



Islands Trust

# FACT SHEET

## SENSITIVE ECOSYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT

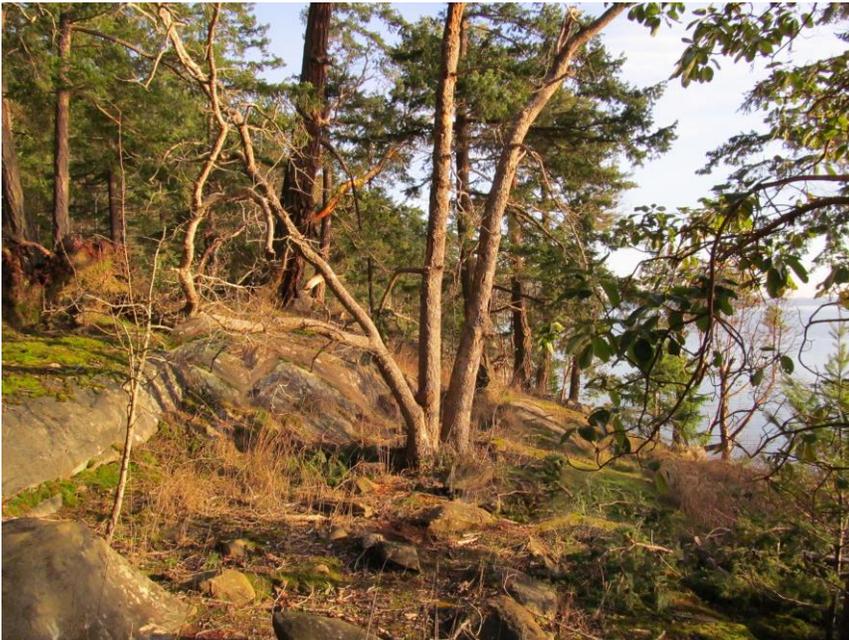
### PERMIT AREA 5

#### *What is the Sensitive Ecosystems Development Permit Area (DPA 5)?*

British Columbia's *Local Government Act* enables communities to designate parts of their planning area as Development Permit Areas (DPAs) so they can set objectives and guidelines for development within those areas. The [Galiano Island Official Community Plan](#) (OCP) designates seven DPAs generally designed to protect sensitive ecosystems or to guide development in areas with special circumstances. Depending on the particular Development Permit Area and its exemptions, the requirement to obtain a Development Permit may be triggered by any building construction, demolition, land alteration, or subdivision of land that occurs in the DPA.

The Riparian Areas DPA was adopted by the Galiano Island Local Trust Committee (LTC) in order to preserve and protect remaining sensitive ecosystems on Galiano Island. The DPA includes lands identified as containing the following sensitive ecosystems:

- Woodland ecosystems: open deciduous forests of Garry Oak, arbutus and Douglas-fir
- Herbaceous ecosystems: wildflower meadows, grassy hilltops, and rock outcrops
- Older forest ecosystems: large mature conifers, standing dead trees and fallen logs
- Riparian ecosystems: vascular plants, mosses, and related stream-side species
- Wetland ecosystems: saturated soils and water-loving plants
- Freshwater ecosystems: lakes or ponds deeper than 2 metres
- Cliff ecosystems: steep, vertical or overhanging rock faces, sparse vegetation in crevices or on ledges



#### *Why are sensitive ecosystems important?*

The DPA encompasses some of the rarest, most threatened, and most unique ecosystems in British Columbia. Forests, meadows, streams and bluffs are a key facet of island identity, and provide a key aesthetic and recreational resource for residents and tourists alike.

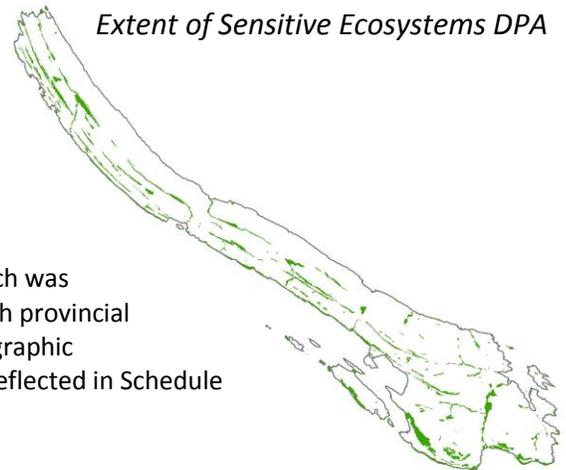
Sensitive ecosystems perform a variety of vital functions. Areas like Garry Oak woodlands contain high levels of biodiversity. Older forests absorb carbon dioxide and filter pollutants from the air. Riparian, freshwater and wetland ecosystems prevent flooding and erosion, maintain groundwater quality, and provide a source of drinking water.

Sensitive ecosystems are particularly fragile and rare, and in many cases have been compromised by fragmentation, disturbance, development, recreation and pollution.

### *How do I know whether my land is affected by the DPA?*

All land designated in Schedule H of the [Official Community Plan](#) is included within the DPA. Approximately 492 hectares of land on Galiano Island are designated within the Sensitive Ecosystems DPA, accounting for about 8.2% of the total land area.

The DPA boundaries are based on Sensitive Ecosystem Mapping (SEM), which was most recently updated in 2011 using methods and categories consistent with provincial standards. The SEM consists of a digital record compiled by means of a geographic information system maintained at the offices of the Islands Trust, which is reflected in Schedule H.



### *When do I need a development permit?*

Any landowner who has property that is located within the DPA may be required to obtain a development permit from the Local Trust Committee before undertaking any construction, demolition, alteration of land or structures, or subdivision of land.

The regular maintenance of existing buildings and landscaping does not require a development permit; other exemptions are listed in the OCP. Notably, an exemption may be granted if either a registered professional biologist or Islands Trust staff determine that a sensitive ecosystem is not actually located on the property. In addition to exempted activities, a development permit is not required for buildings or development located within a DPA that were present prior to approval of the bylaw, or for development outside the boundaries of a DPA.

### *How do I obtain a development permit?*

Islands Trust planning staff can give you advice on the application process and options for developing your property. If you do need to apply for a permit, you will be required to complete an [application](#) and submit the application fee. Additionally, you may be required to hire a Qualified Environmental Professional (e.g. biologist, environmental technician) to produce an assessment report. In the assessment, the QEP provides their opinion about the potential of the development to affect the sensitive ecosystem, and may recommend mitigation or enhancement measures.

Once a complete application is submitted, it typically takes 4 to 8 weeks to process an application. Staff will review your application, plans and any professional reports in relation to the DPA guidelines in the OCP, and make a recommendation to the LTC. The LTC will then consider issuance of the permit at a regular meeting. There is no public hearing or notification for a development permit application.

While a Development Permit cannot preclude permitted development, it can include conditions consistent with the DPA guidelines, such as attaching specific plans or requiring mitigation measures. Depending on the development, additional permits (e.g. a building permit) may be required as well.

General information about the development permit application process can be found on the [Islands Trust website](#).

### *How do I get more information?*

To determine whether your land is subject to the Sensitive Ecosystems DPA, consult the Galiano Island Official Community Plan. Copies of the OCP are available from Islands Trust offices in Victoria, and online at [www.islandstrust.bc.ca/islands/local-trust-areas/galiano](http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca/islands/local-trust-areas/galiano). You can also contact planning staff directly at 250-405-5151 or toll-free through Enquiry BC at 1-800-663-7867.