



Working together to create:

A Regional Framework for Nature Based Climate Solutions in Southwest BC

Why is Southwest BC Important?

Southwest BC's Georgia Basin lowlands host over 75% of BC's population and includes the Coastal Douglas-fir zone (CDF), home to the largest number of species and ecosystems at risk in the province. Per hectare, forests in the Basin have among the highest carbon storage capacity of any forest in BC, with those in old growth being some of the highest carbon storing ecosystems in the world¹. Georgia Basin ecosystems also provide critical ecosystem services, such as supplying water, controlling floods, improving air quality and providing salmon habitat, recreation and climate refuge. As the traditional territory of the Coast Salish and other First Nations, these ecosystems are also important to indigenous food security, and support a multitude of culturally important plants and animals.

Increasing demand for residential development and timber are intensifying pressure on the Basin's natural assets and the ecosystem services they supply. These pressures are compounding as climate change increases the intensity and frequency of heat, droughts, flooding, and wildfires, threatening the well being of BC's south coast communities, and their capacity and long-range options for adapting to climate change.

Nature Based Climate Solutions

Healthy functioning ecosystems are our front line defence against climate change. Nature-based climate solutions (NBS) are policies and actions that conserve and restore natural areas to reduce carbon emissions (climate change mitigation) and buffer climate change impacts (climate change adaptation). They do so by:

- storing and capturing carbon;
- reducing impacts of floods, droughts, erosion, fires and heat waves;
- sustaining biodiversity and culturally important plants and animals;
- providing indigenous food security;
- sustaining economically important fish and wildlife populations and valued recreation areas.

The Issue

BC's Georgia Basin land base is governed by a complex suite of federal, provincial and municipal policies, bylaws, and regulations. Governments, First Nations, industry and ENGOS need improved coordination, policy and science-based decision support to: incentivize nature based solutions, support payments for ecosystem services, and overcome the barriers to conserving biodiversity and natural assets presented by escalating land and timber prices, amidst a complex land ownership and management landscape.

The Project

In February 2022, the CDFCP secured two years of funding from the *Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund* to help address this issue. The CDFCP will be working with its partners¹² to convene key stakeholders in a collaborative process to develop **a regional framework for aligning and improving nature-based policy and decision support tools**³, to integrate objectives for:

- biodiversity conservation,
- climate change mitigation (carbon storage and sequestration),
- climate change adaptation (watershed and wildfire resilience),
- culturally important ecosystems (i.e. habitats that support plants and animals important to indigenous communities).

...with a focus on supporting local government, First Nations, and ENGO decision-making in southwest BC. (see study area in **Figure 1**).

¹ Smithwick, E., *et al.* (2002). Potential upper bounds of carbon stores in forests of the Pacific Northwest. *Ecological Applications*, 12(5), 1303-1317.

² Partners to date include: Ministry of Land, Water and Resource Stewardship, BC Climate Action Secretariat, UBC Botanical Gardens, Transition Salt Spring and Action on Climate Team.

³ E.g. maps, models, incentives, decision trees, protocols, policy statements, guidance documents, evaluation frameworks, etc.

Proposed Project Schedule for CDFCP *(to be coordinated with partner projects)*

YEAR 1	(2022/23)
Identify partners & plan work	
▪ Identify potential partners	Apr–May
▪ Project start-up and work planning	Apr–May
Build relationships & identify needs, barriers and opportunities	
▪ Conduct in-depth interviews	April-Sep
▪ Compile literature and spatial layers	April-Sep
▪ Collate interviews & prepare summary reports	Oct
▪ Design follow-up workshops on key topics	Oct
Share knowledge, build agreement & plan action	
▪ Host workshops to share knowledge, build agreement and plan action	Nov-Dec
▪ Develop and deliver supporting webinar series	Nov-Dec
▪ Prepare workshop summaries & collaborative action plans for Year 2	Nov-Jan
YEAR 2	(2023/24)
Mobilize partners/collaborators	
▪ Additional meetings, interviews and workshops, as required	TBD
▪ Mobilize partners to develop regional framework for NBS policy and decision-support tools, based on Year 1 results	

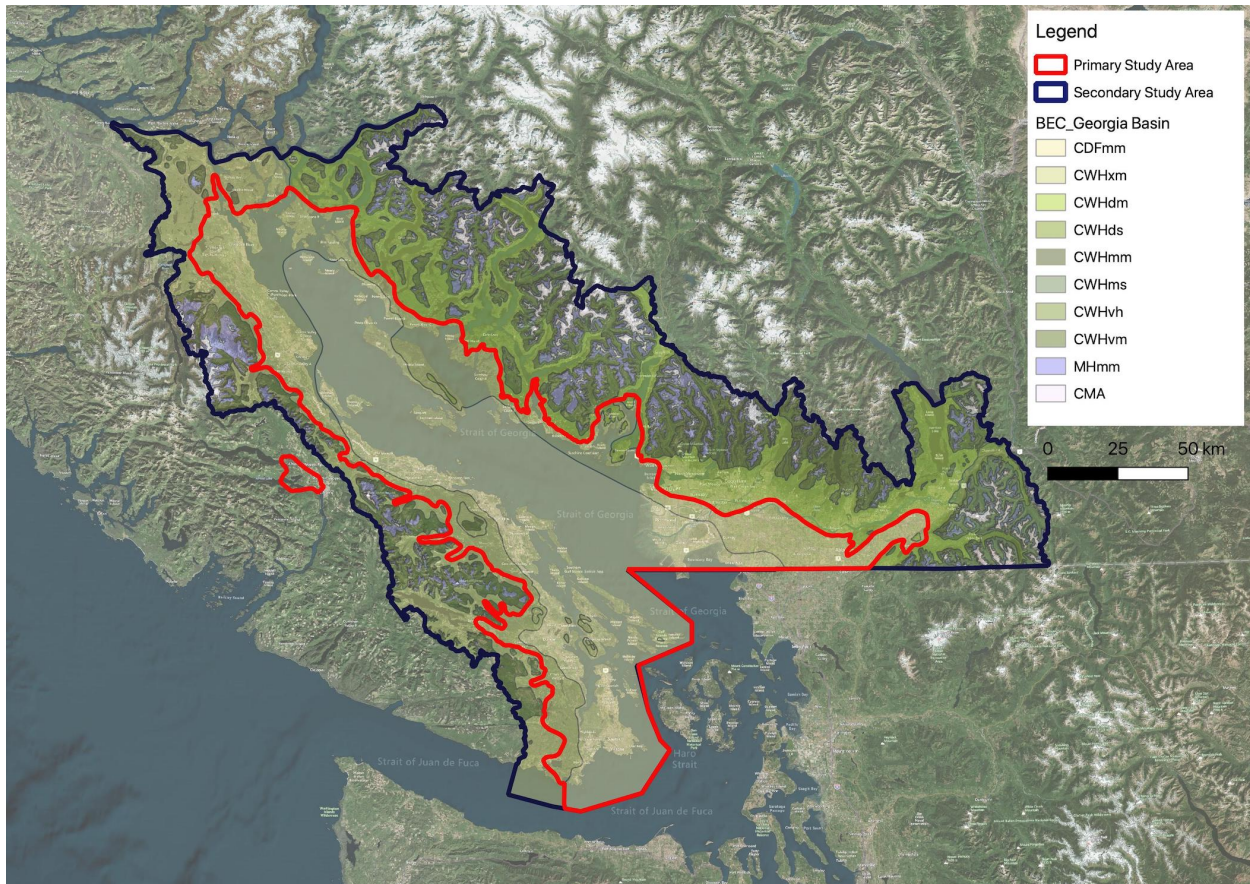


Figure 1. Primary study area outlined in red (Georgia Basin’s dry lowlands – CDF and associated ecosystems), and secondary study area outlined in blue (lowlands and adjacent uplands combined).