

4.1 Features

The Shuswap region, for the purposes of this study, is that area that embodies the Salmon Arm Forest District and a small extension to the southwest that encompasses Falkland and area. The Forest District is primarily comprised of the Shuswap Lake drainage system from Chase to Three Valley and Yankee Flats to Seymour Pass. The countryside varies from lush valleys at approximately 350 meters (1,100 feet) through rolling hills to mountain peaks at 2,700 meters (9,000 feet).

The biophysical features of the region include large plateaus dominating the area's central and western high elevation areas. In the valley bottoms, there is a number of large lake bodies which include Shuswap Lake, Mara Lake and Mabel Lake. Smaller lake bodies include Hunakwa Lake, Anstey Arm, White Lake and Humamilt Lake.

The valleys of the Shuswap region are utilized as farms, orchards and vineyards while the lower slopes provide grazing for cattle and habitat for many wildlife such as deer, moose, bear, goat and sheep as well as various bird and waterfowl. The Shuswap Lake is a principal feature of the region, and the focal point of many tourism-related activities. To the east, the Monashee Mountains are well known for their heli-skiing opportunities.

Four biogeoclimatic (BEC) zones exist within the Shuswap region:

- The *Interior Douglas Fir* (IDF) zone is comprised primarily of a mix of Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine. Elevations range between 350 and 1,450 metres. The climate is characterized by warm dry summers and cool winters. Precipitation may exceed one meter, with 20 to 50 percent falling as snow.
- The *Interior Cedar Hemlock* (ICH) zone ranges between 660-1,400 metres and experiences cool, wet winters and warm, moderately dry summers. Snowfall is moderate to high in this area with late snowmelt occurring.
- The *Englemann Spruce-Subalpine Fir* (ESSF) zone is the highest elevation forested zone in BC's southern and central Interior. Elevations range from 1,270-2,050 metres, with long, cold winters with a high snow cover, and short, cool summers. Snowpack generally ranges from 1-4 meters and remains until late May.
- The *Alpine Tundra* (AT) zone consists of high elevation areas across the Southern Interior Plateau where mountains are sufficiently high.

The IDF zone occupies a few small western sections of the Shuswap region. The remainder of the region is typified by ICH at low elevations, ESSF at mid elevations and the AT at high elevations.