

BC's Coast Region: Species & Ecosystems of Conservation

Plant Community: Red alder / slough sedge [black cottonwood] (*Alnus rubra* / *Carex obnupta* [*Populus balsamifera* ssp. *trichocarpa*])

Global: G1, Provincial: S1, BC List: Red, BEC: CDFmm/14



Notes: A seasonally flooded, closed canopy deciduous forest occupied by red alder and black cottonwood, with a typically well-developed shrub layer of common snowberry and red-osier dogwood. The herb layer is dominated by slough sedge and the moss layer is poorly represented. This plant community is restricted by the unique climate found in a relatively narrow geographic area.

Description

This plant community is represented by the CDFmm/14 site series, which is restricted to rich to very rich low lying sites that experience winter flooding and have strongly fluctuating water tables (e.g. poorly drained valley floors and depressions). A maturing, closed deciduous, small forest patch community typical areas of occupancy range from 5-50 ha in BC. Red alder and black cottonwood dominate. Western redcedar and other conifers are occasionally present but are suppressed by the prolonged annual flooding. The shrub layer is occupied by common snowberry and red-osier dogwood, along with variable amounts of Pacific crab apple, black twinberry, and trailing blackberry. The herb layer features slough sedge, with sword fern and false lily-of-the-valley present in small amounts. The moss layer is characteristically a thin scattering of slender beaked-moss, with occasional small amounts of palm tree moss.

Threats

Decline is due to extensive past timber harvesting as well as agricultural, rural and urban development within a relatively small area. This geographic area is predominantly private land, where protective measures for red listed plant communities are limited. All areas continue to have development pressures and it is thought that as little as 0.5% of the entire CDFmm subzone remains as mature or old forest. Livestock grazing and ungulate browsing are considered threats. It is also thought to be very susceptible to invasive species, especially after clearing.

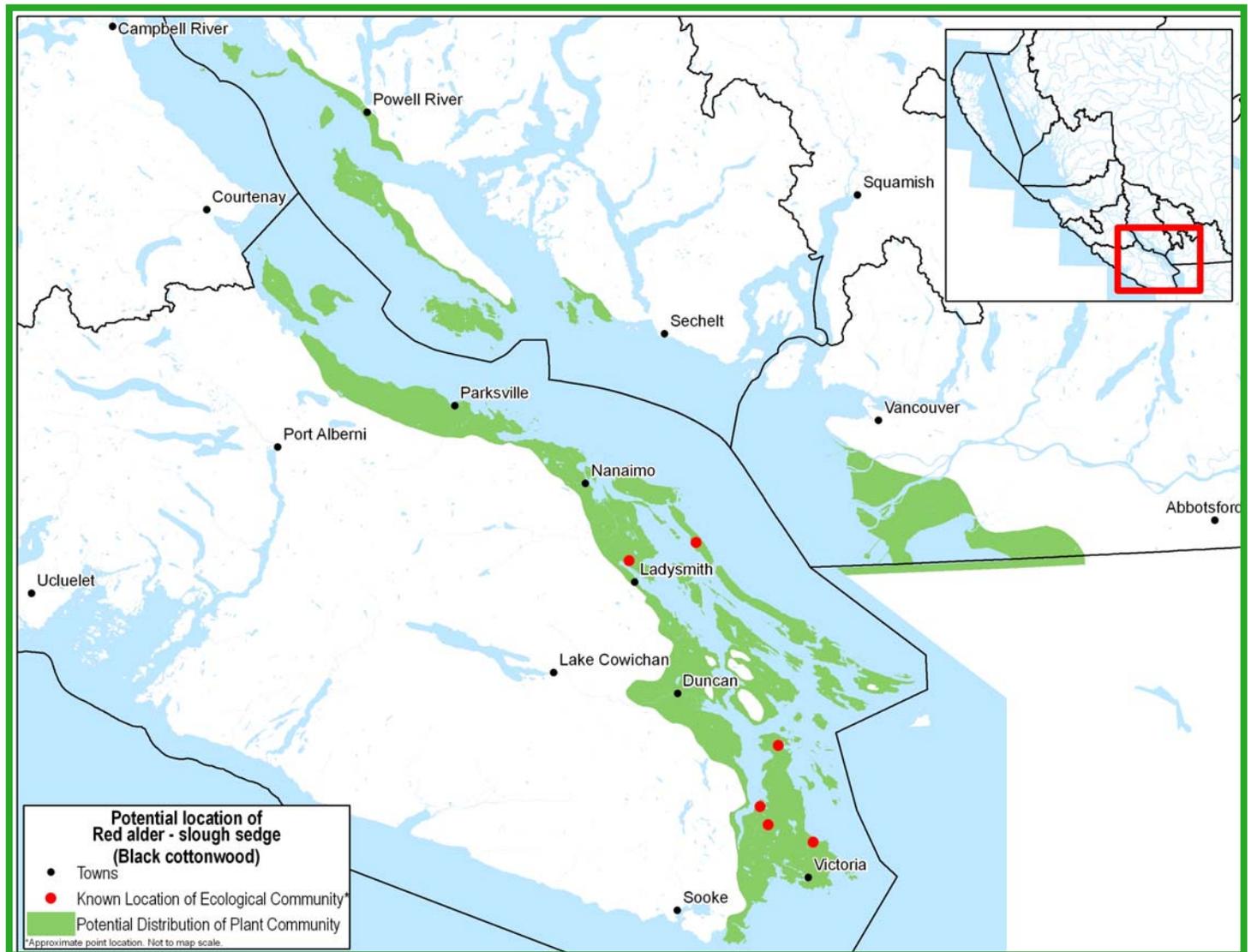
Conservation & Management Objectives

BC's Conservation Framework (CF) action plan sets out three goals that can be used to form the basis for conservation planning for BC's at risk plant communities: Contribute to global efforts for species and ecosystem conservation; prevent species and ecosystems from becoming at risk; and maintain the diversity of native species and ecosystems.

Specific activities should include: Ecosystem protection, planning (including developing or updating recovery plans), promotion of private land stewardship and compiling or updating status reports (trends, threats, ecological function and processes, successional pathways, identification of information gaps etc.).

Distribution

This plant community occurs mostly on fluvial and sometimes on marine or organic parent materials; the soils are usually saturated in the winter and remain moist-to-wet during the summer. Potentially found on south-eastern Vancouver Island from the most southerly regions to between Courtenay and Parksville. Other locations include the southern Gulf Islands as well as Denman, Hornby, Lasquiti, Thormanby, Harwood, Savary, and Hemando Islands, portions of Texada Island, the Sunshine Coast and the lower mainland within the southern half of the Fraser River Valley from the Chilliwack area westward.



Content for this Factsheet has been derived from the following sources

B.C. Conservation Data Centre. 2010 [Internet]. Ecological Community Summary: Red Alder/Slough Sedge [black cottonwood]. B.C. MoE. BC Conservation Framework. 2009. [Internet]. BC Ministry of Environment.
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