

RIPARIAN ECOSYSTEMS

NORTH PENDER ISLAND DEVELOPMENT PERMIT AREA

What Are They?

Riparian ecosystems are found along the margins of rivers, streams, lakes and marshes, the floodplains of these areas, and wet gullies. The moist soils of these areas support plant communities that are very different from those in drier, upland areas. Riparian ecosystems can range in width from a few metres, such as those next to small streams with steep banks, to more than 100 metres along large rivers. On North Pender Island these ecosystems are quite limited and narrow.

Due to seasonal changes in water levels, riparian ecosystems are highly dynamic. Natural disturbances such as periodic or seasonal flooding, blowdown of shallow-rooted trees, and shifts in the stream channels combine to create a variety of habitat types that support high levels of biodiversity. In mature riparian ecosystems, tree growth is rapid and the forest understorey is lush and diverse.

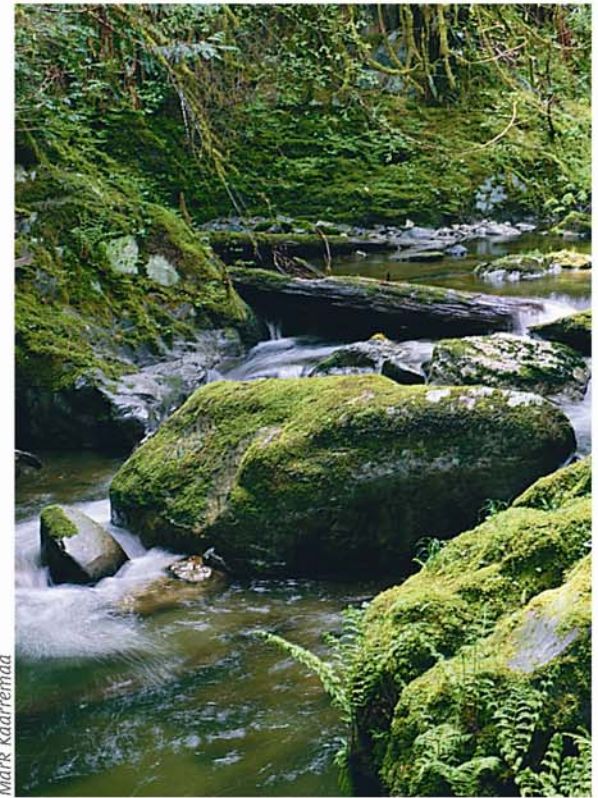


Why They Are Important

Riparian ecosystems support an exceptionally high number of plants, amphibians, small animals, and insects for the area that they occupy. This is because they contain the three critical habitat components for wildlife - water, shelter and food.

Due to their relatively small size, coupled with the North Pender Island's limited topography and dry climate, riparian areas are very limited.

Human activity has affected the extent and health of local riparian areas. On North Pender Island less than half a hectare of intact riparian ecosystems remain.



Riparian ecosystems make up only 0.015% of North Pender Island

Their Purpose

The purpose of the Riparian Ecosystems Development Permit Area (DPA) is to help protect the remaining riparian areas on North Pender Island by guiding any new development that might occur within them. The areas covered by this DPA are indicated in Schedule K of the North Pender Island Official Community Plan (OCP).

What Does This Mean?

If you have a property that is partially located within a Riparian Ecosystems DPA you will need to obtain a development permit from the Islands Trust before undertaking certain new land-altering activities identified in the North Pender Island OCP.

The regular maintenance of existing buildings and landscaping, as well as any development that takes place outside of the DPA does not require a Development Permit.



Islands Trust

Extent of Riparian Ecosystems DPA Areas on North Pender Island



How to Protect this Ecosystem

Maintain a Surrounding Buffer

A protective vegetated buffer around a riparian area will help protect it from potentially harmful outside disturbance and edge effects.

Control Invasive Species

The limited and narrow nature of riparian areas coupled with their fertile soils and increasing proximity to new developments makes them particularly vulnerable to the intrusion of non-native species such as Himalayan blackberry, English Ivy and holly.

Limit Access

Any form of human and domestic animal access may severely affect the understorey vegetation, soil, tree health, or stand age structure in these sensitive and very dry ecosystems.

Allow Natural Disturbances to Occur

Avoid or minimize bank or flood protection and maintain natural flow regimes in associated watercourses. Flooding, tree blowdown, channel changes and certain erosion patterns are important for the health of these ecosystems.

Consider Establishing a Protective Covenant

Properties with riparian ecosystems may qualify for the Natural Area Protection Tax Exemption Program. This program provides landowners who permanently protect natural features of their land with the opportunity to receive a 65% exemption in property taxes on the protected portion of their land. www.islandstrustfund.bc.ca/naptep.cfm

Derek Holzapfel



Associated Species

Animals

Beaver, muskrat, river otter, mink, belted kingfisher, yellow warbler, great blue heron, rough-skinned newt, various invertebrates

Plants

Lady fern, salmonberry, red alder, willow, western redcedar, foamflower, mosses

Rare Species

Red-tailed frog

***Ecosystem DPAs guide
development in identified
ecologically sensitive areas***

For More Information

To determine if your land has a Riparian Ecosystems DPA on it consult the North Pender Island Official Community Plan (OCP). Copies of the OCP are available from Islands Trust offices in Victoria and Pender Island, and on-line at:

www.islandstrust.bc.ca/ltc/np

If you have any questions about DPAs please contact Islands Trust staff by phone by dialing 1.800.663.7867 and requesting 250.405.5151 or by email at npi@islandstrust.bc.ca.