

# Ecosystem Classifications

## NATURAL ECOSYSTEMS

**Definition:**

Natural ecosystems are landscape units with little or no human development. In the Trust Area these are usually rare and/or fragile ecosystems.

**Information:**

Natural ecosystems in the Trust Area are usually remnant fragments of what once were much larger ecosystems. Most of the ecosystems captured in the ecosystem mapping project are considered by both the provincial and federal governments to be fragile and/or rare. However, development pressures with the Trust Area continue to result in significant loss of these natural ecosystems.

<b>CLASS</b>	<b>SUBCLASS</b>
<p><b>OF – Old Forest</b>            Old Growth Forest ecosystems are structurally complex stands comprised mainly of shade-tolerant and regenerating tree species (&gt;250 years old). The under story can include snags, coarse woody debris, in all stages of decomposition and a fully developed moss layer.</p>	<p><b>co – Conifer:</b> with &lt; 15% broadleaf.</p> <p><b>mx – Mixed:</b> mixed with broadleaf component &gt; 15%.</p>
<p><b>MF – Mature Forest</b>            Mature Forest ecosystems are characterized by establishment of shade-tolerant trees after the last disturbance (80-250 years old). The under story can be well developed as the canopy begins to open up but in Douglas-fir forests the under story is typically dry with few woody shrubs, forbs and grasses.</p>	<p><b>co – Conifer:</b> with &lt; 15% broadleaf.</p> <p><b>mx – Mixed:</b> mixed with broadleaf component &gt; 15%.</p>

<b>CLASS</b>	<b>SUBCLASS</b>
<p><b>WD – Woodland</b>                      Woodland ecosystems are open stands of deciduous forest, composed of pure or mixed stands of Garry oak or mixed stand of arbutus and Douglas fir. Mature big-leaf maple can also be found in sites designated as woodland. Woodlands may include non-forested openings, often with shallow soils and bedrock outcroppings.</p>	<p><b>mx – Mixed:</b> mixed with conifer component &gt; 15%.</p> <p><b>bd – Broadleaf:</b> Dominant broadleaf.</p>
<p><b>HB – Herbaceous</b>                      Herbaceous ecosystems are non-forested ecosystems with less than 10% tree cover. They are typically found in areas of shallow soils and bedrock near shorelines and at the summit of hills and mountains.</p>	<p><b>mx – Herbaceous:</b> a mix of grasses and forbs as well as mosses and lichens.</p> <p><b>cs – Coastal herbaceous:</b> rocky shoreline, influenced by the marine environment and characterized by grasses, forbs, mosses and lichens.</p> <p><b>vs – Vegetated shoreline:</b> low-lying rocky shorelines with less than 20% vegetation.</p> <p><b>sp – Spit:</b> sand and gravel deposits with low to moderate cover of grasses and herbs.</p> <p><b>du – Dunes:</b> sand dunes with a low cover of grasses and herbs.</p> <p><b>sh – Shrub:</b> shrubs account for more than 20% of the vegetation.</p>
<p><b>RI – Riparian</b>                      Riparian ecosystems occur adjacent to lakes, streams, gullies, canyons and rivers and may vary in width.</p>	<p><b>fl – Low bench:</b> areas flooded at least once every two years for part of the growing season; plants are adapted to extensive flooding and abrasion.</p> <p><b>fm – Medium bench:</b> areas flooded every one-six years for short periods (10-25 days); usually deciduous or mixed forests with trees tolerant of flooding and sedimentation.</p> <p><b>fh – High bench:</b> areas periodically and briefly inundated by high waters; typically conifer-dominated floodplains of larger coastal rivers.</p> <p><b>ff – Fringe:</b> narrow, linear areas along open water bodies (rivers, lakes, and ponds).</p> <p><b>gu – Gully:</b> where the watercourse is in a steep V-shaped gully.</p>

<b>CLASS</b>	<b>SUBCLASS</b>
<p><b>WN – Wetland</b> Wetland ecosystems are characterized by daily, seasonal or year-round water at or above the surface.</p>	<p><b>bg – Bog:</b> shrubby or treed, nutrient-poor peatlands with distinctive communities of plant species adapted to highly acid and oxygen-poor soil conditions.</p>
	<p><b>fn – Fen:</b> peatlands where groundwater inflow maintains a high mineral content within the rooting zone.</p>
	<p><b>ms – Marsh:</b> shallowly flooded mineral wetland dominated by emergent grass-like vegetation.</p>
	<p><b>sp –Swamp:</b> forested, mineral wetland dominated by broadleaf shrubs and trees on sites with a flowing, semi-permanent, near surface of water table.</p>
	<p><b>sw –Shallow Water:</b> aquatic ecosystems dominated by rooted, submerged and floating aquatic plants.</p>
	<p><b>wm – Wet Meadow:</b> seasonally inundated wetlands, dominated by grasses, sedges, or rushes. They generally occur on mineral soils and have little or no peat accumulation. Tree cover is less than 10%.</p>
<p><b>CL – Cliffs</b> Cliff ecosystems are steep, vertical or overhanging rock faces where sparse vegetation may occur in crevices or on ledges.</p>	<p><b>cc – Coastal cliffs:</b> cliffs with a marine interaction. Generally near vertical bedrock with accumulation of soil limited to fissures and ledges.</p>
	<p><b>ic – Inland cliffs:</b> typically formed as a result of erosion, catastrophic failures or mass wastage. Generally characterized by rapid drainage and the accumulation of soil that is limited to bedrock fissures and ledges.</p>
<p><b>LC – Lacustrine</b> Lacustrine ecosystems are freshwater ecosystems where total vegetated coverage of the total surface area is less than 5%.</p>	<p><b>la – Lake:</b> a naturally occurring static body of water, greater than 2m deep in some portion.</p>
	<p><b>pd – Pond:</b> a small body of water greater than 2m deep, but not large enough to be classified as a lake.</p>
<p><b>LT – Littoral</b> Littoral ecosystems are marine influenced ecosystems where total vegetated coverage of the total surface areas is less than 5%.</p>	<p><b>mu – Mudflat:</b> flat, plain-like areas dominated by fine-textured sediments and exposed at low tide; includes estuaries.</p> <p><b>be – Beach:</b> area that expresses sorted sediments, reworked by wave action in recent times.</p>