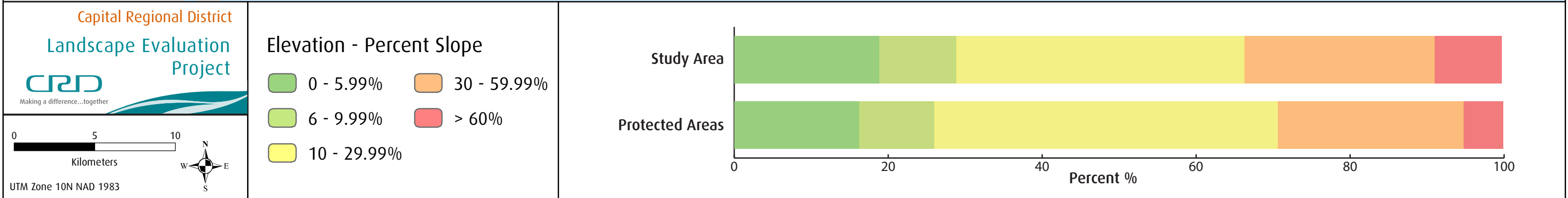
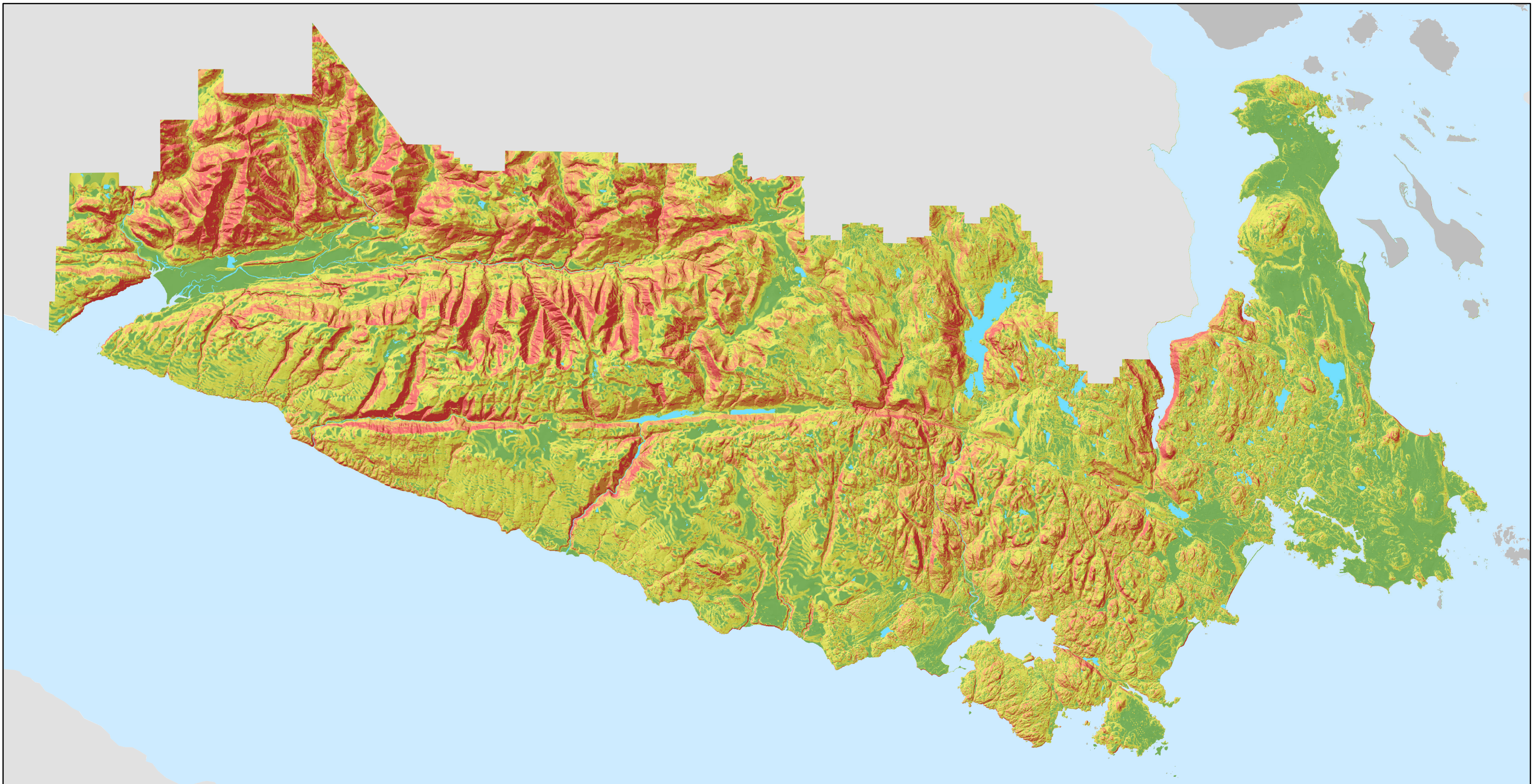
Elevation - Class

The elevation classes depicted here show the coastal plains in deep green tones. Much of the peninsula and greater Victoria region is low lying below 150m elevation. Lighter greens show the modest terrain of the Highlands District and the Sooke Hills which are generally below 500m elevation. This is in stark contrast to areas in the west where steep mountainous regions dominate the San Juan Ridge and insular mountains to the north. There are also significant lowland features in the west like the San Juan and Sooke rivers and the coastal fringe along the Juan de Fuca Strait.

Our current regional park system has focused on areas east of the Sooke River in the middle elevations of the region. As a result, we do not have good representation of features or ecosystems that you would find in the lowest elevation classes found along the coastal fringe, the San Juan River or the peninsula. Similarly, higher subalpine elevation areas found in the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area are underrepresented.

It is important to have vertical gradients in elevation connected through a protected area network to provide migratory pathways for species as they seek out different habitats by season. This will be very important as climate change impacts become more prevalent potentially forcing elevational migration of plant and animal species.

This map is based on elevation contours that range from sea level up to mountain summits over 1000m. The elevation is derived from provincial terrain inventory mapping.




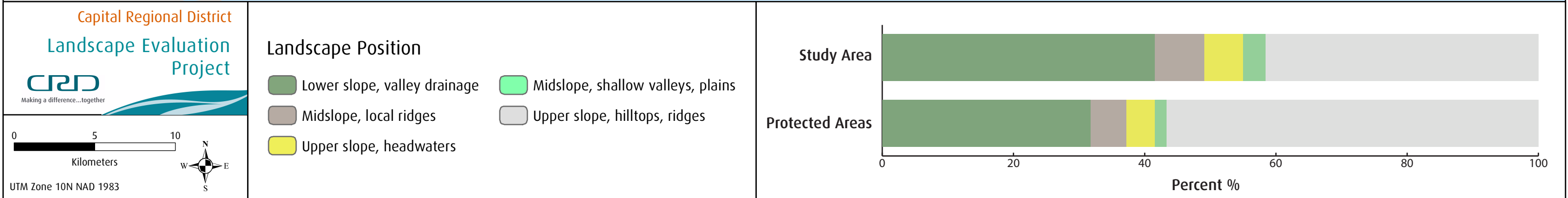
Elevation – Percent Slope

On this map, the green shades illustrate low slope plains and broad valley bottoms or low hills, yellow tones indicate steeper hills and mountain approach, while river canyons and steep mountain ridges, cliffs and steep valleys are shown in red. The eastern core area and peninsula are relatively flat to low slope in nature. As you move toward the northwest, the slopes become steeper in general across the landscape.

The degree of elevation change across an area, or slope, is an important landscape element. Slope often dictates soil characteristics like moisture and nutrient levels as well as slope stability. Both humans and wildlife can travel more easily across low slope areas and can be completely impeded by very steep slopes.

The slope is derived from provincial terrain inventory mapping. The slope classes are also adapted from provincial standards and range from relatively flat (below 6% grade) to very steep (above 60%).






Landscape Position

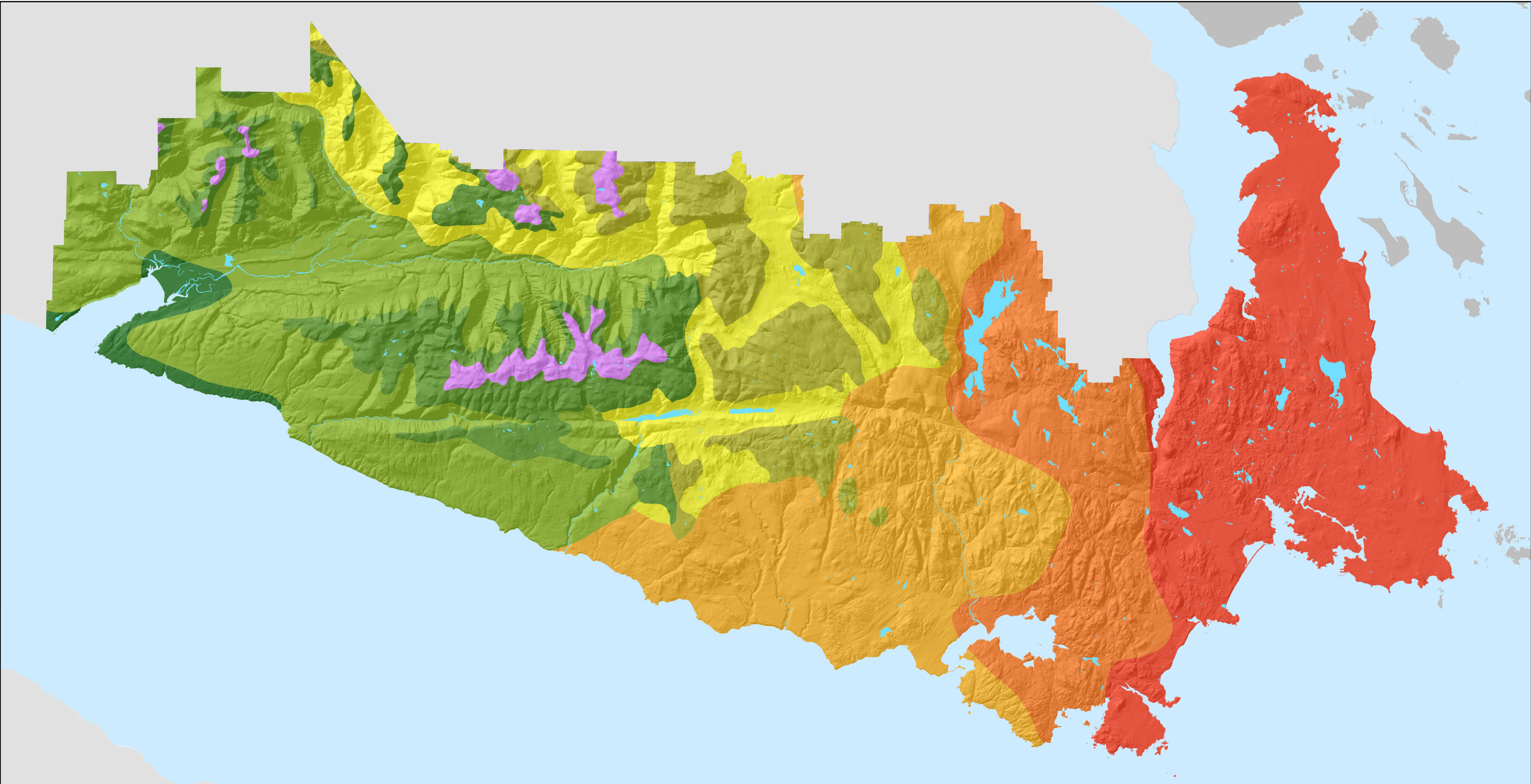
Landscape position is a combination of slope, aspect and elevation used to describe position at a specific location in relation to the surrounding landscape. It is derived from a computer model known as Topographic Position Index and relies on provincial terrain mapping data.

Valley bottoms, ridge tops, mid slopes and headwaters combine to create corridors across the landscape as well as potential barriers to movement. Ridgetops (shown in light grey) often represent drier open landscapes that provide relatively good vistas, while valley bottoms (shown in dark green) are often densely vegetated rich moist ecosystems.

Regional features like the San Juan River Valley, the San Juan Ridge, and the long west to east Leech River Fault from Sombrio Beach to Esquimalt, are seen clearly on the map.

Connecting these natural corridors across the landscape, and providing adversity of habitats along the way, are important for migration of wildlife. As climate change impacts increase, many plants and animals will need the ability to adapt through elevational migration and will rely on these corridors to do so.





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Biogeoclimatic Ecosystem

Coastal Western Hemlock			
Subzone	Variant	Subzone	Variant
vh	1	mm	1
vm	2	xm	2
vm	1	xm	1
mm	2		

Mountain Hemlock	
Subzone	Variant
mm	1

Coastal Douglas Fir	
Subzone	
mm	

Study Area - Hectares

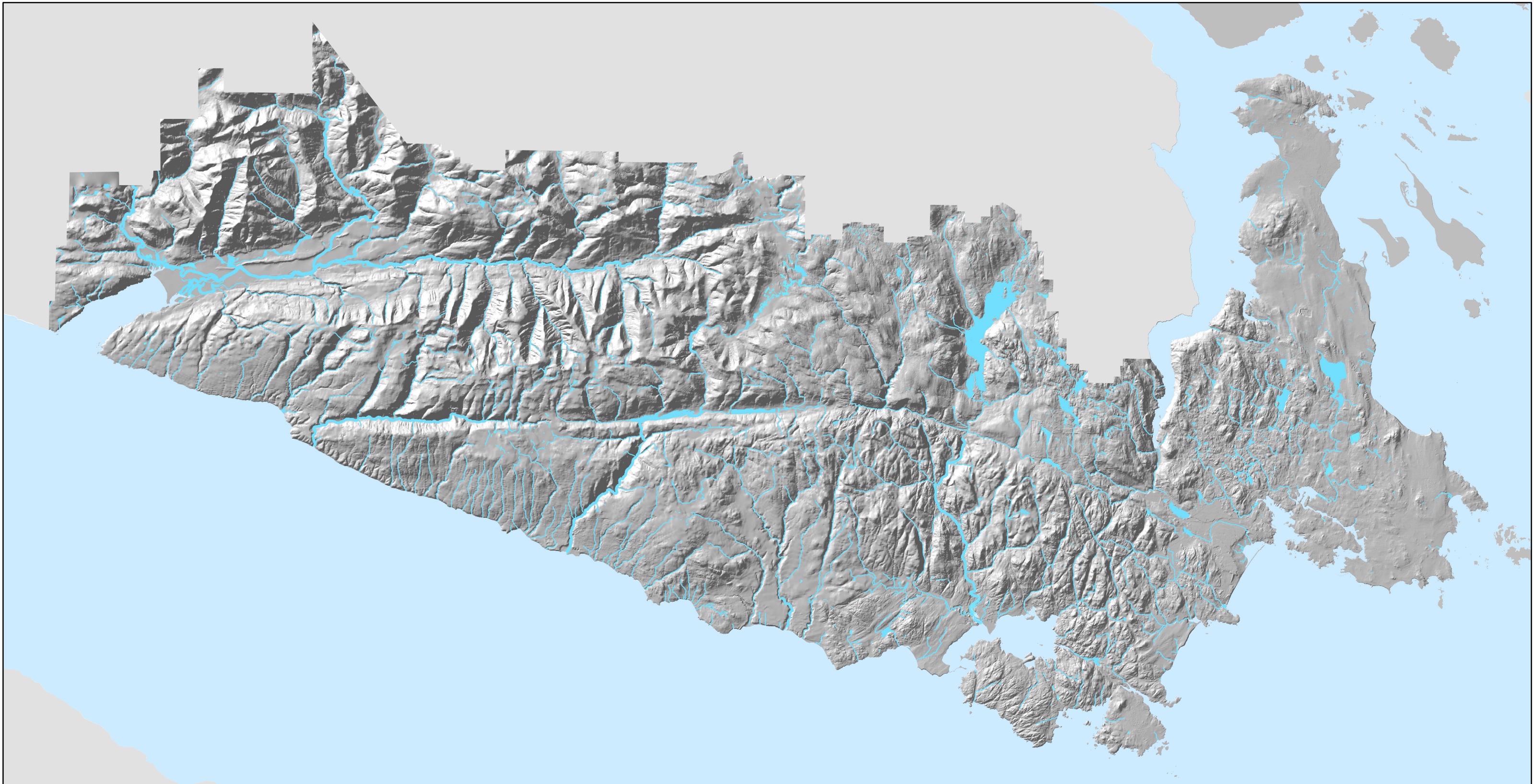
Protected Areas - Hectares

This map is a representation of the provincial Biogeoclimatic Ecosystem Classification. Very simply, it is a representation of

- Bio Biology (vegetation)
- Geo Geological formation
- Climatic Local climatic influences

The Biogeoclimatic Ecosystem Classification (BEC) system is used for management of forested and non-forested ecosystems and uses vegetation communities to infer the combined ecological effects of climate and soil. In BC, there are 14 zones named after the dominant tree species and broad geographic location. The study area includes three zones: Coastal Douglas Fir (CDF); Coastal Western Hemlock (CWH) and Mountain Hemlock (MH). Zones can be divided into climatically distinct subzones of precipitation (moisture), temperature and geography. For example, the CWH zone has subzones ranging from very dry maritime (CWHxm) to very wet hyper-maritime (CWHvh). Within these subzones, variants are areas which are slightly drier, wetter, snowier, warmer, or colder than typical but with similar vegetation.

The BEC system combines a number of important ecological features that help to characterize the landscape. In our region, there is a distinct gradient from east to west and from low to high elevation, representing the climatic and physiographic (or landscape diversity) of the region. In the west, the full influence of the Pacific Ocean provides warm moist air with high rainfall, and moderated temperatures (never too warm or too cold) where coniferous forests are dominant. In contrast, the east is in the shadow of the mountains and is typically drier with a wider range of warm and cold temperatures and a range of forests, open woodlands and meadows. In the mountains of the interior, high snow pack and prolonged winters along with very high rainfall result in more subalpine wetlands alongside high elevation forests, including yellow cedar and mountain hemlock. These three “typical” scenarios represent the CWH, CDF and MH zones. Regional parks are predominantly located in the CDF and drier subzones of the CWH.



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W N E S

Watercourses

- Rivers / Streams
- Wide Rivers
- Lakes / Reservoirs

Protected Areas

Lakes / Reservoirs

Protected Areas

Wide Rivers

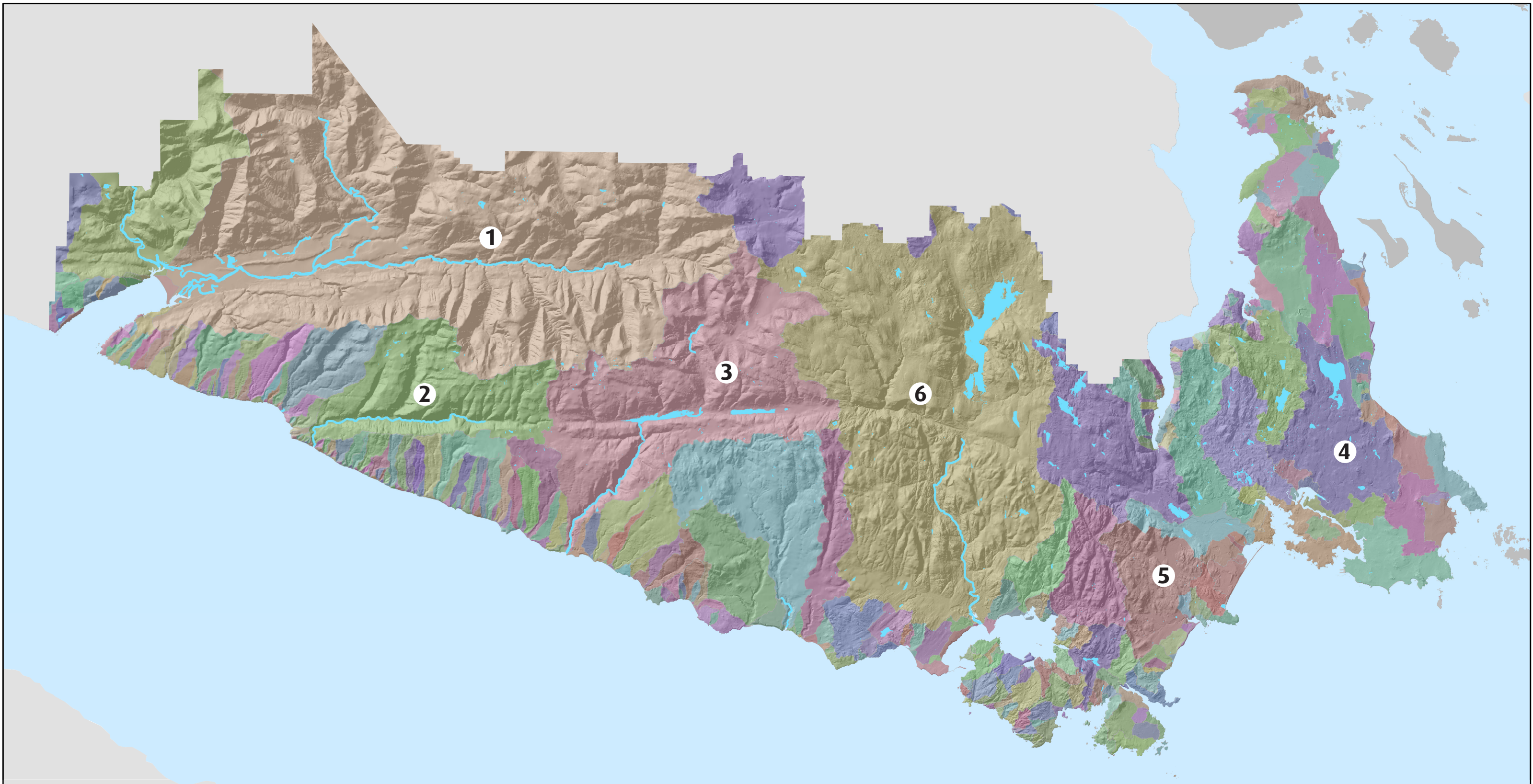
Protected Areas

Rivers / Streams

This map represents water courses defined by Provincial and CRD hydrology data including creeks, rivers, lakes and reservoirs. Wetlands are considered in the land cover maps found in this document.


Water is like the life blood of the ecosystem, circulating throughout our landscape. Water supports important aquatic ecosystems but also shapes the landscape and provides moisture, nutrients and climate control for terrestrial ecosystems. Access to water and the physical features formed by water influences how plants, animals and humans utilize the landscape.

There are over 3,200 hectares (ha) of lakes and reservoirs and almost 4,000 kilometres (km) of rivers and creeks. Over 46% of lake area is found in the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area mostly due to the large reservoirs like Sooke Lake. About 57% of lakes and 20% of all streams, but only 5% of large rivers are found in existing protected areas.




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Kilometers

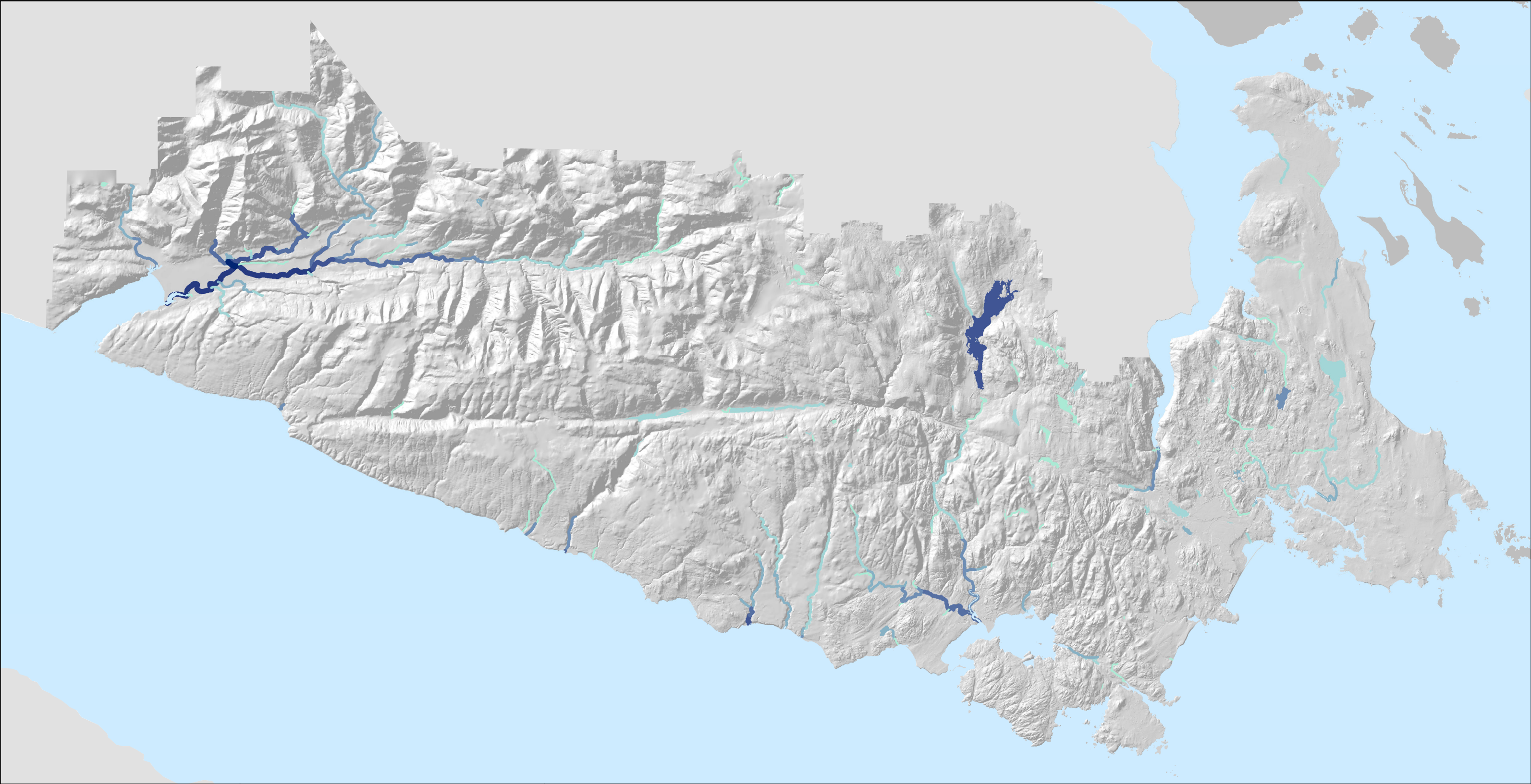


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Sample Watersheds			Hectares				
1		San Juan River	43,204	4		Colquitz Creek	5,007
2		Loss Creek	7,499	5		Bilston Creek	3,128
3		Jordan River	16,190	6		Sooke River	34,057



This map represents watersheds defined by provincial and CRD hydrology data. Water flows downhill and, over millennia, features like valleys and canyons, limestone sinks and low lying wetlands result. A watershed is a feature defined by water as it flows down one side of a ridge or the other, culminating in larger and larger streams as it travels toward the sea. All water that flows to enter the sea at a common point is contained in one watershed.

In a regional context, there are several major watersheds and many smaller ones. These landscape features are commonly named for the major river that flows through them. For example, in the centre of the study area, Sooke Lake flows south into the Sooke River down to the Sooke Basin. This is the Sooke River Watershed and is 34,057 ha. By comparison, the Colquitz Creek (5,007 ha) and Bilston Creek (3,128 ha) watersheds are considerably smaller. The San Juan River flows east to west across the top of the study area, with Harris Creek joining it from the north as it flows toward Port Renfrew. The San Juan River watershed is 43,204 ha within the CRD but also spans the boundary into the Cowichan Valley Regional District and outside of our study area adding another 23,701 ha for a total of almost 67,000 ha.




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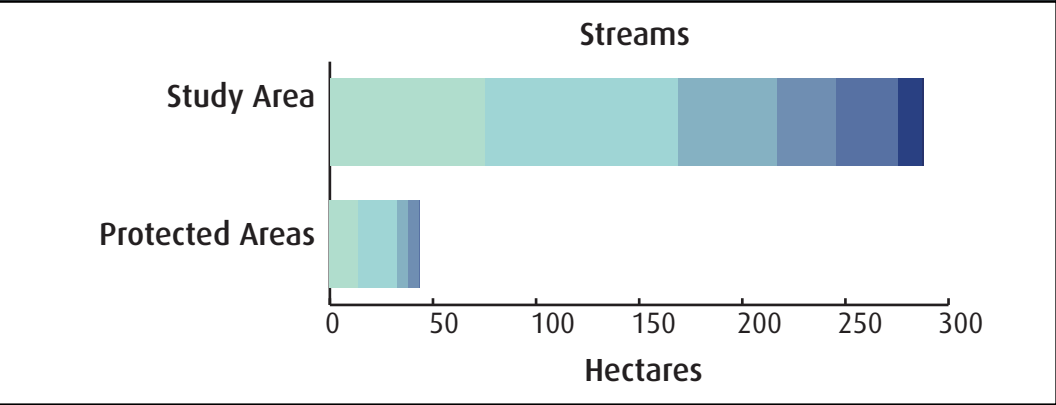
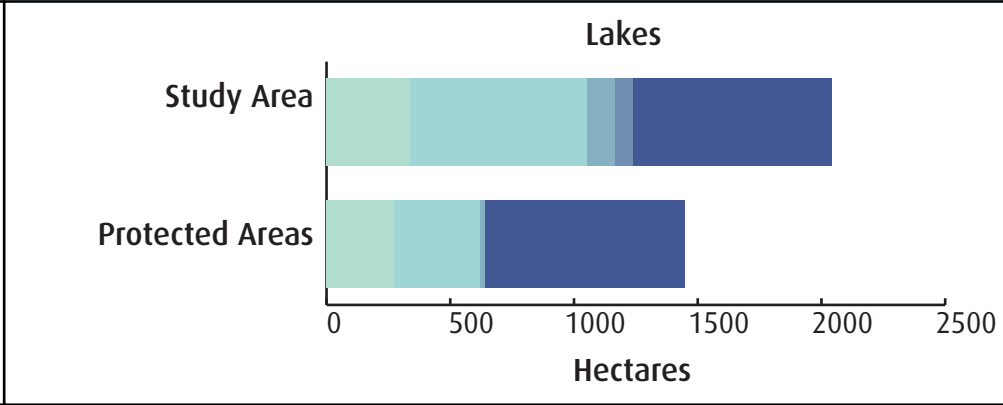
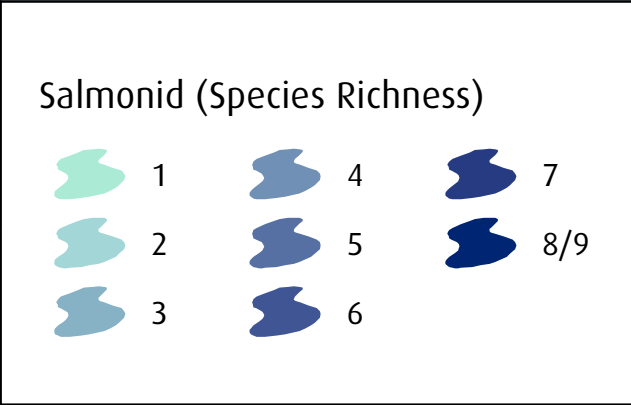


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Kilometers



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Salmonid Fish Diversity

Although aquatic ecosystems are diverse and support many different plants and animals, the most well known of these are the salmonid fish species. This includes all the salmon and trout species that occur in the region. The map is derived from a subset of the provincial Fisheries Information Summary System (FISS) that provides fish and fish habitat data for waterbodies throughout British Columbia at a 1:50,000 scale.

Data for the study area identify 11 species of salmonid fish including: steelhead, chinook, chum, sockeye, pink, coho and kokanee salmon; rainbow, brook, cutthroat and dolly varden trout. For analysis, the individual species distributions were combined as species richness or the number of different fish species that exist in a given stream or lake. The richest sections of river are typically those closest to the sea reflecting the changing diversity of habitats from tidewater to headwaters.


Salmon and trout are important for people as food and many species have deep cultural values. People also consider fish and fishing as an important recreational resource. These fish species can also have a significant economic value – especially the salmon which support various fisheries at sea. Salmon and trout also play an ecological role as food for various other wildlife and as a source of rich nutrients that are distributed throughout the landscape through the expansive network of rivers and streams.

The existing protected areas contain about half of the salmonid lakes in the study area and about 70% of the total surface area. This large surface area is primarily due to the presence of large reservoirs in the Water Supply Area. Sooke Lake, the largest lake/reservoir in the region, has the highest species diversity for lakes with six species represented. There are 130 km of stream habitat occupied by salmonid fish across the study area and existing protected areas contain 15% of the habitat with low to moderate diversity (1-4 species). The lower reaches of San Juan, Renfrew, Fairy, Kirby, Sooke and Demamiel rivers have high salmonid diversity (5-9 species) but are outside of current protected areas.



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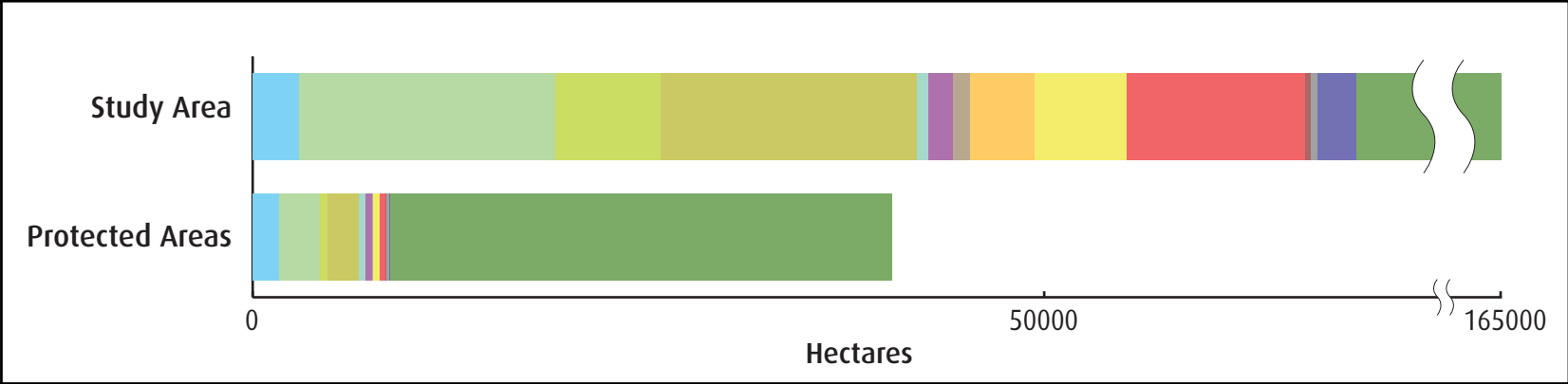
Kilometers



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Land Cover

 Water	 Herb	 Exposed bedrock
 Coniferous	 Wetland	 Agriculture
 Deciduous	 Sand/gravel shoreline	 Grass
 Shrub	 Bedrock shoreline	 Anthropogenic



Land cover is derived from the analysis of satellite imagery captured in 2017. This analysis provides a classification of “cover” or what you see from above. The classification is adapted from standards established by the provincial government.

Land cover provides a broad characterization of the landscape including both natural cover and human activity. This provides a representation of the human footprint (patterns of land use) and also provides some indication of natural values like forests, water features, meadows, rocky outcrops and wetlands. These are all important features to consider in evaluating a protected areas network.

The anthropogenic (human created) changes are most noticeable in the eastern part of the study area. Urban development and agriculture make up 9% and 2% of the study area respectively. As you move west, the land cover is predominantly coniferous forest which makes up 66% of the study area. Recent resource development, where mature trees have been removed, is expressed as exposed soil, herbaceous or shrub cover shown as tan and bright green on the map.



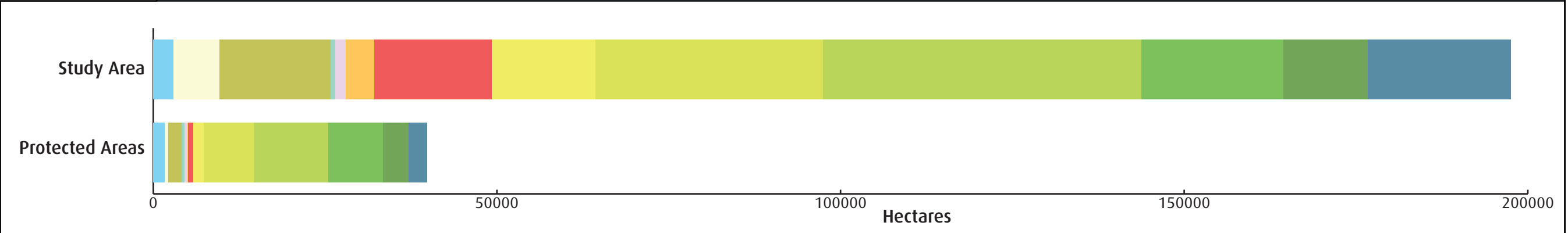
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W N S E



Land Cover with Forest Stand Age Class


Land cover derived from the satellite imagery has been combined with provincial Vegetation Resources Inventory (VRI) mapping to create a composite map of forest stand age class indicating the overall age of trees in the forest.

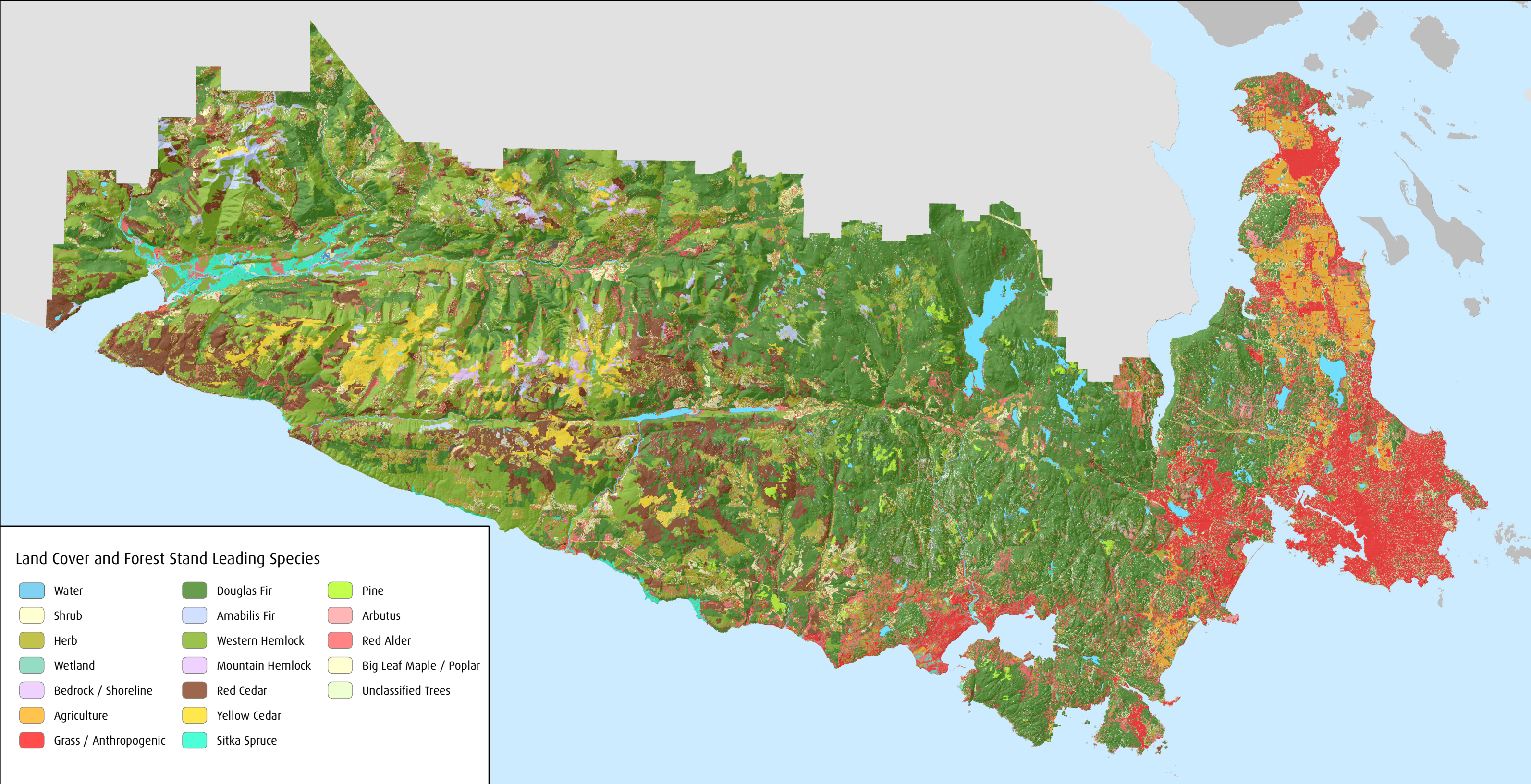
Land cover provides a broad characterization of the landscape including both natural cover and human activity. This map provides a representation of land use (such as forest development history) but also characterizes natural values like old and mature forests, water features, meadows, rocky outcrops and wetlands. These are all important features to be represented in a protected areas network.

Forest stand age class tells a story of resource development. Much of the landscape has been logged historically and this activity continues, resulting in a predominance of younger stand ages, with old forests primarily found in higher elevations and steeper terrain that are challenging for forest harvesting operations. There is a considerable amount of old growth (>250 years old) forest along the San Juan Ridge.

Lands that have been cleared recently do not have trees established. These areas are designated herb or shrub. For the remaining forest lands the age profile is: Establishing (1 – 20 years old), 10%; Pole Sapling (21 - 40 years old), 22%; Young Forest (41 - 80 years old), 31%; Mature (81 - 139 years old), 14%; Older Mature (140 - 249 years old), 8%; Old Growth (250+), 14%.

About 13% of the remaining old growth forest and 30% of remaining older mature forest in the study area is currently protected in parks and the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area.






Land Cover and Forest Stand Leading Species

- | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| Water | Douglas Fir | Pine |
| Shrub | Amabilis Fir | Arbutus |
| Herb | Western Hemlock | Red Alder |
| Wetland | Mountain Hemlock | Big Leaf Maple / Poplar |
| Bedrock / Shoreline | Red Cedar | Unclassified Trees |
| Agriculture | Yellow Cedar | |
| Grass / Anthropogenic | Sitka Spruce | |

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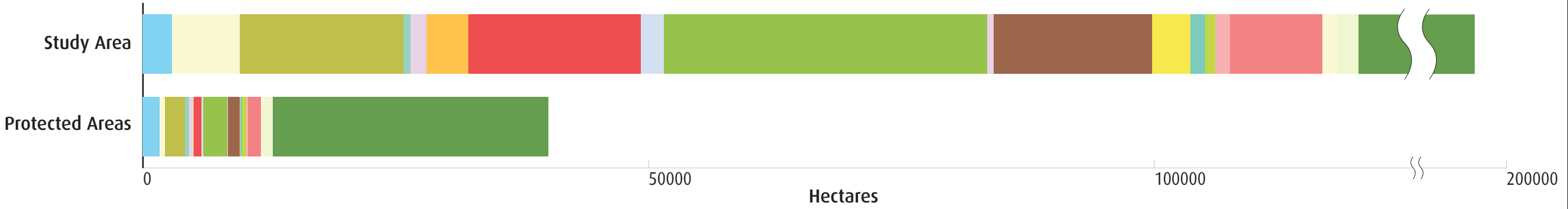
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Land Cover with Forest Stand Leading Species

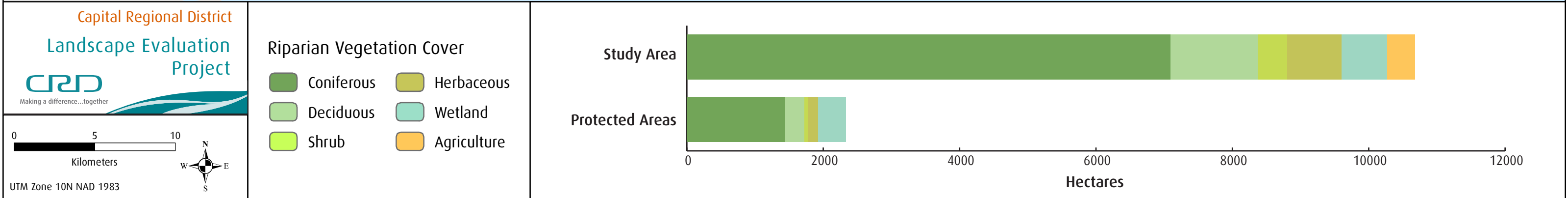
Land cover derived from the satellite imagery has been combined with recent provincial Vegetation Resources Inventory (VRI) mapping to create a composite map showing forest stand leading species. This refers to the most common or dominant species found in a stand of trees (forest) and varies across the landscape based on ecological or habitat variation.

Anthropogenic (human) changes are most noticeable in the urban and agricultural areas on the eastern part of the study area. As you move west, the land cover is predominantly coniferous forest with pockets of deciduous stands interspersed. The distribution of leading tree species shows the dominance of Douglas-fir in the east grading to a dominance of western hemlock as you move west. Red cedar dominates in the wetter areas and species like yellow cedar and mountain hemlock are dominant in the high elevation areas along the San Juan Ridge. Sitka spruce is predominantly found along the San Juan River flats and the outer west coast reflecting the high rainfall and cooler temperatures of these areas.

The most recent logging activity is represented by herb, shrub and bare soil cover since the trees have been removed and not yet regrown. As the forest recovers, red alder and sometimes big leaf maple predominate, followed by the conifers like hemlock and fir. The deciduous trees like arbutus, cottonwood or poplar are very site specific and difficult to discern on the larger landscape.

Douglas-fir and pine leading stands are well represented in existing protected areas with 36% and 35% of stands protected respectively. Other species like yellow cedar and mountain hemlock (2-3%), red cedar (7%) and amabilis fir (8%) are not well represented in existing protected areas.





Riparian Vegetation Cover

Riparian zones are those areas that surround water features and are composed of moist to saturated soils. These areas are usually very productive and are favoured by water-loving plant species and their associated ecosystems. They are often very important area for wildlife as sources of high value foods and as travel corridors along valley bottoms and through a watershed. Riparian zones may be found surrounding lakes, ponds, estuaries, streams and rivers, and serve to protect the integrity of these water-based ecosystems as well.


The study area has a complex landscape that, for the most part, has been designed by water. Riparian land cover occurs across the region with larger concentrations noticeable on the broad plains of the large rivers like the San Juan or the Sooke. There are also wetland complexes in the upland areas that have extensive riparian values. Riparian vegetation cover is generally well represented within protected areas.

Riparian cover is classified from satellite imagery similar to the other land cover maps. The land cover has been delineated along all the fresh water features based on existing hydrology data and a flood plain model derived from the surrounding terrain. Where wide flat valleys are present, the riparian zone is wider, and where the water feature is constrained by a narrow valley or canyon, the riparian zone is more narrow.



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Road Disturbance

- Arterial road
- Neighbourhood road
- Resource road

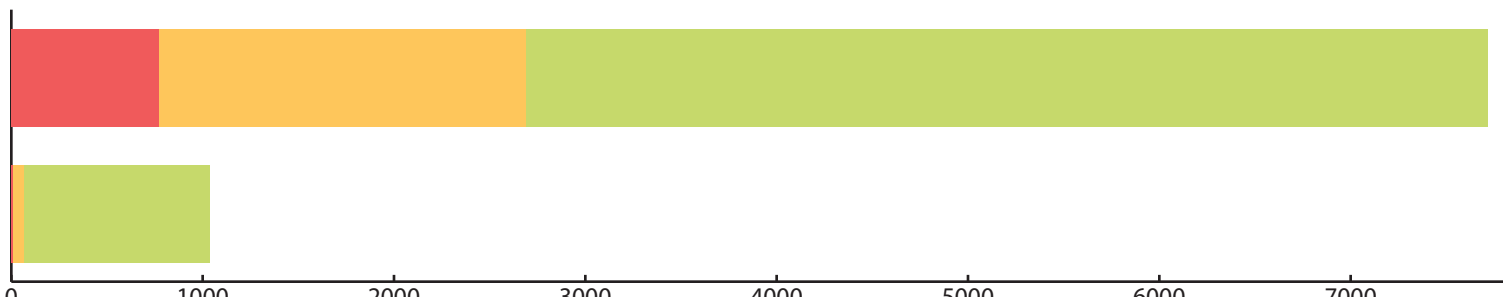
Road Density

High

Low

Study Area


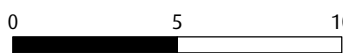
Protected Areas



Category	Distance (Kilometres)
Study Area	~7800
Protected Areas	~1000

0 5 10

Kilometers



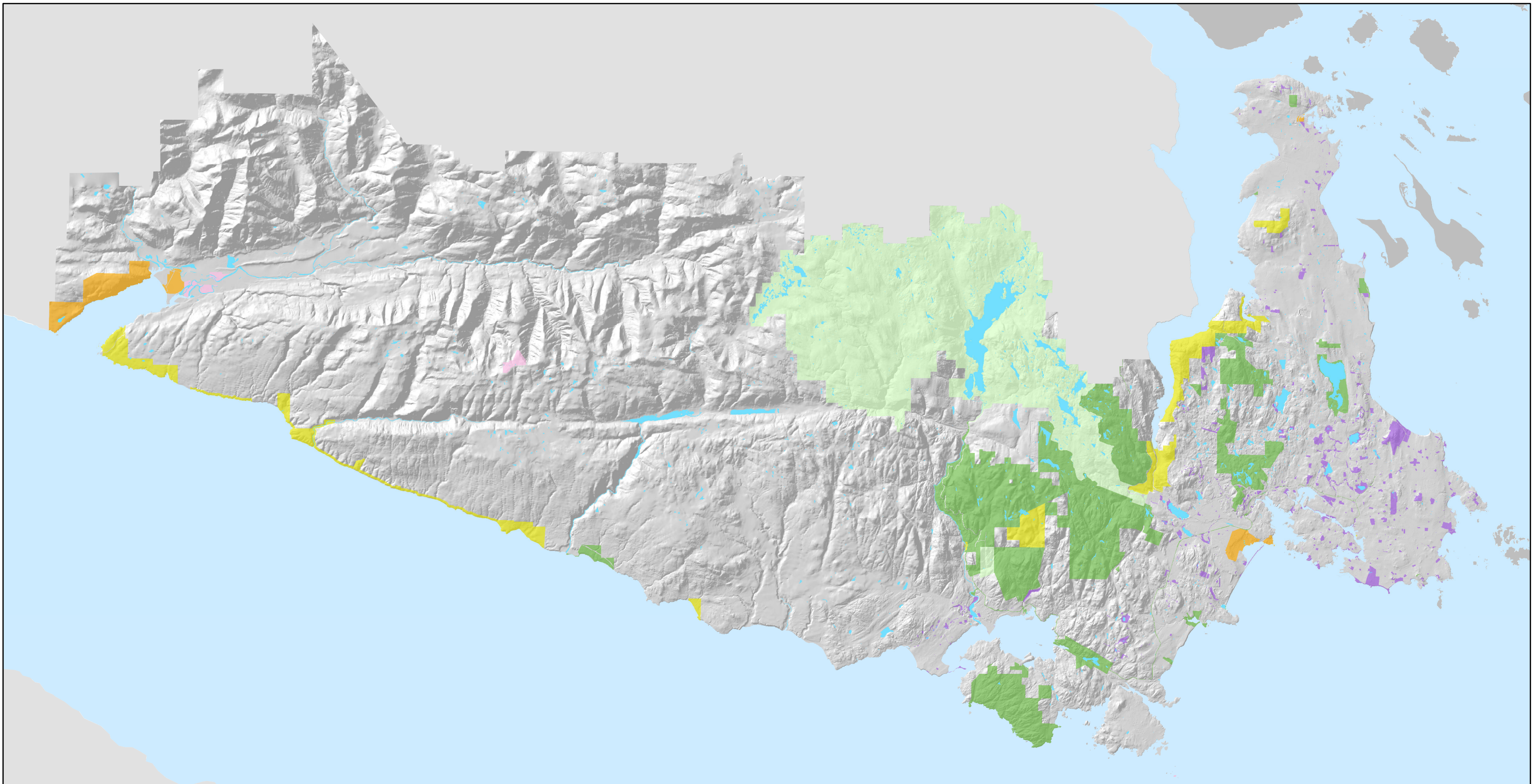
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Road Disturbance and Density

There are over 7,700 km of roads in the study area. Density of roads ranges from low values of 0-4 km per 100 ha to a high density of 58.5 km per km².

The current protected areas network has very few roads. The exception is resource roads which are predominant in the water supply area and are also present in some parks as fire roads and/or as trail corridors.

This map was created using the provincial Digital Roads Atlas (DRA). Roads have been grouped into three classes to reflect the level of use: urban, arterial roads (like highways) and resource roads. Roads are a surrogate for human activity and the class of road indicates how much human activity is occurring in an area. For the evaluation of landscape values, the road network was converted to road density (km of road per km² or 100 ha). The DRA does not specify consistently between resource roads that are currently being used and roads that may have been closed and restored from past forest harvesting activities. To account for this, the road density was adjusted to add additional weight (density) for areas where urban development or recent forest harvesting activity have occurred.



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W N S E

Parks/Protected Areas and Watershed

Federal Park	Provincial Park
Municipal Park	Regional Park
Provincial Ecoreserve	Water Supply Area

= 1000 Hectares

Municipal Park

Provincial Ecoreserve

Provincial Park

Federal Park

Regional Park

Greater Victoria Water Supply Area

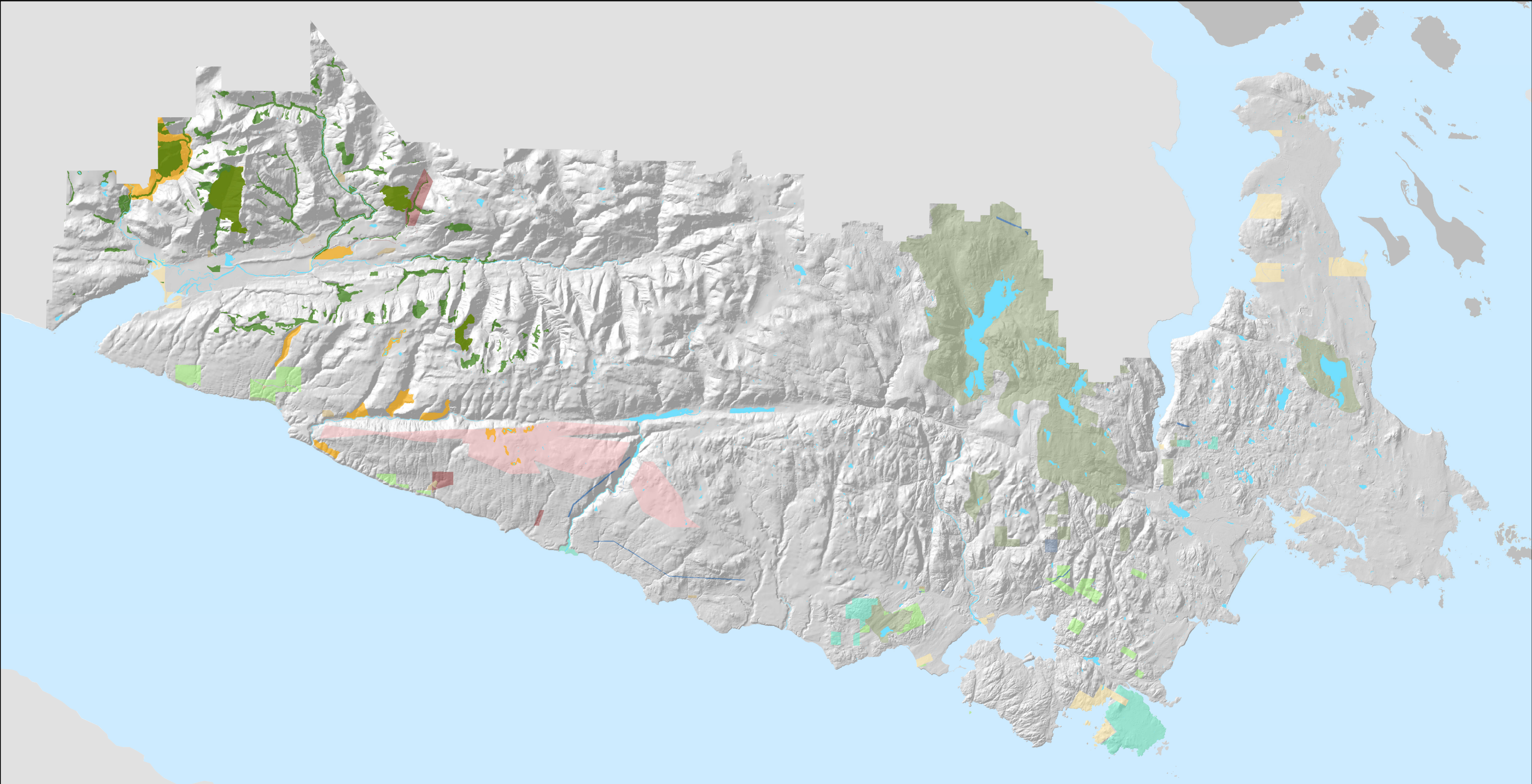
Protected Areas

The study area is 203,249 ha. There are 13,133 ha (6.5%) in regional parks, 18,525 ha (9.1%) in other parks and protected areas, and 20,700 ha (10.2%) in the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area. With the inclusion of the water supply area, about 25% of the study area is protected in some way.

This map is created from a provincial protected areas layer provided by The Nature Trust of British Columbia (TNTBC). It excludes recreation-focused parks like ball diamonds or soccer fields, but includes municipal parks that are nature- or conservation-focused. The largest park class is regional parks at just over 13,000 ha. This map also includes the Greater Victoria Water Supply Area which accounts for almost 40% of the protected lands.


Parks in the study area are concentrated east of the Sooke River or along the western coastal fringe, with large areas unrepresented across the central uplands of the study area.

Park Class	Area (Hectares)
Community Park	332
Federal Park	7,648
Municipal Park	1,770
Protected Area	686
Provincial Ecoreserve	1,836
Provincial Park	6,253
Regional Park	13,133
Greater Victoria Water Supply Area	20,709
Total	52,367



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Management Areas

- Old Growth Management Area
- Wildlife Habitat Area

First Nation Reserves

- First Nation Reserve

Crown Tenures

Commercial Recreation	Quarrying
Environment	Utility
First Nations Treaty Lands	Waterpower
Industrial	Windpower
Miscellaneous	

Category	Hectares
Old Growth Management Areas	3914.66
Wildlife Habitat Areas	2843.08
Total	6757.74

Other Land Designations

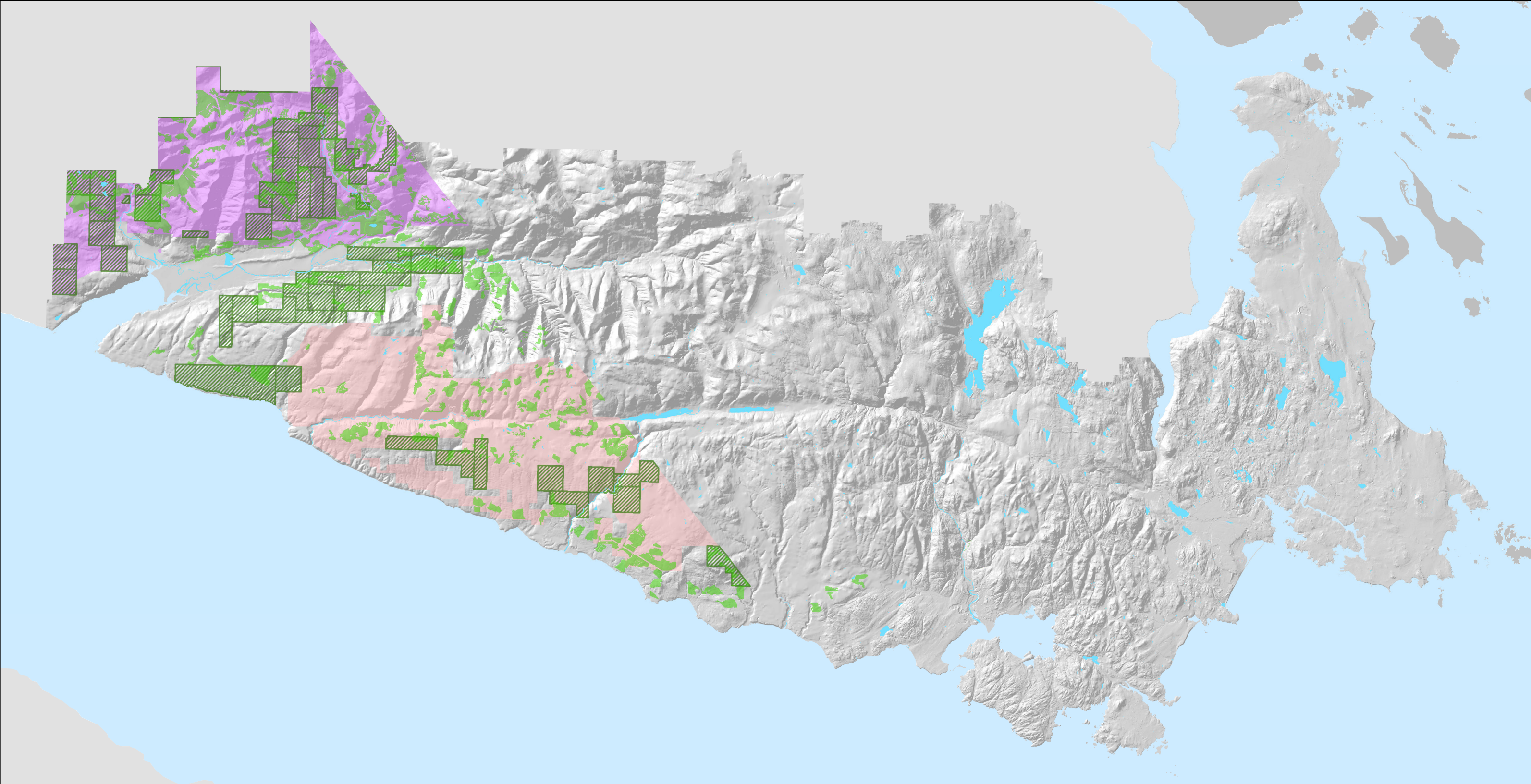
The study area passes through the traditional territories of several First Nations. The areas west of the Sooke River are in the territories of Pacheedaht, T'Sou-ke and Scia'new (Beecher Bay) First Nations. The CRD is working with all three of these Nations to ensure their interests are represented in this study. First Nations Reserves are located in the study area in several locations. These are parcels of land set aside under the *Indian Act* and through treaty agreements for the use and benefit of the respective Nations for which they were established.

The western third of the study area is predominantly provincially managed (Crown) land, while the eastern two thirds are mostly private ownership. There are several pre-existing land uses or designations in the study area – particularly in the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area.

A Crown land tenure is an agreement between the provincial or federal government and an individual or company for an interest in the land. Tenures are granted for specific purposes and periods of time. In the study area, there are several tenures for a variety of interests from rock quarries to wind farms.


Old Growth Management Areas (OGMAs) are legally established under provincial forestry regulations and are areas of old growth forest identified during forest development planning. OGMAs, in combination with other areas where forestry development is prevented or constrained, are used to achieve biodiversity targets. There are just over 3,900 ha of designated OGMA lands in the provincially managed portion of the study area.

Similar to OGMAs, Wildlife Habitat Areas (WHAs) are areas designated under provincial forestry regulations to meet the habitat requirements of identified wildlife species. WHAs designate critical habitats in which activities are managed to limit their impact on the wildlife species for which the area was established. There are approximately 2,900 ha of WHAs in the study area.



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Forest Tenures and Timber Licensing

 Forest Tenures

 Timber Licenses

Tree Farm Licenses

 TFL46

 TFL61

Category	Hectares
Forest Tenures	10817.82
Timber Licenses	13400.28
Subtotal	24218.1
Tree Farm License 46	19427.51
Tree Farm License 61	20227.47
Subtotal	39654.98
Total	63873.08

Date: 12/10/2018

Other Land Designations –Forest Tenures

The Juan de Fuca Electoral Area west of the Sooke River is comprised predominantly of resource lands and the dominant activity on these lands is forestry operations. This area is divided between provincially managed or crown lands to the west and private forest lands to the east.

On provincially managed crown lands, forest operations are managed in many different ways with different resource allocation approaches, including Tree Farm Licenses and Timber Licenses. These are designated areas established by the provincial government to allow forest harvesting through integrated resource management principles. These land units are often managed in conjunction with larger areas for the purposes of calculating harvest levels.

Within the study area, there are two tree farm licenses and numerous timber licenses allocated.



Summary

This series of themed maps has been compiled based on the best available data at the time of publication. The resolution and accuracy of these maps are reliant on the base data and are intended to provide a regional landscape perspective. By analyzing this collection of information, we can further our understanding of the natural character and diversity of the region, as well as the “human footprint” that describes historic and current development patterns. This provides insight toward understanding what landscape values are important to consider as we begin exploring the expansion of our regional parks system.

This information atlas is an important resource to support the development of a regional parks land acquisition strategy. We are currently undertaking a public engagement program to share this work and learn about other values and aspirations for the landscape. Please refer to the other supporting documents on this [website](#) and provide your input through our short [questionnaire](#) so that we can consider your values, local knowledge and expertise.

