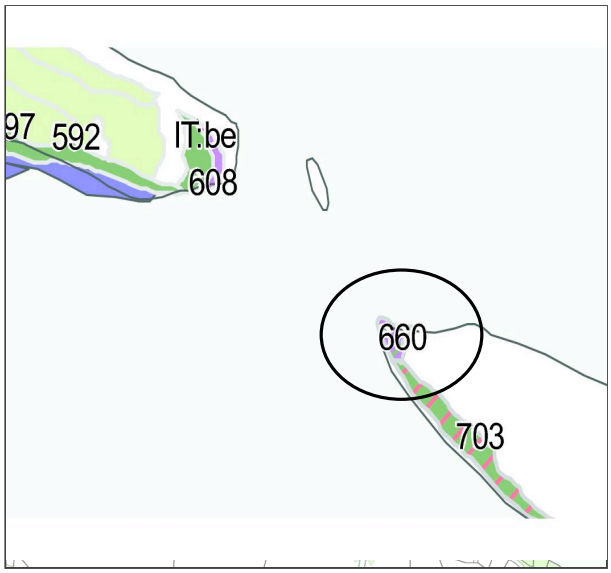
How to Read a Sensitive Ecosystem Map

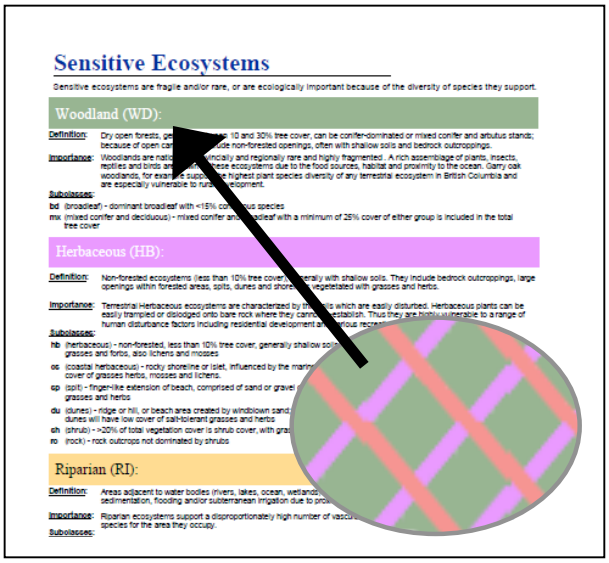
A Sensitive Ecosystem Map allows you to determine the types and ecological characteristics of the sensitive ecosystems that exist on your property. In short, the coded information in the polygon label moves from a general indication of the sensitive ecosystem(s) present to highly detailed information regarding vegetation type and form.

It can be difficult to learn how to interpret the condensed ecological information provided by a Sensitive Ecosystem Map. What follows is a step-by-step explanation of how to read and understand a Sensitive Ecosystem Map.



STEP 1: Locate your property on the map. Identify the sensitive ecosystem polygons that exist within your property boundaries.

A polygon is an area of contiguous sensitive ecosystem represented by an irregularly shaped “splotch” of colour.

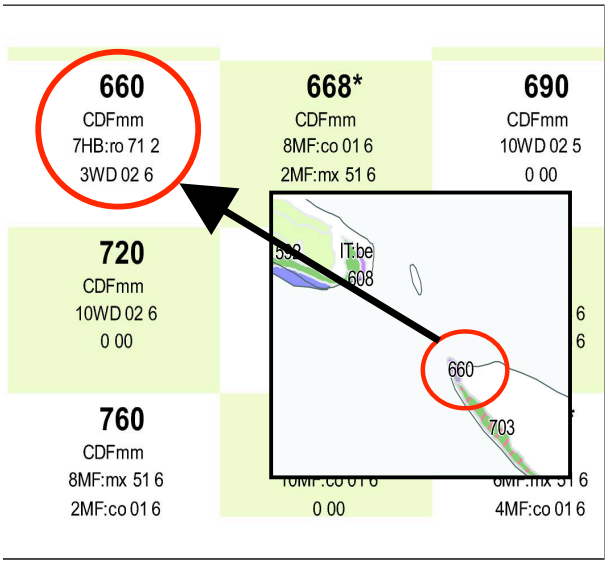


STEP 2: Note the colour of the background and cross-hatching. Cross-reference with the Sensitive Ecosystem list on the right-hand side of the map to determine the ecosystems that are present.

The background colour indicates the dominant ecosystem.

The ‘forward’ (///) cross-hatching indicates a secondary ecosystem.

The ‘backwards’ (\\\) cross-hatching indicates a tertiary ecosystem.



STEP 3: Identify the Polygon Number, and locate it in the Ecosystems Label table on the left-hand side of the map.

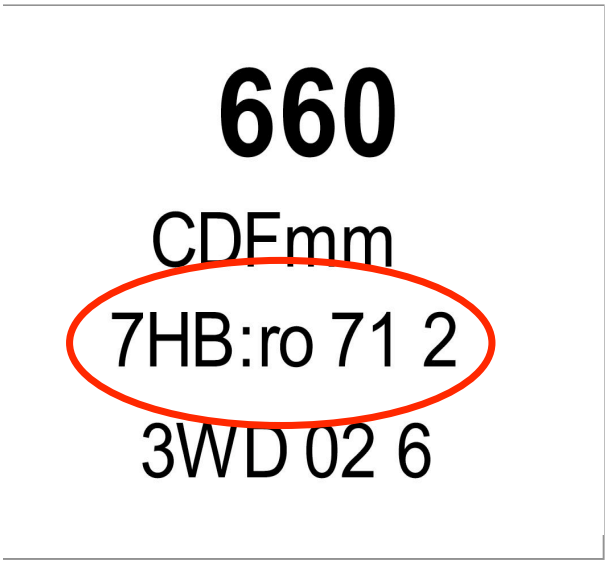
The next steps explain how to cross-reference the coded information in the polygon's Label to determine the characteristics of each ecosystem present.

Note: If a * appear after the Polygon Number, an on-the-ground field sampling was conducted in this polygon area.

STEP 4: Interpret the first line of the Polygon Label.

This indicates the biogeoclimatic zone, subzone, and variant in which the sensitive ecosystem is located.

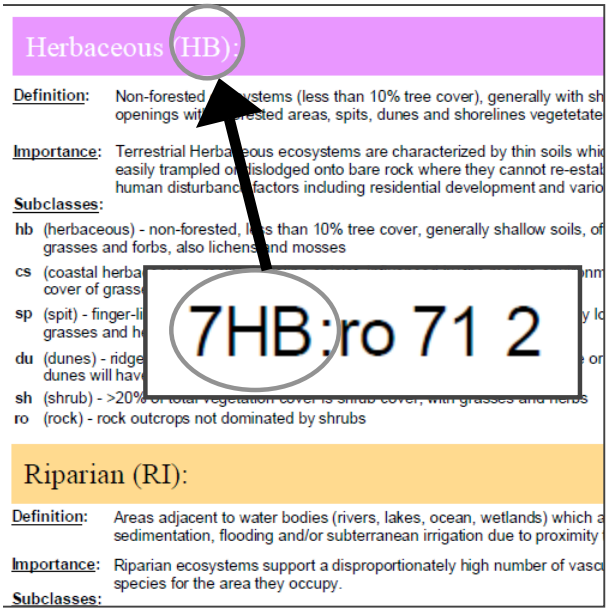
CDFmm indicates **Coastal Douglas-fir (moist maritime).** Virtually all of the Islands Trust Area is within this biogeoclimatic zone. A biogeoclimatic zone is a geographic area having similar patterns of energy flow, vegetation and soils based on a relatively homogenous macro-climate.



STEP 5: Interpret the second, third, and fourth lines (if present) in the Polygon Label.

These lines provide information on the dominant, secondary, and tertiary ecosystems that are present.

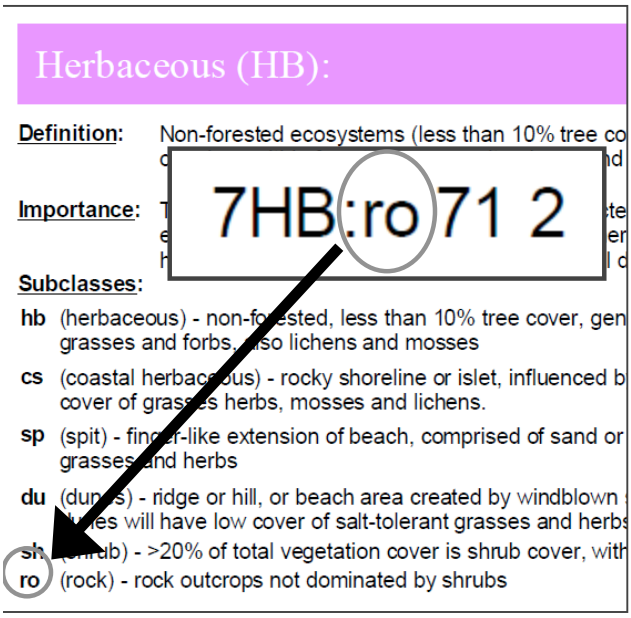
The next 4 steps will walk through this process using the first line in the sample Polygon Label as an example.



STEP 6: These two letters indicate the type of ecosystem (cross-reference to the *Sensitive Ecosystems* table along the right hand side of the map).

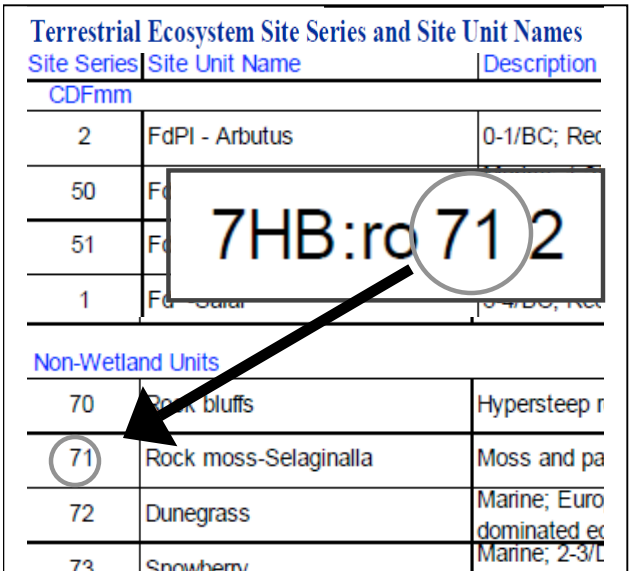
The number in front indicates the percent of the polygon that is composed of the ecosystem type (simply add a zero).

For example, ***7HB*** indicates the polygon is 70% Herbaceous ecosystem.



STEP 7: These two letters indicate ecosystem sub-class (cross-reference to the *Sensitive Ecosystems* list along the right hand side of the map).

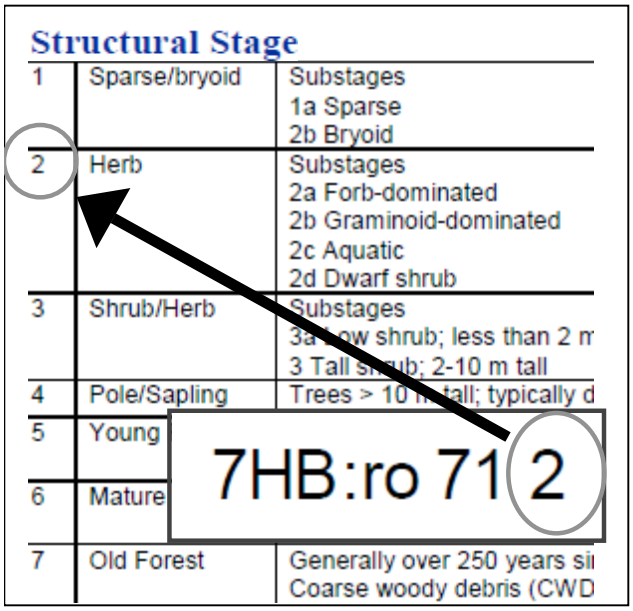
For example, ***ro*** indicates that the subclass of the Herbaceous ecosystem present in the polygon is (**rock) – rock outcrops not dominated by shrubs**.



STEP 8: This number indicates the ecosystem site series (cross-reference to the *Terrestrial Ecosystem Site Series and Site Unit Names Table* on the bottom left-hand side of the map).

A ‘site series’ indicates sites capable of producing the same stable, long-lasting plant communities. Here, it gives a finer definition of the vegetation present in the polygon area.

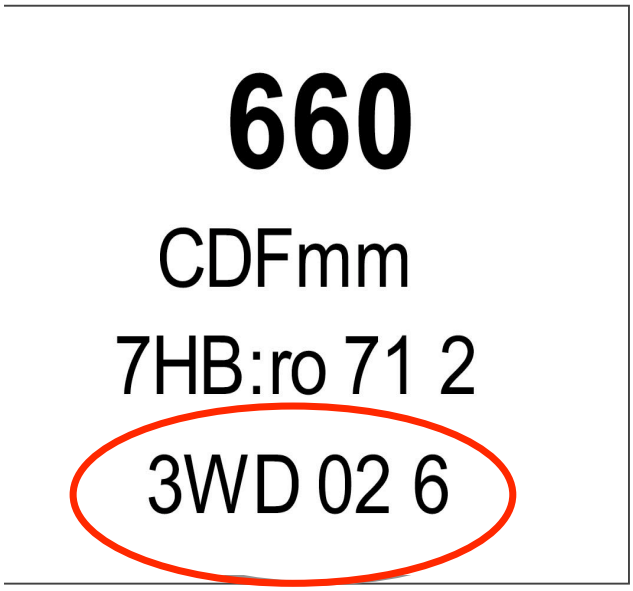
For example, ***71*** indicates that the site series of the Herbaceous ecosystem present in the polygon is **Rock moss-Selaginalla.**



STEP 9: This number indicates the structural stage of development of the ecosystem (cross-reference to the *Structural Stage Table* on the bottom left-hand side of the map).

'Structural stage' indicates a stage of development of a plant community as it moves from bare ground to its final steady state.

For example, ***2*** indicates that the structural stage of the Herbaceous ecosystem present in the polygon is **Herb.**



STEP 10: Complete the same process of cross-referencing with the other lines of information (if present).

The secondary ecosystem in this example is interpreted below:

3WD 02 6: 30% Woodland ecosystem; site series arbutus; structural stage herb.

For further help on reading the map or more information on the Sensitive Ecosystem Mapping project, please visit **www.islandstrust.bc.ca** or call the Islands Trust office at **1-250-405-5151** or toll-free through Enquiry BC **1-800-663-7867**.

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