

THE CARIBOO LAND CAPABILITY ANALYSIS

The Land Capability Analysis considers the capability of the land to support agriculture, big game, forestry, recreation, and waterfowl. It is based on the principle that the land varies in its ability to support use, and that to preserve the land and to maintain its ability to respond to many uses, it should be developed in harmony with its capability. Water resources, mineral deposits, and mineral potential are not considered in this Analysis Area, but they are very important factors in land-use decisions.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Cariboo Analysis Area is characterized by a wide range of landscapes. Physiographically, it varies from the gently rolling Fraser Plateau to the rugged Coast Mountains in the southwest. The Plateau, which occupies about three-quarters of the area, is generally at an elevation of 3000 to 5000 feet; the Fraser and Chilcotin rivers have incised themselves as much as 2000 feet below the Plateau surface. A subdued mountainous terrain occurs in the Quesnel Highland to the northeast and in the Marble and Camelfoot ranges to the south. In contrast, the Pacific Ranges of the Coast Mountains in the southwest have numerous peaks over 10,000 feet.

Climatically, the Coast Mountains modify the easterly flowing air masses, whereas the relatively flat topography to the north and east permits the influx of Arctic air during the winter months. As a result, the part of the Fraser Plateau that lies to the west of the Coast Mountains has a low annual precipitation of about 13 inches.

The type and growth of vegetation reflect the climatic influences. In the western part of the Plateau, parklike stands of lodgepole pine and Douglas-fir are intermingled with open grass meadows. Also characteristic of this area are numerous lakes and an undulating terrain. In the eastern part, and in the Quesnel Highland to the northeast, an annual precipitation of 100 to 150 inches permits the growth of western hemlock, western red cedar, and Douglas-fir stands. Subalpine forests of spruce and alpine fir are found in conjunction with large areas of bare rock and glaciers at the higher elevations in both the Quesnel Highland and Coast Mountains.

The present location of communities and access routes, and the current patterns of land use, are largely an expression of development during the 19th century. Highway 97 generally follows the route of the Cariboo Wagon Road, which was constructed during the gold rush years of the early 1860s. Many of the major cattle ranches were also established at this time, and the raising of beef cattle is still an important activity. Although several communities have greatly expanded in recent years, old buildings and relics of the past are common features of the Cariboo.

PROCEDURES

The Land Capability Analysis is prepared from data taken from surveys conducted under the Canada Land Inventory program of climate and of land capability for agriculture, big game, forestry, recreation, and waterfowl. These land capability sectors have independently classified each unit of land according to a seven-class rating system in which Classes 1 signifies the highest capability. The ratings reflect the intensity of use the land will allow. The agriculture, big game, and forestry sectors occasionally use complexes of ratings consisting of two or three classes, including the percentages of each class.

The Land Capability Analysis is interdisciplinary and makes comparisons among sectors. For the purpose of the Analysis, only five of the seven capability classes are considered. They are grouped into three categories: Classes 1 to 3 lands are termed prime or high capability; Class 4 moderate capability; and Class 5, limited capability. For big game, however, Classes 1 to 2W are termed prime; Classes 3 and 3W, moderate; and Classes 4 and 5, limited capability.

The agriculture classifications used on the Land Capability Analysis map may include areas with organic soils. Organics are indicated as "O" on the published agriculture maps. Provisionally, organics have been rated and they are shown as such on agriculture manuscript maps."

The Analysis identifies the highest capability of the land for a single use. However, any or all of the five resource uses are possible in varying degrees. The Analysis was done by an appraisal process in which all sectors were given equal weight. Where the best potential was obvious, decision making was straightforward. In instances where a land unit had two or more equal capabilities, however, other criteria such as the individual rather than the group's class ratings, were introduced. Particular attention was given to the higher or lower percentage component within the sector rating where a complex has been used. Units that are too small are too distant from either agriculture or forestry lands have been allocated to another sector.

Native Range is one of two special categories used. It includes those lands that are essentially limited to the grazing of livestock and wild ungulates, and to extensive forms of recreation. Forestry and waterfowl capability is limited or nonproductive. The second special category is *Highland*, which includes alpine and associated high-elevation areas that have limited to moderate capability for big game, and limited capability for recreation. It contains summer habitat that may be of high quality for various species of big game, and may also contain some winter range for caribou, mountain goats, and mountain sheep. Capabilities for recreation are mostly for extensive activities, such as hiking, riding, mountain climbing, wildlife viewing, and hunting.

SECTOR SUMMARIES

AGRICULTURE

In the Analysis Area major climatic limitation, particularly aridity, take precedence over any soil limitations that may affect agricultural capability. Prime agricultural land has a limited distribution, and is mainly restricted to large valleys and adjacent uplands. In these locations, the combination of gentle slope gradients and more favorable climates permit a wide range of crops to be grown under irrigation, including vegetables, cereal grains, and forage crops. *Moderate Capability* lands are restricted by cold temperatures, frequent frost, and aridity and are, therefore, capable of producing only a narrow range of field crops under irrigation. Without irrigation throughout the growing season, there is a high risk of crop failure in both the *High* and *Moderate Capability* classes. At present, the highest potential of *Limited Capability* lands is for grazing.

Grazing potential in the Analysis Area is quite variable and its capability is determined to a large extent by the quantity and distribution pattern of precipitation. The largest single unit of natural grazing lands is included in the *Native Range* category.

Most of the *High Capability* lands are indicated for agriculture. Those that are not are either too small or too isolated to be significant. *Moderate Capability* lands are usually allocated when they adjoin a unit of *High Capability*.

Ranching is presently the principal agricultural enterprise and prime land is devoted largely to hay production, but a wider range of crops is possible. Winter feed (forage) can be produced on the *Moderate* and *Limited Capability* lands. An integral part of the ranching enterprise are the associated grazing lands (*Native Range*) provided by open grassland, timber range, and natural meadows.

BIG GAME

The Analysis Area contains a variety of big game species, including moose, mule deer, mountain sheep, caribou, mountain goats, black bears, grizzly bears, wolves, cougars and coyotes. Moose and mule deer are the most abundant and widely distributed wild ungulates, whereas mountain sheep, mountain goats, and caribou are more limited in distribution and abundance.

The most important lands for wild ungulates occur in and adjacent to the valleys of the main drainages, especially the Fraser and Chilcotin rivers, and on the eastern part of the Fraser Plateau. These lands support winter concentrations of ungulates, many of which summer in the Cariboo Mountains or Coast Mountains. Important moose winter ranges occur in the bottomlands of the Chilcotin, Horsefly, and Bonaparte rivers as well as in the vicinity of Horsefly, Black Creek, and Bridge Lake. Lands on the west side of the Fraser River, from Churn Creek southward, border extensive summer ranges and support some of the largest winter concentrations of mule deer in the province. Low-elevation grasslands near the junction of the Chilcotin and Fraser rivers support year-round populations of California bighorn sheep. Nearly all the most important lands for wild ungulates are indicated on the map as *Prime Big Game Range*.

Much of the plateau has a moderate capability for big game. The moderate-capability lands that support winter concentrations of wild ungulates are mainly indicated as *Moderate Big Game Range*. Moderate and limited capability plateau lands that do not support winter concentrations of wild ungulates are mainly indicated on the map as *Native Range*. Lands designated as *Native Range* support native perennial forage used by big game.

The alpine zone constitutes most of the *Highland* category. Excellent summer range for big game populations occurs on these lands, but deep snow forces most of the animals to lower elevations in winter.

Protection of the *Prime Big Game* habitat is essential for the maintenance of big game populations in the area. On lands managed primarily for forestry, big game values can be protected and increased if forest managers consider food and cover needs, particularly on those lands that support winter concentrations of big game. Travel routes between seasonal big game ranges are important and should be considered by other land users.

Competition for forage between big game and domestic livestock can be minimized by good range management practices. Such competition can be serious on low-elevation grasslands supporting concentrations of mountain sheep or deer.

FORESTRY

The forestry potential of about 45 percent of the Analysis Area is very restricted. Climatic factors, including the limited availability of soil moisture for growth, severely retard forest production west of the Fraser River. Longeope pine and Douglas-fir stands prevail on the level to rolling terrain, whereas Lodgepole pine, Engelmann spruce, and alpine fir dominate the rugged mountainous areas. Open grasslands occur adjacent to the Fraser and Chilcotin rivers and some of their tributaries. These regions have been termed Non-Productive Forests.

Limited Yield Forests, which comprise about 30 percent of the area, have lodgepole pine and Douglas-fir at lower elevations and Engelmann spruce and alpine fir at higher elevations. Low annual precipitation, severe winters, and dry hot summers restrict tree growth in this region. A large percentage of the lodgepole pine - Douglas-fir areas is allocated to the *Native Range* category. Although productivity is low, logging of existing mature timber does occur within the *Native Range* and *Limited Yield Forests*. This, however, does not preclude the possibility of managing such lands for the production of timber if economics so dictate. The *Limited Yield Forests* were retained for forestry only in areas where they were adjacent to better forest capabilities.

About 15 percent of the area contains *Moderate Yield Forests*. These lands occur mainly in the eastern part of the area and the main tree species are lodgepole pine, Douglas-fir, and Engelmann spruce. Most of the *High Yield Forests* occurs in the northeastern part of the area. Here, the increased precipitation over the moderately rugged and mountainous topography results in the occurrence of western red cedar and western hemlock, as well as lodgepole pine, Douglas-fir, and Engelmann spruce.

In general, forest management techniques should be compatible with other uses. Special care should be taken in ungulate winter range areas of high concentration and use, as well as in areas near recreation sites.

RECREATION

The area covered by the Cariboo Land Capability Analysis is one of the most significant in the province for outdoor recreation. The warm summer temperatures (70°-80° F), low precipitation, and dominant sunshine, combined with topography, water, vegetation, and wildlife, result in high potential for a wide range of outdoor recreational activities.

High-quality shoreline features are most frequent in the eastern part of the area. Prime Recreation capability for angling, cottaging, camping, boating, and beach activities predominates on the shorelines of Horsefly, Quesnel, Crooked, Canim, Mahood, Horse, Green, Bridge, and Bonaparte lakes and Lac La Hache. Similar conditions are found at Taseko, Chaunigan, Elkin, Vedan, Yohetta, and Koniak lakes to the southwest, and at McLeese, Cuisin, Tyee, Williams, Natsy, and Knox lakes to the north.

Quesnel Lake in the northeast has one of the highest recreation capabilities for a lake in the southern half of British Columbia. In addition to extensively distributed shorelines with warm exposures suited to cottaging and camping, the lake offers very high capability for angling, scenery that varies from gentle hills to snow-capped peaks, and frequent sand beaches. Its main limitation is the relatively cool summer water temperatures.

The larger tributaries of the Fraser River offer outstanding recreation possibilities. The Chilcotin River is an especially attractive river still relatively free from human exploitation and development. It offers excellent trout fishing and salmon runs and is one of the best rivers for steelhead in the province. Areas adjacent to it have very high wildlife value, interesting erosional phenomena, and excellent potential for camping, viewing, hiking and photography.

The Chilko and Taseko rivers and Big Creek also have fairly high potential for camping, viewing, and angling. To the east, the Horsefly river features high capability for camping and moderate potential for angling and canoeing, but frequently encounter small prime and moderate recreation sites on the Fraser River and on Little Gaspard and Churn creeks.

In addition to areas of intensive use around the major lakes and rivers, the uplands provide excellent opportunities for extensive recreation. The large area of *Native Range* comprises the relatively dry, undulating parts of the Fraser Plateau and is very well suited to hiking, riding, game observation, nature interpretation, and photography. The harvesting of trees and agricultural activities should be carried out so as not to impair the recreational attractions of these extensive use areas. Hundreds of lakes dot the surface of the Plateau, but few of them have shorelines suited to intensive recreational use. These areas have high potential for recreational activities such as canoeing, fly fishing, wilderness travel, and primitive camping. Some of these sites are important waterfowl and shorebird production areas, and recreation, except at the most extensive scale, would be detrimental to this resource. In winter, the Plateau has good capability for snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling; favorable snow conditions extend from mid-March to late March.

The Coast Mountains of the southwest offer a number of prime viewing and alpine areas in association with glaciers, waterfalls, alpine lakes, and dramatic mountain escarpments. The terrain in the Cariboo Mountains and the Quesnel Highland is not as spectacular, but capability is good for riding, hiking, and hunting. High local relief and fairly high seasonal snowfall provide good opportunities for downhill skiing in the mountainous uplands of the northeast and southwest. These lands are mainly included in the *Highland Category*. Small *Prime* and *Moderate Recreation* units have often been retained over forestry and big game units with equal or higher capability ratings.

Historic sites are mostly confined to the urbanized areas, such as Williams Lake, 100 Mile House, and Clinton. Many sites and small communities, such as the Gang Ranch and Alexis Creek, are also of historic significance. Archaeological sites are extremely frequent in this region, particularly along the Fraser River.

WATERFOWL

The Analysis Area contains important and extensive units of habitat for waterfowl production. The *Prime Waterfowl* units are well distributed over the grasslands on both sides of the Chilcotin River and south of Williams Lake between the Fraser and San Jose rivers. They range in size from potholes of less than an acre to complexes of numerous shallow waterbodies, each covering an area of about 2 square miles. The main limitations are lack of good marsh edge, excessive water depth, and the seasonal drying up of some potholes, particularly in dry years.

Several *Moderate Waterfowl* units are interspersed throughout the region but are mainly concentrated between the Fraser River and the San Jose River, south of Williams Lake. Some larger complexes of this class include several areas of high-potential density west and northwest of Green Lake. The capability of these units for waterfowl production is limited by marsh development, excessive water depth, and, in some instances, high salinity or alkalinity.

Limited quality wetlands occur throughout the grasslands range, mainly in the western half of the Fraser Plateau region, and make up part of the larger *Native Range* unit. These generally have low value for waterfowl production because of poor edge, low fertility, and restricted water flow. In the mountainous southern and eastern parts of the Cariboo region, the steep topography results in large, deep water bodies with closed, timbered shorelines. Here waterfowl activity is low and includes little production and light migrational use. Agricultural practices, such as the manipulation of water levels for hay production and the use of ponds for livestock watering, can improve waterfowl habitat. The *Native Range* can be similarly managed to benefit waterfowl, livestock, and wild ungulates.

QUALIFICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Although the Land Capability Analysis map shows important information about the best physical capability of the land for five uses, it represents little more than one-fifth of the original survey information. Map users must refer to individual sector maps and reports for secondary and complementary uses.

THE MAP IS NOT A LAND-USE PLAN BUT AN INDICATOR OF THE MOST FEASIBLE CAPABILITY PATTERNS BASED ON A COMPARISON OF PHYSICAL DATA. The analysis is only the first of many steps toward land-use planning. It is unweighted by almost all external considerations, such as provincial and regional patterns and socioeconomic needs of the population. It cannot substitute for on-site and regional planning and cannot be used to predict new attitudes toward integrated use.

Good management practices are of prime importance to preserve the resource base and maintain efficient resource use. Forestry practices must not only be least damaging to soil and most conducive to forest regeneration, but they must also take into account the demands and requirements of other resource users. For example, big game winter range and aesthetic requirements surrounding recreation sites and waterfowl depend upon production and migrational ponds. Recreational pursuits such as camping and cottaging must be wisely located and distributed so as not to threaten other recreational and natural features. Climate, especially wind, air drainage, and aridity should be taken into account in cropping practices. Agriculture must consider the size of farm units and proximity to a source of water for irrigation, and must follow management practices that maintain desirable soil characteristics.

*For more detailed information on the classification system used by the individual sectors, please refer to the relevant series of publications available from the Canada Land Inventory, Environment Canada, Ottawa, Ontario. Capability maps for each sector will be available upon publication from: Information Canada, Ottawa; Information Canada Bookstore, 900 Granville Street, Vancouver, or the Map Distribution Office, Lands Service, Parliament Buildings, Victoria. For information not contained in the above sources, refer to the Coordinating Chairman, B.C. Land Inventory (CL), Department of Agriculture, Parliament Buildings, Victoria, B.C.

**Manuscript maps are available from the Coordinating Chairman, British Columbia Land Inventory (CL) Department of Agriculture, Parliament Buildings, Victoria, B.C.

The Chairman and selected members of each major committee and sector crew formed a technical evaluation committee. This committee, which was directly responsible for appraisal and compilation, consisted of the following:

J. W. C. Arlidge, P. J. Bandy, A. L. Bedwany, D. R. Bellamy, W. A. Benson, D. Blower, V. C. Brink, J. C. Carrero, G. E. Cheeseman, M. F. Clark, N. A. Gough, L. Farstad, C. J. Frederickson, G. I. Howell Jones, R. C. Kowall, S. LeBaron, T. M. Lord, A. Luckhurst, R. Marshall, M. C. M. Matheson, R. H. Reid, C. A. Rowles, G. G. Runka, J. Senyk, I. Sneddon, P. N. Sprout, E. W. Taylor, W. Watt, J. A. Wood, W. C. Yeomans, and G. K. Young.

Members come from one or more of the following professional groups or their divisions: Agronomist, Biologist, Climatologist, Ecologist, Educator, Forester, Geographer, Landscape Architect, Pedologist. Now that interdisciplinary dialogue has become effective, individuals are not limited to their professional roles; hence, these have not been assigned to this persons named.

Submitted to the Deputy Ministers' Committee

by

Coordinating Chairman, W. Arthur Benson.

ANALYSE DES POSSIBILITÉS DES TERRES DU TERRITOIRE DE CARIBOO

La présente analyse des possibilités des terres porte sur leurs aptitudes physiques pour l'agriculture, le gros gibier, la forêt, la récréation et la sauvagine. Les aptitudes varient d'une région à l'autre. Pour préserver les terres elles-mêmes et en conserver l'adaptabilité à leurs nombreuses utilisations, leur gestion doit se faire en harmonie avec leurs possibilités. Bien que l'analyse ne tienne pas compte des ressources hydrauliques et des gisements minéraux connus ou possibles, ces éléments influent fortement sur les décisions concernant l'utilisation des terres.

DESCRIPTION GÉNÉRALE

La diversité des paysages caractérise le territoire de Cariboo. Les formes de son relief varient du plateau ondulé du Fraser aux montagnes accidentées de la Chaîne cottié au sud-ouest. Le plateau qui occupe environ les trois quarts du territoire, se situe à une altitude de 3 000 à 5 000 pi. Le fleuve Fraser et la rivière Chilcotin s'y sont creusé un lit allant jusqu'à 2 000 pi de profondeur. On trouve un terrain moins montagneux au nord-est, dans les hautes terres de Quesnel, ainsi que dans les chaînes Marble et Camelfoot au sud. Par contre, les chaînes du Pacifique de la Chaîne cottié présentent, au sud-ouest, de nombreux pics élevés à plus de 10 000 pi.

La Chaîne cottié influe sur le climat en faisant obstacle aux masses d'air se déplaçant vers l'est, tandis que le relief plutôt plat du nord et de l'est du territoire n'arrive pas à bloquer l'air froid provenant de l'Arctique en hiver. La partie du plateau du Fraser à l'est de la Chaîne cottié, n'enregistre que de faibles précipitations annuelles, soit environ 13 po.

Ces influences climatiques se font également sentir sur la végétation. On trouve dans la partie occidentale du plateau des peuplements de pin de Murray et de sapin de Douglas entrecoupés de prairies naturelles. Cette zone présente un relief ondulé et compte de nombreux lacs. Les précipitations annuelles de 100 à 150 po enregistrent la partie orientale du territoire et les hautes terres de Quesnel, au nord-est, favorisent la croissance de la pruche de l'Ouest, du thuya et du sapin de Douglas. Aux altitudes plus élevées, parmi les grandes étendues rocheuses et stériles, on rencontre des forêts subalpines d'épinette et de sapin concorde.

Les routes d'accès et les localités, ainsi que les formes d'utilisation actuelles des terres, découvrent largement l'activité déployée dans le territoire au cours du 19^e siècle. La route 97 suit plus ou moins le chemin Cariboo, aménagé au début des années 60 pendant la ruée vers l'or. Plusieurs des grandes exploitations d'élevage ont été établies à cette époque, et cette industrie est encore importante aujourd'hui. Il y a dans tout le territoire d'anciens bâtiments et des vestiges, même dans les localités qui ont connu une rapide expansion au cours des dernières années.

MÉTHODES DE CLASSIFICATION

La présente analyse est basée sur les données recueillies lors des études effectuées dans le cadre du programme d'inventaire des terres du Canada, sur les possibilités des terres et du climat pour l'agriculture, le gros gibier, la forêt, la récréation et la sauvagine. Les terres ont fait l'objet d'études distinctes dans ces cinq secteurs, puis elles ont été réparties en sept classes d'aptitude pour chacun, la classe 1 représentant les meilleures possibilités. Les classes indiquent l'intensité des utilisations possibles des terres. Pour les secteurs de l'agriculture, du gros gibier et de la forêt, on a à l'occasion utilisé des combinaisons groupant deux ou trois classes, les pourcentages étant indiqués pour chacune.

L'analyse des possibilités des terres est interdisciplinaire et comparative. La présente analyse ne tient compte que de cinq des sept classes d'aptitude possibles. Elles sont regroupées en trois catégories: les classes 1 à 3 s'appliquent aux zones propres à l'agriculture, les classes 4