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# Saving Salmon

## One Meter of Shoreline at a Time

A community-based  
approach to shoreline  
habitat restoration

**Danny Swainson**

British Columbia Conservation Foundation (BCCF)

**Elodie Roger**

Origins Environmental Services



Association of Vancouver  
Island and Coastal  
Communities

April 1<sup>st</sup> 2022



## Danny Swainson

- Fisheries Biologist with BCCF
- ~10 years of experience with freshwater and marine environments Canada-wide



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## Elodie Roger

- Ecosystem Restoration Consultant with Origins Environmental Services
- 10 years of experience in conservation, restoration of terrestrial habitats in BC and overseas



Email: [Elodie@originsenvironmental.com](mailto:Elodie@originsenvironmental.com)



# Gratitude

Quw'utsun and Ts'uubaa-asatx Nations

Gerald Thom

Hundreds of volunteers, property managers and landowners

Our summer field crews, students, youth

And the many more who coordinated the project behind the scene

*Coastal Restoration Fund (Government of Canada) and private donors; DFO; PSF; HCTF; BCCF (Craig Whiteman, Lisa Limerick, Danny Swainson, Jeramy Damborg, Christine Brophy, Jeff Strohm, Dannielle Owen); Cowichan Lake And River Stewardship Society (Board members); Town of Lake Cowichan; Government partners Peter Woods, Andrew Coster, Luke Clarke, Grant Bracher; Polster Environmental Services Ltd. (Dave Polster, Genevieve Singleton) who contributed their expertise, mentorship and guidance once again; BC Forestry Research Station who provided the project with a plant storage and watering facility; Khowutzun Forest Services (Cedar Elliott, Troy Elliott, Rob Furness and their staff) for fostering our partnership with First Nations., Royal Road University; Local Schools...*





# Agenda

1. Riparian Areas and their significance for Fish
2. The Story of Cowichan Lake
3. Cowichan Shoreline Stewardship Project
4. Future of grass-root restoration initiatives around Lake Cowichan





# Section 1 Riparian Areas and their significance for Fish

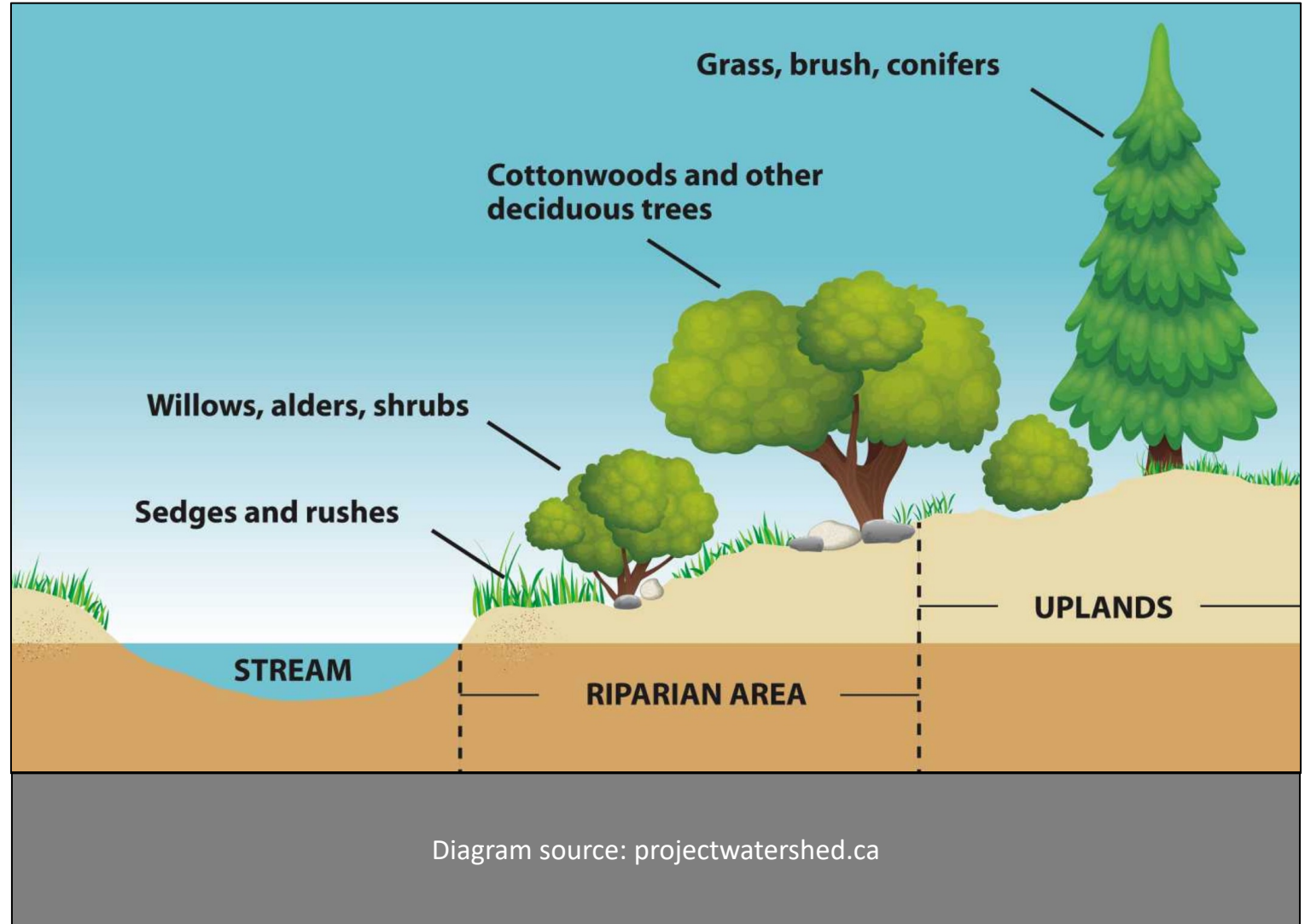


What is a Riparian Area?  
and why do we even care?



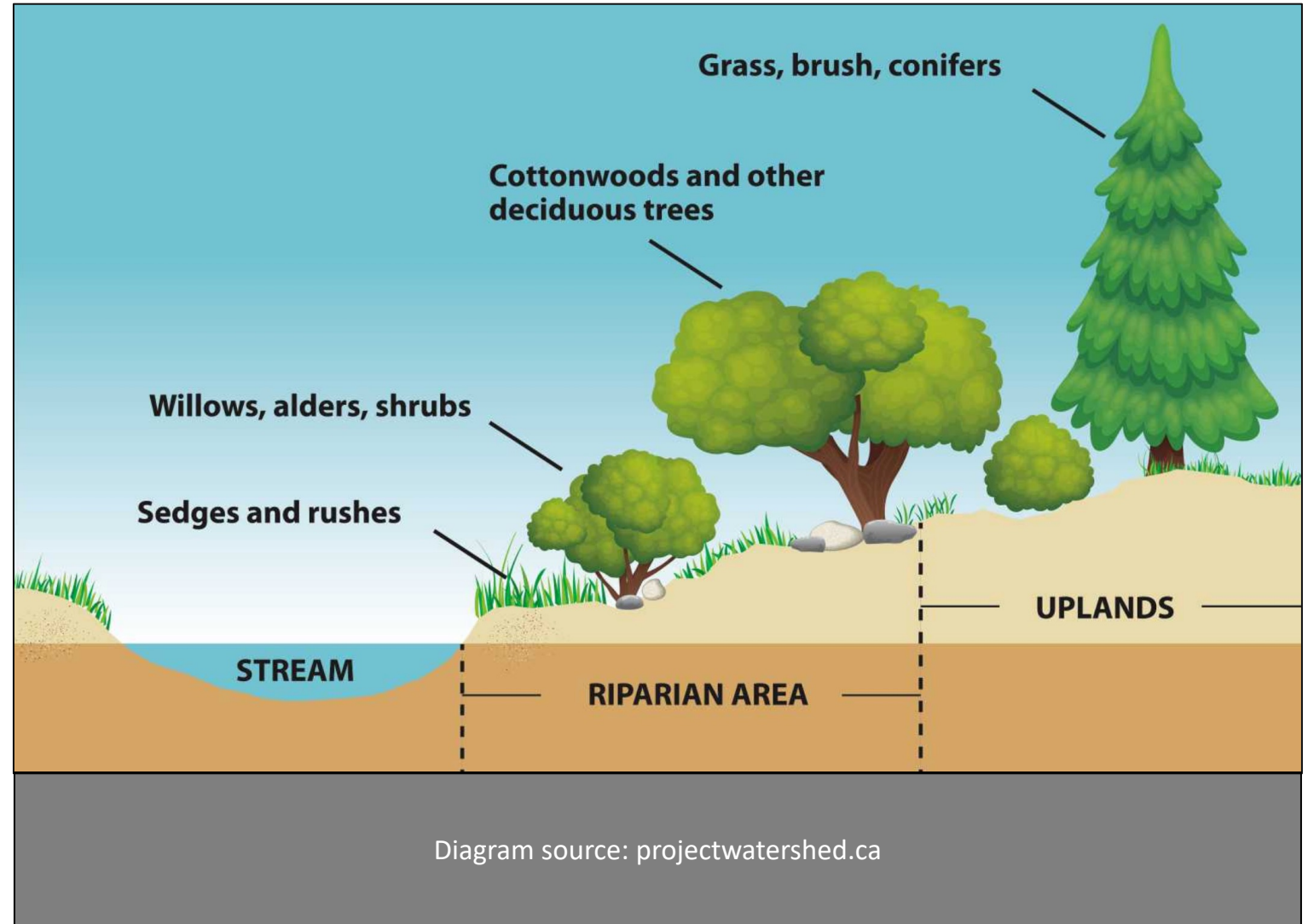


A Riparian area  
is the  
interface between a  
body of water and  
the adjacent land.



Healthy riparian areas provide many important ecosystem services !

- Shoreline stability
- Flood control
- Shade
- Habitat for birds, wildlife and insects
- **Fish habitat !**





Planting Trees = Saving Salmon?





Healthy Riparian  
Areas  
Keep Fish Happy  
and Alive !





When it comes  
to salmon...

Wood is  
Good!



Juvenile Chinook Salmon utilizing riparian vegetation on the  
Cowichan River

Photo by: Craig Whiteman



When it comes  
to salmon...

Wood is  
Good!



Adult Chinook Salmon utilizing riparian vegetation on the  
Englishman River

Photo by: Danny Swainson





Over-hanging Myrica gale



Submerged SWD over coarse gravel



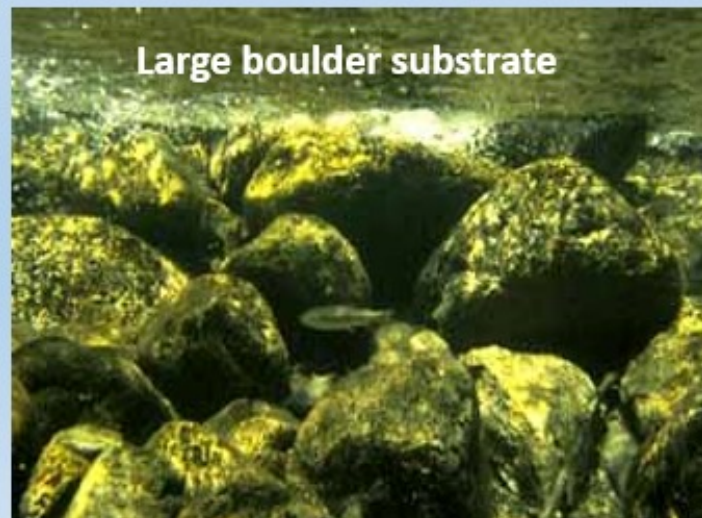
Fully intact riparian zone and emergent macrophytes



Submerged LWD



Submerged aquatic macrophytes



Large boulder substrate



Emergent Potamogeton

## Summer/Fall

1<sup>st</sup> - Stream Mouth

2<sup>nd</sup> - Rocky shores

3<sup>rd</sup> - Wetlands



Cowichan Lake's  
Healthy  
Productive Fish  
Habitats



# Dominant Fish Species of Cowichan Lake Shorelines



Chinook salmon fry



Three-Spine Stickleback



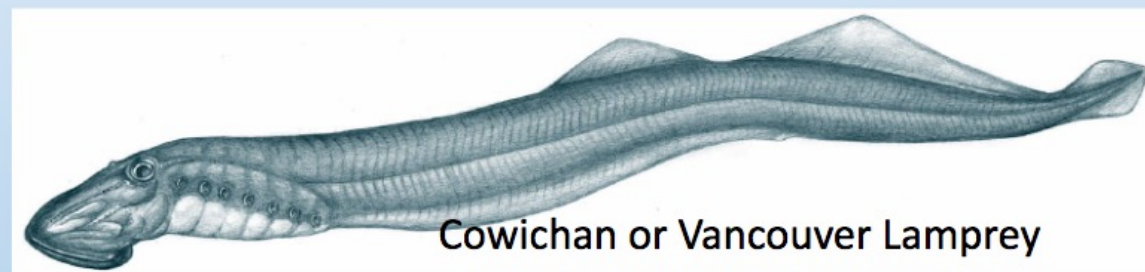
Cowichan Kokanee



Prickly Sculpin



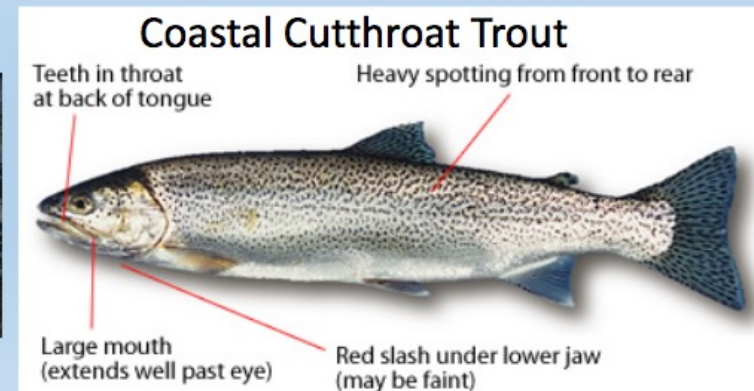
Juvenile Coho salmon  
Winter 2013



Cowichan or Vancouver Lamprey



Cowichan Rainbow Trout



Coastal Cutthroat Trout

Teeth in throat  
at back of tongue

Heavy spotting from front to rear

Large mouth  
(extends well past eye)

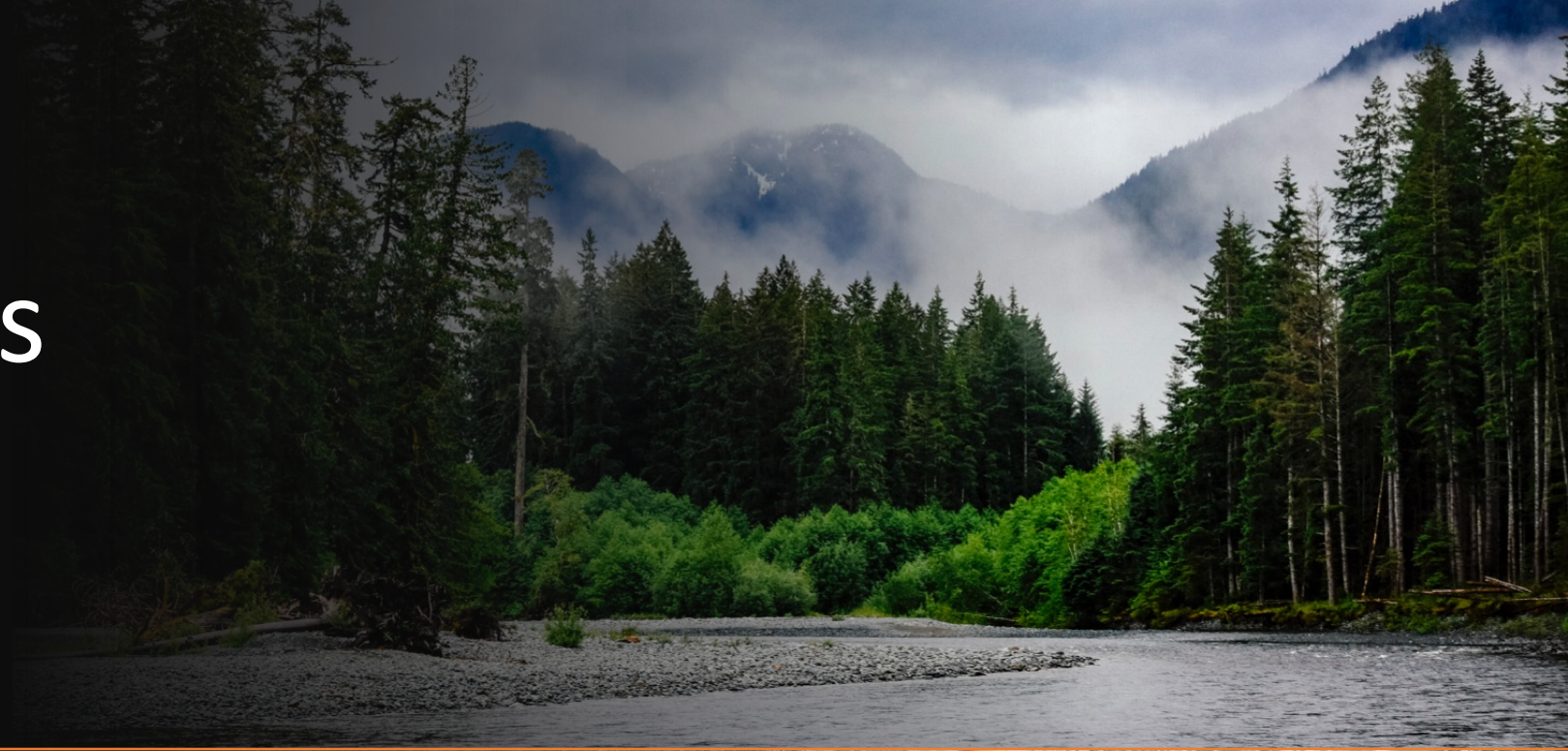
Red slash under lower jaw  
(may be faint)



Riparian Areas  
are...

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an Ecosystem Worth  
Investing In !







## Section 2

# The Story of Cowichan Lake

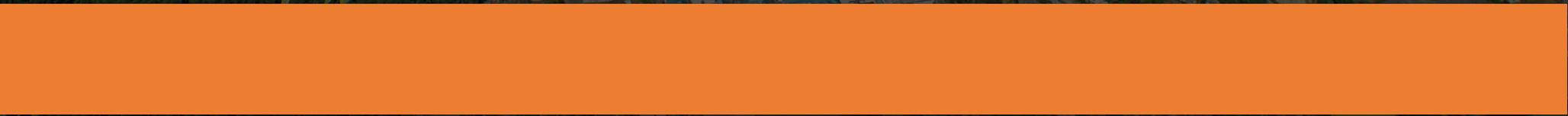


Photo by Don Fern



# Cowichan Watershed



Source: Roger (2022)





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# Development Trends in the Lake Cowichan Area



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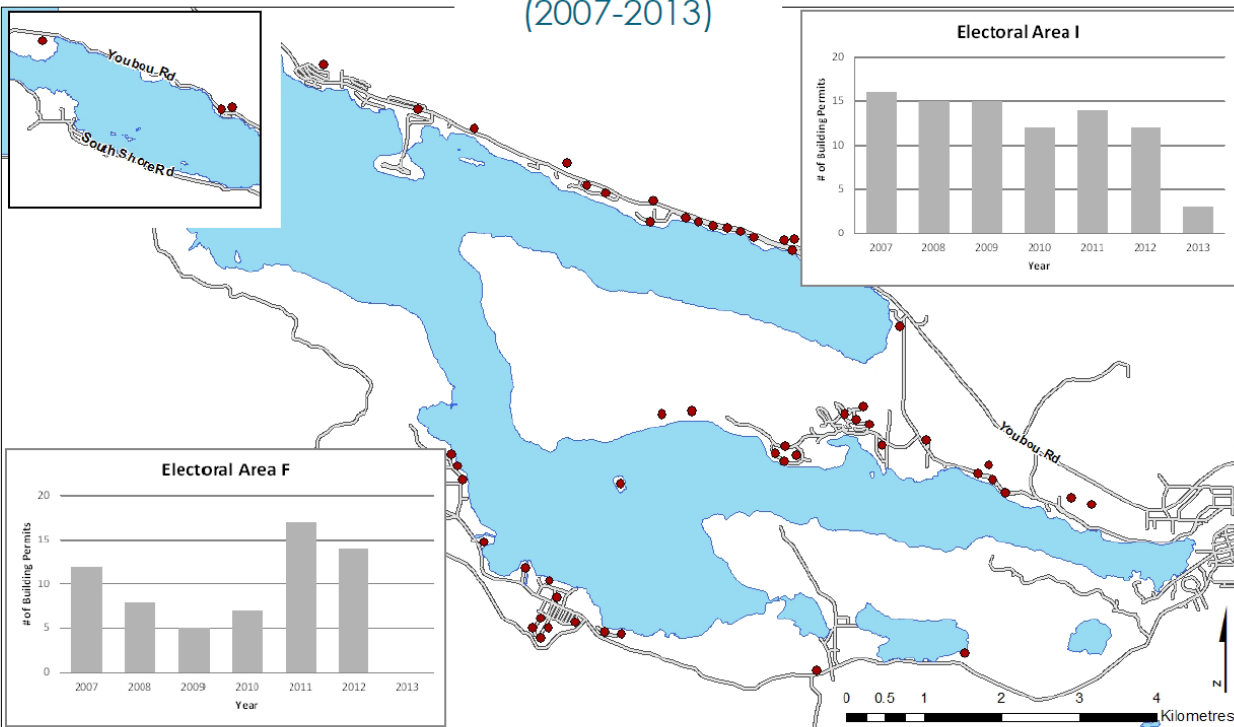
From "Lake Cowichan Shoreline Workshop", Dec. 2015



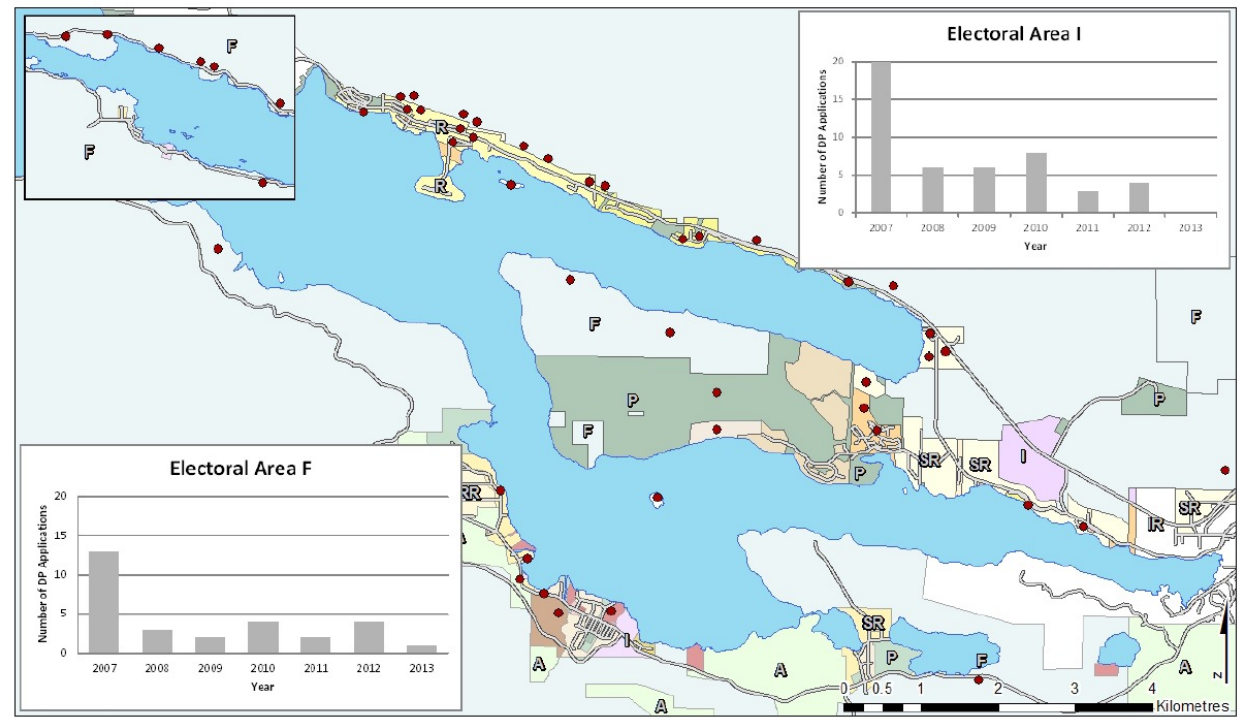
# Development around Lake Cowichan

## SF Building Permit Applications

(2007-2013)



## RAR DP Applications 2007-2013



CVRD Area F and Area I

Source: "Lake Cowichan Shoreline Workshop", Dec. 2015



British Columbia Conservation Foundation  
**Cowichan Lake Erosion Assessment**



**Eric Morris, M.A.Sc., P.Eng.**

**Erica Ellis, M.Sc., P.Geo.**

# Natural Biophysical Processes that Shape the Shore

“What are the natural causes of erosion on the lake’s shoreline?”

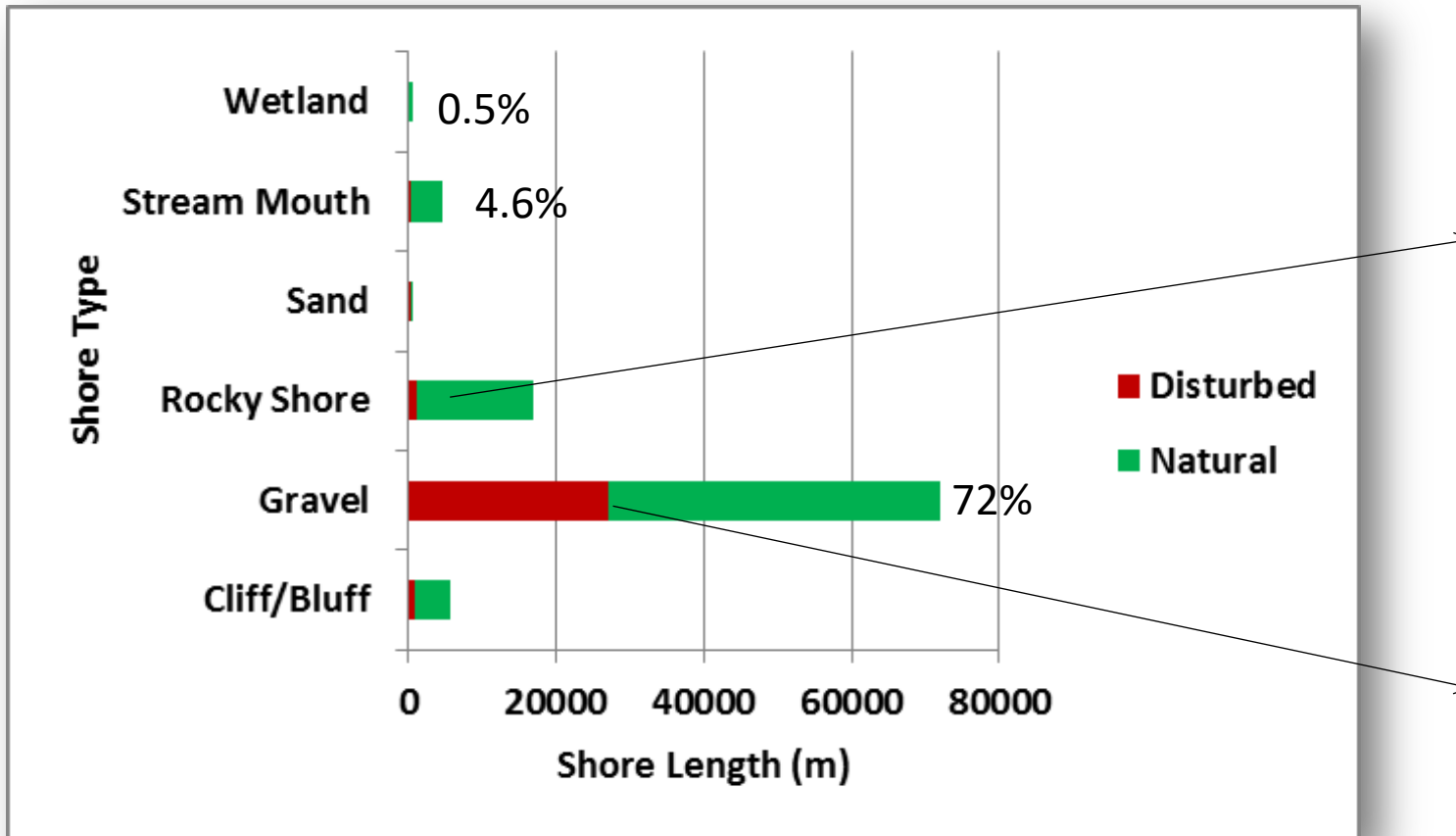
“What influence seasonal lake levels have on this process?”







# Findings: Shoreline Types and Disturbances





Gravel, cobble shorelines and man-made structures are the most vulnerable to site-specific erosion pressures cause by:



## Existing Erosion- Potential Causes

- Seasonal Beach Profile Changes
- Seawall and Groyne Construction
- Climate Change (Wind, Waves, Inflows)
- Cowichan Lake Weir (1961)
- Subsea Landslide at Youbou due to 1946 Earthquake
- Shoreline Vegetation Removal
- Log Boom Installation and Removal
- Vessel Traffic

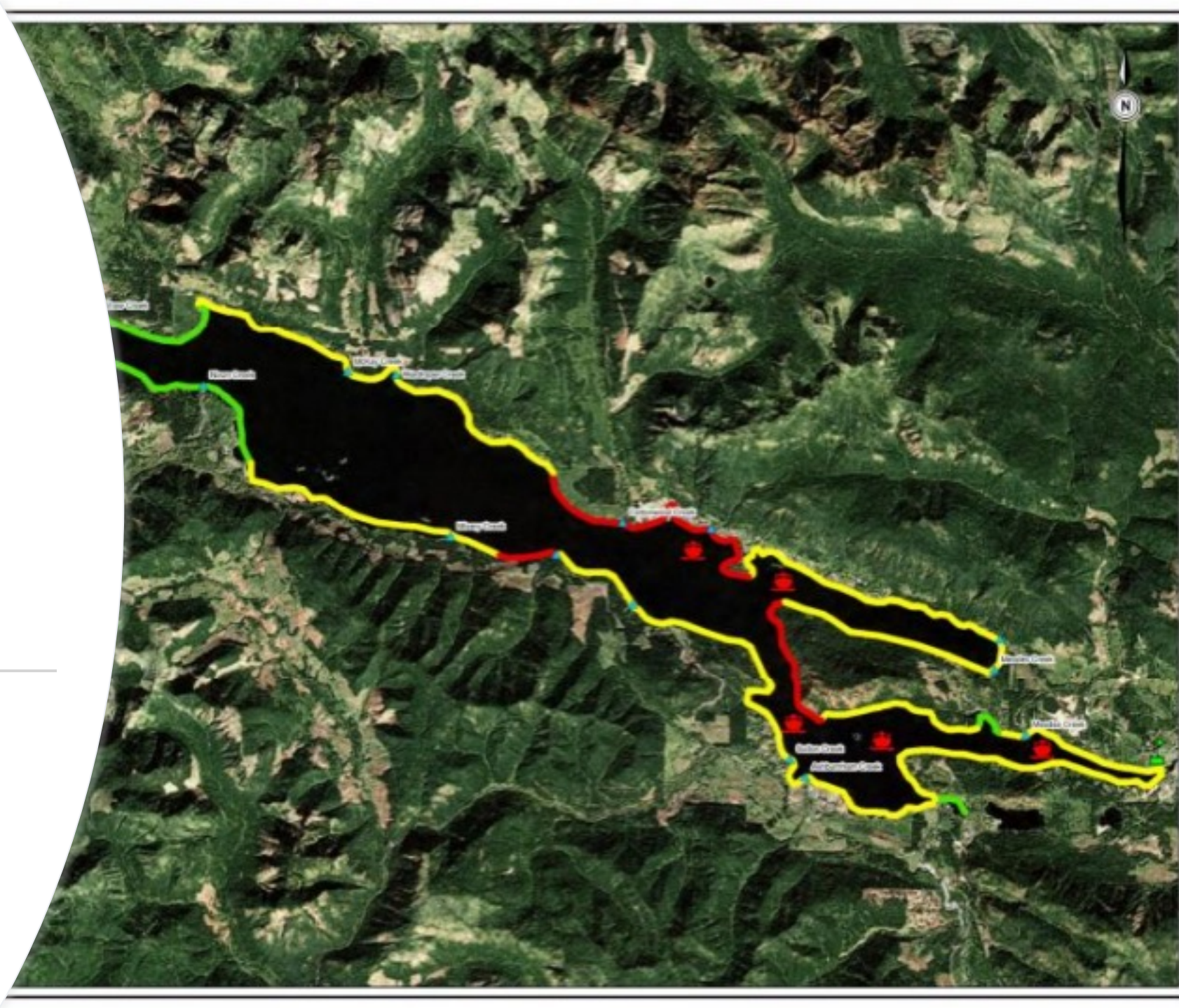
23



Gordon Bay

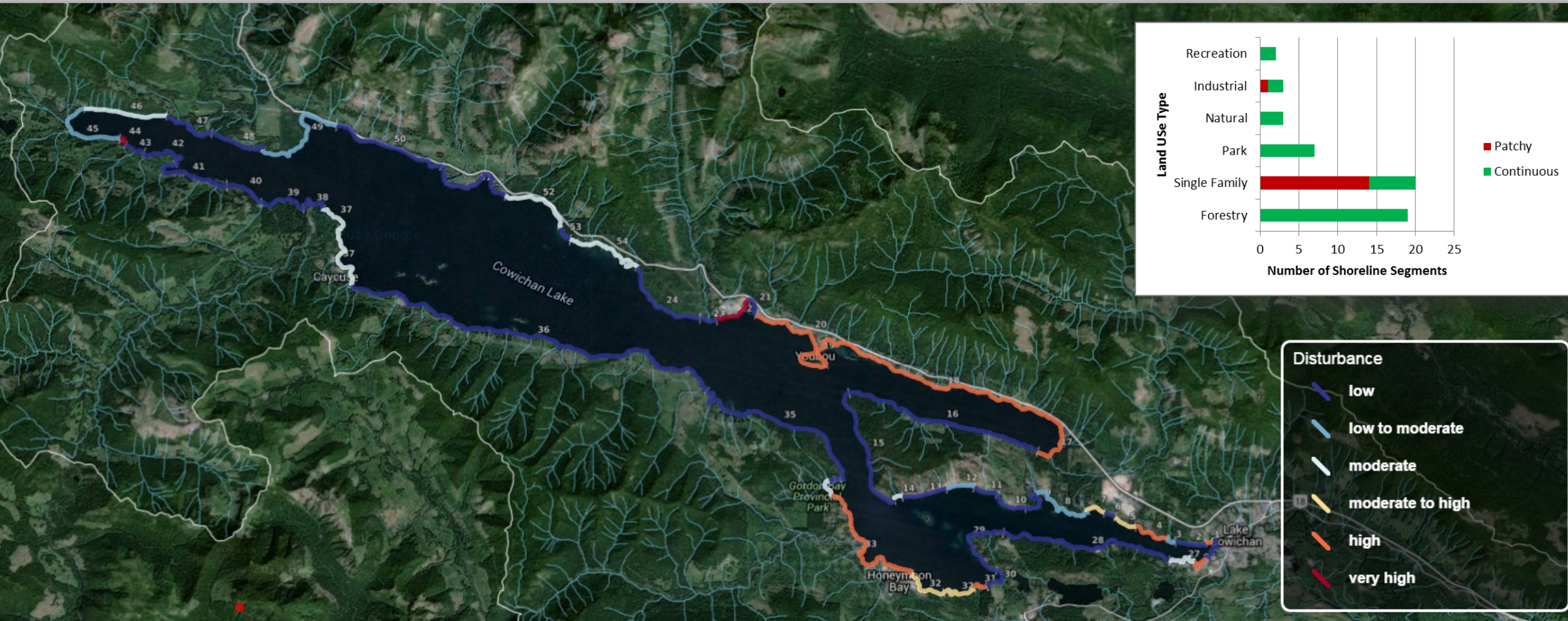


Findings:  
Action from  
Waves and  
Winds tend to  
magnify erosion  
risks around the  
shore





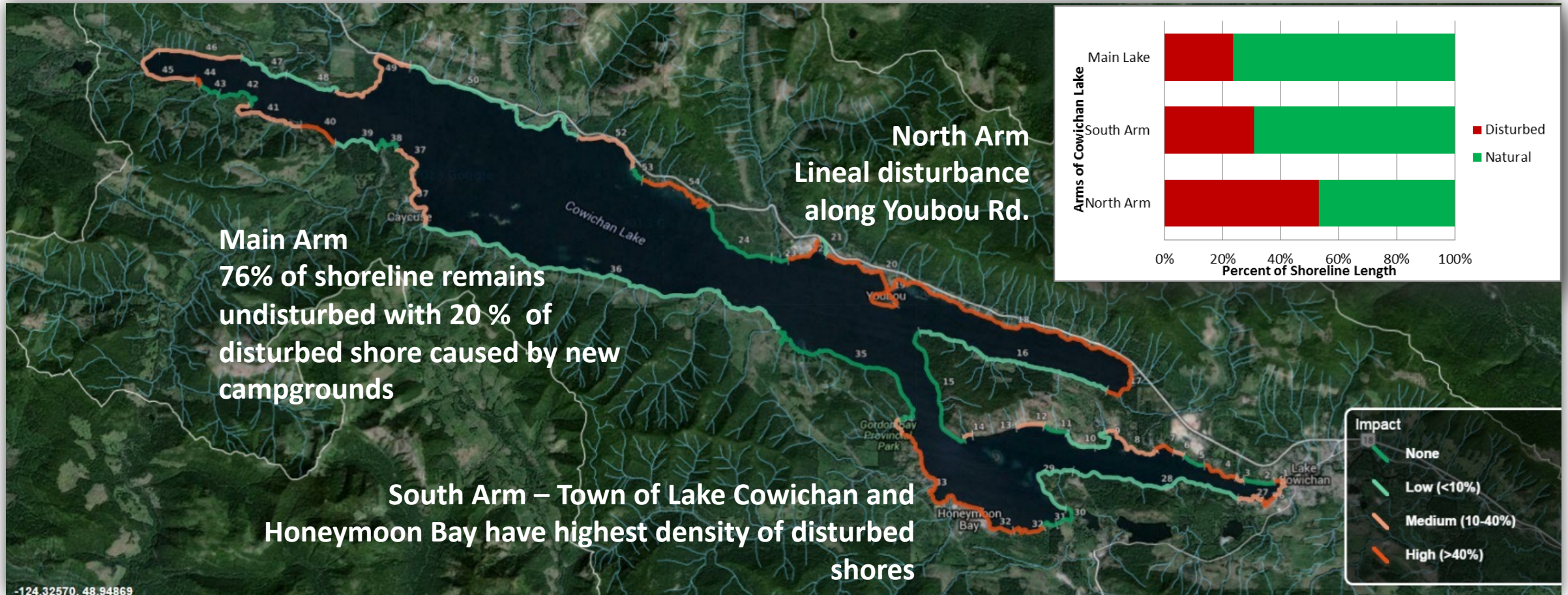
# Findings: Riparian disturbances







# Findings: Natural vs. Modified shoreline





*EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED*







Section 3  
Cowichan Shoreline  
Stewardship Project

2013 - 2022





“The lake can be restored to preserve its conservation values for the benefit of the next generation”

Gerald Thom

A River Run Through Him



The last day of Gerald's life





# Cowichan Lake and River Stewardship Society (CLRSS)

**BCCF, Cowichan Watershed Board, Governances**

## Question

How could our Community assist in  
“Maintaining the Lake as a Healthy  
Ecosystem”.

## Components of the project

- 1.Landowner Education
- 2.Shoreline restoration
- 3.Community Engagement

1 Workshop  
And  
A 10-Year  
Vision



April 24<sup>th</sup> -25<sup>th</sup> 2013 Workshop





# CSSP project objectives and performance indicators

(2014 – 2022)

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Phase I: 2014-2016

Phase II: 2017-2019



## CSSP Targets 2014 - 2022



### Objective 1:

2 linear kilometers or 18,000 m<sup>2</sup> of damaged shoreline habitats restored along Cowichan Lake and River



### Objective 2:

600 shoreline property visits and 450 owner surveys



### Objective 3:

15 km of shoreline and riparian habitats protected on the lake and river through partnership building with local First Nation, governances, landowners and conservation organizations



### Objective 4:

Shifting cultures through youth and community engagement to better protect shoreline habitat

## What CSSP Achieved

**18,758 square meters ( + 4.22%)**  
**1.8 km of linear shoreline and fish habitat**

**Hundreds of residents contacted**  
**4 years of resident surveys and property visits**

**Growing First Nation partnerships and support from local governances.**  
**Increased landowner's concerns and awareness for healthy shoreline habitat**  
**Documented riparian restoration opportunities for on-going restoration**

**Numerous community events, youth engagement programs and educational opportunities through Universities and Schools**





Summary of 7 years of  
shoreline stewardship



<b>Cowichan Shoreline Stewardship Project</b>	<b>Number of Planting Sites</b>	<b>Planting Area (m2)</b>	<b>Linear Metres</b>	<b>Number of potted plants</b>
CSSP 2014	7	3352.86	311.5	2326
CSSP 2015	9	1898.78	325.9	1083
CSSP 2016	8	2355.1	208.8	689
CSSP 2017	8	3088	264	954
CSSP 2018	8	4326.43	214.6	827
CSSP 2021	6	3737.7	489.5	1980
	Number of Planting Sites	Planting Area (m2)	Linear Metres	# of potted plants
<b>Total CSSP 2014 - 2022</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>18,758.87</b>	<b>1,814.30</b>	<b>7859</b>

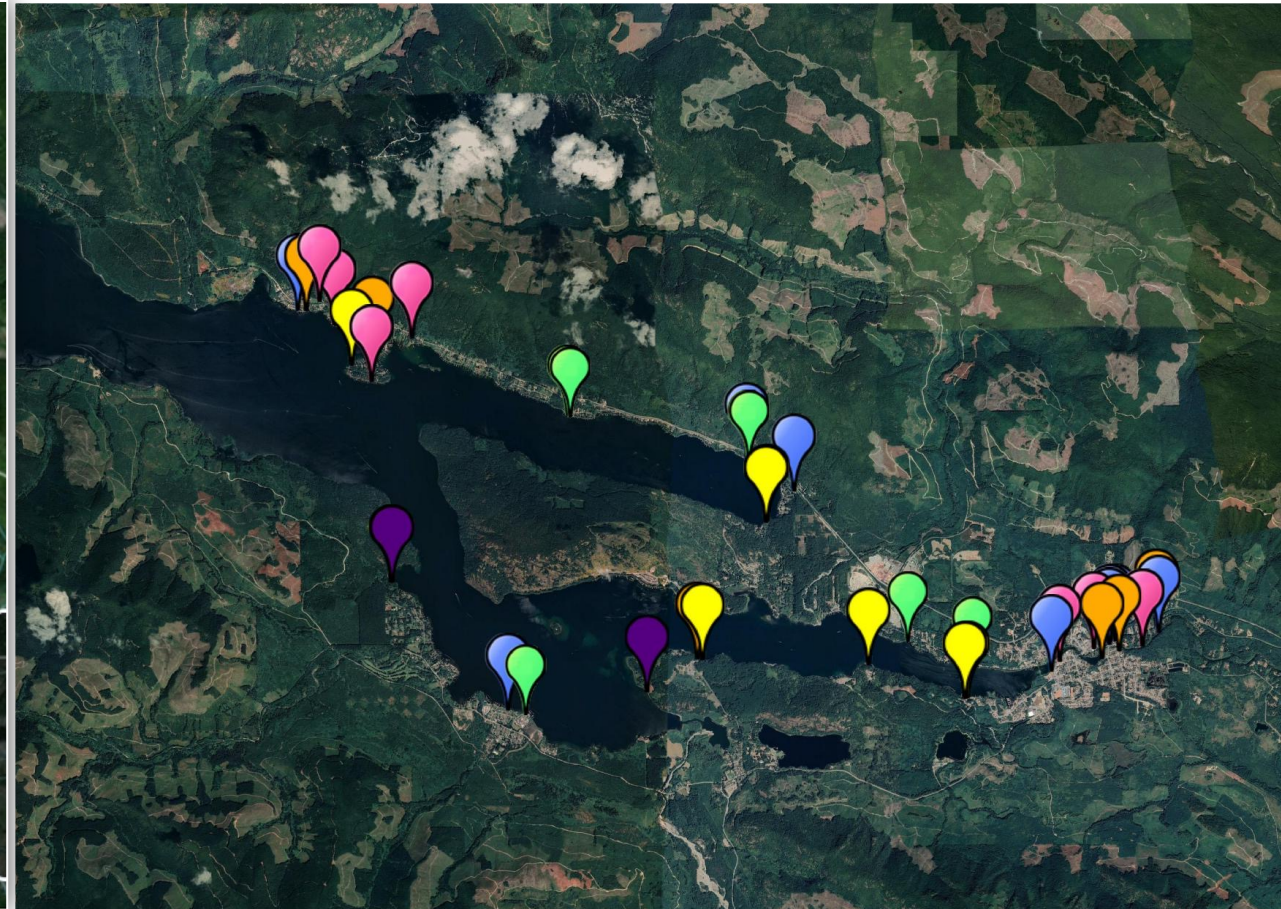


# Ecological Restoration

Map of highly impacted shoreline (red)



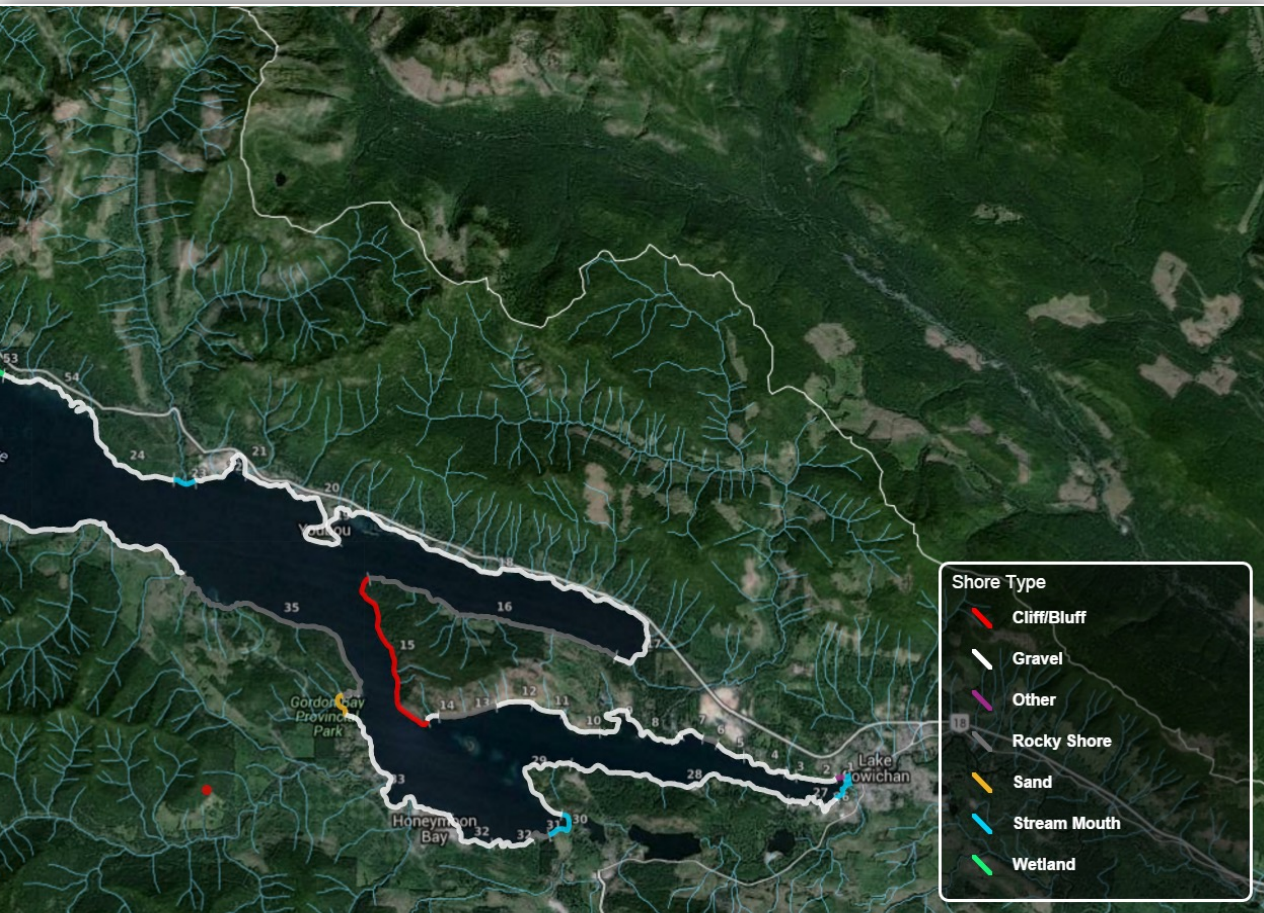
Map of restored sites between 2014 - 2022





# Ecological Restoration

Map of shoreline types



Map of restored sites between 2013 - 2022

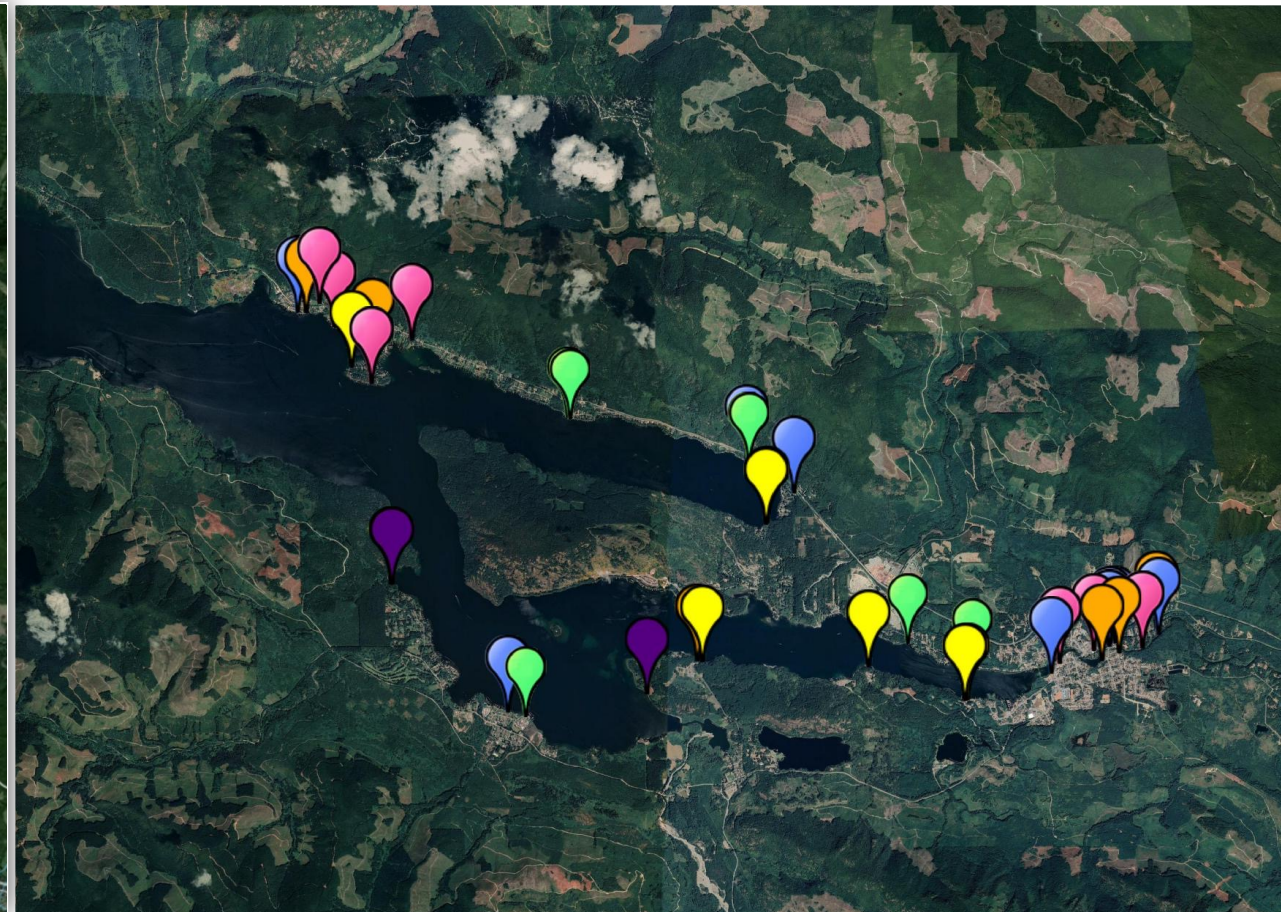






Figure 10. Before (2015) and after (2018) at a private residence, a 2015 Riparian Restoration Site



Figure 11. Before (2015) and after (2018) at a private residence, a 2015 Riparian Restoration Site



Figure 7. Construction of a live-stake wattle fence at two CSSP 2018 sites along Cowichan River



Figure 6. Invasive plant removal at CSSP private residence on Cowichan Lake and Koksilah River























# Awareness raising !

## You need the fish, the fish needs you

### Oh Deer !!

WITHOUT THIS FENCING, THIS AREA WOULD BE A DEER RESTAURANT!

PLANTING OF NATIVE PLANTS HAS BEEN DONE HERE TO INCREASE SHADE FOR BABY FISH NEEDING SAFE PLACES TO REST.



HAVING MORE PLANTS ALONG THE SHORELINE WILL SUPPORT MORE FISH IN THE LAKE.

THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

COWICHAN SHORELINE STEWARDSHIP PROJECT

A PROJECT SUPPORTED BY:  
COASTAL RESTORATION FUND  
BRITISH COLUMBIA CONSERVATION FOUNDATION  
COWICHAN LAKE AND RIVER STEWARDSHIP SOCIETY



### Do you like to go fishing?

WE DO!!

THESE NATIVE PLANTS PROVIDE PLACES FOR INSECTS TO REST THAT THEN FALL INTO THE WATER PROVIDING FISH FOOD.

BABY SALMON ESPECIALLY LIKE TO HIDE ALONG SHORE EDGES UNDER PLANTS. BY PLANTING HERE, WE ARE HELPING THERE BE MORE FISH FOR US ALL TO GO FISHING!



DEER LIKE TO EAT THESE YOUNG PLANTS, WHICH IS WHY WE HAVE THIS TEMPORARY FENCING.

THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

COWICHAN SHORELINE STEWARDSHIP PROJECT

A PROJECT SUPPORTED BY:  
COASTAL RESTORATION FUND  
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COWICHAN LAKE AND RIVER STEWARDSHIP SOCIETY



### Who are we?

The Cowichan Lake & River Stewardship Society (CLRSS) is a volunteer group of caring neighbours dedicated to the protection and enhancement of the Cowichan Lake Watershed. The CLRSS Riparian Education Project promotes a "stewardship lens" culture and act in cooperation with landowners to protect and enhance riparian areas on private land.

### Did you Know?

- 92% of the lake shoreline (including forested land) is privately owned. Owners of ecologically important habitat are responsible to preserve publicly owned resources, the fish and the water, now and for future generations.
- 70% of shoreline of Cowichan Lake is still in an undisturbed state and needs protection. This land and vegetation adjacent to watercourses (the riparian zone) is essential for water quality, fish stocks and wildlife, as well as flood and erosion control.
- The shoreline of Cowichan Lake is a nursery for up to 300,000 wild cutthroat salmon annually. It also contains self-sustaining populations of cutthroat, rainbow, dolly varden and kokanee.

### How can CLRSS support you?

- Visit our riparian webpage: [www.cowichan-lake-stewardship.ca](http://www.cowichan-lake-stewardship.ca) to learn more about the importance, protection, enhancement and regulation of riparian areas.
- Request a riparian visit to evaluate your riparian area.
- Visit healthy riparian shorelines that are restoration friendly.
- Become a member! Meetings are held locally in Lake Cowichan. For details call us or visit our website.

President Leroy Van Wieren  
250-709-7308  
[www.cowichan-lake-stewardship.ca](http://www.cowichan-lake-stewardship.ca)

Join us as we work together for the healthy future of Cowichan Lake and the Cowichan River.

This brochure has been supported by the Pacific Salmon Foundation

### Riparian Insights

Beyond the river ways: "The healthy future of Cowichan Lake is in our hands!"

[www.cowichan-lake-stewardship.ca](http://www.cowichan-lake-stewardship.ca)

## What can we do?

- Leave our riparian areas intact.**  
Prevention is easier than restoration. Common changes that can damage riparian health include:
  - Clearing vegetation to create beaches, lawns or enhanced views.
  - Adding fill, rock or sand to create beaches and extend property.
  - Building docks and boat launches for recreation.
  - Introducing non-native plants for aesthetics.
  - Removing woody debris and aquatic "weeds" for water sports.
- Minimize impact when accessing the water.**
  - Use only one point of access, build docks, frame views and use gravel pathways.
- Restore damaged riparian areas.**  
Let natural re-vegetation take its course or re-establish native plants. A native plant is one that occurs naturally in a particular region, ecosystem or habitat and occurred prior to European contact.
  - Native Plants:**
    - Any beautiful & low maintenance.
    - provide wildlife with food, shelter and places to reproduce.
    - Help regulate climate, prevent erosion, improve water quality and much more.
- Respect Riparian Area Regulations (RAR) and avoid fines.**  
Leave riparian areas intact for erosion control, water quality, habitat protection, coho production and flood prevention. Any disturbance within 30 metres of the high water mark of lakes and streams requires contact with local government:
  - Riparian Habitat Contacts**
    - CVRD Development Services 250-749-2620
    - Town of Lake Cowichan 250-749-6681
    - Provincial Government (Environment) 250-751-3100
    - Fisheries and Ocean Canada (Habitat Enquiries) 1-866-845-6776

For online contacts or more riparian habitat information, visit our riparian webpage.

### Safe Boating Practices

The Cowichan Lake and River Stewardship Society has a mandate to promote respectful and safe boating practices on our lake and river. We have produced a "Welcome Boater" brochure that is distributed to marinas and to boat ramps. A printable version is available at our website [www.cowichan-lake-stewardship.ca](http://www.cowichan-lake-stewardship.ca).

### Water Quality Monitoring

Regular monitoring provides baseline data which will be used to detect change over time. The information is shared with the Province and the BC Lake Stewardship Society to compare our lake with others in the province. Of 110 monitored lakes in BC we are currently ranked second for clarity. For more information on BC lakes visit: [www.bcls.org/](http://www.bcls.org/)

### Committees

There are several committees in the CLRSS focusing on various aspects of our work. To learn more or volunteer, please see our website [www.cowichan-lake-stewardship.ca](http://www.cowichan-lake-stewardship.ca).

- Water Traffic Committee
- Education Committee
- Membership Committee
- Retail Sales Committee
- Annual River Clean-up Committee
- Executive/Finance Committee
- Water Monitoring Committee
- Cowichan Shoreline Stewardship Committee

### Cowichan Lake and River Stewardship Society

PO Box #907  
Lake Cowichan, BC  
V9R 2G0

For current information visit our webpage: [www.cowichan-lake-stewardship.ca](http://www.cowichan-lake-stewardship.ca)

email enquiries: [volunteers@cowichan-lake-stewardship.ca](mailto:volunteers@cowichan-lake-stewardship.ca)

President Leroy Van Wieren  
Phone 250-709-7308  
email: [jvanwieren@clrss.ca](mailto:jvanwieren@clrss.ca)

### Cowichan Shoreline Stewardship Project

The Cowichan Lake and River Stewardship Society has set the goal of protecting 25% and restoring 25% of the Cowichan Lake shoreline by 2020. This process was started in the spring of 2014 when we received funding from several donors and all levels of government to begin the Shoreline Stewardship Project. By September we had completed restoration on seven lakefront properties by removing invasive plants and planting over 2,500 native riparian plants in their place. We have a crew of four secondary school students and a VRD Environmental Studies student to supervise the restorations.

### Saywell Park Restoration

In fall 2013 the CLRSS completed the Saywell Park riparian restoration by removing invasive plants and planting over 2,000 native riparian plants in their place. Interpretive signs were installed. This project serves as a demonstration of the value of riparian restoration being done in the Shoreline Stewardship Project.

### Fish Habitat Signs

CLRSS volunteers have spent the past few years installing these signs on creekbanks where they cross streams that are utilized by salmon and trout. These signs help increase community awareness of sensitive habitat and promote the health of our aquatic ecosystems.

### Gerald's Legacy:

#### Encouraging Environmental Study and Action for Generations to Come

Our Youth is our most important resource. They hold the future of our community in their hands. Gerald Thom always emphasized the importance of engaging our youth in the stewardship of our watershed. The Cowichan Lake and River Stewardship Society is working hard to preserve and protect our watershed. We want to follow Gerald's lead by encouraging our young people to become aware of and directly involved in the protection and preservation of our precious watershed ecosystems. We are pleased to provide some financial assistance to deserving LCS students that want to learn more about environmental protection and preservation.

**The Cowichan Lake and River Stewardship Society**  
PO Box #907  
Lake Cowichan, BC  
V9R 2G0  
President: Leroy Van Wieren  
250-709-7308  
[www.cowichan-lake-stewardship.ca](http://www.cowichan-lake-stewardship.ca)

### The Gerald Thom Environmental Studies Bursary

Announces

**The Gerald Thom Environmental Studies Bursary**

[www.cowichan-lake-stewardship.ca](http://www.cowichan-lake-stewardship.ca)

**Gerald Thom and volunteers completing his last project July 26, 2014**

Gerald spent his last day doing what he loved, working with volunteers to restore Lake Cowichan First Nation land. Previous days had been removing invasive tamarisks and preparing the site. The large group of volunteers that showed up on July 26 completed the project by planting and watering hundreds of native plants on the site. We all enjoyed lunch and cold drinks and Water Monitor showed her appreciation.

### The Gerald Thom Bursary \$1,000

#### Conditions

One annual bursary is awarded in the name of Gerald Thom to honour his substantial contributions to ecological restoration, environmental education and advocacy.

#### Eligibility

Priority will be given to LCS applicants planning to enrol in post secondary environmental studies related courses.

#### Criteria

Preference for this Bursary will be awarded to a Lake Cowichan School student who:

- Has successfully completed the Lake Studies Program.
- Has demonstrated commitment and service to improving or restoring the local environment. (Actions include effort towards water testing, record keeping, clean-up activity, planning, article writing and nursery management).
- Has demonstrated a willingness to educate others regarding environmental stewardship.

#### Applications

- Application forms are available from the Lake Cowichan School Office.
- Applications will be reviewed and recipients selected by the LCS and CLRSS Education Committee.

#### Donations

If you would like to donate to the Gerald Thom Environmental Studies Bursary Program please send contributions to:

CLRSS, PO Box 907  
Lake Cowichan, BC V9R 2G0

or

Lake Cowichan School, 100 South Burr Rd.  
PO Box 40, Lake Cowichan, BC V9R 2G0

**Cowichan Lake and River Stewardship Society**  
[www.cowichan-lake-stewardship.ca](http://www.cowichan-lake-stewardship.ca)



# Youth And Public Engagement





# Working with First Nations

Through  
leadership,  
knowledge  
sharing and  
capacity building



*SSP Riparian Restoration Site Tour, September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018*





# Conclusion and Future of CSSP

Recommendations made at the end of the project



COWICHAN SHORELINE  
STEWARDSHIP PROJECT  
2022 INTERIM REPORT



Interim report prepared by Elodie Roger at Origins Environmental Services

Submitted to the British Columbia Conservation Foundation, Lantzville, BC

BCCF Service Agreement #: 1172038-003

BCCF Project #: 1172038

Duncan, BC  
February 2022

**Elodie Roger**  
Origins Environmental Services





# There is more to do...

Site Name	Access	Addresses	Geographical Area	CSSP Status	Restoration recommendations	Approx. Restoration Area (meters squared)
	Private	50 Prospect Ave, Lake Cowichan	Cowichan River	Follow-up	Property adjacent to Mrs. Danaher, facing extreme bank collapse. Mrs. Adrams received CSSP restoration efforts in the past. Email communications mention that wattle fences installed in the past had washed away.	TBD
	Private	66 Prospect Ave, Lake Cowichan	Cowichan River	New	Bank collapse by private residence due to winter river flood. Staking possible at bottom of slop below high water mark. Upper slope requires staking with support from QEP. Threats to fish habitat and riparian health include Cowichan River winter flooding. Bank collapse by house footings. Wildlife grazing.	36
	Private	7314 Peri Rd, Honeymoon Bay, BC VOR 1Y0	Cowichan Lake	Follow-up	Restoration follow up and signage after 2018 CSSP Planting. Fencing, educational signs required on the property. Survival rate monitoring.	TBD
	Private	8354 Sa-seen-os Road	Cowichan Lake	Follow-up 2019 CSSP	Plant and signage monitoring.	600
	Private	7314 Peri Road	Cowichan Lake	Follow-up 2019 CSSP	Plant and signage monitoring.	650
	Public	Meades Creek	Cowichan Lake	Follow-up 2019 CSSP	Plant and signage monitoring.	1500
	Public	Honeymoon Bay	Cowichan Lake	Follow-up 2019 CSSP	Plant and signage monitoring.	600
	Private	Honeymoon Bay	Cowichan Lake	Follow-up 2019 CSSP	Plant and signage monitoring.	500
	Private	67 South Shore Road	Cowichan River	Follow-up 2019 CSSP	Plant and signage monitoring.	450
	Private	222 Greendale Road	Cowichan River	Follow-up 2019 CSSP	Plant and signage monitoring.	525
	Public	Gordon Road	Oliver Creek	Follow-up 2019 CSSP	Plant and signage monitoring.	750
	Public	Tresle Bridge	Cowichan River	Follow-up 2019 CSSP	Plant and signage monitoring.	500
	Private	10332 Youbou Road	Utility Creek	Follow-up 2019 CSSP	Plant and signage monitoring.	500
	Private	9262 / 9264 North Shore	Cowichan Lake 2015 A	Follow-up 2019 CSSP	Plant and signage monitoring.	1000

Recommendation Category	Action Item	Rational
Plants	<b>Adding plants to the 33 CSSP sites</b>	Cowichan Lake water level decreases considerably over the summer, turning healthy shoreline and fish habitat into a fragmented landscape. Sites planted between 2014 and 2021 will benefit from regular monitoring and planting to increase habitat connectivity.
Plants	<b>Identify shoreline restoration opportunities for 14 additional sites</b>	14 properties were identified as potential candidates for shoreline restoration or additional planting. Landowner outreach and site visits should be orgnized to research and design site-specific shoreline enhancement or restoration practices with the guidance of a Qualified Environmental Professional.
Plants	<b>Refer to Effectiveness Evaluation Report ffor future monitoring and restoration work</b>	Morley and Barlow (2019) recommendations should be considered when designing the next phase of CSSP. More frequent Effectiveness Evaluation reports should be planned for to verify the quality of work delivered and consider adaptive restoration practices and project management strategies if needed.
Plants	<b>Monitoring in Spring 2022 and Fall 2022</b>	Vegetation planted in 2021 will need to be monitored with the support of a crew member who was part of the crew in 2021. Monitoring should take place after their first winter once plants start budding, and after their second dry summer in 2022.
Plants	<b>On-going watering</b>	Consistent watering will need to be coordinated for Summer 2022 at the six sites planted in 2021. Property owners and managers must be informed of the site visits.
Plants	<b>Following Section 11 recommendations</b>	Referring to the conditions under which Section 11 was approved in 2021: Ensure native plants receive sufficient water during the first two summers to fully establish.
Signage	<b>Spring Beach signage</b>	Install permanent signage at Spring beach in accordance with DFO guidelines.
Outreach	<b>Following-up with CSSP recipients (2014-2021) and identify action items</b>	Several participants contacted CSSP 2021 crew and raised concerns about shoreline erosion, plant survival, or lack of signage on their properties. These participants should be contacted by phone or email to follow-up and determine restoration or support needs.
Partnership	<b>Site visit with Project Partners</b>	Before the end of this project, a site visit should be organized with each property owner and showcase the restoration work that took place.
Partnership	<b>Presentation to local governances and conservation groups,</b>	Before March 2022, we recommend presenting the results of this project to local partners, local governances, and organizations and community to encourage further riparian and shoreline restoration work within the Valley.
Partnership	<b>Seeking funding opportunities</b>	The project has gained considerable momentum since its start in 2014. A new multi-year funding should be considered to increase shoreline restoration and protection efforts around Cowichan Lake and Upper Cowichan River.



## 2022 – 2023: CSSP Research and Development

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- \$15,000 secured for this fiscal year with the goal to develop a new multi-year, community driven restoration initiative!
- Will include effectiveness monitoring of previous restoration work





Thank You  
Huy ch q'u

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Questions?

