

SKAGIT RIVER COTTONWOODS

ER #89

ORIGINAL PURPOSE To maintain stands of alluvial black cottonwoods for purposes of hybridization and stock improvement

OVERVIEW

Date established:	4 May 1978	Location:	Upper Skagit River Valley, 5 km SE of Highway 3 at Sumallo-Skagit confluence; 20 km N of Ross Lake
ORC #:	3089		
Map number:	92 H/3	Latitude:	50°24'N
		Longitude:	121°30'W

Total Area:	69 ha	Elevation:	565-640 m
Land:	69 ha		

Access: Access by foot only, along the Skagit River (Whatcom) Trail. This involves a 5.5 km walk from Highway 3 at Sumallo Grove or a similar distance from km 42.5 of the Silver-Skagit (Ross Lake) Road. The trail stays on the east side of the river. This reach of the Skagit River is not suitable for canoeing.

Biogeoclimatic Zone:	Coastal Western Hemlock (CWH)
Biogeoclimatic Variants:	CWHms1 Southern Moist Maritime
Ecosection:	Eastern Pacific Ranges
Region:	Lower Mainland
Management Area:	South Fraser

COMPOSITION

Physical: The reserve is on the floodplain of the Skagit River, a relatively small, fast-flowing river with a gradient of about six m/km. The northeast-southwest trending valley, located in the Hozameen Ranges of the Cascade Mountains, is bounded by slopes of about 30° which rise to peaks of 2100-2500 m. The valley is relatively straight, the river slightly sinuous within its narrow floodplain. Bedrock is of the Hozameen series, made up of Cretaceous sediments and much volcanic material. Upon retreat of Pleistocene glaciers an accumulation of poorly sorted debris was left behind. This has been resorted by the Skagit River and tributary streams to form the present alluvial valley bottom deposits. Soils have not been described. Talus slopes border part of the reserve on its west side. Climate is transitional between that of the wet coast and dry interior.

Biological: Black cottonwood trees at this site are mostly in mixed stands containing conifers, including western redcedars up to two metres in diameter, and some Douglas-fir, grand fir, and bigleaf maple. Douglas-fir-western redcedar stands occur on the fan of Marmotte Creek, and Douglas-fir is the characteristic tree of the lower mountain slopes. The shrubs red-osier dogwood, hazelnut, thimbleberry and salmonberry are common in the floodplain forest understory, together with sword fern. Other trees recorded in this area are amabilis fir, Engelmann spruce, western white pine and western hemlock.

The fauna has not been surveyed. Rainbow Trout, Dolly Varden Char and Eastern

Brook Trout (introduced) are known to occur in the upper Skagit system, and probably are present in the reserve.

Cultural: The historical Whatcom Trail traverses the reserve. It provided Americans a route to gold discoveries in British Columbia during the 1800's and was also used by First Nations as a trade route.

MANAGEMENT CONCERNS

SIGNIFICANT SPECIES	BC LIST STATUS	COSEWIC STATUS	CF PRIORITY
Spotted Owl	Red listed	Endangered (2008)	2
mountain blue-curls	Red listed		2
elmera	Blue listed		3
steer's head	Blue listed		2
lace fern			4

THREATS

Climate Change: An increase in seasonal runoff, due to early spring freshet, increased precipitation as rain rather than snow, glacial melt etc. may lead to flooding of the Skagit River. This could result in increased erosion and sediment deposition.

Recreation: Unauthorized backcountry camping occurs and degrades habitat within the reserve.

Hikers travel off the main trail.

SCIENTIFIC NAMES OF SPECIES MENTIONED IN THE SKAGIT RIVER COTTONWOODS ER ACCOUNT

Flora

blue-curls, mountain (*Trichostema oblongum*)
 cottonwood, black (*Populus trichocarpa* ssp. *trichocarpa*)
 dogwood, red-osier (*Cornus stolonifera*)
 Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*)
 elmera (*Elmera racemosa* var. *racemosa*)
 fern, lace (*Cheilanthes gracilima*)
 fern, sword (*Polystichum munitum*)
 fir, amabilis (*Abies amabilis*)
 fir, grand (*Abies grandis*)
 hazelnut, beaked (*Corylus cornuta*)
 hemlock, western (*Tsuga heterophylla*)
 maple, bigleaf (*Acer macrophyllum*)
 pine, western white (*Pinus monticola*)
 redcedar, western (*Thuja plicata*)
 salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*)
 spruce, Engelmann (*Picea engelmannii*)
 steer's head (*Dicentra uniflora*)
 thimbleberry (*Rubus parviflorus* var. *parviflorus*)

Fauna

Dolly Varden (*Salvelinus malma*)

Owl, Spotted (*Strix occidentalis*)

Trout, Brook (*Salvelinus fontinalis*)

Trout, Rainbow (aka Steelhead) (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*)