

HERBACEOUS ECOSYSTEMS

NORTH PENDER ISLAND DEVELOPMENT PERMIT AREA

What Are They?

Herbaceous ecosystems are natural grasslands, open wildflower meadows and grassy hilltops.

Vegetation in these areas is generally low-growing, dominated by grasses and forbs (low, broad-leaved plants). Open grassy areas are frequently punctuated by rocky outcrops, which may seem bare but are actually covered with mosses and lichens that may have taken centuries to develop.

Few trees and shrubs can survive on these sites because the shallow soils dry rapidly in the summer heat. On deeper soils, herbaceous ecosystems feature more grass and shrub species such as Idaho fescue, California oat-grass, and Nootka rose.

In spring, terrestrial herbaceous ecosystems may form a rich tapestry of colour, with a profusion of delicate wildflowers such as blue-eyed-Mary, satin-flower, and white fawn lily.

Herbaceous ecosystems are often found associated with woodland and forest ecosystems. These dry ecosystems also contain some very specialized and important wet micro-habitats such as seepage areas, and vernal or seasonal pools.



Derek Masselink

Why They Are Important

Terrestrial herbaceous ecosystems provide specialized habitats for several rare or endangered species in British Columbia. Regionally they occur in small patches on hilly, rocky slopes along the east coast of Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands.

These ecosystems are rare and getting rarer. While the bedrock beneath them is generally robust and stable, their thin soils are very susceptible to disturbance. As result of disturbance, soil can be lost or be colonized by non-native species such as Scotch broom and hairgrass. In both cases, key native plant species are displaced from these ecosystems.



Mark Kaarremaa

Herbaceous ecosystems make up only 0.9% of North Pender Island

Their Purpose

The purpose of the Herbaceous Ecosystems Development Permit Area (DPA) is to offer protection to the remaining herbaceous ecosystems on North Pender Island by guiding any new development that might occur within them. The areas covered by the this DPA are indicated in Schedule J of the North Pender Island Official Community Plan (OCP).

What Does This Mean?

If you have a property that is wholly or partially located within a Herbaceous 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 Herbaceous Ecosystems DPA Areas on North Pender Island



How to Protect this Ecosystem

Establish a Surrounding Buffer

A protective vegetated buffer around a herbaceous area will help protect it from potentially harmful outside influences and disturbance.

Control Invasive Species

The open nature of herbaceous ecosystems and their thin, dry soils makes them particularly vulnerable to the intrusion of non-native species such as Scotch broom.

Limit Access

Any form of human and domestic animal access may severely damage the thin soils of these sensitive and very dry ecosystems.

Allow Natural Ecological Processes to Occur

Natural processes such as the seasonal variation of soil moisture and nutrient regimes are critical to the creation and maintenance of these ecosystems.

Consider Establishing a Protective Covenant

Properties with herbaceous 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



Mark Kaarremaa

Associated Species

Animals

Alligator lizards, garter snakes, songbirds, bats, butterflies

Plants

Satin flower, blue-eyed Mary, Hooker's onion, junegrass, hoary rock moss

Rare Species

Sharp-tailed snake

*Ecosystem DPAs guide
development in identified
ecologically sensitive areas*

For More Information

To determine if your land has a Herbaceous 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.