

BC's Coast Region: Species & Ecosystems of Conservation

Ecological Community: Douglas-fir / Alaska oniongrass (*Pseudotsuga menziesii* / *Melica subulata*)

Global: G1, Provincial: S1, BC List: Red, BEC: CDFmm/03 Identified Wildlife Ecological Community



Notes: Occurs as open stands dominated by Douglas-fir, with a minor component of Garry oak. The shrub layer is sparse, whereas the herb layer is well developed, species include Alaska oniongrass and long-stolonated sedge. The thick moss layer tends to be a monoculture electrified cat's-tail moss.

Description

This open canopy, small patch community (5-50 ha), is dominated by Douglas-fir, with some interspersed Garry oak. The shrub layer is very sparse to non-existent, but generally includes some hairy honeysuckle. The herb layer is generally well developed and is dominated by Alaska oniongrass, with lesser amounts of long-stolonated sedge, blue wildrye, Pacific sanicle, big-leaved sandwort, broad-leaved shootingstar, nodding trisetum, and cleavers. The moss layer features electrified cat's-tail moss. Typically it is associated with relatively dry sites, over stable, colluvial and sometimes morainal, parent materials. The soils (classified as Sombric Brunisols), are shallow and mostly have a sandy loam texture with moderate coarse fragment content. The soil nutrient regime is rich to very rich.

Threats

This ecological community's decline is largely due to extensive past timber harvesting, subsequent small scale logging, and settlement. The CDFmm is a very small biogeoclimatic subzone with high human population density pressures. This plant community is naturally small, local in extent, but occupies sites that are highly prized for upscale residences, especially when on favourable scenic aspects. This geographic area is predominantly private land, where protective measures for red listed plant communities are unfortunately very limited. All areas continue to have development pressures. Presently as little as 0.5% of the CDFmm subzone remains as mature or old forest stage in British Columbia. Agriculture, livestock grazing, fire suppression, and recreation (especially mountain bikes, dirt bikes, and all-terrain vehicles), are considered threats. It is also susceptible to invasive species, especially after clearing. Climate change is another potential negative factor for this community.

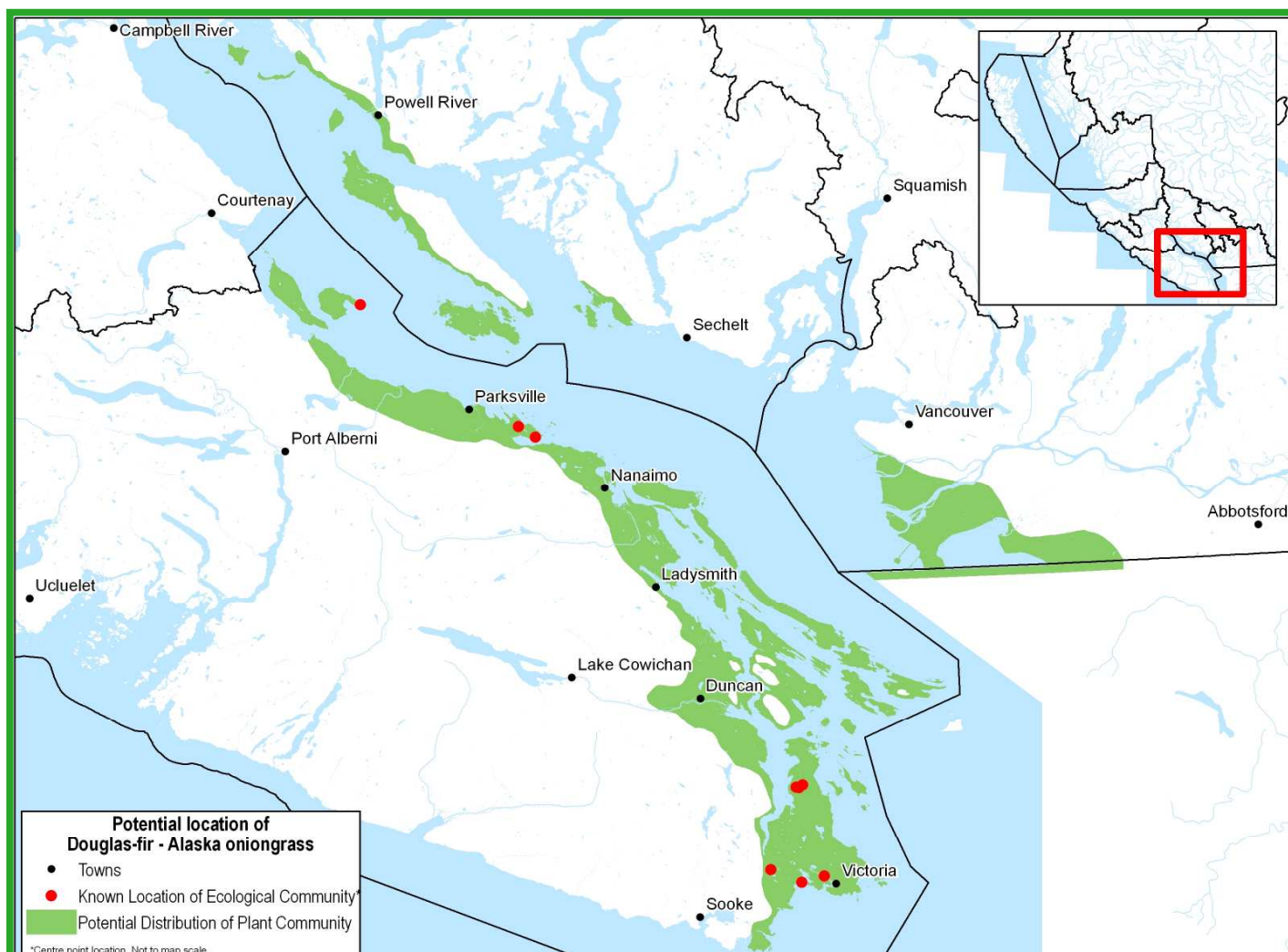
Conservation & Management Objectives

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 ecological 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. These goals should be integrated with direct conservation and management measures set out in the "Identified Wildlife Accounts and Measures for the Douglas-fir/Alaska Onion Grass *Pseudotsuga menziesii*/ *Melica subulata* plant community V. 2004.

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

Originally this ecological community was scattered and localized in the driest and warmest portions of the Pacific Coastal formation of western North America in the Strait of Georgia, Puget Sound (Washington), and Willamette Valley area (Oregon), and is now considered to be extirpated from Washington State. This ecological community is represented by the CDFmm/03 site series, restricted to low elevations (0-150 m asl) along southeast Vancouver Island from Bowser to Victoria, and on the Gulf Islands south of Hornby and Lasquiti islands; typically on southerly aspects.



Content for this Factsheet has been derived from the following sources

B.C. Conservation Data Centre. 2010 [internet]. Ecological Community Summary: Douglas-fir / Alaska oniongrass. B.C. MoE
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Every effort has been made to ensure content accuracy. Comments or corrections should be directed to the South Coast Conservation Program: info@sccp.ca. Content updated August 2010.

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