

Choices for our Future

REGIONAL GROWTH
STRATEGY FOR THE
FRASER VALLEY
REGIONAL DISTRICT

2004



Vision

The Fraser Valley Regional District will be a network of vibrant, distinct, and sustainable communities that accept responsibly managed growth while being committed to protecting the land resource and the natural environment to ensure that a high quality of life is accessible to all.



The Fraser Valley Regional Growth Strategy authorizing bylaw No. 0569, 2003, was adopted on October 26, 2004. The Bylaw has been modified slightly for publishing purposes.

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Preface

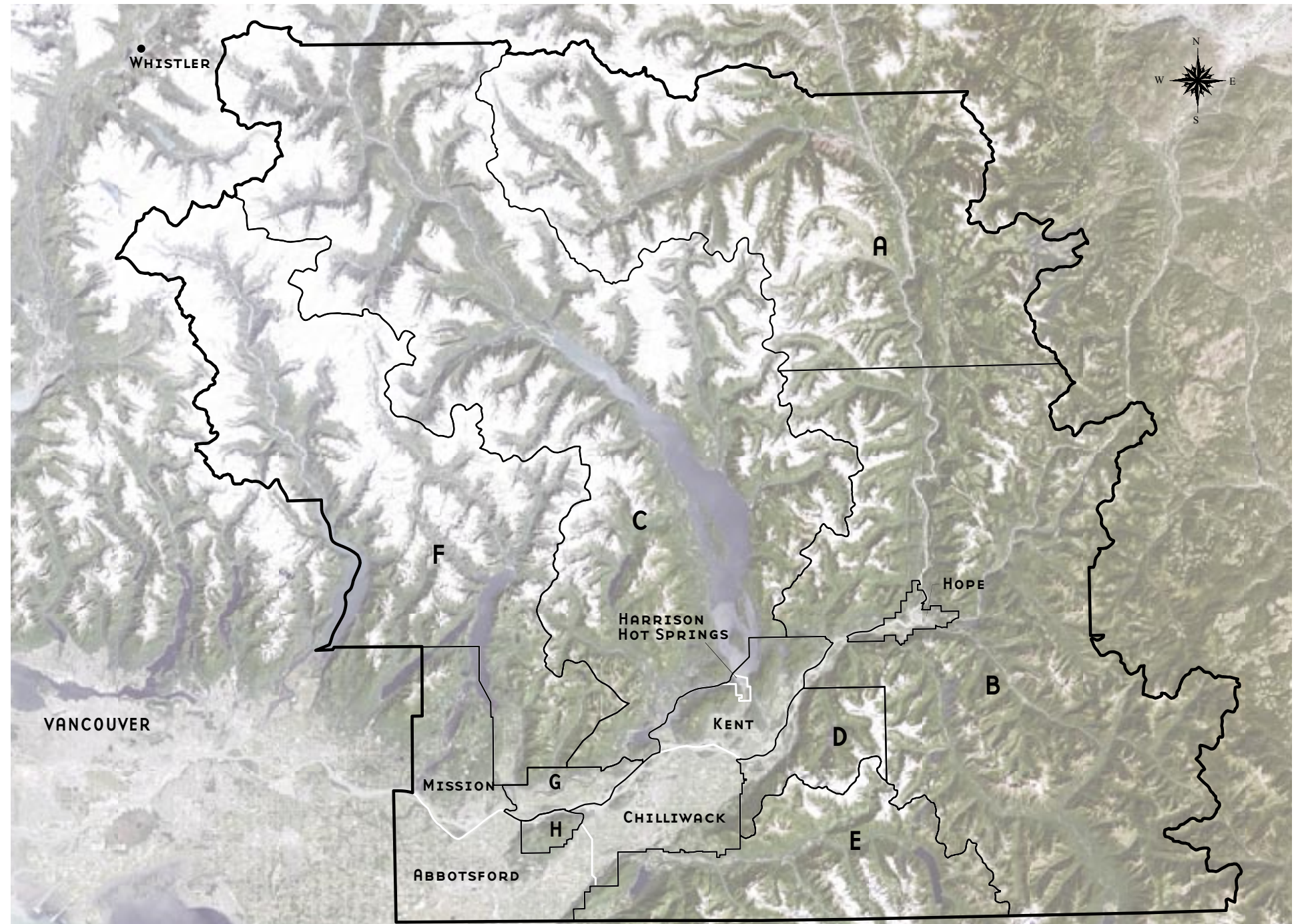
Fraser Valley Regional District

In December 1995, the Fraser Valley Regional District was formed by the amalgamation of Central Fraser Valley, Dewdney-Alouette, and Fraser Cheam Regional Districts. The Fraser Valley Regional District is a partnership of local government members, including the Cities of Abbotsford, and Chilliwack, the Districts of Mission, Kent and Hope, the Village of Harrison Hot Springs, and eight electoral areas.

Fraser Valley Regional District residents currently enjoy a high quality of life. The region offers beautiful scenery and many recreational opportunities. Most valley residents also benefit from growing employment opportunities close to home, and housing costs which are more affordable than many other parts of British Columbia's Lower Mainland. Rapidly growing urban centres have brought a broad range of services and employment opportunities to local residents; and the region's productive farmland, historic rural communities, and large resource and wilderness areas combine to make it one of the most livable environments in North America. (Map 1)

To ensure that valley residents continue to enjoy a high quality of life, we need to jointly develop a framework to guide growth in the municipalities and unincorporated areas of the region. There are many important choices to be made regarding how the region can grow in a sustainable way. To begin with we need to develop an understanding of how some valley communities have been coping with the pressures and prospects of growth and change while other valley communities have experienced decline in population and economic growth. What compromises are valley communities willing to make to accommodate growth? What aspects of community, environment, and quality of life must be protected? These fundamental choices will guide the land use, transportation, economic development, and other decisions which will shape the future for the Fraser Valley Regional District.

Map I- Fraser Valley Regional District



Introduction

Since 1960, the population of the Fraser Valley Regional District has approximately doubled every 20 years, and projections indicate this trend will continue. Choices for Our Future is a regional growth strategy (RGS) plan for the Fraser Valley Regional District. It provides an opportunity to take stock of the challenges and prospects of growth in this region, and to set out actions to guide long range decisions respecting future growth and change.

In many respects, the FVRD is at a crossroads in its history and development. The Region faces extreme growth pressures: from its current population of 230,000 people, forecasts indicate the population could double in the next 20-30 years. The region is nearly 14,000 square kilometers in size, but over 90% of the population resides on less than 1% of the land base. Although the land base is immense, only a small portion of the Region, mostly located in the fertile Fraser Valley floor, is considered habitable; and virtually all development pressures are directed to this area.

The Fraser Valley is one of the most intensively farmed areas in Canada, with the FVRD generating the largest annual farm receipts of any Regional District in British Columbia. The RGS recognizes the importance of agriculture to the region's past, present and future. The region must ensure the continued expansion of the agricultural sector while at the same time addressing regional growth pressures.

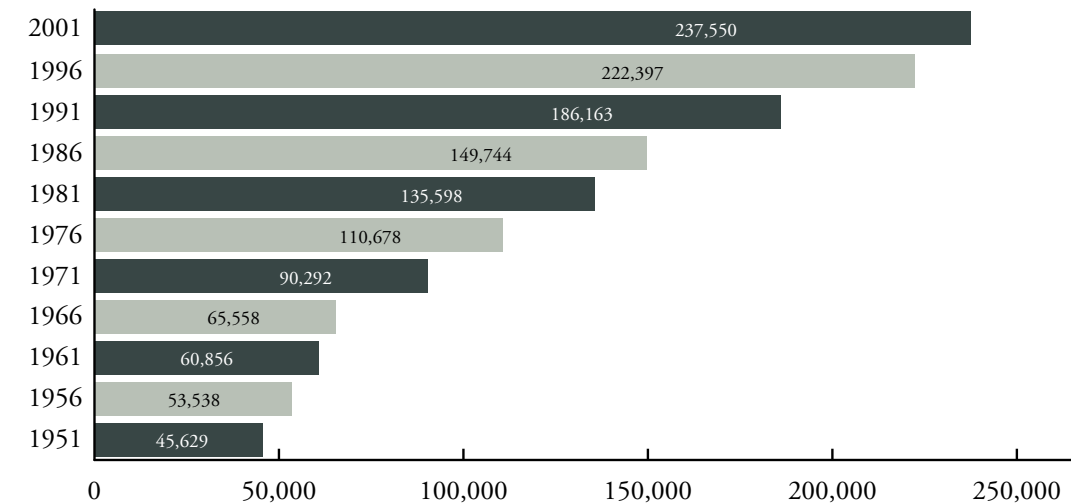
Through the RGS process, the region has gained a better understanding of how valley communities have coped with the pressures of growth and change over the past twenty years. The region has explored the compromises communities are willing to make to accommodate future growth and the aspects of community, environment, and quality of life that must be protected. The choices made as part of this process will guide the land use, transportation, economic development, and other decisions that will shape the future of the FVRD.

FVRD communities are addressing growth pressures through Official Community Plans (OCPs), Area Plans, Zoning and Development Bylaws, and development policies. Most of the region's OCPs already incorporate policies and goals that are consistent with the vision of the RGS. The purpose of the Growth Management Strategy is to provide support to FVRD members as they continue to address growth management challenges.

The communities of the FVRD are committed to responsibly manage future growth. New development will take place only where services can be provided in a timely and economically, socially, and environmentally sound manner. To that end, efficient use of land, transportation and infrastructure systems will be an important consideration in major development decisions. Senior levels of government, Crown corporations and the private sector will also play a role in helping the region meet these goals. Strong public support also exists for protecting and maintaining agricultural lands and rural areas.

The Choices for Our Future Regional Growth Strategy offers a regional framework for managing growth in order to ensure that the Fraser Valley continues to be a desirable place to live, work, and play.

Figure 1 - FVRD Population Growth



Vision Statement

The following statement expresses the aspirations of all the communities in the FVRD and is based on the desire to achieve a livable region, as envisioned by local leaders and citizens:

Vision

The Fraser Valley Regional District will be a network of vibrant, distinct, and sustainable communities that accept responsibly managed growth while being committed to protecting the land resource and the natural environment to ensure that a high quality of life is accessible to all.



Harrison Hot Springs Lagoon

Growth Management Goals

Based on the direction of the Regional Board, subsequent public input, and the findings of studies and background reports, a set of growth management goals was developed to address the growth challenges the FVRD will face over the next 20-30 years. These goals, which form the basis for the FVRD's "Choices for Our Future" Regional Growth Strategy, are presented here. It should be noted that the goals are not listed in any order of priority.

1. Increase Transportation Choice and Efficiency.
2. Support and Enhance the Agricultural Sector.
3. Manage Urban Land Responsibly.
4. Develop a Network of Sustainable Communities.
5. Protect the Natural Environment and Promote Environmental Stewardship.
6. Protect and Manage Rural and Recreational Lands.
7. Achieve Sustainable Economic Growth.
8. Manage Water, Energy Resources and Waste Responsibly.

I. Increase Transportation Choice and Efficiency.

Transportation choices and efficiency will be increased by:

- supporting the provision of specific road and regional infrastructure improvements;
- promoting transportation choice and reducing dependency on the single-occupancy vehicle;
- increasing the efficiency of existing transportation infrastructure;
- increasing and developing a broader range of transit services; and
- improving bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

Background:

Valtrans¹, the FVRD long-range transportation study, has shown that over the next 20-30 years the valley road network will have to accommodate twice as many cars and trucks. This growth will be driven by many factors, including population growth within the region, growing linkages to other parts of the province, as well as the FVRD's close proximity to the GVRD and increasingly the US border and market.

The demands on the regional road network are directly related to the dependency on private, single-occupancy vehicles. Even with significant improvements in transit, as supported by the RGS, it is projected that valley residents will continue to rely on the private single-occupancy vehicle for daily travel over the next 20-30 years. Therefore, significant improvements to the road network in the region will be required while policies and approaches are developed to widen transportation choices.

As the population grows, valley residents will require a wider range of available travel choices in order to decrease reliance on the single-occupancy vehicle. However, increasing transportation choice does not imply an increase only in conventional bus service. The challenge of providing viable alternative travel choices to the single-occupancy automobile can also be met by encouraging walking and bicycling, and by continuing to broaden the range of transit services such as car/van pooling, sharedride, taxis, minibus shuttles, and the like.

Despite rapid traffic growth forecasts, the RGS does not foresee the need for the construction of a major new highway within the Fraser Valley during the lifespan of the RGS. However, significant improvements are required to improve the efficiency of the existing road network, as shown on Map 2. Implementation of these improvements will be achieved through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the FVRD, member municipalities and the provincial government. The MOU will establish a process that will ensure the timely funding of the identified infrastructure improvements throughout the region.

The RGS promotes the development of a transportation system that supports compact urban development, promotes a network of sustainable communities, and minimizes intrusions on rural, recreational and agricultural lands.

Actions:

- 1.1 Seek the timely implementation of the Regional Transportation Improvement Priorities, as illustrated on Map 2.
- 1.2 Develop and maintain transportation and mobility systems that efficiently and safely facilitate the movement of people and goods.
- 1.3 Support, in partnership with local governments, neighbouring regional districts, the Province, and other stakeholders, an integrated approach to planning and investment in transportation infrastructure by supporting the development of regional transportation modeling and other programs.
- 1.4 Investigate and promote the potential for Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs with major employers.
- 1.5 Respond, as resources permit, to inter- and intra-community public transit, cycling and pedestrian infrastructure deficiencies identified by the University College of the Fraser Valley, Regional Health Authorities, local governments, transit operators, and the public.
- 1.6 Encourage the integration of existing railway infrastructure and waterway transportation systems into regional and local transportation plans.
- 1.7 Support transportation improvements to facilitate growth in the tourism industry.
- 1.8 Protect and provide superior access to future industrial and business park lands and the Abbotsford Airport.
- 1.9 Plan for settlement patterns that minimize the use of automobiles and encourage walking, bicycling, and the efficient use of public transit, where practical.
- 1.10 In partnership with local government, neighbouring regional districts, and senior government, consider the merit of a Transportation Round Table to provide a forum to discuss issues of regional importance and develop mechanisms to address travel choice and road network development.



Highway 1



Highway 1 and North Parallel Road

In 2001 only 1.4 % of FVRD residents used transit to get to work and less than 1.2% cycled. The numbers are more encouraging for the smaller communities such as Harrison, Hope and Kent where 8%, 10% and 8% walked to work.

The average commuting distances in the FVRD, estimated by travel surveys and computer simulators is 12.6 kilometers; shorter on average than the Lower Mainland as a whole, at 14 kilometers (1996).

According to the Regional Growth Strategy Public Opinion Survey, 73% of respondents felt that the region needs more inter-city bus service between Fraser Valley communities. The highest level of support for this is in Mission with 94%. The suggestion that these buses be paid for by both subsidies and user fees was supported by 73% of the respondents.

In the ten years ending in 1996, FVRD-licensed vehicles grew at a compound rate of 3.7% per year.

In 2001, 84% of the employed valley residents used their car to get to work; 8% carpooled; while 4.3% walked. The vast majority of the cars were single occupancy vehicles.

2. Support and Enhance the Agricultural Sector.

The region's agricultural lands will be managed responsibly by:

- minimizing land use conflicts between agricultural, recreational and urban uses;
- addressing the intensification of agriculture
- promoting the agricultural sector; and
- promoting the reclamation of lands back to agricultural use, where appropriate.

Background:

The FVRD covers approximately 1.4 million hectares of land, of which only 1% is currently used for settlement purposes. Highly productive agricultural lands cover 5.4% of the land base, with the rest dominated by mountainous terrain, some of which is used for resource-related activities such as logging. Though occupying a relatively small geographic area, agriculture forms a significant component of the Region's economy, producing 32% of provincial gross farm receipts in 2000. Given the importance of agriculture, the RGS recognizes that population growth has exerted considerable pressures on agricultural lands and that future growth must not negatively impact the agriculture sector.

Agricultural Areas.

The Fraser Valley is one of the most intensively farmed areas in Canada, with the FVRD generating the largest annual farm receipts of any regional district in British Columbia. Notwithstanding the rapid growth of the region, agriculture has flourished and remains a crucial component of the region's economy. Local governments have long recognized the economic importance of this industry and have worked with local farmers, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries and the Provincial Agricultural Land Commission (PALC) to develop policies and regulations that will ensure the long-term viability of agriculture in the region.

As a result of the limited developable land base, the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) has historically contained urban growth, but with an expected doubling of the population over the next 20 to 30 years, these pressures will only increase. In the past, agricultural activities and rapid population growth have been able to co-exist, though pressures on agricultural lands and conflicts over agricultural activities have increased in recent years.

While the RGS recognizes the importance of agriculture, and the need for stable, long-term agricultural boundaries, it also recognizes the challenges facing urban communities to remain self-sufficient. Self-sufficiency will require the allocation of additional land for community and general employment use, including lands for agri-business enterprises such as food processors, suppliers, and farm support services. For this reason, the FVRD and member municipalities will work with the PALC and other stakeholders to develop innovative approaches that address urban land requirements without compromising the intent of the Agricultural Land Reserve.

Agricultural Employment.

Determining the total number of agriculture related jobs in the Fraser Valley Regional District, is difficult. According to the 2001 Census, 8.8% of the region's labour force is directly employed in the agriculture, fishing and hunting sector.

The number of persons working in agriculture varies between communities. In Abbotsford, for instance, approximately 10.3% of the labour force is directly employed in agriculture as compared to 7.2% in Mission. These totals do not include employment in the agri-industrial sector (food processors, feed suppliers, agri-tech, and support industries), field workers or other less obvious agriculture-related businesses in the FVRD. Suffice to say, a healthy agricultural sector is critical to the long-term economic health of the FVRD.



- Farm, Abbotsford

Land Reclamation:

Development in the highly urbanized Lower Mainland has impacted, and will continue to impact, agricultural land supply through the extraction of gravel from agricultural lands. Gravel extraction is a permitted use in the ALR, but the rehabilitation and reclamation of these lands has not been consistent, leading to large areas of ALR land without any significant agricultural production. Rehabilitation of gravel pits within the Agricultural Land Reserve represents a significant opportunity to reintroduce viable agricultural production to the Fraser Valley. The RGS supports innovative efforts to ensure that continued growth in the Lower Mainland will not negatively impact the long-term supply of viable agricultural land.

Actions:

- 2.1 Support the FVRD's Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) in its capacity to advise the Regional Board on a broad range of agriculture-related issues at the regional level.
- 2.2 Encourage an ongoing dialogue between farming interests, provincial and local governments to mitigate the effects of agricultural intensification, particularly within the context of surrounding land uses.
- 2.3 Address agriculture-related transportation issues in regional comprehensive transportation initiatives, Official Community Plans, and Area Plans.
- 2.4 Foster economic growth in the agricultural sector by supporting initiatives identified in the "Economic Strategy for Agriculture in the Lower Mainland" report.
- 2.5 Support the creation of Agricultural Area Plans to maximize the production potential of agricultural lands while maintaining environmental and social values.
- 2.6 In cooperation with local governments, the provincial government and other stakeholders, enhance public awareness of agricultural activities and the role of agriculture in the community.
- 2.7 Encourage the development of a long-term strategy that will balance the need for stable, long-term Agricultural Land Reserve boundaries with the need for additional land to support employment growth in all sectors, including agriculture, and the need for contiguous urban development.

ALR land comprises a significant share of the land base in valley communities; 75% of the land base of the City of Abbotsford, and 66% of the land base of the City Chilliwack is located within the ALR.

In 2000 there were 2,661 farms in the FVRD, totaling 48,670 hectares (120,267 acres).

At \$736 million, agriculture operations in the FVRD generated 32% of provincial gross farm receipts in 2000.

3. Manage Urban Land Responsibly

The urban land base will be managed responsibly by:

- focusing growth primarily within the six existing communities;
- developing and implementing growth management tools such as area plans, development policies and bylaws that will result in more sustainable and cost effective development;
- utilizing regional Urban Growth Boundaries (UGB) to contain growth;
- developing a land supply inventory to ensure that future residential and employment growth will be supported;
- increasing land use efficiency through increased densities, more compact forms of development and discouraging non-contiguous development within UGBs;
- supporting settlement patterns that minimize risks associated with flooding, forest and structural fires, and geological hazards;
- encouraging timely, economically efficient, and environmentally sound public investment in the provision of services and infrastructure to new development;
- encouraging employment growth to keep pace with population growth.

Background:

Existing and future urban growth areas in the Fraser Valley Regional District comprise only 1.5% of the region's total land base. Within this limited land base, the region will have to absorb double the current population over the next 20 to 30 years. Local Urban Growth Boundaries, Official Community Plans, Zoning Bylaws, Development Bylaws, and Area Plans have played a major role in enabling the region's communities to absorb growth in recent years. Continued use of these tools, and others, will enable local government to meet the challenge posed by future growth.

To facilitate the responsible management of urban land of the region, the RGS identifies several tools that are available to, and are currently being used by, local government to manage growth. The tools available to manage growth include: Urban Growth Boundaries, Increased Densities, Trigger Mechanisms, Area Plans, Threshold Analysis and other mechanisms. For further discussion on growth management tools see Appendix 2.

Local governments will determine the timing and location of new development within the Regional Urban Growth Boundaries through the application of growth management tools as discussed above. By using such tools, development pressures on agricultural lands, rural areas, and environmentally sensitive areas will be reduced as will the costs associated with servicing new development.



- Abbotsford Hillside Development

57% of the respondents in the Regional Growth Strategy Public Opinion Survey felt that Urban Growth Boundaries were required to contain growth.

61% of the survey respondents stated that most of the population growth should be accommodated in new residential neighbourhoods developed on hillsides. The rest of the growth would be accommodated in existing neighbourhoods through the use of more compact housing forms such as secondary suites, townhouses and apartments.

A number of Fraser Valley communities have housing policies that allow secondary suites and second dwellings under certain conditions.

The Region's Urban Growth Boundaries are currently under discussion with the PALC. As requested by the PALC, lands subject to these on-going discussions are included on Map 3.



- New Development, Harrison Hot Springs

Actions:

- 3.1 Support Official Community Plans policies that encourage infill, redevelopment, densification and mixed use as a means of creating more compact development patterns.
- 3.2 Require that amendments to the Urban Growth Boundaries, as shown on Map 3, be referred to the Regional Board for notification.
- 3.3 Consider the use of threshold analysis, or other trigger mechanisms, as a method of determining the timing and location of new development in areas located within the UGBs as shown on Map 3.
- 3.4 Consider the feasibility of establishing a region-wide land supply tracking system to ensure that adequate supplies of land are available to support long-term community and economic growth.
- 3.5 Seek provincial commitments on infrastructure improvements that will support the goals of the Regional Growth Strategy.
- 3.6 Support settlement patterns that minimize development costs to communities and the risks associated with geotechnical and environmental constraints.
- 3.7 Support actions that reduce conflict along the urban/agriculture interface.



- New Development, Gated Community, Mission

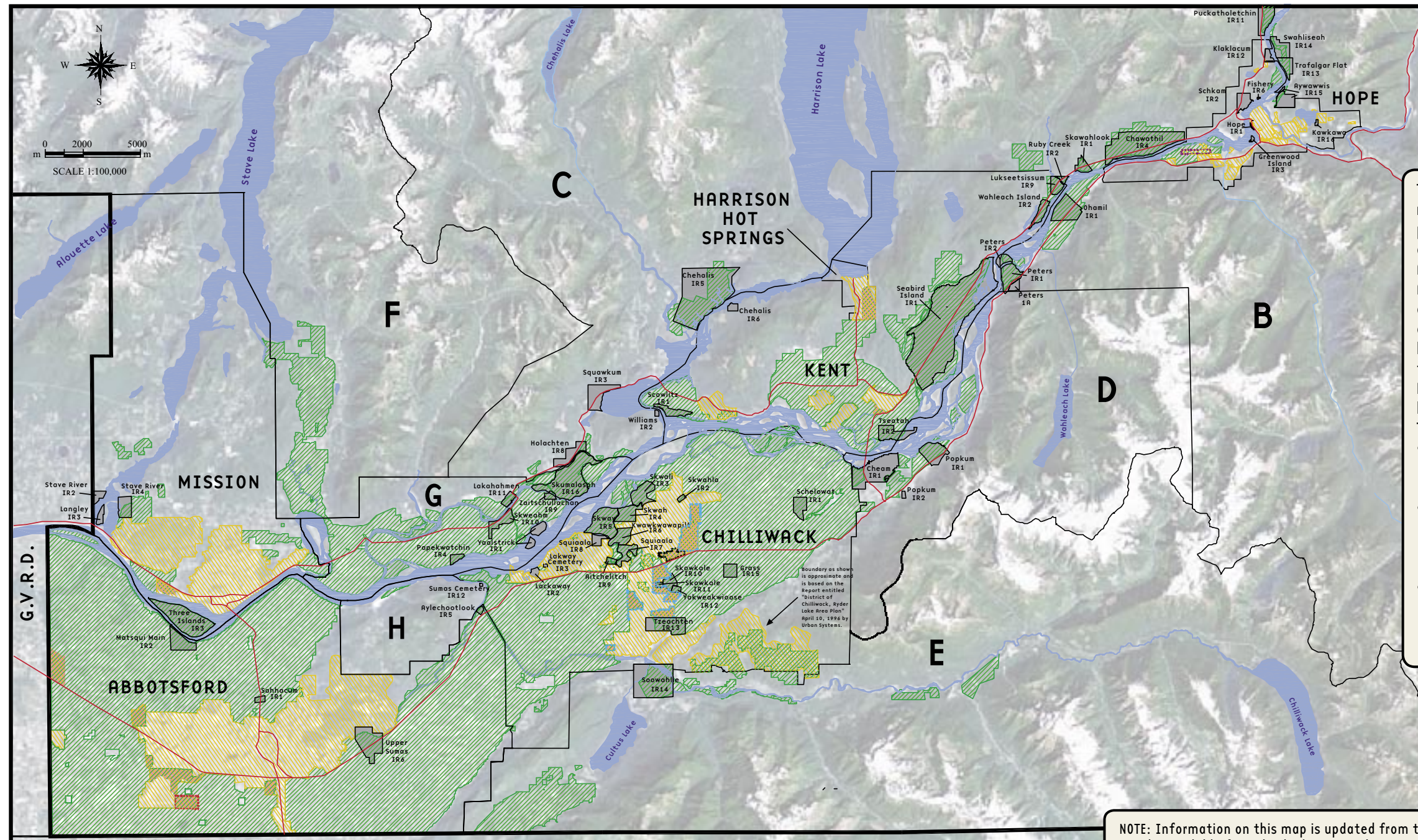
Many FVRD residents support the development of more complete and compact communities. The FVRD Housing Survey results showed general approval (more than 70%) for houses on small lots, and more than 72% support secondary suites being built in their neighbourhoods.

The majority of housing stock in the FVRD is in the form of single family dwellings, constructed in the 1980's and early '90's. Total number of units increased from 43,050 in 1991, to 49,830 in 1996 though proportionately, single family dwellings decreased from 67% of all housing stock in 1991, to 63% by 1996.

Medium density, ground oriented units increased from 16% to 18% of total housing stock between 1991 and 1996. Apartment units increased from 34% to 37% of total housing stock during the same period.

Map 3 Fraser Valley Regional District's Urban Growth Boundaries

88% of British Columbia's and 15% of Canada's chicks and other poultry are hatched in the FVRD.



The Urban Growth Boundary Map represents a long-term policy perspective to guide decision making over the next 20 to 30 years, as of April 2004. A number of FVRD local governments are engaged in public processes aimed at identifying long term urban growth boundaries that will balance the need for stable, long-term Agricultural Land Reserve boundaries with the need for land to support urban development. This map distinguishes between:

- Urban Growth Boundaries not extending into the Agricultural Land Reserve,
- Urban Growth Boundaries extending into the Agricultural Land Reserve with the consent of the Provincial Agricultural Land Commission; and
- local government proposals still under discussion between the local governments and the Provincial Agricultural Land Commission.

- ALR Agricultural Land Reserve lands (ALR) are shown by green hatching as of the date of printing. For current ALR boundaries, contact the Provincial Agricultural Land Commission.
- UGB Urban Growth Boundaries (UGB) not extending into the ALR are shown by yellow hatching.
- ALR / UGB Urban Growth Boundaries extending into the ALR with the consent of the Provincial Agricultural Land Commission are shown by cross-hatching in both green and yellow. For the City of Chilliwack the cross-hatched area illustrates the land needed to accommodate industrial growth for the next 10 years.
- ALR / UGB Other local government proposals for Urban Growth Boundaries extending into the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR/UGB) are shown in an orange colour with cross-hatching in both green and yellow and are currently under negotiation with the Provincial Agricultural Land Commission and other stakeholders. Any of those areas may be adjusted or removed from further consideration, and other areas may be brought into future consideration, thus land development decisions should not be based on the ALR/UGB areas shown on the current map.

It is intended that final Urban Growth Boundaries will include sufficient land for at least the next 20 years requirement for residential, park, institutional, commercial, business park and industrial development at urban densities. Hillside resort development, rural communities and rural/suburban residential areas where higher urban densities cannot be achieved are not included in Urban Growth Boundaries.

Lands on this map may be impacted by various geotechnical and environmental constraints. No attempt is made here to indicate potential or existing constraints.

- ALR
- UGB
- ALR / UGB (with PALC consent)
- ALR / UGB (under negotiations)
- INDIAN RESERVES
- ABBOTSFORD AIRPORT
- HOPE AIRPORT
- PHASE I Industrial and Business Park (Some Commercial)
- PHASE II Residential and Institutional (Some Commercial)

NOTE: Information on this map is updated from time to time, and more detailed mapping may be available for individual municipalities. Contact the municipal mapping department for more information.

NOTE: The Future Growth Areas include land identified for future residential, industrial and business park growth. This map includes land for residential growth of urban densities. Some areas, such as rural communities, hillside resort development and rural/suburban residential areas, (eg. Ryder Lake, Silvermere Island and Eastern Hillsides), where higher urban densities are not achievable have not been included in the UGB areas.

NOTE: Some lands located within the Urban Growth Boundaries and the Agricultural Land Reserve have received conditional ALR exclusion approval, approval for non farm use or are less than two acres and are therefore not shaded in orange color.

INDIAN RESERVES SOURCE: First Nation Profile and Indian Lands Registry System located on the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada website http://pse-esd.ainc-inac.gc.ca/esd-pse/index_all_e.asp. This map also shows Indian Reserve names and approximate locations but does not at this time indicate which if any Indian Reserve lands will accommodate urban-density development. Contact the Stó:lo Nation or individual First Nation for more information.

4. Develop a Network of Sustainable Communities.

A network of sustainable communities will be developed by:

- strengthening transportation, economic, and social linkages between communities;
- maintaining the unique historic identities of communities;
- providing opportunities for residents to live and work in the same community or region; and
- creating economically, environmentally and socially sustainable communities.

Background:

The RGS supports a sustainable approach to community development. In broad terms, sustainable development is “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.²

Sustainable communities that strive for self-sufficiency are characterized by:

- a strong local economy with accessible, well-serviced commercial, industrial and business park lands for business and job creation;
- the majority of residents having the opportunity to live and work in the same community;
- availability of recreational facilities, parks, open spaces, and community services;
- compact settlement with a range of services located close enough to each other, and where transportation choices are available;
- availability of a wide range of affordable and accessible housing types;
- efficient use of land to maximize the protection of natural area and open space;
- having the ability to provide a realistic proportion of its food resources within or adjacent to the urban community;
- strong support for energy efficiency in terms of buildings, transportation, and infrastructure;
- implementation of measures to reduce environmental pollution and degradation; and
- a consensus to achieve a high quality of life that is enhanced by a safe and attractive built environment.



- Salish Park, Chilliwack

Many of the characteristics identified above are already incorporated into the Official Community Plans of FVRD members. Communities in the FVRD are developing innovative approaches to achieve self-sufficiency and sustainability through urban design, environmental stewardship, engineering standards, environmental regulations and economic strategies.

While the RGS promotes self-sufficient communities, the social, economic and environmental linkages between communities are also an important component. The region's communities are already linked by inter- and intra-regional infrastructure, services, economics, a shared transportation system and a shared history. Through their daily activities Fraser Valley residents are, in fact, strengthening the interrelationship and interdependency of valley centres. Enhancing linkages between the regional centres will become increasingly important as the population expands. The region, local governments, senior levels of government and other stakeholders, including the private sector, must be encouraged to work together to reinforce and create new linkages and partnerships that are of mutual benefit.

It is clear that no single program or initiative will lead to sustainable communities and self-sufficiency. Public support and input into long-range community plans will facilitate the emergence of sustainable communities across the region. Furthermore, collaboration and coordination of all government agency initiatives will ensure that provincial land use directives are in accordance with local government efforts to create sustainable communities.

Actions:

- 4.1 Encourage development that is sensitive to the sense of place, history and unique character of each community.
- 4.2 Encourage community sustainability and viability by recognizing the importance of considering economic, social and environmental factors in decision-making processes.
- 4.3 Support official community plans and other plans that incorporate sustainable planning principles as a means to becoming more sustainable and self-sufficient.
- 4.4 Identify land for employment and community growth to assist communities in improving the ratio of jobs to labour force.
- 4.5 Consider establishing a regional mechanism to monitor and address housing affordability on a regional basis.
- 4.6 Consider establishing partnerships with FVRD local governments, First Nations, the provincial government and other stakeholders to enhance the achievement of sustainable communities, and develop services which provide mutual benefit and support to the communities of the region.

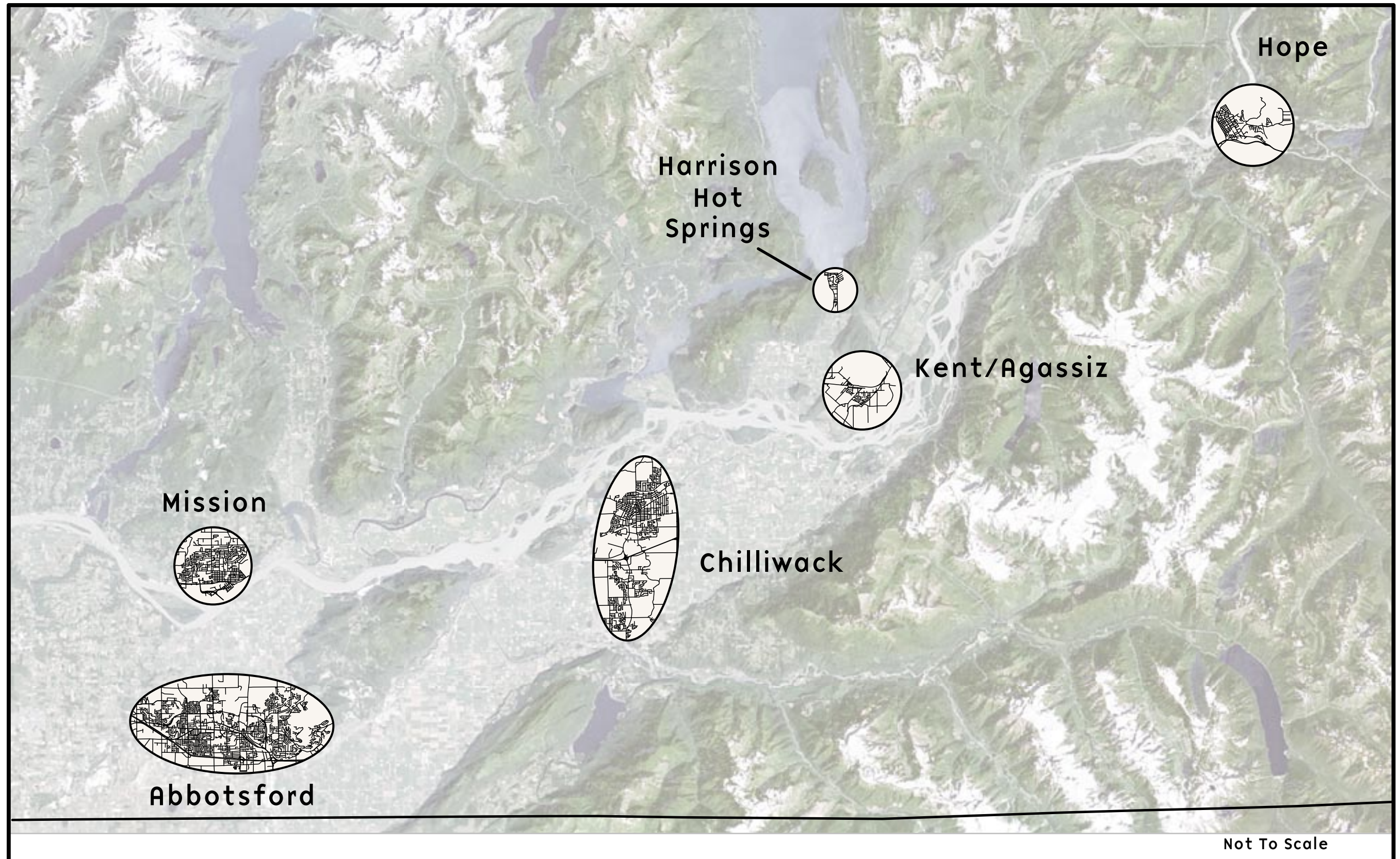


- Playground, Abbotsford

The majority of the regional population and employment growth will occur in the urban centres of Abbotsford, Chilliwack, and Mission. These communities will remain the region's major employment nodes, accounting for approximately 82% of regional employment by the year 2021.

Local governments are adopting plans and strategies that recognize the importance of building sustainable communities.

Map 4
Network of Sustainable Communities



5. Protect the Natural Environment and Promote Environmental Stewardship.

The Natural Environment will be protected by:

- promoting environmental stewardship and best management practices;
- co-operating with appropriate jurisdictions to protect air quality, water resources, fish, wildlife, and natural habitat;
- encouraging growth in existing centres;
- supporting the region's natural environment through encouraging better recognition and protection of interconnected environmental corridors.

Background:

With the region's sensitive air shed, limited land base, and river and stream corridors, there are immense challenges in mitigating the environmental impacts of urban development. Furthermore, greater numbers of Lower Mainland residents seeking recreation opportunities place additional pressure on the region's natural areas.

While much of this human impact is irreversible, residents support initiatives that will improve environmental protection in the Fraser Valley.³ A sustainable approach to development could limit further degradation of the region's land base and natural resources, and could help mitigate the potential negative impacts of growth on air quality, water quality and quantity, and wildlife habitat.

Given the complexity of environmental issues, the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) will provide another avenue, apart from regulation, to address environmental issues. BMP's are considered to be economically feasible practices that minimize adverse impacts on the environment. BMP's are being implemented in the FVRD in such diverse industries as agriculture and auto recycling. Storm water management, manure management and industry-supported codes of practice are all examples of BMP's being implemented in the FVRD today.



- Fraser Canyon

Protection of the natural environment is a shared responsibility. Many environmental issues do not follow administrative or political boundaries; hence, any effort to protect the natural environment must be addressed at all levels of government – at the broader regional scale and at the local level. While the FVRD supports the continued efforts by local government, the RGS provides a vehicle for working on environmental issues that are best dealt with on a regional level.

Air Quality.

As a result of its geographic setting, the Fraser Valley's airshed is vulnerable to air pollution generated not only from activities within the region but also from GVRD to the west, and Whatcom County in Washington State. Poor ventilation conditions, especially in the summer, restrict the dispersion of pollutants, which often result in air quality episodes.⁴ The air quality is also affected by internal factors such as increased motor vehicle use and ammonia emissions associated with agricultural uses. Energy generation facilities and gas pipelines also pose a significant threat to air quality in the Fraser Valley.

Air quality monitoring in the Lower Mainland from 1985 to 1995 indicates significant reduction in emissions of common pollutants.⁵ However, a doubling of the regional population and the construction of power plants and gas pipelines could reverse this trend. For this reason, the RGS encourages planning for less automobile-dependent communities, continued air quality monitoring, best available control technology, and implementation of the FVRD Air Quality Management Plan. The RGS also stresses the need for a partnership of federal, provincial, GVRD and local agencies to develop strong agreements to protect the sensitive and vulnerable airshed of the Fraser Valley.

Surface Water Quality.

Surface water, in the form of lakes and streams, is sensitive to growth pressures due to direct impacts of development activity, and indirect impacts as a result of contaminants entering watercourses through runoff, storm drainage systems and spills. Environmental regulations at the local, provincial and federal levels provide a degree of protection for the habitats in and adjacent to water bodies. However, environmental stewardship, where the public takes an active interest in the health of the environment, may hold the most promise for preventing and mitigating the degradation of the region's watercourses.

Protection of surface water is also an important public health issue. Surface water provides the main source of potable water for several valley communities, including Abbotsford, Mission, and parts of Chilliwack and Hope. The impact of growth on the region's water bodies can be minimized by protecting watersheds that contain municipal water supplies, adopting appropriate waste management practices, adopting Best Management Practices, and by encouraging environmental stewardship.



- Mill Lake, Abbotsford



- Cheam Lake, Popkum

The survey also found that 56% of respondents felt that the region's air quality is degrading and that 66% of the respondents feel that improved "transit/other kind of transit" will help improve air quality. 60% of the respondents believed that continued advances in car technology and fuels will help improve air quality.

As a result of overall growth in mobile sources, such as diesel truck traffic, aircraft, railways and off-road vehicles, growth in total emissions for the FVRD is projected to increase by 15% between 1995 and 2020. The overall rate of growth also implies a 32% increase of greenhouse gases during the same time frame. Emissions from automobiles and heavy-duty vehicles are projected to be the predominant source of these emissions.

The Regional Growth Strategy Public Opinion Survey found that 74% of respondents believe that the government should implement stronger measures to protect the natural habitat/ environment even at the cost of new residential growth.

The survey found that 59% of respondents believe that governments should implement stronger protection of the natural habitat/ environment even if it results in increased taxes.

Although most of the groundwater resources in the FVRD are currently in good health, several of the aquifers, such as the Abbotsford-Sumas, Vedder, and Chilliwack-Rosedale aquifers, are considered vulnerable to contamination.

B.C. is the only province in Canada that has no legislation to protect groundwater resources.

Groundwater Quality

Many of the region's rural areas and portions of the region's urban areas depend on clean groundwater for drinking and irrigation. Communities such as Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Kent, and the Columbia Valley are located on vulnerable aquifers that require protection. Groundwater quality can be affected by many human activities; however, nutrient contamination and pesticide use associated with agriculture, septic systems, and toxic contamination from industry are of particular concern in areas that are dependant on groundwater sources for drinking water. Groundwater quality can also be affected by decreasing recharge from surface waters. Such reduced contributions may occur as a result of stream diversions and withdrawals for irrigation, drinking water storage, and an increase in impervious surfaces, such as asphalt.

Groundwater sources in B.C. have limited and sometimes conflicting protection in terms of Provincial and Federal legislation. It is, therefore, essential that the RGS support ongoing monitoring and management of the region's groundwater supply through water conservation measures, nutrient management initiatives, Best Management Practices in commerce and industry, environmental farm plans, and groundwater protection legislation. The RGS also supports the ongoing dialogue with the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to ensure consistent solid waste management practices and thereby its effect on the region's groundwater resources.

Natural Environment

Due in part to population growth and the historic conversion of lands to agriculture, resource and urban uses, the landscape that supports regional wildlife and natural habitat has become increasingly fragmented. Consequently, the amount of land available to support functioning natural ecosystems has been reduced, and the list of rare, endangered and threatened species and plants continues to grow.⁶ Although environmental protection regulations assist to mitigate some of the environmental impacts of farming and urban development, it is in the vast resource areas that the threats to landscape health⁷ are critical because these are the major habitat reservoirs in the region. These areas are also most vulnerable due to conflicting land uses and shifting environmental protection legislation.

Environmental degradation need not be the inevitable outcome of regional growth provided that environmental values are identified and protected. The RGS can limit the impact of future growth on the environment by supporting:



-Vedder Canal, Abbotsford/Chilliwack

- sustainable planning principles;
- watershed management plans which would include the management of large forested and vegetated areas, riparian corridors, and species migration corridors; and
- identification and preservation of regionally significant Environmentally Sensitive Areas.

Actions:

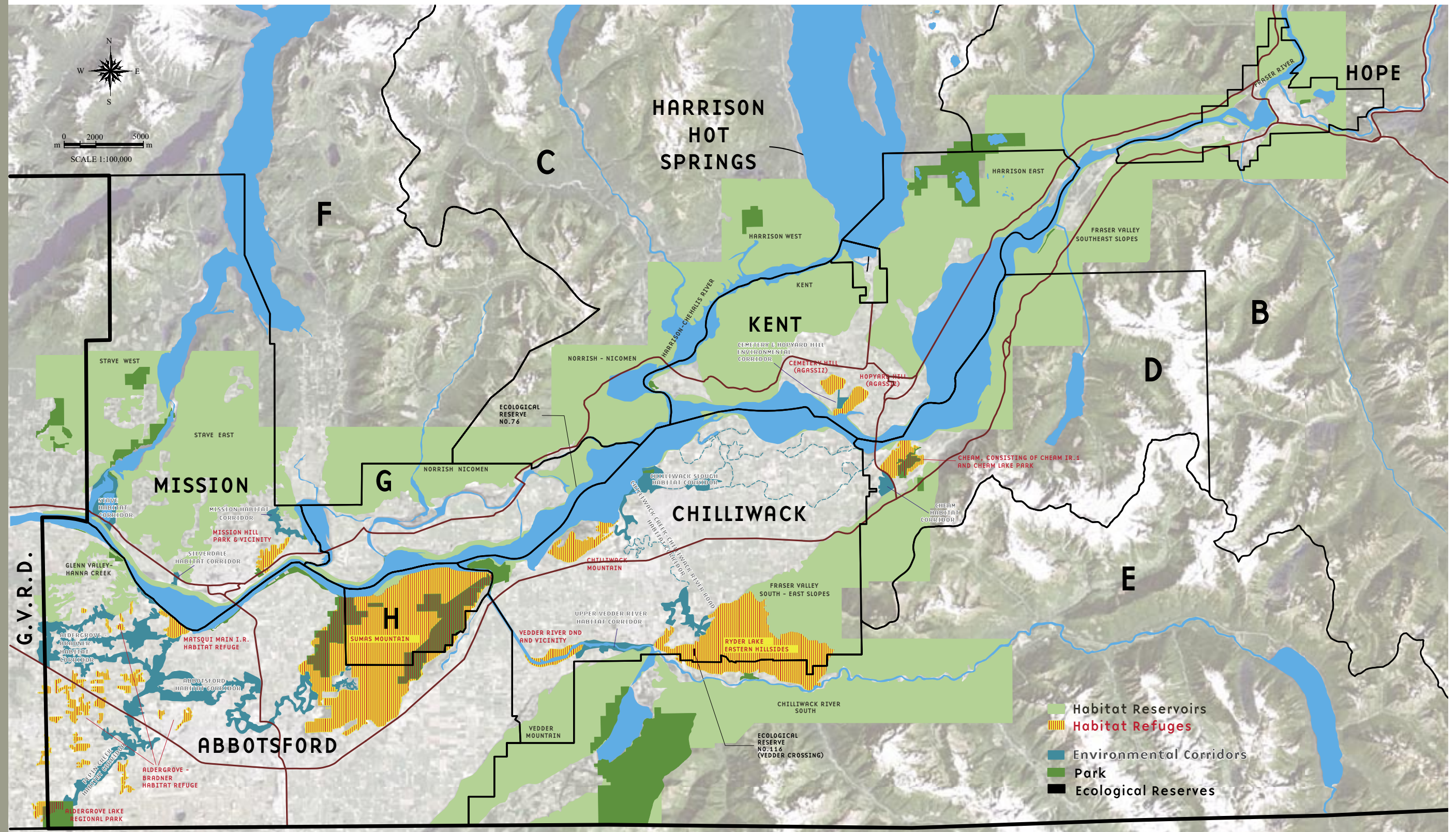
- 5.1 Consider establishing a regional mechanism to monitor the ecological and environmental health of the region.
- 5.2 Promote environmental stewardship through public awareness and educational programs in co-operation with other governments and stakeholders.
- 5.3 Continue to support the initiatives taken by member local government, federal and provincial agencies, and local farm groups that enhance the stewardship of soil, agricultural waste, water, air and habitat resources on agricultural lands.
- 5.4 Cooperate with local governments, provincial and federal agencies and other stakeholders to implement consistent, region-wide, best management practices to protect and enhance the region's biodiversity, environment, and ecology.
- 5.5 In cooperation with the GVRD, Whatcom County, local governments, and other stakeholders, support, strengthen and implement the FVRD Air Quality Management Plan and consider the merits of applying for regulation and enforcement powers for air quality management.
- 5.6 Consider preparing, in collaboration with local government, First Nations, GVRD, and other stakeholders, a watershed management plan for watersheds of regional importance, focusing initially on watersheds serving as municipal water sources.
- 5.7 Continue to implement and monitor the Regional Solid Waste Management Plan.
- 5.8 Consider preparing a Regional Liquid Waste Management Plan that will examine environmental concerns and address the links between liquid waste management, nutrient management, and water use.
- 5.9 Consider preparing, in collaboration with local government, senior governments, and other stakeholders, a Regional Biodiversity and Conservation Strategy for the protection and restoration of natural areas and ecosystems of regional importance.
- 5.10 Protect the region's potable surface and groundwater resources by supporting water conservation and stormwater management measures and by supporting the development of needed water protection legislation.
- 5.11 Encourage local government to develop a process to identify and protect Environmentally Sensitive Areas of regional significance and prevent, where possible, further landscape fragmentation.



Boston Bar

Some species, such as Coho salmon, tailed frog, Pacific water shrew, and Pacific giant salamander are particularly vulnerable to habitat degradation. There are currently 16 plant and animal species listed as being extinct, endangered, or threatened (red), and 35 as being at risk (blue) in the FVRD.

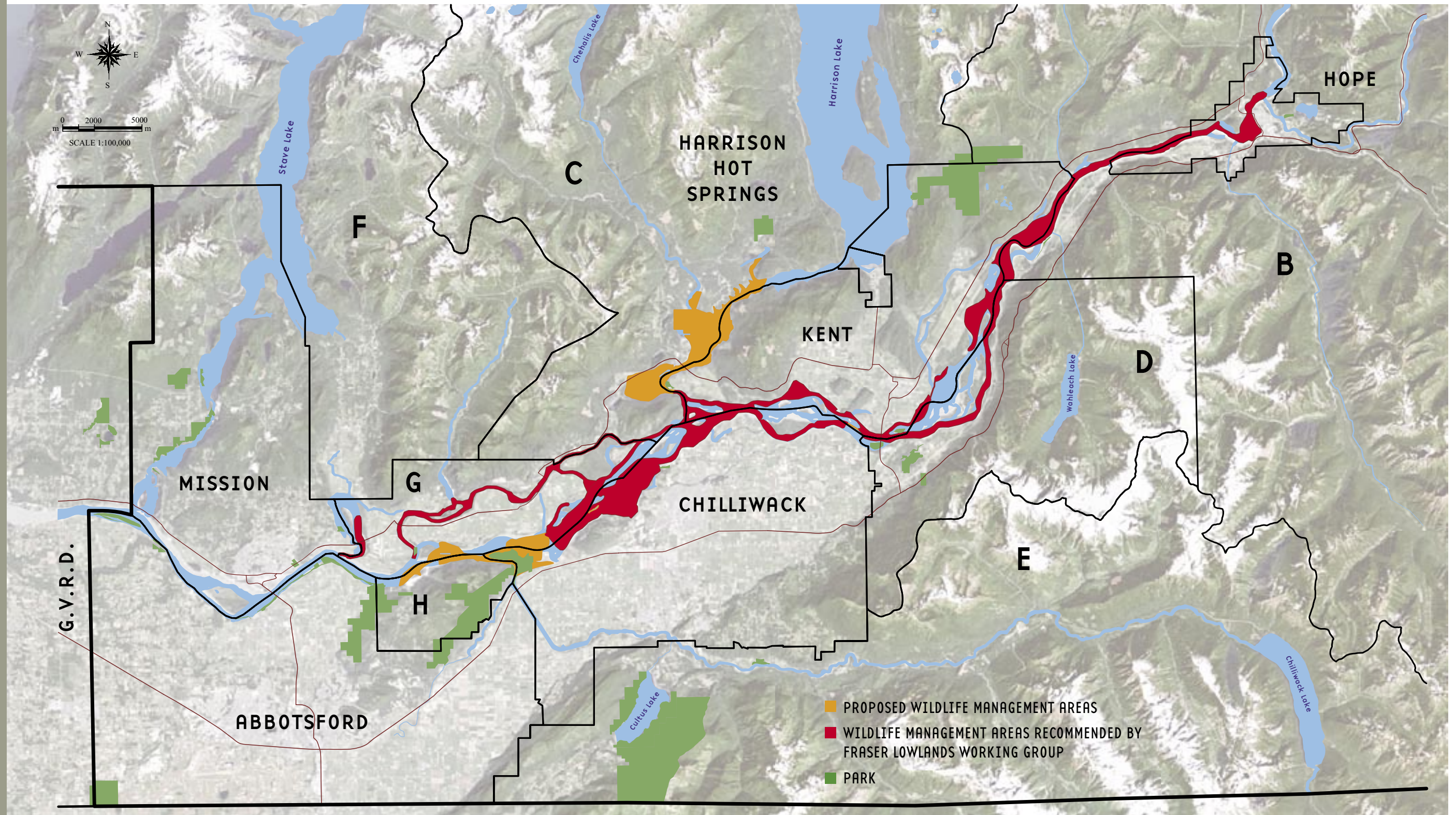
Map 5a Habitat and Natural Areas



SOURCE: Environment and Ecological Working Paper Part 2, Quadra Planning Consultants Ltd.
July 7, 1998, February 1999

Note: information shown on this map is updated from time to time, and more detailed mapping may be available for individual municipalities. Contact the municipal mapping department for more information.

Map 5b Proposed Wildlife Management Areas



SOURCE: Environment and Ecological Working Paper Part 2, Quadra Planning Consultants Ltd.
July 7, 1998, February 1999

Note: information shown on this map is updated from time to time, and more detailed mapping may be available for individual municipalities. Contact the municipal mapping department for more information.

6. Protect and Manage Rural and Recreational Lands.

The Regional Growth Public Opinion Survey found that the majority of respondents (83%) believed that new development should be planned to protect the natural environment, mountain views and rural landscape, even if it means greater density in their neighbourhood. 73% of respondents also supported the protection of the natural environment, mountain views and rural landscape, even if it means increased housing costs.

In 2001, smaller rural communities located in the eight unincorporated electoral areas, accounted for 5.3% of the total regional population and 4.3 of the total employed labour force.

The region's rural and recreational lands will be protected and managed by:

- preserving rural identity and lifestyle;
- encouraging rural residential development within existing rural communities;
- encouraging recreational, residential and resort development to develop in clusters;
- participating in provincial land use planning of Crown lands; and
- minimizing land use conflicts between agriculture and recreational uses;

Background:

The FVRD covers approximately 1.4 million hectares of land of which over 90% is comprised of unincorporated Electoral Areas. These lands have many uses, including rural settlement, agricultural, parkland, Crown reserves, federal lands, resource development, and various Crown recreation and other tenures. Less than 6% of the region's population lives in these areas. Protecting the rural way of life is an important thrust of the RGS, together with protecting and restoring the natural environment, continued stewardship of parklands, recreation and cultural resources while maintaining the region's resource-based heritage. Map 6 clearly demonstrates the unique composition of the FVRD's landscape mosaic.

Rural Areas:

A large portion of the region is rural (unorganized areas and non-ALR land) and the residents of these rural areas have expressed concerns with respect to the loss of the rural lifestyle that they currently enjoy. The RGS recognizes that rural communities are an important part of the region's identity and supports initiatives to protect these communities from growth pressures. The rural areas of the region are expected to remain stable with modest incremental growth over the next 20-30 years. The FVRD and its members will endeavor to support rural communities by preserving and protecting rural lands for scenic and green space qualities, as well as for managed resource use. The health of the forestry industry is critical to the viability of many smaller communities in the Rural Areas: The region will also continue, through official community plan processes and responsible policies, to ensure that new rural development will be safe from flooding and other natural hazards.

Recreation Areas:

The FVRD is experiencing increased demand for outdoor recreational opportunities from the region's residents as well as significant numbers of GVRD residents. In response to this increased demand, the region has developed a Regional Parks Plan that creates new outdoor recreational opportunities while minimizing conflict with agricultural operations, rural uses, and the ecology of natural areas. The Parks Plan advocates responsible management of recreational sites that fall under the jurisdiction of the Regional District and will link up with local, GVRD and Provincial Park systems.

The City of Abbotsford has an on-going and mutually beneficial relationship with the GVRD through its Glenn Valley, Aldergrove Lake and Matsqui Trail Regional Parks. Abbotsford will continue to work with the GVRD and the FVRD in relation to future parks planning and greenway initiatives. The District of Mission, in cooperation with BC Hydro, Ministry of Forests, and the FVRD have developed the Stave Lake Reservoir recreational area, where many outdoor recreation opportunities are presently managed around the reservoir.



Hemlock

The RGS recognizes the assets and importance of the rural communities and their associated lifestyles. It also recognizes the value and potential in the large recreational resources that the region has to offer. Managing growth in a sustainable manner will ensure that these values continue to be an important and unique asset to the region.

Actions:

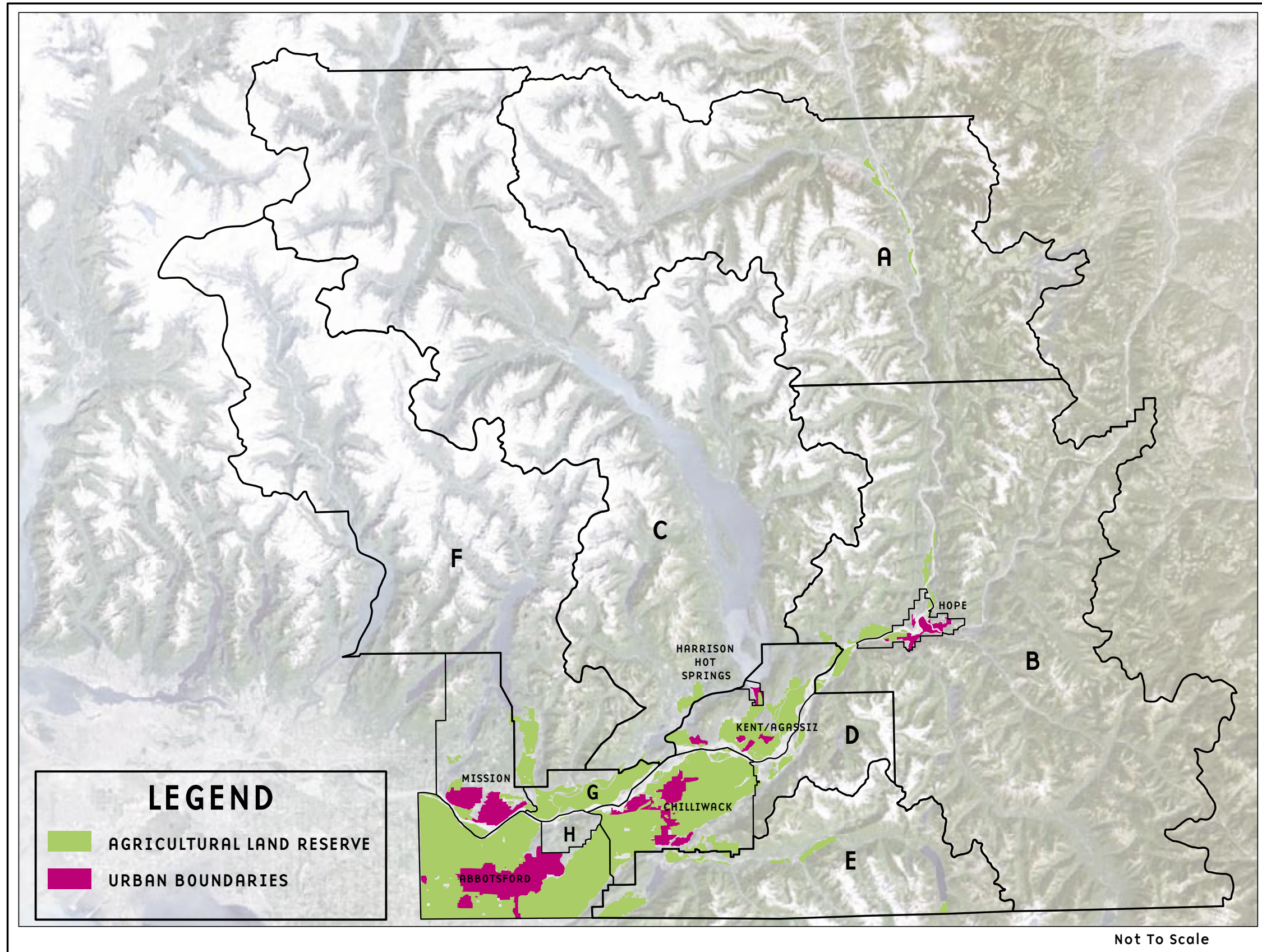
- 6.1 Support the development of a regional park system that is sensitive to agricultural and rural interests and links up with federal, provincial, municipal and GVRD park systems and greenway initiatives.
- 6.2 Encourage the development and coordination of municipal and rural walking and bicycle path plans.
- 6.3 Seek the cooperation of senior levels of government to create policies and programs that will improve the management of land use on Crown Lands.
- 6.4 Promote and facilitate the coordination and financing of federal, provincial, regional, and local efforts with respect to flood control and dyke management.
- 6.5 Develop, in collaboration with federal, provincial, local government and First Nations, a floodplain and floodproofing management plan that addresses issues identified in the BC Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection's "Flood Hazard Management Program Review".
- 6.6 Manage the removal or movement of gravel using best management practices to assist in flood management and prevention.



Harrison Hot Springs Lagoon

In 1993 FVRD regional parks provided 23% of the walking/hiking opportunities; 20% of picnicking opportunities, and 40% of fishing opportunities in the Lower Mainland. Much of the outdoor recreation activities in the Fraser Valley occur on either Provincial Forest or Crown land beside the Fraser River much of which is not formally designated or managed as parkland.

Map 6 Fraser Valley Regional District's Land Base



7. Achieve Sustainable Economic Growth.

The region will achieve sustainable economic growth by:

- creating a strong and diverse economy across the region;
- identifying key regional economic drivers and priorities as well as creating an economic vision for the region;
- promoting the development of a strong employment base and a favorable investment climate;
- identifying accessible, serviceable and centrally located industrial and business park lands;
- encouraging infill, densification and redevelopment of industrial and business parks;
- developing and maintaining a skilled labour force and a high quality of life; and
- taking advantage of the region's proximity to the GVRD and the Canada-U.S. border.

Background:

A strong economy is key to meeting the social and environmental goals of the RGS. The creation of a network of sustainable communities is dependent upon maintaining a healthy and growing economy. The economy of the Fraser Valley is strong, diverse and expanding. Over the past fifty years, the valley's economy has shifted from being resource based to one that is highly diversified. Notwithstanding this apparent economic health, the RGS identifies four areas of concern:

Agriculture Sector:

Agriculture and agriculture related businesses have long been the economic engine of the Fraser Valley, particularly in Chilliwack and Abbotsford. According to the 2001 Census of Agriculture, more than 32% of the provincial gross farm receipts, or \$736 million, were generated in the FVRD, a 3% increase from the 1996 Census. The economic influence of agriculture is felt in most other sectors of the local economy, including: food processing, manufacturing, retail and commercial, business services, personal services and others. A healthy agricultural sector, including the agri-industrial sector, is critical to the long-term economic health of the FVRD. Consequently, it is equally important to have lands available for the food processing sector and other support industries to ensure continued success of the primary agriculture sector. Also, in recognition of the economic importance of agriculture, the FVRD is supportive of the initiatives identified in the "Economic Strategy for Agriculture in the Lower Mainland".



- Country Produce, Abbotsford

Economic viability of small, resource oriented communities.

Economic diversity varies across the region. There is a marked contrast between smaller rural communities in the eastern part of the region that heavily depend on jobs in primary industries, and the larger, western communities that are tied to the rapidly growing, service-oriented economy. Eastern communities such as Hope and other smaller communities in the Fraser Canyon are facing significant socio-economic challenges associated with a declining resource sector.

The viability of smaller communities is dependent upon an employment base of well-paid and secure jobs that support a high quality of life and provide a solid long-term tax base. The decline of the resource sector has caused significant hardships in these communities. A regional economic strategy for the Fraser Valley could identify innovative strategies to assist resource based communities to adapt to economic shifts and become more sustainable.

Employment growth keeping pace with population growth in urban areas.

As the region's urban areas grow, so will the demand for additional employment opportunities. In order to meet the goal of building sustainable communities, communities must have an adequate supply of land to ensure that employment growth keeps pace with population growth. Even where short-term land supplies are adequate, if valley communities are to become sustainable, additional industrial and business park lands, including lands needed to support the agri-industrial sector, must be identified in strategic locations. For this reason, the FVRD and member municipalities will work with the Agricultural Land Reserve Commission and other stakeholders to develop innovative approaches to address urban land requirements without compromising the Agricultural Land Reserve.

The region's proximity to the GVRD provides a challenge to FVRD's goal of self-sufficient communities, but this relationship can also be seen as an opportunity to provide a ready market for companies located in the FVRD. The FVRD's proximity to the U.S. border, diverse agricultural sector, and the economic potential of facilities, such as the Abbotsford Airport, provide a competitive advantage over a number of jurisdictions in the GVRD.



- Tractor, Abbotsford

Between 1996 and 2001, total employment in the FVRD grew by 12% which equates to an average annual increment of 2,250 jobs.

Employment growth occurred in every employment sector between 1996 and 2001. In 2001, approximately 30% of FVRD residents were employed in the sales and services industry, 19% in the trade, transport and equipment industries while 17% were employed in the business, finance and administration related jobs.

Employment in the FVRD is projected to grow by between 3,200 and 4,200 jobs per year between 1996 and 2021.

In 2001, Abbotsford, Mission and Chilliwack accounted for 89% of regional employment. Abbotsford outperformed other FVRD sub-regions, accounting for approximately half of all regional jobs in 2001.

Regionalization and concentration of employment growth is expected to continue in the future, presenting the region with challenges to ensure economic growth throughout the region.

According to the Regional Growth Public Opinion Survey, 68% of the respondents felt that when the creation of new business or industrial parks conflict with the ALR boundaries and plans, reasonable compromises with ALR boundaries should be allowed.



- Dairy Farm, Chilliwack

Socio-economic factors:

Businesses considering locating in the Fraser Valley take into consideration, among other things, the region’s overall economic context, its education levels, training opportunities, labour force, fire and police protection and quality of life prior to deciding upon a specific location. Maintaining the region’s current quality of life in the face of rapid growth and change will be an important locational attribute for new businesses. This is also an important consideration for retaining successful “home grown” companies, of which there are many. The FVRD recognizes that the local entrepreneurial spirit has, and will continue to be, an important component of the region’s economic successes.

Supporting employment growth and the creation of new employment opportunities is central to growth management in the Fraser Valley. In the long term, the RGS supports the development of an economic strategy with a strategic economic vision, the establishment of an Economic Development Round Table, the preparation of a regional Employment Land Inventory, and the facilitation of a dialogue between all stakeholders in order to ensure the provision of an adequate supply of accessible and serviceable industrial and business park lands.

Actions:

- 7.1 In partnership with local government, senior government and business representatives, consider the merits of an Economic Development Round Table, to provide a forum to share ideas and discuss issues of regional importance.
- 7.2 Consider the merits of an economic strategy that will improve the viability of smaller resource based communities and help them adapt to economic change and become more sustainable.
- 7.3 Support strategies that capitalize on the FVRD’s competitive advantages, including agricultural expertise.



- Shopping Plaza, Mission

- 7.4 In collaboration with FVRD members and other organizations consider the merits of a regional Employment Land Inventory database to ensure an adequate supply of accessible and serviceable land for industrial, business-park and other employment related development.
- 7.5 Support initiatives that identify, protect and expand industrial and business park lands in the region.

8. Manage Water, Energy Resources and Waste Responsibly.

Water, energy resources and waste will be managed responsibly by:

- improving public awareness;
- encouraging innovation and local solutions to infrastructure needs;
- coordinating infrastructure plans in and beyond the region, where applicable;

Background:

A central challenge identified by the RGS is to ensure that future development, particularly in urban areas, takes place only where adequate infrastructure and community facilities exist or can be provided in a timely, economic, and environmentally sound manner. Infrastructure investments must also work to support growth that is economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable. The RGS addresses critical infrastructure issues pertaining to the management of water, energy and waste that are best dealt with on a regional level.

Water supply.

Water supply is not only an issue for the Fraser Valley, but the Lower Mainland as a whole. As discussed in the environmental section, the region’s water supply comes from both surface and groundwater sources. Water demand comes from a wide range of user groups including residential, industrial, agricultural, commercial, emergency response⁸ and others. While adequate to meet today’s demands, increasing consumption rates, despite water conservation initiatives, will require the region to secure additional sources of water in the future. Harrison Lake has been identified as one possible source. Given that this issue is of relevance to the Lower Mainland as a whole, the FVRD must work with the Federal and Provincial governments, adjacent jurisdictions and other stakeholders to ensure adequate water supplies for the future.

Energy resources.

Sustainability also extends to managing energy resources, to the extent that regional and local governments are able. Energy policy is a federal and provincial responsibility, but actions at the local level can save energy and ultimately reduce demand for new energy infrastructure such as: dams, power lines, pipelines and energy generating plants. The RGS supports maximizing the efficient use of energy resources and minimizing the need to expand energy infrastructure. The FVRD and local governments will strongly oppose the construction of additional energy infrastructure that is not in the best interest of the region. The RGS encourages more responsible use of energy resources by:

- supporting green building initiatives;
- supporting energy efficient urban design and urban infrastructure;
- supporting initiatives that promote solar energy use, small scale hydro–electric generation, wind power generation, and geothermal energy as sustainable sources of energy; and
- improving public awareness with respect to the importance of energy conservation.

When valley residents were asked about what we should do about the increased demand for water in our region, the Public Opinion Survey showed great support for public education and conservation programs.

All of the FVRD local governments have introduced sprinkler restrictions during the summer months. It is crucial that water conservation initiatives be continued and improved where necessary.

The average annual growth rate for electricity consumption in the region has been estimated to be 3.5% largely due to increased development in the Fraser Valley. This is significantly higher than the 2.2% average annual growth rate on electricity consumption for the total Lower Mainland.

When valley residents were asked about what should be done about increased demand for garbage collection and disposal in the region, the survey showed greatest support (80%) for educating and encouraging the public to recycle and reduce waste, and 74% supported enhanced reuse and recycling programs.

The FVRD Solid Waste Management Plan is promoting the concept of "Zero Waste" to transform the current thinking of waste as a liability into resources to be recovered (an asset).

Solid waste.

As the region's population increases and landfill capacity decreases, the diversion of solid waste from landfills through recycling and other methods become more important. Many local governments in the FVRD have already achieved 50% diversion rates.⁹ However, it is not sufficient to focus only on the current diversion rate. The RGS also acknowledges the need to improve public education with respect to the generation of solid waste and the implications of poor waste management.



- Green Waste Site, Harrison Hot Springs

Solid waste management varies across the region. The City of Abbotsford, for example, sends refuse to the Matsqui Transfer Station operated under contract with the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) and the waste is hauled to the Cache Creek landfill for disposal.¹⁰ Other communities utilize authorized landfills and transfer facilities within the FVRD. The District of Mission is currently utilizing Minnie's Landfill Pit, which is currently under expansion. The City of Chilliwack relies on independent haulers to collect residential waste and dispose of it at the Bailey Landfill facility.

The larger communities also have active waste reduction programs. The District of Mission has the most extensive waste reduction program, which includes curbside collection of recyclables, organic household waste, and yard waste. The District of Hope residents have consistently recycled and composted more per capita than any other community within the FVRD (1997-2001).



- Power Lines, Popkum

In order to accommodate future growth, the FVRD must work with local governments and adjacent jurisdictions to determine the most appropriate approaches to managing solid waste in the future. The key to success is to determine the level of responsibility required by all stakeholders and to take a proactive role in adopting new policy directions that will facilitate sustainable management solutions.

Liquid waste.

Liquid waste includes sanitary sewage and storm water effluent both from urban and agricultural runoff. Minimizing the impacts of water pollution from point sources such as sewage treatment plants, and non-point sources such as urban runoff and storm water overflows is dependent upon waste treatment and reduction technologies as well as land use patterns. Most local governments have adequate means to address stormwater through conventional mechanisms; however, greater emphasis is now being placed on a broader management of stormwater, including infiltration. The RGS supports and encourages the use of innovative approaches and technologies to manage liquid waste in an environmentally and economically sustainable manner.

Actions:

- 8.1 Support energy efficient land development and urban design to promote efficient use of energy resources and infrastructure.
- 8.2 In partnership with local governments, the GVRD, senior governments, First Nations, and other stakeholders, consider the merits of comprehensive infrastructure planning and modeling for the FVRD.
- 8.3 In collaboration with local governments, promote the reduction of energy consumption by encouraging energy conservation measures, innovative energy supply systems, and energy-efficient development.
- 8.4 Endorse and assist with public awareness and educational programs aimed at reducing waste generation, and promoting energy and water resource conservation.
- 8.5 Support the use of innovative approaches and technologies to manage liquid waste in an environmentally and economically sustainable manner.
- 8.6 Support and monitor the Regional Solid Waste Management Plan in order to ensure that waste reduction, re-use, recycling, and recovery targets are being met.
- 8.7 Consider preparing, in collaboration with local governments, First Nations, GVRD, and other stakeholders, a Regional Water Resource Plan that will address the future needs of the region and ensure that the region's water reservoirs are utilized in an efficient manner.
- 8.8 Continue to support the implementation of the FVRD Transportation and Utility Corridors of Regional Significance policy.
- 8.9 In partnership with local government, senior government and business representatives, consider the merit of establishing a Sustainable Energy Round Table, to provide a forum to share ideas and take a proactive role in promoting more responsible use of energy.

According to the Regional Growth Strategy Public Opinion Survey, most respondents were satisfied with garbage collection, recycling programs, crime prevention, educational facilities, library, arts and cultural facilities, and park and recreational facilities. However, economic development and job creation, public transit, and roads and drainage services were deemed by the public to have fallen below their expectations.

Appendix 1 - List of Background Papers

Beginning in 1996, the first phase of the strategy was a technical program to collect and produce background information relevant to the region over a 20-30 year horizon. This process represented the first attempt within the newly-created Regional District to bring together all stakeholders to address the region's growth management challenges, and to acquire, collate, and analyze data at a regional level.

The scope of the technical program included a broad range of growth management topics; including, public opinion surveys, population forecasts, employment projections, and housing, environment, agriculture, infrastructure, and transportation studies. A picture emerged from this process about how this region can grow over the next 20-30 years if appropriate growth management policies, built on sustainable planning principles, are put in place and implemented.

- *Agriculture Working Paper Fraser Valley Regional District*. FVRD Planning Department, May 2000.
- *A Long Range Transportation Strategy for the Fraser Valley Region*. Fraser Valley Regional District, June, 2000.
- *A Scan of the Current Operating Environment*. Reid Crowther & Partners Co., 1998.
- *Choices for Our Future: Planning for Urban Growth Boundaries in the Fraser Valley*. FVRD Planning Department, September 1999
- *FVRD Regional Growth Strategy Plan Concept*. FVRD Planning Department, September 1998.
- *Environment and Ecological Working Paper Part 1, 2 and 3*. Quadra Planning Consultants Ltd. July 7, 1998, February 1999.
- *Fraser Valley Housing Profile 1981-1996*. FVRD Planning Department, July 2000.
- *FVRD Regional Growth Strategy Public Opinion Survey*. Waugh Research, March 2000.
- *Growth Management and Sustainability: Investigating Options for Urban Form, Infrastructure and Energy Services in the Fraser Valley Regional District*. The Sheltair Group Inc. and The International Centre for Sustainable Cities. January 1999.
- *Lower Mainland Employment Study*. Coriolis Consulting Corporation and Dr. T.A.Hutton, CHS/UBC, June 1999.
- *Primary Goals of the Growth Strategy for the Fraser Valley Regional District*. FVRD Planning Department, September 1997.
- *Quality of Life in the Fraser Valley*. FVRD Planning Department November 1999.
- *The Context of Change and Growth in the Fraser Valley Regional District*. David Baxter Urban Future Institute, January 1997.
- *The Future Distribution of People, Homes, and Jobs in the FVRD*. Urban-Eco Consultants, 1998.
- *Transportation Analysis of Two Land Use Scenarios*. Reid Crowther & Partners Co., 1998.

Appendix 2 - Growth Management Tools

Urban Growth Boundaries.

Urban Growth Boundaries (UGBs) clearly delineate, on a map, land within which development at higher densities is encouraged and urban infrastructure (roads, water and sewage) is provided for or planned. The Urban Growth Boundaries, shown on Map 3, are derived from municipal Official Community Plans. Urban Growth Boundaries reinforce the concept of "complete communities" and can increase transit ridership, reduce infrastructure costs and decrease the potential for rural-urban edge conflict.

UGBs reflect the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) boundaries as well as topographic and other environmental constraints that impact valley communities. Although the ALR in the past has defined and shaped the valley communities, it also limits opportunities to plan for, contiguous urban growth pattern. ALR boundaries and the Fraser River floodplain are forcing development to the hillsides, resulting in increased servicing costs and development in some of the most environmentally sensitive and topographically challenging areas of the region. Balancing community growth within these constraints is the major growth challenge for the Fraser Valley. The RGS emphasizes the need for dialogue, collaboration, and consensus between provincial and local agencies to address potential conflicting mandates.

Trigger Mechanisms.

Trigger mechanisms are established criteria that signal the timing and location of new development based on acceptable density targets or other criteria. They provide for orderly and efficient expansion of development into new urban growth areas. While the market will play a major role in determining when and how development will occur, trigger mechanisms will signal the need for future development areas to be developed and provide for an orderly, contiguous development pattern between existing and new development areas. The RGS supports and encourages the implementation of trigger mechanisms and recognizes that they be defined by each community within their Official Community Plans.

Threshold Analysis.

The threshold capacity of infrastructure is an integral component determining the location and timing urban development. Growth will not occur in areas where servicing capacity is inadequate and the cost of providing infrastructure makes such development unfeasible.

Increased Densities.

Population densities can be increased through the development of townhouses, apartments, secondary suites, mixed-use development and small-lot development. Increased densities result in more people being accommodated on less land. The RGS promotes increased density; however, it is recognized that the form and character of the densification will be determined by each community.

Appendix 3 - Population and Employment Projections

Population growth in Lower Mainland British Columbia is inherently difficult to project because growth is largely based on national and international migration levels that can vary widely from year to year. In the FVRD approximately three quarters of the growth is from migration. FVRD migrants tend to originate from within British Columbia and other parts of Canada. This contrasts with the Greater Vancouver Region where international migration, primarily from Asia, has been the dominant driver in population growth.

Population Projections.

The first step in developing the Choices for Our Future plan involved a review of projections from a variety of sources. "P.E.O.P.L.E." projections, prepared by BC Stats, the provincial statistical agency, calculated that the population of the region could grow by approximately 50% by the year 2021. Because BC Stats projections are sometimes viewed as being conservative, the FVRD commissioned the Urban Futures¹¹ to study factors that may affect population growth and change in the Fraser Valley Regional District over the next twenty to thirty years. A broad range of factors were analyzed, including past growth trends, urban land supply, housing demand, and transportation infrastructure in the Lower Mainland. That analysis concluded that there was a considerably larger growth potential in valley communities than recognized by the B.C. Stats projections. For strategic purposes, it was determined that the RGS be based on population potential as opposed to the more conservative BC Stats projections.

Figure 2. Population Growth Concept Projection

Area	1996 Census	2001 Census	RGS Concept Projected Population 2020 - 2030	P.E.O.P.L.E. 26 Population Projection 2021
Abbotsford	105,605	115,711	209,500	165,673
Chilliwack	61,708	64,898	134,000	105,470
Mission	30,519	31,272	65,500	65,246
Hope	6,247	6,313	11,000	8,842
Kent	5,364	5,492	10,000	10,588
Harrison Hot Springs	898	1,343	3,000	n/a
Electoral Areas	11,991	12,521	17,000	n/a
FVRD	222,397	237,550	450,000	355,901

Source: Statistics Canada 1996 and 2001 Census Information and FVRD Planning Department, FVRD Regional Growth Strategy Plan Concept, 1998.

Note: Total population includes population living on Indian Reserves within particular jurisdictions.

While the rate of population growth within the Fraser Valley is expected to slow down in relation to the past decade, the valley's population could double over the next 20 to 30 years, to approximately 450,000. The majority of population growth will occur in the three largest centres: Abbotsford, Chilliwack and Mission.

Population and employment projections are, by nature, imprecise and especially so over long periods of time. Consequently, there must be flexibility in plans in order to account for variations. The RGS proposes a number of partnerships with senior governments, First Nations and other regional districts. The proposed partnerships deal with issues of shared interest such as, but not limited to, transportation, air quality, water, parks, infrastructure, and flood control and dyke management. Some of these partnerships will require population and employment projections for different time horizons than that of the RGS. For example, transportation models often work within a 10-15 year planning horizon while a regional water resource plan may plan for a longer time frame. In addition, some joint planning processes may need to incorporate new or modified assumptions about the scale of future growth, based on emerging trends and new information. Given these considerations, the Plan acknowledges that the RGS's population and employment projections may be cooperatively reviewed and amended to respond to the needs of these future partnerships.



Employment Projections:

Employment growth will be focused in the three largest centres: Abbotsford, Chilliwack and Mission. Employment in the larger communities grew significantly between 1981 and 1996, while employment in Hope, for instance, declined. Abbotsford outperformed other sub-regions within the FVRD and accounted for a higher share of Lower Mainland employment and population growth than several subregions within the GVRD.

Employment is projected to grow between 3,200 and 4,200 jobs per year, higher than the average increase of approximately 2,400 jobs per year experienced between 1981 and 1996.

Figure 3. Employment Growth Concept Projections (20 - 30 years)

Area	1981	1996	2021 (Forecast) ⁵	No. of jobs required/year
FVRD	48,035	84,345	163,000 to 188,300	3,200 to 4,200
Abbotsford ¹	19,140	36,465	73,000 to 84,000	1,450 to 1,900
Chilliwack ²	18,605	24,060	49,000 to 54,000	1,000 to 1,200
Mission ³	5,965	8,170	13,000 to 15,000	190 to 270
Hope ⁴	3,470	2,655	3,200 to 3,300	20 to 25
No Fixed Workplace	710	12,290	25,000 to 32,000	500 to 790
GVRD	638,900	913,825	1,404,000 to 1,476,000	20,000 to 22,500
Lower Mainland	695,625	1,010,065	1,600,000 to 1,700,000	23,600 to 27,600

¹ Abbotsford includes City of Abbotsford and Subdivision D.

² Chilliwack includes the City of Chilliwack, Kent, Harrison Hot Springs and SD "B"

³ Mission includes the District of Mission, SDs "C" and "E".

⁴ Hope includes the District of Hope and SD "A".

⁵ The employment forecast is present as a range from Low Employment Growth Scenario to High Employment Growth Scenario

Source: Lower Mainland Employment Study, FVRD Subregional Profiles, Coriolis Consulting Corporation, June 1999.



Endnotes

- ¹ A Long Range Transportation Study for the Fraser Valley Regional District, Fraser Valley Regional District June 1, 2000.
- ² "Our Common Future" World Commission on Environment and Development, Oxford University Press, 1987.
- ³ FVRD Regional Growth Strategy Public Opinion Survey, Waugh Research, March 2000.
- ⁴ Air quality is defined according to the Air Quality Index which combines the various air quality pollutants into a single ambient air quality value. The lower the air quality indicator, the better the air quality level is. A level between 0-25 is considered Good, 26 - 50 Fair and 51-100 Poor, any value greater than 100 is considered Very Poor.
- ⁵ In cooperation with the GVRD, North-West Pollution Authority, the FVRD is part of an air-shed wide air quality monitoring system which measures five known contaminants: Carbon Monoxide (CO), Nitrogen Oxides (NOX), Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC), Sulphur Oxides (SoX), and Particulates (PART). In the FVRD air quality is currently monitored at three monitoring stations within the FVRD – Chilliwack, Abbotsford and Hope.
- ⁶ B.C. Conservation Data Centre, Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks.
- ⁷ Landscape Health is a term used in the *Environment and Ecological Working Paper Part 2, Quadra Planning Consultants Ltd. July 7, 1998, February 1999* and refers to the health of larger areas of land (50 to 5000 hectares) that is comprised of landforms, ecosystems and land uses.
- ⁸ Water supply for emergency response needs to meet the Fire Underwriters Survey specification.
- ⁹ Although 50% diversion rates have been reported, these statistics can be skewed by the recycling of heavy materials such as concrete, asphalt and auto hulks.
- ¹⁰ The Cache Creek Landfill is expected to reach its capacity in 2007. The GVRD is in the process of expanding its disposal capacity in the Cache Creek area through the development of a long-term landfill on the Ashcroft Ranch where the GVRD is intending to continue to serve the solid waste disposal needs of its member municipalities and its existing clients.
- ¹¹ *The Context of Change and Growth in the Fraser Valley Regional District.* David Baxter Urban Future Institute, January 1997.