Improving Land Decisions in the Central Okanagan
Presentation

• The Challenge
• Sensitive Habitat Inventory and Mapping (SHIM)
• Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory (SEI)
• The Tools
The Challenge

• Develop programs that provide for improved environmental practices within the RDCO.

• Rapid urbanization continues to have significant impacts on the natural environment.

• Prior planning has been limited in its ability to assess, identify and conserve significant features.

• What needs to be protected?

• Provide the decision-makers with the “best available science” so that better decisions can be made.

• Program effectiveness is contingent on the information being portrayed in a manner that is easily interpreted by the decision-makers, developers and the public.
What is SHIM?

The collection and mapping of reliable, high quality, current and spatially accurate information about local habitats and watercourses.
• Intended as a standard for habitat mapping in urban and rural BC.

• Principal objective is to identify, inventory and map all watercourses.

• Technique allows information to be incorporated into GIS using GPS.

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• Efficient, low cost & accurate.
• Information can be easily shared and updated.
• Previously large gaps in information.
• 30-40% of small streams are incorrectly mapped.
• Enhancing local land use planning decisions.

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What is SEI?

A standardized inventory of sensitive ecosystems that are relatively unmodified, and are ecologically fragile or are recognized as being rare in the provincial landscape.

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Riparian and Wetland

4.3% Riparian

0.2% Wetland
Scenery

Loggin

Green space

Ranching

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Increased property values

Clean Water

Water Retention

Recreation

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The Tools

• Regional Growth Strategy
• Official Community Plans
  • Neighbourhood Plans
  • Zoning
• Development Permits
Regional Growth Strategy

• “Plan for development by knowing first what to protect, and then developing and using a selection of special management tools.”

• “Use BMPs for urban and resource development to achieve environmental protection.”

• “Incorporate environmental with social and economic considerations in day-to-day decision-making.”
Westside Official Community Plan Policy Examples

• “Maintain and update the inventory of streams, ponds, lakes and shorelines using the SHIM method.”

• “Evaluate development and servicing proposals in consideration of the RDCO SEI and SHIM as well as provincial Best Management Guidelines and publications.”

• “Protect ground water, streams, ponds, lakes and shorelines using methods such as development permits, restrictive covenants, subdivision and development servicing bylaws and park dedication.”
Neighborhood Plans

“At time of neighborhood planning and rezoning, assess opportunities using transfer of density, density bonusing, park dedication, land trusts, covenants or development agreements to conserve corridors of “sensitive ecosystems” and to manage these areas in a manner that provides connectivity and movement of rare and endangered species.”
Zoning

“Require that rezoning applications for land proposed for development:

• Include information that assesses the environment;
• Identifies natural features for that site;
• Considers environmental impact and overall ecosystem connectivity on and offsite; and
• Considers the rarity and uniqueness of the particular habitat as it relates to the remaining habitat on the Westside.

Development should avoid sensitive areas and be designed to retain important ecosystem features and functions.”
Development Permits

“Development Permits issued in this area will be in accordance with the following objectives and guidelines:

- Development Permit Objectives and Guidelines for Sensitive Terrestrial Ecosystems; and
- Development Permit Objectives and Guidelines for Aquatic Ecosystems.”
Appendix A-8

Sensitive Terrestrial Ecosystem Development Permit Design Guidelines

1. Objectives
1.1 To protect the ecological attributes and socio-economic values that are common to all Sensitive Terrestrial Ecosystems.
1.2 To conserve Sensitive Terrestrial Ecosystems in a relatively natural state.
1.3 To plan land development carefully in a manner that protects Sensitive Terrestrial Ecosystems from potentially adverse effects of land use practices in adjacent areas.
1.4 To protect Sensitive Terrestrial Ecosystems through the use of buffers.
1.5 To identify feasible habitat corridors connecting core conservation areas.
1.6 To reduce wildfire threat across the landscape.
1.7 To identify lands in which priorities can be set for conservation and management.
1.8 To evaluate development proposals based upon the following guidelines.

2. Guidelines
The following general guidelines pertain to all forms of development within Sensitive Terrestrial Ecosystem Development Permit Areas:

2.1 An environmental assessment should be prepared by a qualified professional biologist together with other professionals of different expertise, as the project warrants. Hydrologists and hydro-geologists should be consulted where wetlands, riparian areas, and broadleaf woodlands exist within the development area to ensure the proper hydrological function is maintained within these ecosystems. A professional geoscientist should be consulted where there are erosion potential or slope stability hazards. The consultant or team of consultants should have an understanding of wildlife biology, especially for species at risk, geomorphology, environmental assessment, and development planning in British Columbia. Specific expertise in Okanagan Valley wildlife species, wildlife habitat, and ecosystems is highly preferred.

2.2 Concentrations of high quality ecosystems and habitat for rare species should be prioritized for conservation.
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Questions?