

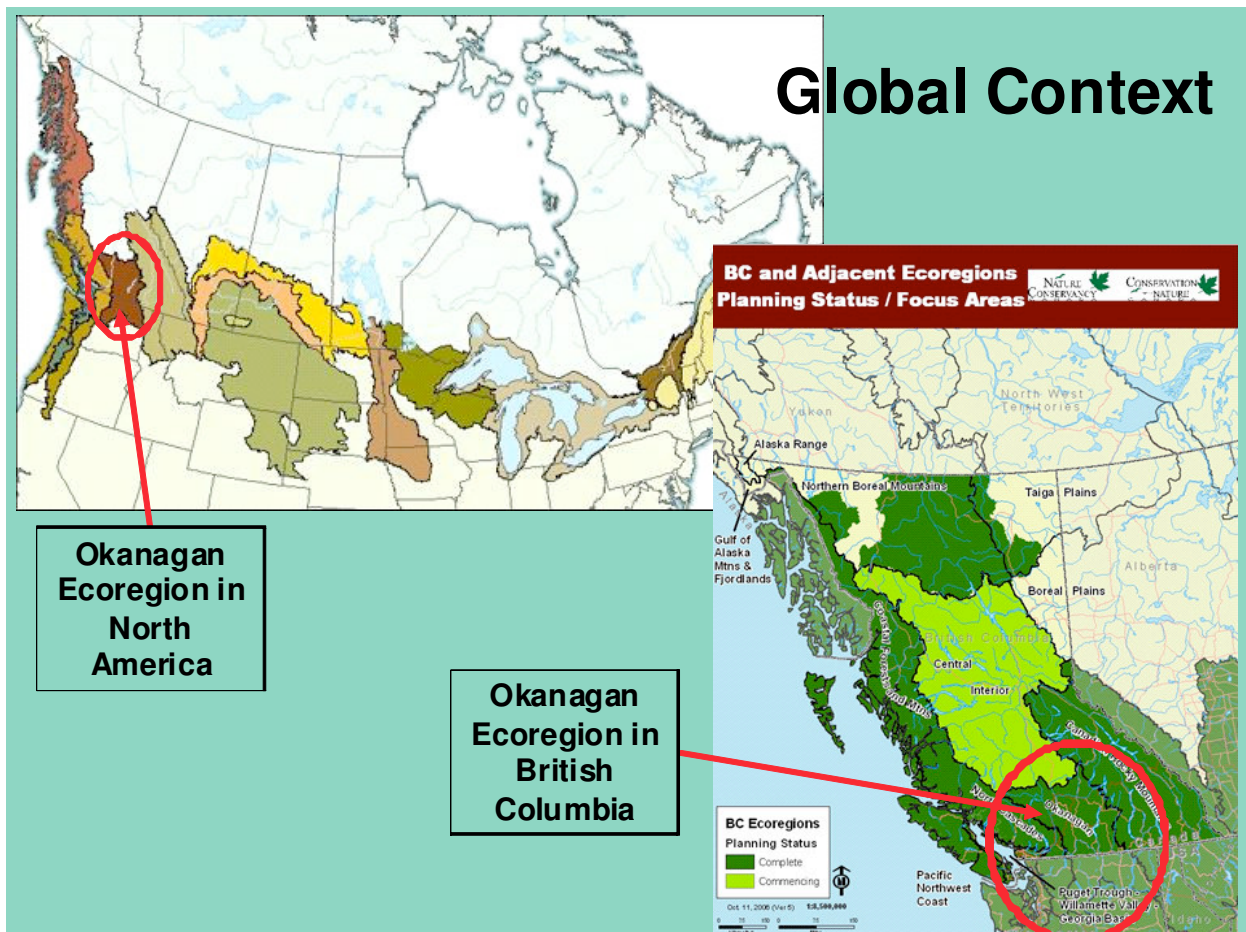
Okanagan Ecoregional Assessment Summary

The Nature Conservancy of Canada was approached by Warren Bell to undertake a review of the results of the Okanagan Ecoregional Assessment (OK ERA), in light of a proposal to develop a parcel of land at the mouth of the Salmon River within the City of Salmon Arm. The following summarizes the biodiversity values of the area at a broad scale, and is provided for information purposes only.

The Okanagan Ecoregional Assessment was completed in 2006 by the Nature Conservancy of Canada and other Canadian and US Partners (Pryce et al., 2006). The purpose of the OK ERA was to use the best available information about the ecology of the region to identify lands and waters needed to maintain the biodiversity of the Ecoregion. The assessment is a result of rigorous scientific analyses, which incorporates expert review and is the most comprehensive and current effort to set conservation priorities at an Ecoregional scale (Groves et al., 2000; Groves et al., 2002). Numerous scientists and other experts from federal, state, provincial and local agencies, academia and conservation organizations contributed to the assessment. The OK ERA is intended to be used as a guide to help inform conservation decision-making across the Okanagan Ecoregion.

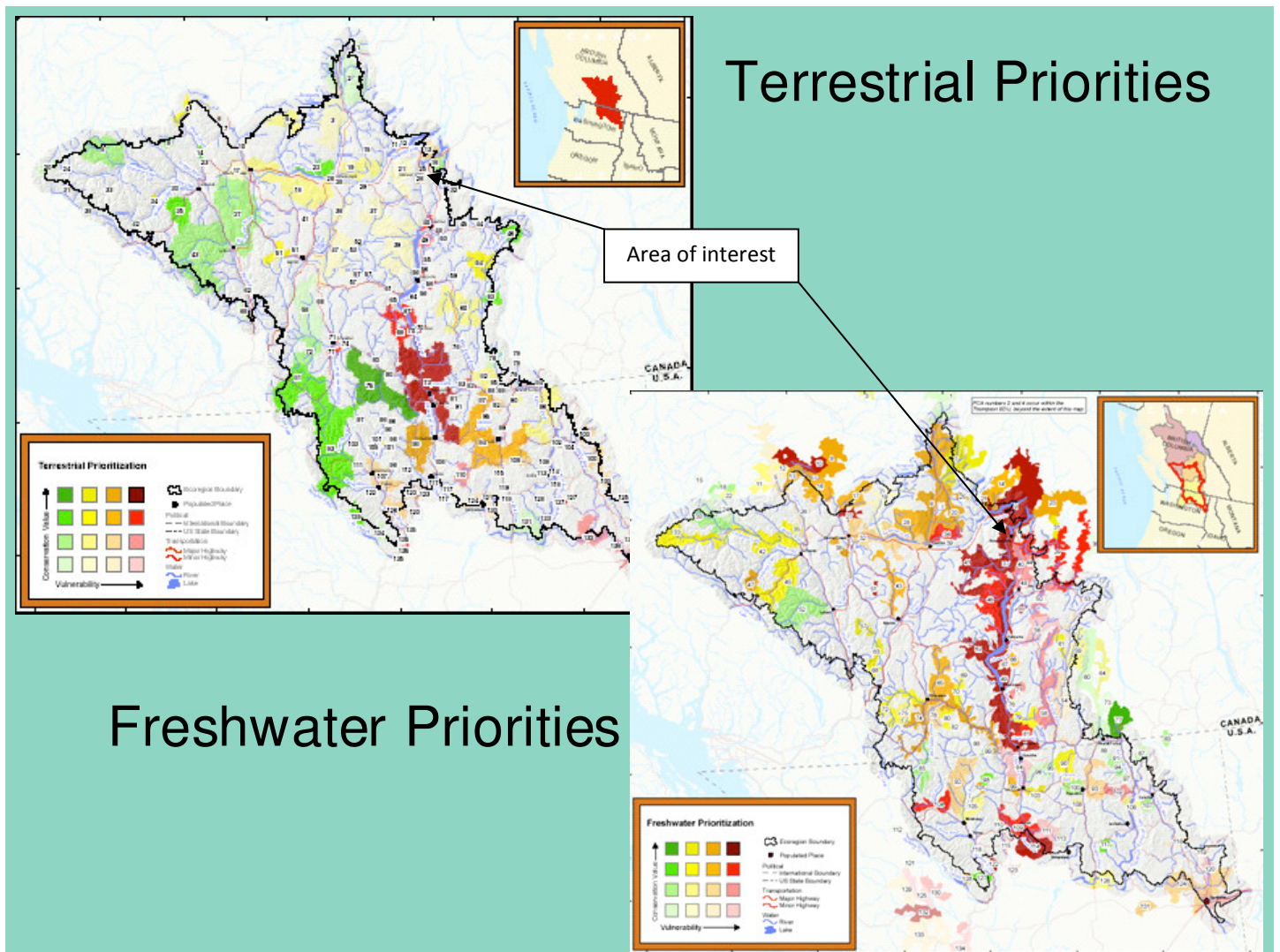
Global Context

Ecoregional Assessments are being completed globally. They provide global and regional contexts for local decision-making. The relative importance of biodiversity within the Okanagan Ecoregion can be understood as a result of the assessment.



Okanagan Ecoregional Assessment Results

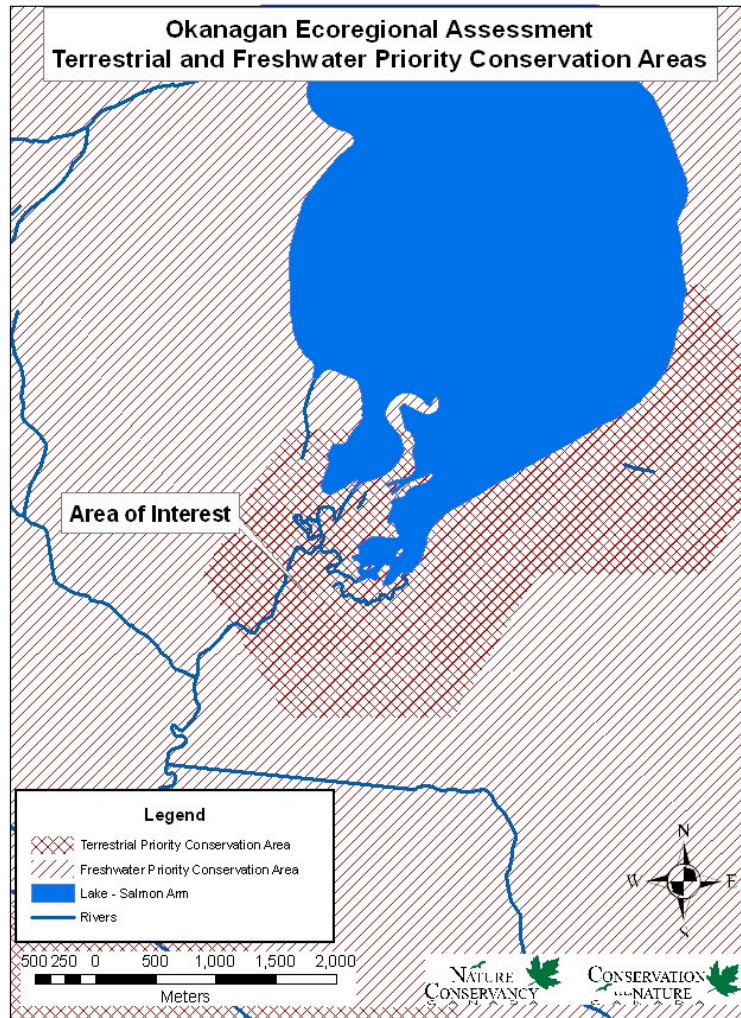
Terrestrial and Freshwater Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs) were identified – these areas represent a portfolio of sites for conservation action with a goal of protecting representative biodiversity and ecologically significant populations. These sites include the last places where many of the Ecoregion’s most imperiled species occur, and the last, largest expanses of relatively intact natural habitat. These areas contain a suite of ecological systems and plant and animal species; they show the most important and suitable areas for conservation. The PCAs were prioritized to show the relative conservation value and relative vulnerability of each.



Area of Interest

The mouth of the Salmon River where it enters Salmon Arm is part of one Terrestrial Priority Conservation Area (#25 – Salmon Arm) and two Freshwater Priority Conservation Areas (#9 – Shuswap Lake and #37 – Salmon River). These PCAs are all rated as having the highest conservation value and highest vulnerability in the Okanagan Ecoregion. Prioritization evaluated the relative importance among sites using criteria for measuring conservation value and vulnerability (Pressey et al., 1994; Noss et al., 2002; Rumsey et al., 2003). Of 137 Terrestrial PCAs in the Okanagan Ecoregion, only 14 have these highest rankings. Of 135 Freshwater PCAs in the Okanagan Ecoregion, only 12 have these highest rankings.

Of additional interest is the fact that the Terrestrial and Freshwater PCAs overlap in the Area of Interest. The area of overlap between the Terrestrial and Freshwater PCAs is relatively small – comprising only 14% of the Okanagan Ecoregion (1,341,400 ha/9,605,000ha). Areas of overlap have increased relative importance for biodiversity.



Summary

The ultimate vision of the Okanagan Ecoregional Assessment is to facilitate the thoughtful coordination of current and future conservation efforts by the growing number of federal, provincial, local, private and non-governmental organizations engaged in this field. While the Assessment has no regulatory authority, it is a guide to help inform decision-making across the Okanagan Ecoregion. It is intended to guide users to areas with high biodiversity value and suitability. The specifics of conservation site delineation, planning and management will rely on more localized expertise.

Nature Conservancy of Canada

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Citations

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