

Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory Sunshine Coast

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Draft SEI Maps in Preparation

The Sunshine Coast Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory (SEI) project is now in its fourth year. Maps for the Sunshine Coast SEI will soon be available.

The first stage of the project (1999-2001) was the identification of sensitive ecosystems using **air photo interpretation**. Using aerial photography at scales between 1:10,000 and 1:16,000, the project team identified more than 5,500 polygons (sites) in the 1,800 km² study area.

More than one-quarter of these polygons were then **field checked** during 2000 and 2001. This field checking allowed the project team to refine site boundaries, and gather additional information on the ecology and quality of sites. In some cases, polygons were removed from the SEI database if the field checks revealed that the polygon did not meet the criteria for a “sensitive ecosystem”—for example, if it had been extensively modified. A funding shortage meant that only a limited number of sites could be visited on Texada Island, but the team was able to verify information using low-level helicopter surveys through a project sharing initiative.

Information from the air photo interpretation and the field checking has been **digitised**, enabling electronic maps to be generated. The project team is currently building the database that provides additional information on each of the 5,000+ sites. At the same time, they are editing the draft maps—a laborious process that involves careful checking of information and many levels of **quality assurance**.

A sensitive ecosystem is
one that is fragile
and/or rare



Environment
Canada

Environnement
Canada



The **maps** will be finalised and available by March 2003. The information will be available in digital format (GIS ArcInfo) and as hardcopy maps at a 1:20,000 scale. Once completed, these maps will be provided to all project members, and will also be available for purchase. Maps of the Howe Sound islands (including Bowen and Gambier) are already available, and may be obtained from Clover Point Cartographics in Victoria, phone: (250) 384-3537. The project team will also be preparing a **written report** that describes the inventory methods and results, ecosystem characteristics and conservation options. This report should be ready in 2003.

Draft data has already proven useful. The Sunshine Coast Regional District has used SEI information to review an applications to amend one Official Community Plan. The Powell River Regional District has used draft data to review two potential development areas. In one case, the SEI revealed that there are no sensitive ecosystems in the area, strengthening the case for development, and in the other, the SEI identified sensitive ecosystems that will need to be considered carefully if development were to proceed.

Sunshine Coast Habitat Atlas

The Sunshine Coast Habitat Atlas is being created through a joint initiative of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection and the Sunshine Coast Regional District.

The Habitat Atlas will compile data from a variety of sources into a GIS database. There will be more than 40 layers of information, including all water courses and associated information (enhancements, obstructions, artificial modifications), fish presence and species information, parks and protected areas, and land use. Users will be able to combine the data to suit their needs for planning and analysis, or to create custom maps. This information will be made available through the Habitat Atlas website, hopefully by April 2003.

The Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory will be included as one component of the Habitat Atlas.

For more information see www.user.dccnet.com/ctrent/

Partnerships

Major funding for this project has been provided by Environment Canada's Georgia Basin Ecosystem Initiative, with contributions from the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund, Sunshine Coast Regional District, Comox-Strathcona Regional District and Terminal Forest Products Ltd. The project is jointly managed by Environment Canada (Canadian Wildlife Service) and the B.C. Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management, with input

from a multi-agency Steering Committee that includes federal and provincial agencies, local governments, First Nations and industry.

The Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory

The Sensitive Ecosystems Inventory (SEI) is mapping rare and fragile terrestrial ecosystems along the coastal lowlands from Howe Sound to Desolation Sound, and includes adjacent islands such as Texada, Savary, Cortes and the southern part of Quadra Island. This project is built on the success of the SEI for East Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands, which is being used by local governments for regional growth strategies, Official Community Plans, greenways/parks plans and site-specific applications. Information on the SEI can be found at

<http://srmwww.gov.bc.ca/cdc/sei> or <http://www.pyr.ec.gc.ca/wildlife/sei>