
Develop with Care



5.4

Environmental Guidelines for Urban and Rural Land Development in British Columbia

March 2006

Section Five

REGIONAL INFORMATION PACKAGES: KOOTENAY REGION

5.4 Kootenay Region

5.4.1	Regional Features	3
5.4.2	Useful Sources	5

Links to:

5.1 Vancouver Island Region

5.2 Lower Mainland Region

5.3 Okanagan Region

5.5 Thompson Region

5.6 Cariboo Region

5.7 Skeena Region

5.8 Omineca Region

5.9 Peace Region

Table of Contents



Ministry of Environment Regions

This section of *Develop with Care* offers information on issues and species of concern that are unique to each region. This section is not a stand-alone guide to environmentally sensitive development in each region—reference to other sections of this document will be essential for a full understanding of the recommended environmental guidelines.

Figure 5.4-1: Ministry of Environment regions.

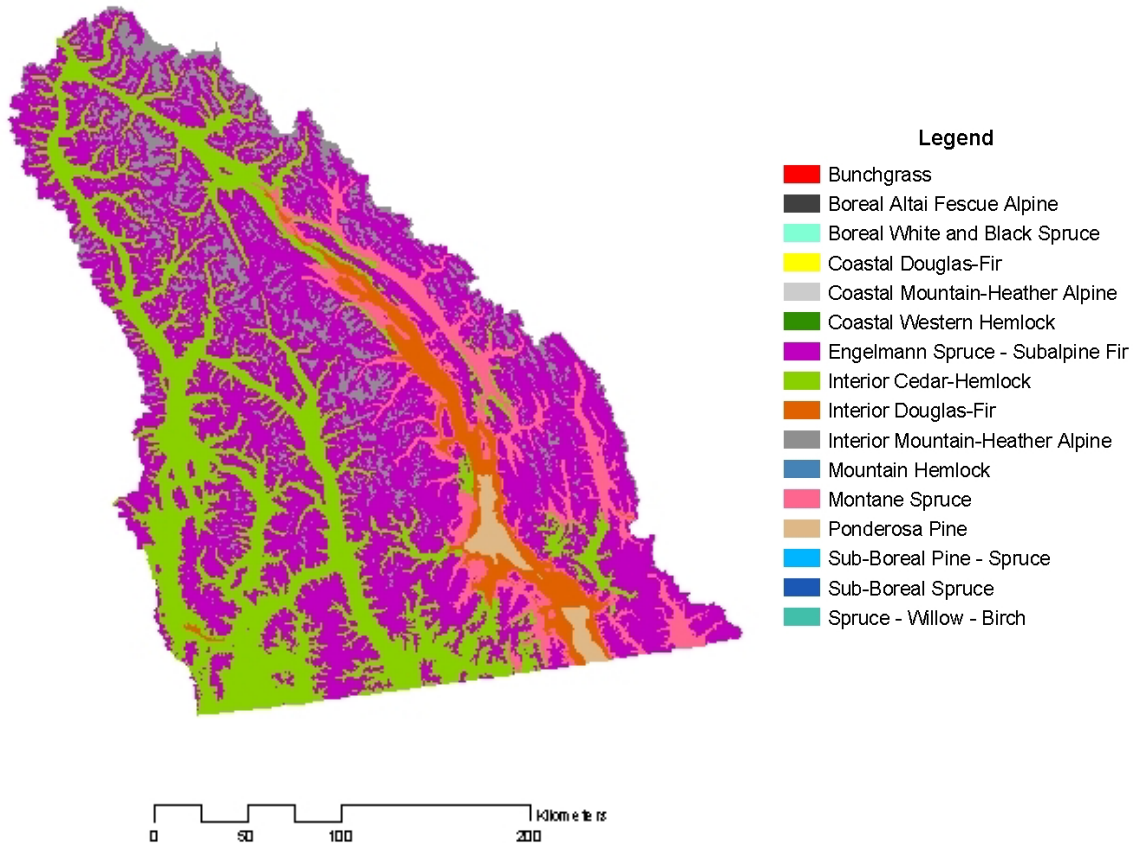




Kootenay Region

The Kootenay Region covers approximately 7.6 million hectares of the southeast corner of British Columbia. The region extends from the Arrow Lakes country in the west to the Alberta border in the east, and from the U.S. border in the south to Kinbasket Lake in the north.

Figure 5.4-2: Biogeoclimatic zones of the Kootenay Region.



5.4.1 REGIONAL FEATURES

The Kootenays are comprised of a series of north-south valleys with mountainous ranges between. From east to west, the main valleys of the Kootenay Region include the Elk River Valley immediately adjacent to the Rocky Mountains; the Columbia River trench, which separates the Rockies from the Purcell Mountain range; Kootenay Lake and the Duncan River, which divide the Purcell range from the Selkirk Mountains; and the Columbia River and Arrow Lakes system, which separates the Selkirks from the Monashee Mountains.

The mountain ranges of the Kootenay Region create unique weather patterns with the western slopes typically receiving significantly more precipitation than the eastern slopes. In addition, moisture from the



Pacific falls mainly on the western ranges, which results in drier conditions in the eastern portion of the region.

Mountain features are generally more pronounced in the northern part of the region where world famous mountain groups such as the Bugaboos and the Roger's Pass occur. Further south, the valleys become broader, with the Creston and Columbia River trenches reaching their widest point along the border with the United States.

Urban developments occur in the valleys and are often confined between the watercourses (rivers or lakes) and the steep mountain slopes. Farming is common in the Cranbrook, Creston, and Slocan areas.

The steep slopes and variety of glaciofluvial¹ deposits in the region create areas of instability, which can cause significant problems for urban and rural developments. Clearing of slopes can create landslides, and irrigation of sensitive silt deposits can cause erosion and sedimentation. In addition, avalanches can create significant hazards both to the travelling public and to recreational users of back-country areas.

Wildfire is an increasing problem in the Kootenays. Effective fire suppression over the past 50 years has allowed conifer forests to grow in areas where natural low-intensity fires would have removed them. The Columbia River Trench on the eastern side of the region has been particularly affected by fire suppression; dense stands of Douglas-fir now occur where open ponderosa pine forests once dominated. Restoration efforts are seeking to redress this problem.



Kootenay Lake, swallow nests, mule deer. PHOTOS: DAVE POLSTER

¹ Material moved by glaciers and subsequently sorted and deposited by streams flowing from the melting ice. The deposits are stratified and may occur in the form of outwash plains, deltas, kames, eskers, and kame terraces.



5.4.2 USEFUL SOURCES

GENERAL INFORMATION

Ministry of Environment Kootenay Regional Office

205 Industrial Rd. G

Cranbrook, BC V1C 7G5

Phone: (250) 489-8540

Fax: (250) 489-8506

<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/kor/> or <http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/kor/>²

REGIONAL RESOURCES

Access to many sources of inventory information can be found through the EcoCat (Ecosystems Report Catalogue) website <http://srmapps.gov.bc.ca/apps/acet/>

Kootenay Boundary Higher Level Plan (land use planning)

<http://srmwww.gov.bc.ca/kor/hlp/main.htm>

Fisheries information <http://srmwww.gov.bc.ca/kor/fsh/main/mainfish.htm>

² Note: Ministry websites are being updated. If the 'www.env.gov.bc.ca' link does not work, try wlapwww.gov.bc.ca.