



**LISA K. SCOTT, M.Sc., R.P.Bio.**

8703 Palmer Place  
Summerland, B.C. V0H 1Z2 Canada  
Phone: (250) 404-0115 Email: [ecomatters@shaw.ca](mailto:ecomatters@shaw.ca)

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12 August 2022

Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS)  
101 Martin Street  
Penticton, BC V2A 5J9

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**Re: Environmental Assessment of 8005 Princeton-Summerland Road, Summerland**

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The following report outlines the results of an environmental assessment on a parcel of private land located at 8005 Princeton-Summerland Road, Summerland, BC. The legal description of the private property is District Lot 2893, Osoyoos Div of Yale Land District, Portion EX PT S & W PL A67, Except Plan A67 27332. This lot will hereafter be referred to as the ‘subject property’. This report is intended to address the **Ecological Assessment Phase**, as required in the Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen’s (RDOS) Development Procedures Bylaw No. 2500, 2011.

## **1.0 BACKGROUND**

The proponent (Plateau Rousseau Estates Inc.) is proposing to subdivide the subject property into three lots of 1.0 ha, 1.2 ha and approximately 9.0 ha. The proponent had applied for and been granted a development permit in 2021 to build a single-family dwelling, driveway, septic system and associated infrastructure on the subject property (RDOS ESDP No. F2021.041-ESDP). The undersigned completed a Rapid Environmental Assessment (REA) report in 2021, as the proposed house location was within the Environmentally Sensitive Development Permit Area (ESDPA) assigned by the RDOS.

The subject property is currently designated as Resource Area (RA) under the Electoral Area “F” Official Community Plan (OCP) Bylaw No. 2790, 2018. The RA designation supports a minimum parcel size of 20 ha. The current proposal requires an amendment to the Electoral Area “F” OCP Bylaw No. 2790, 2018, in order for this subdivision proposal to proceed. These proposed changes include:

- amend the OCP designation of the subject property from Resource Area (RA) to Small Holdings (SH) and Large Holdings (LH); and
- amend the zoning of the subject property from Resource Area (RA) to Small Holdings Three (SH3) and Large Holdings Two (LH2).

As the subject property is within an Environmentally Sensitive Development Permit (ESDP) Area pursuant to Electoral Area “F” Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 2790, 2018, an Environmental Assessment Report is required.

Eco-Matters Consulting (Eco-Matters) was retained by the proponent to conduct a site investigation of the subject property to document the environmental values and present the findings in an environmental assessment (EA) report. The purpose of the EA was to assess biological conditions and

physical conditions of the subject property and recommend a development footprint respectful of sensitive ecosystems.

## **2.0 METHODOLOGY**

A background review was conducted to gather biological information regarding the subject property and surrounding parcels to help further define the fieldwork component. Eco-Matters consulted various governmental authorities and local experts regarding knowledge of rare and endangered species use within the general area through e-mail, telephone conversations and internet databases.

A Terrestrial Ecosystem (TEM) and Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory (SEI) map was reviewed to identify the plant communities on the subject property and surrounding landscapes (see Figure 1). TEM<sup>1</sup> is mapped at a scale of 1:20,000, and is often not ground-truthed due to the large area to which it applies; thus, minor distortion is possible. Due to the relatively broad scale at which the TEM was conducted, smaller, environmentally sensitive features are not necessarily captured within the mapping. Therefore, to complement the TEM, environmentally significant features were identified in the field. For the purposes of this report, an environmental feature was considered significant if the loss of the feature would affect at-risk wildlife species, potentially occurring within an area.

The undersigned completed onsite assessments on July 15, 2021, May 21, June 1 and June 20, 2022 as per RDOS terms of reference. The proponent provided a site orientation on May 21 and accompanied the biologist on June 20.

These site visits provided opportunities to ground-truth the mapping, identify environmentally significant features and document wildlife or signs of wildlife observed on the subject property. A photographic log is included in Appendix A.

## **3.0 PROPERTY DESCRIPTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING**

The 11.08 ha property is located in the Faulder area of the RDOS (Area F), west of the District of Summerland. The parcel is accessed directly off the Princeton-Summerland Road. The subject property is bordered by:

- the Princeton-Summerland Road to the north;
- the Kettle Valley Railway (KVR) trail and Trout Creek to the southwest;
- provincial public land to the west;
- another parcel owned by the proponent to the east; and
- additional private parcels to the southeast.

Using the British Columbia Biogeoclimatic Ecosystem Classification (BEC) Classification System, the subject parcel is classified as Okanagan Very Dry Hot Interior Douglas fir Variant (IDF<sub>h</sub>1). Elevation ranges from 790 metres at the north end to 690 metres at the southeast corner where it borders the KVR trail. Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory (SEI) mapping identified Coniferous Woodland as the prominent ecosystem. Terrestrial Ecosystem mapping identified Fd / Py – Bluebunch wheatgrass –

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<sup>1</sup> Ecosystem mapping is the stratification of a landscape into map units, according to a combination of ecological features, primarily climate, physiography, surficial material, bedrock geology, soil, and vegetation. TEM is a methodology that requires direct air photo interpretation of ecosystem attributes

Pinegrass (DW)<sup>2</sup> as the dominant plant community on the subject property. Both of these mapped occurrences were confirmed during the onsite assessments and are indicated in Figure 1.

Mixed aged stands of both ponderosa pine and Douglas fir occur on the property with a shrub cover dominated by common Saskatoon and an understory of spreading dogbane, arrow-leaved balsamroot, silky lupine, a variety of other forbs and perennial bunchgrasses (Photo 1).

Open Douglas fir – ponderosa pine forests are commonly on moderate to steep warm aspects with deep, medium-textured colluvial or morainal soils.



**Photo 1 – Mixed aged stands of ponderosa pine and Douglas fir occur on the subject property.**

There were several swales noted with higher moisture levels than surrounding areas and consequently slightly different plant growth, but there was no standing water nor evidence of overland flow. These swales were typically dominated by pine grass and Oregon grape.



Small rocky outcrops and talus slopes were recorded on the steep, south facing slopes leading down into Trout Creek canyon. Prominent rock bluffs and extensive talus slopes border the KVR trail (Photo 2).

**Photo 2 – Rugged terrain including rocky bluffs and talus slopes occur along the southern boundary.**

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<sup>2</sup> Provincially Blue-listed: Species or ecological communities with characteristics that make them particularly sensitive or vulnerable to human activities or natural events.



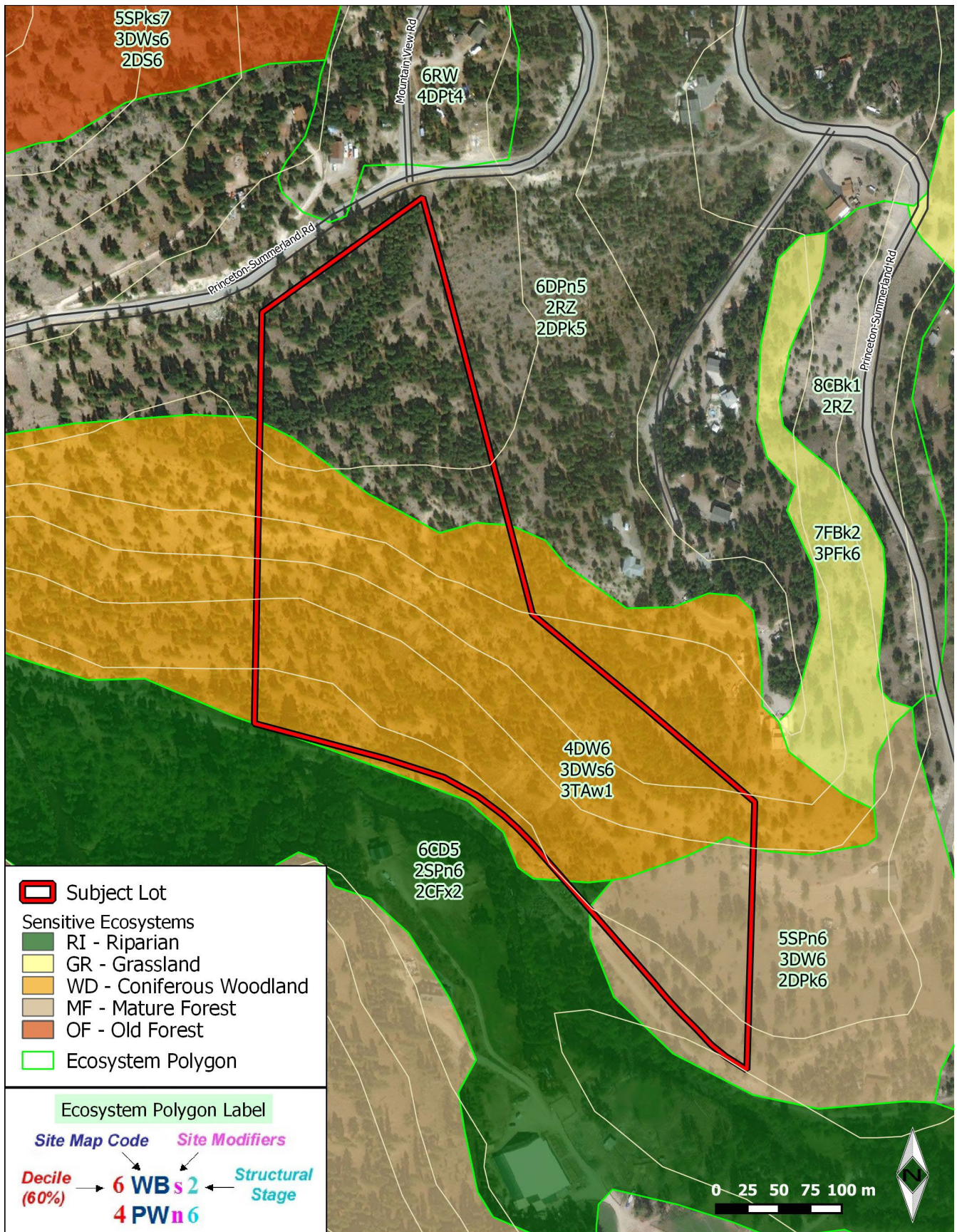


Figure 1 – Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory (SEI) and Terrestrial Ecosystem Mapping (TEM) on the subject property. Map produced by Allison Haney.





A patch of riparian vegetation supporting willow, black cottonwood, Douglas maple and water birch was observed along the southern boundary bordering the old railway bed (Photo 3). The RDOS has noted this as being within a Watercourse Development Permit Area. Historically, the area likely supported a natural meander of Trout Creek; however, the construction of the railway in the early 1900s has since provided a barrier to water flow on the subject property.

**Photo 3 – A small area of riparian habitat was recorded along the KVR trail.**

The subject property is located within ungulate winter range based on iMapBC. Game trails and deer pellets were observed throughout the property and one mule deer was recorded in July 2021. Moose pellets were recorded on the southern half of the property.

Vegetation has been cleared for the driveway access off Princeton-Summerland Road and single-family dwelling approved in 2021. Otherwise, there are limited disturbance. There are historical skid trails, most notably on the southern two-thirds of the property. There is evidence of historical clearing in the southeast corner of the property. A very low abundance of invasive plants was noted on the property, with Dalmatian toadflax being the predominant species.

#### **4.0 SPECIES AT RISK**

A data search of the Conservation Data Centre (CDC) and Regional Sightings Database, Ministry of Forests (Penticton) did not reveal any at-risk species recorded on the subject property. The property does fall within a very large CDC element occurrence for Badger (*Taxidea taxus*)<sup>3,4</sup> although this species is not anticipated to occur on the property. The subject property provides sub-optimal foraging and breeding opportunities. No badger dens were observed during the assessment.

The onsite assessment revealed the subject property to be moderately suitable for Lewis's Woodpecker (*Melanerpes lewis*)<sup>5,6</sup> although it has not been formally identified as Critical Habitat<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Provincially Red-listed: Includes any native species or subspecies that have, or are candidates for, Extirpated, Endangered, or Threatened status in British Columbia.

<sup>4</sup> Federally Endangered: A species facing imminent extirpation or extinction.

<sup>5</sup> Provincially Blue-listed

<sup>6</sup> Federally Threatened: A species that is likely to become endangered if limiting factors are not reversed.

<sup>7</sup> Under the federal Species at Risk Act (SARA), critical habitat (CH) is the habitat that is necessary for the survival or recovery of listed extirpated, endangered, or threatened species, and that is identified as CH in a recovery strategy or action plan.

Suitable foraging and nesting habitat for Lewis's Woodpecker were noted on the property and on adjacent provincial public land to the west. Approximately 40 wildlife trees (ponderosa pine and Douglas fir) were recorded on the subject property (see Photos 2 and 4) in addition to fruit-bearing shrubs and perennial grasses in the understory layer. No Lewis's Woodpeckers were observed during the assessment.



**Photo 4 – The subject property supports an abundance of wildlife trees.**

## **5.0 ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS**

The subject property supports one class of environmentally sensitive area (ESA-2) based on information gleaned through the assessment. RDOS Development Procedures Bylaw No. 2500, 2011 states that ESA-2 “...shall be applied to attribute-based Critical Habitat, locally or provincially significant ecosystems, uncommon and important to rare wildlife species.” Refer to Figure 2, which also indicates the proposed subdivision layout.

ESA evaluation is a key element in the planning process as it identifies area constraints and opportunities. The ESA criteria used in the evaluation of the subject property included: TEM/SEI mapping; rarity; landscape context; habitat suitability for species at risk (i.e. Lewis's Woodpecker); presence of important environmentally valuable resources (e.g. wildlife trees); species diversity/habitat complexity; soil disturbance; presence of invasive plants; biological integrity; and surrounding land uses.

## **6.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Wildlife trees are numerous on the property and provide a key environmentally valuable resource for a variety of wildlife. These trees may not be removed or modified without authorization.

Areas of coarse woody debris were observed throughout the property (refer to Photos 1 and 4). These are considered important habitat features and should be retained whenever possible.

Due to the presence of sensitive habitats, locations disturbed during the course of development should be seeded with a suitable dryland grass mix and/or planted to native species to prevent invasive plant establishment and provide habitat for wildlife.

Conclusions and recommendations presented in this EA report are based on visual observations of the subject property, personal interviews and other information that was available at the time of this assessment. This report is not intended to give absolute guarantees or categorically state that the proposed development guidelines, as outlined, will protect all elements of the surrounding

environment but rather it is intended to help all stakeholders involved with the project assess the potential for environmental impact and limit any such identified impacts.

If you require any further clarification regarding this assessment, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

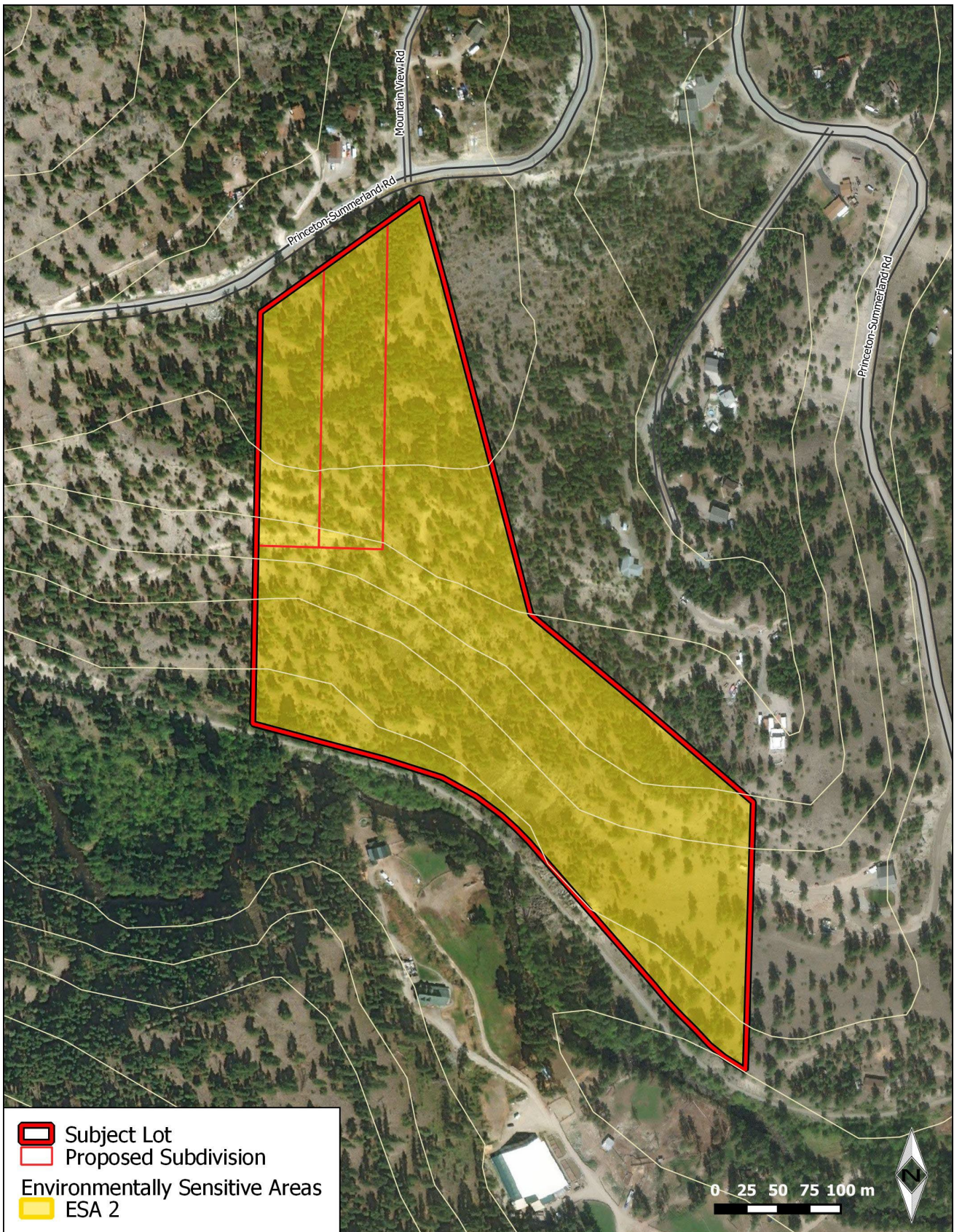
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Scott", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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Lisa Scott, MSc., RPBio





**Figure 2 – A map of the subject property showing the ESA designation and proposed subdivision layout. Map produced by Allison Haney.**