



# The Georgia Basin Habitat Atlas

will provide up-to-date habitat information to planners, developers, governments, First Nations, community organizations, businesses and the general public. Many individuals and partners are acknowledged for its creation with special thanks to Friends of Semiahmoo Bay Society for initiating the project.

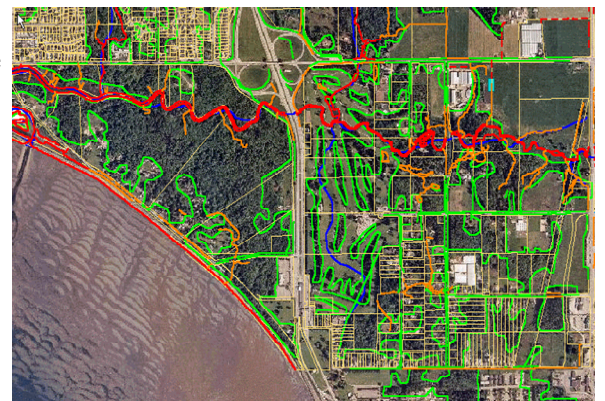


Humans have mapped their sense of place since earliest times. The advent of GIS supports speedy analysis of trends and tracking of resources. While many different management agencies and jurisdictions are ultimately responsible for parts of local ecosystems, all understand the necessity to combine limited resources, share data and employ an integrated planning and resource management approach. The Atlas integrates features important to planning including: roads, trails, land parcels, property lots, existing land use, municipal services, geology & soil classifications, bio-climatic zones, fish & wildlife habitat, streams, sensitive habitat areas, wildlife and vegetation surveys including rare species, parks, protected areas, archaeological sites, watershed boundaries, historical data, maps and site/aerial photographs. Banner photo credits: Margaret Cuthbert



Each layer is stored on computer in a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) database at the Community Mapping Network, [www.cmnbc.ca](http://www.cmnbc.ca) (see below) and on local government systems. It must be recognized that not all resources will be identified and the spatial accuracy of both resource and cadastral information may vary. Although hard copy atlases will be available, a detailed long term maintenance strategy is planned to ensure the data is refined and updated as new information becomes available.

A Habitat Atlas is a first step in the continuous process of caring for the sensitive areas that provide water and life to a community. Resource planners and managers need all available information to be integrated so they can make more informed decisions. Human population growth and resource conversion are overwhelming the ability of planners to manage land and preserve sensitive habitats. Governments are under tremendous pressure to respond to these development demands and often proposals are received too early relative to integrated planning to effectively support mitigation of environmental impacts. Development proposals are often reviewed with inadequate knowledge of the location or value of sensitive resources. This has resulted in loss or degradation of habitats that once supported fisheries, wildlife, forests and sensitive ecosystems.



*Example of an atlas sheet from the Georgia Basin Habitat Atlas consisting of an ortho photo colour image overlaid with lot parcel boundaries, forest cover, and sensitive aquatic areas. With internet access, you will have the ability to view & print maps. Download and install a mapguide viewer plugin to view the interactive maps.*



**The Georgia Basin-Puget Sound region** includes the Strait of Georgia, Juan de Fuca Strait & Puget Sound, waters shared by British Columbia, Canada and the State of Washington, USA. Tidal flows bring ocean waters surging twice daily through the Juan de Fuca Strait and northward into the Strait of Georgia; freshwater from the mighty Fraser, the Campbell and many smaller streams flow south with the ebb tide. Killer whales (orcas), grey whales, California and Steller sea lions, migratory birds, and fish such as salmon, herring and smelt, move regularly across the international border, and are a shared responsibility. In recognition of this, the B.C.- Washington Environmental Cooperation Council and



Environment Canada – Environmental Protection Agency Statement of Cooperation outlined shared goals and joint action programs under the Georgia Basin Ecosystem Initiative in British Columbia and the Puget Sound Water Quality Action Team in Washington State. A further initiative is provided under the Pacific Coast Joint Venture, designed to monitor and protect Pacific Flyway migratory bird populations. The Georgia Basin-Puget Sound has a higher population growth than either of the national averages (approx. 19% in 2000 compared with 12% US and 10% Canada); this is placing many demands on the ecosystem. Collective measures are needed to protect wildlife and their habitats, including the large number of sensitive wetlands, slopes and aquifers in the region. The Fraser River estuary & delta is the largest estuarine wetland in British Columbia and is designated a Hemispheric Reserve and an Important Bird Area - the top rated of 597 sites in Canada. Photo Credits: Left above, Anne Murray; Banner, left to right, Hank Tseng, Tom Middleton, Margaret Cuthbert, Michael Harvey; Lower right: Margaret Cuthbert



**The Community Mapping Network (CMN) website at ([www.cmnbc.ca](http://www.cmnbc.ca))** will house the Georgia Basin Habitat Atlas. A non profit organization that integrates and links community and government natural resource information, the CMN uses an online interactive mapping system called AutoDesk Mapguide. Maps and information are “web-served” through the BC Conservation Foundation office in Surrey, BC. Natural resource information is integrated to assist communities and local governments with land use planning, to promote conservation and protection of sensitive habitats and to raise awareness and respect for ecological values. Standard methods for collecting & mapping natural resources information are developed through the CMN but all community mapping projects, regardless of methodology are welcome. Building local capacity & expertise, sharing ideas and linking all community data across administrative boundaries to make it seamless are key objectives of the Network.



The Georgia Basin Habitat Atlas project was initiated by Friends of Semiahmoo Bay Society through partnerships with the Ministry of Environment, B.C., Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Canadian Wildlife Service, and others;



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