

Reay Creek Park and Readings Park Overview



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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Methods	3
3.0 Reay Creek Park	4
3.1 Site Description	4
3.2 Reay Creek Park Ecosystem Units	5
RP5sC: Western redcedar – June plum	6
CDfd5mB: Black cottonwood - Red-osier dogwood (Young forest)	8
CD3bsB: Black cottonwood - Red-osier dogwood (Shrub stage)	11
3.3 Undescribed Polygons	12
3.4 Reay Creek Park Soil Analysis	13
4. Readings Park	15
4.1 Site Description	15
4.2 Readings Park Ecosystem Units	16
DAj5tM: Douglas fir – Shore pine – Arbutus	17
YF4sM: Young Forest seral stage	19
RSj5tM: Western redcedar – Snowberry	21
CDgd5tB: Black cottonwood – Red-osier dogwood	23
DSj5tM: Douglas-fir – Salal	25
4.3 Undescribed Polygons	27
4.4 Soil Analysis	28
5.0 Discussion	30

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This project was conducted in the District of North Saanich which is located on the traditional, unceded territories of the W̱SÁNEĆ people, specifically the BOKÉĆEN (Pauquachin) and W̱SÍKEM (Tseycum) First Nations. This report was made possible by the guidance and expertise shared by Sharon Hope, and the support of the Friends of North Saanich Parks.

1. Introduction

The Friends of North Saanich Parks (FNSP) serves an important role in restoring and caring for the parks in the District of North Saanich, BC. These parks are small pockets of natural area in the district, providing essential ecosystem services and habitat for indigenous plants and animals. In addition to the ecological benefits of these parks, residents of the North Saanich community value them for recreation and enjoyment of nature.

FNSP collects data on the ecosystems found within the parks they are active in to guide the organization's restoration activities and inform the municipal staff of current conditions. This report will add to both the District and FNSP's collection of information by describing the environmental site associations, soil conditions and tree stand characteristics found within Reay Creek Park and Readings Park.

2. Methods

Reay Creek Park and Readings Park were both visited in preparation for data collection; study plots were chosen in areas representative of the vegetation, topography, and hydrology. Data collection took place in June 2024 following the protocols established in *Describing Terrestrial Ecosystems in the Field 2nd Edition* (Ministry of Forests and Range, 2010). Plot characteristics including slope, aspect, elevation, and ground cover were recorded; dominant plant species cover was estimated. One soil pit was dug in each park to investigate soil properties and tree mensuration data was collected from three plots, two in Reay Creek Park and one in Readings Park.

Site associations were determined using the Madrone Environmental Services Ltd. site associations report (2008) and terrestrial ecosystem maps were created following the Standards for Terrestrial Ecosystem Mapping (Resource Inventory Committee, 1998).

3.0 Reay Creek Park

3.1 Site Description

Reay Creek Park is a 1.86 hectare park located between Deerbrush Crescent and Highway 17. The park is the only one in which FNSP currently works with a permanent freshwater stream, Reay Creek. The creek's headwaters are located in the Victoria International Airport, and it flows into the park from the north and exits to the east, passing under Highway 17 via a culvert and into Bazan Bay. Prickly Sculpin (*Cottus asper*), Coho Salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*), Coastal Cutthroat Trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii clarkii*), and Threespine Stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus*) are all found in Reay Creek.

The area was originally settled around 1875 by the brothers William and Charles Reay former gold miners (North Saanich parks booklet) and was farmed in the 1930s (1932 aerial photograph, UVic library). The adjacent Eaglehurst housing development was built in 2017, along with an artificial wetland for storm water management constructed in the park.

Most of the park lies on the south side of Reay Creek, with roughly one third of the area occupied by the artificial wetland, peripheral rough lawn, and a community garden for the Eaglehurst development. The remaining natural area is divided into the Reay Creek riparian area, a shrub-dominated forest edge, and two forest ecosystem types along the east side of the park.

The park is highly disturbed by invasive species, predominantly English ivy (*Hedera helix*) and Daphne (*Daphne laureola*) in the conifer forest, and Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*) in the shrub-dominated edge. Informal trails constructed by a park neighbour wind through the forested areas, sometimes crossing into the highway easement past the east border. Work to remove invasive species in this park had recently begun in the summer of 2024 when this report was written.

Assessment of the vegetation in this park was limited by the extensive invasive species cover, especially in the conifer stand where the primary ground cover is English ivy. While the park is almost two hectares, the non-edge, "natural" areas make up only approximately 0.9 hectares. These small, fragmented habitats are difficult to assess with traditional forest analyses and the described site associations may not be a perfect description of the present ecosystems. Data collection was also limited to a short period in mid-June 2024 and short-lived species or species out of season may not have been recorded.

3.2 Reay Creek Park Ecosystem Units



Figure 1. Terrestrial ecosystem map of Reay Creek Park.

1. RP5sC	2. CDfd5mB	3. CD3bsB
<p>RP: Western redcedar – June plum 5: Young forest s: Single-storied stand C: Coniferous-dominated stand</p>	<p>CD: Black cottonwood - Red-osier dogwood fd: Fine-textured deep soils 5: Young forest m: Multistoried stand B: Broadleaf-dominated stand</p>	<p>CD: Black cottonwood - Red-osier dogwood 3b: Tall shrub (2-10m tall) s: Single-storied* B: Broadleaf-dominated stand</p>

* Edge is primarily shrubs of equal height with a few tree saplings slightly taller.

RP5sC: Western redcedar – June plum

Figure 2. Typical vegetation of the RP5sC polygon.

Two polygons found to the north and south sides of the Reay Creek riparian area represented the conifer-dominated forest type. The tree cover was dominated by Western redcedar (*Thuja plicata*), with some Red alder (*Alnus rubra*), Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), and Grand fir (*Abies grandis*). An unidentified maple was present throughout the polygon. The thick shrub layer was dominated by June plum (*Oemleria cerasiformis*), with Salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*), Snowberry (*Symphoricarpus albus*), and Oceanspray (*Holodiscus discolor*). The herb layer was difficult to assess because English ivy is currently the dominant ground cover in this polygon.

The tables within each ecosystem unit's section summarize the characteristics of the site used to assess the ecosystem unit, the dominant species found within the polygon, and mensuration data of the forest stand (if collected). Tree mensuration data taken within the polygon included calculating the age of four trees. Overall, the stand was single-storied and of sound health, with only one Western redcedar that had a dead top. Based on species growth tables, the stand had moderate growth.

Table 1. RP5sC Site Characteristics

Elevation	9m
Meso Slope Position	Upper slope - crest
Slope	8%
Aspect	NNE
Mineral Soil Texture	Clayey
Humus Form	Mor
Soil Moisture Regime	4 - Mesic
Soil Nutrient Regime	D - Rich

Table 2. RP5sC Dominant Species

A - Tree Layer	B - Shrub Layer	C - Herb Layer
Western redcedar (<i>Thuja plicata</i>)	June plum (<i>Oemleria cerasiformis</i>)	English ivy** (<i>Hedera helix</i>)
Douglas fir (<i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i>)	Salmonberry (<i>Rubus spectabilis</i>)	Trailing blackberry (<i>Rubus ursinus</i>)
Red alder (<i>Alnus rubra</i>)	Swordfern (<i>Polystichum munitum</i>)	

** non-native

Table 3. RP5sC Tree Mensuration Data.

Tree	Species	DBH (m)	Height (m)	Counted Age	Comments
1	Cw	81.7	29.9	n/a	Codominant, sound
2	Fd	44.2	10.7	n/a	Codominant, significant sweep present
3	Cw	51.3	27.8	92	Codominant, sound
4	Cw	75.0	26.3	n/a	Codominant, broken top
5	Cw	56.3	27.6	81	Codominant, split into two about $\frac{2}{3}$ up
6	Cw	92.3	34.6	n/a	Dominant, sound
7	Cw	55.0	30.5	n/a	Codominant, sound
8	Cw	55.0	32.9	n/a	Codominant, sound

9 ^E	Bg	62.7	34.75	99	Dominant, sound
10 ^E	Fd	49.2	27.75	99	Codominant, sound with only a slight sweep at the top

^E External to mensuration plot

CDfd5mB: Black cottonwood - Red-osier dogwood (*Young forest*)



Figure 3. Typical vegetation of the CDfd5mB polygon.

This polygon represented the park's broadleaf-dominated forest type. The polygon was found to the south of the larger conifer-dominated polygon, separated by a shallow gully with a drainage ditch issuing from the artificial wetland. The tree cover was dominated by Black cottonwood (*Populus trichocarpa*) and the shrub layer was dominated by Red-osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*). There was very little herb layer present, possibly due to the shady conditions created by the dense trees and shrubs. The soil pit for Reay Creek was dug in this polygon and the soils were found to be deep (>1m to bedrock) and clayey. Compared to the conifer-dominated polygons, this area contained lighter English ivy cover with only scattered Daphne plants.

The tree mensuration data taken in this polygon included age estimations for three trees. The stand structure was multi-storied and sound. Tree growth was good.

Table 4. CDfd5mB Site Characteristics

Elevation	13m
Meso Slope Position	Level
Slope	0%
Aspect	n/a
Mineral Soil Texture	Clayey
Humus Form	Moder
Soil Moisture Regime	4 - Mesic
Soil Nutrient Regime	D - Rich

Table 5. CDfd5mB Dominant Species

A - Tree Layer	B - Shrub Layer	C - Herb Layer
Black cottonwood (<i>Populus trichocarpa</i>)	Red-osier dogwood (<i>Cornus sericea</i>) Willow (<i>Salix sp.</i>) Snowberry (<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>)	Trailing blackberry

Table 6. CDfd5mB Tree Mensuration Data

Tree	Species	DBH (m)	Height (m)	Counted Age	Comments
1	Act	116.5	38.9	n/a	Dominant, one trunk split in two about ½ up
2	Act	32.0	21.2	n/a	Intermediate, slight sweep but sound
3	Act	54.6	32.8	n/a	Codominant, sound
4	Act	25.25	22.4	31	Intermediate, sound
5	Act	26.8	32.7	44	Codominant, sound
6	W	11.8	22.6	27	Intermediate, Sweep at top

CD3bsB: Black cottonwood - Red-osier dogwood (*Shrub stage*)



Figure 3. Typical vegetation of the CD3bsB polygon.

This polygon covers the shrub-dominated edge of the forested areas in the park. The polygon is bordered by a rough lawn and gravel trail along its west edge and forested polygons on its east edge. Trees in this polygon were Black cottonwood and Red alder pole saplings with the exception of one large Red alder. The area was primarily Red-osier dogwood, two willow species, and Himalayan blackberry. A formal site description and mensuration plot were not completed.

Table 7. CD3bsB Dominant Species

A - Tree Layer	B - Shrub Layer	C - Herb Layer
Black cottonwood	Red-osier dogwood	Creeping buttercup** (<i>Ranunculus repens</i>)
Red alder	Willows	Bull thistle** (<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>)
	Himalayan blackberry** (<i>Rubus armeniacus</i>)	

** non-native

3.3 Undescribed Polygons

The Reay Creek Riparian Area and Artificial Wetland are the two remaining polygons in the terrestrial ecosystem map of Reay Creek Park. These polygons were not described with site associations like the previous sections, but will be briefly discussed here.

The Reay Creek Riparian Area is a depression in the greater park topography and contains a tall shrub layer of Red-osier dogwood and willow species shading the creek. Skunk Cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*) is found throughout the riparian area but occurs in a large patch near the north border of the park.

The Artificial Wetland was constructed about 2017 as a stormwater catchment pond for the adjacent Eaglehurst development. The edges of the pond were planted with native plants including Hardhack (*Spiraea douglasii*), Snowberry, and Nootka rose (*Rosa nutkana*). Himalayan blackberry, Creeping buttercup, and Bull thistle are present in this polygon.

3.4 Reay Creek Park Soil Analysis

The soil pit for this report was dug to approximately 1m deep in the broadleaf-dominated polygon of the park at the coordinates 48.63396, -123.41123. The soils present at Reay Creek were determined to belong to the Brunisolic order with an Ah layer 22cm thick and a Bm layer 22-32cm thick. Corroded screws were found buried approximately 10cm deep in the Ah layer. The age of these screws could not be determined because factors like exact metal composition, initial burial depth, and soil moisture conditions over time are unknown.

Water was added to soil from all horizons for texture description, but the soil was assessed dry for colour description. The total rooting depth was measured at 69cm.



Figure 4. Soil profile of the Reay Creek Park soil pit.

Table 8. Reay Creek soil description data.

Horizon	Depth (cm)	Texture	Coarse Fragments	Colour	Roots	Comments
LFH	0-4 +/- 2	Sticks, leaves, exposed mineral soil in places				
Ah	0-22	SiCL	<1% fine sand	5YR 2.5/2 dry	Frequent fine, occasional medium	Medium to coarse granular structure.
Bm	22-42 +/- 10	SiC	5% fine sand, 1% subangular gravels, 1% subangular cobbles	5YR 3/2 dry	Infrequent fine	Fine to medium angular blocky structure. Very friable. Wavy B-C horizon
Cg	51+	Si	2% subangular gravels, 1% subangular cobbles	10YR 6/3 dry	Rare fine, rare medium	Medium to coarse angular blocky structure, very friable; Mottling infrequent fine, 7.5YR 4/4; Large cobble in pit wall
C (pocket embedded in the Cg layer)	53-74	S	5% subangular sand	10YR 5/2 inferred from missing colour tile	None	Pocket within C horizon, 100% sand within the pocket; Fine to medium granular structure
Other notes: The soil pit was excavated in a level position at an elevation of 12m above sea level and a slope of 0%.						

4. Readings Park

4.1 Site Description

Readings Park is located on a gentle, south-facing slope at the corner of Readings Drive and Hillgrove Street. Topographic features of the park include an excavated, ephemeral stream leading from a gully and several other drainage ditches. Strata 804 has a major holding along the east side of the park and there are private lots to the north and southwest. District trails run through the park and connect to the neighbouring Sumac Park. Historically the park was logged and two human-caused fires occurred in 1924 and 1925 to the east and west of the park (B.C. Conservation Data Centre). This history of human activity and disturbance has created a complexity of micro topography and rapid changes between vegetation types.

Four ecosystem types were found within the park boundaries, two broadleaf-dominated types and two mixed forest types. The dominant tree cover across the park included Black cottonwood, Bigleaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), and Western redcedar. Some areas of the park have a very high density of young trees and snags. Several invasive species were found throughout the park including English Ivy, Himalayan blackberry, Daphne, and English holly (*Ilex aquifolium*). Invasive species removal work was ongoing in the summer of 2024 when this report was written.

4.2 Readings Park Ecosystem Units

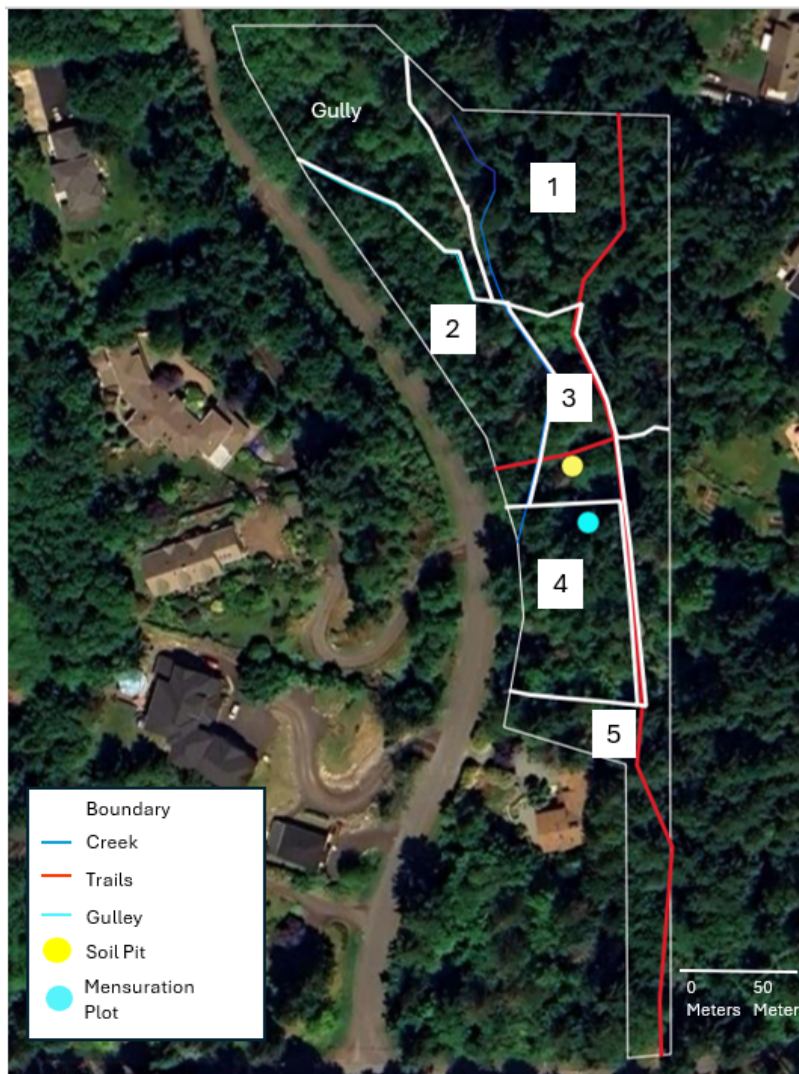


Figure 5. Terrestrial ecosystem map of Readings Park.

1. DAj5tM	2. YF4sM	3. RSj5tM	4. CDgd5tB	5. DSj5tM
<p>DA: Douglas fir-Shore pine-Arbutus j: Gentle slope 5: Young forest t: Two-storied M: Mixed stand composition</p>	<p>YF: Seral stage - Maple and alder dominated 4: Pole/Sapling s: Single-storied M: Mixed stand composition</p>	<p>RS: Western redcedar -Snowberry high bench floodplain j: Gentle slope 5: Young forest t: Two-storied stand M: Mixed stand composition</p>	<p>CD: Black cottonwood – Red-osier dogwood medium bench floodplain g: Gullying d: Deep soils 5: Young forest t: Two-storied stand B: Broadleaf-dominated stand</p>	<p>DS: Douglas-fir-Salal j: Gentle Slope 5: Young Forest t: Two-storied stand M: Mixed stand composition</p>

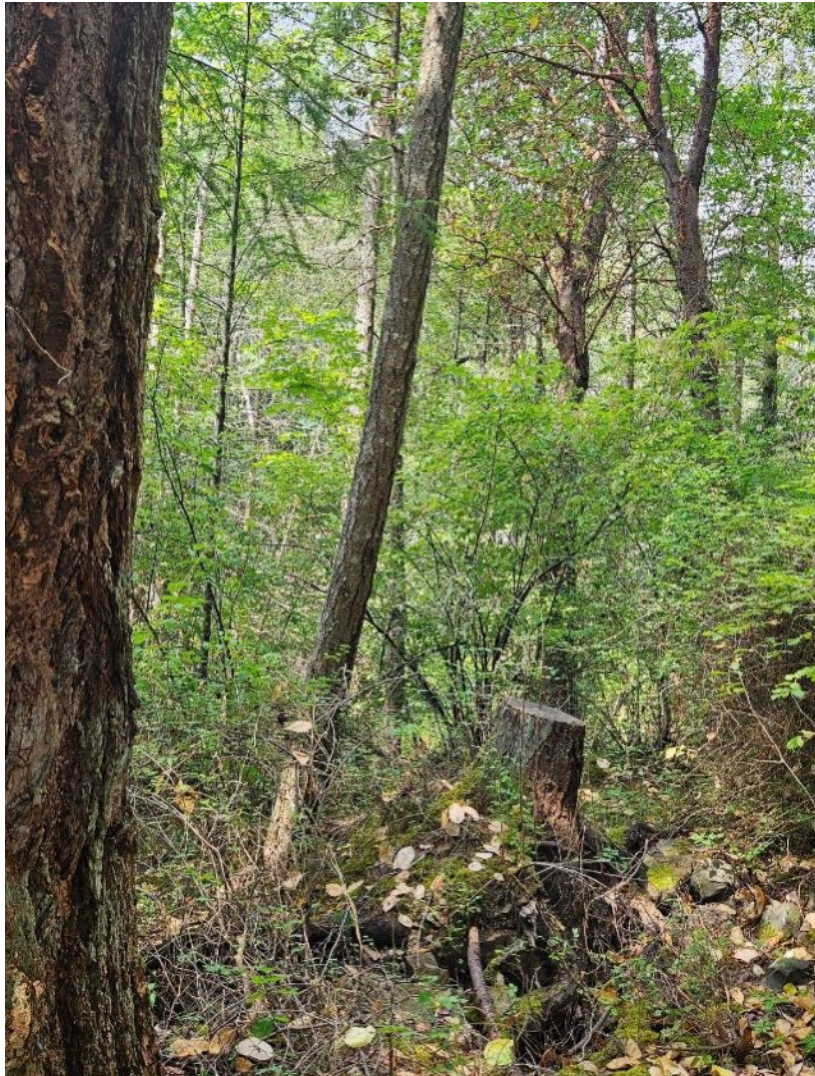
DAj5tM: Douglas fir – Shore pine – Arbutus

Figure 6. Typical vegetation of the DAj5tM polygon.

This polygon occurs in the north side of the park, at the crest of a slope. Bordered by a gully, a road, and the Western Redcedar-Snowberry site, this area was dominated by mature Douglas fir and Arbutus (*Arbutus menziesii*) trees. June plum and Oceanspray dominate the shrub layer, while Swordfern and Trailing blackberry dominate the herbs. This section of the park has a connecting trail to the neighbouring park, Sumac.

Table 9. DSj5tM Site Characteristics

Elevation	119m
Meso Slope Position	Crest
Aspect	SW
Humus Form	Mull

Table 10. DSj5tM Dominant Species

A – Tree Layer	B – Shrub Layer	C – Herb Layer
Western redcedar	Oceanspray (<i>Holodiscus discolor</i>)	Trailing blackberry
Douglas fir	June plum	Swordfern
Arbutus (<i>Arbutus menziesii</i>)	Daphne**	Bracken fern (<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>)
		Himalayan blackberry**
		English ivy**

** non-native

YF4sM: Young Forest seral stage

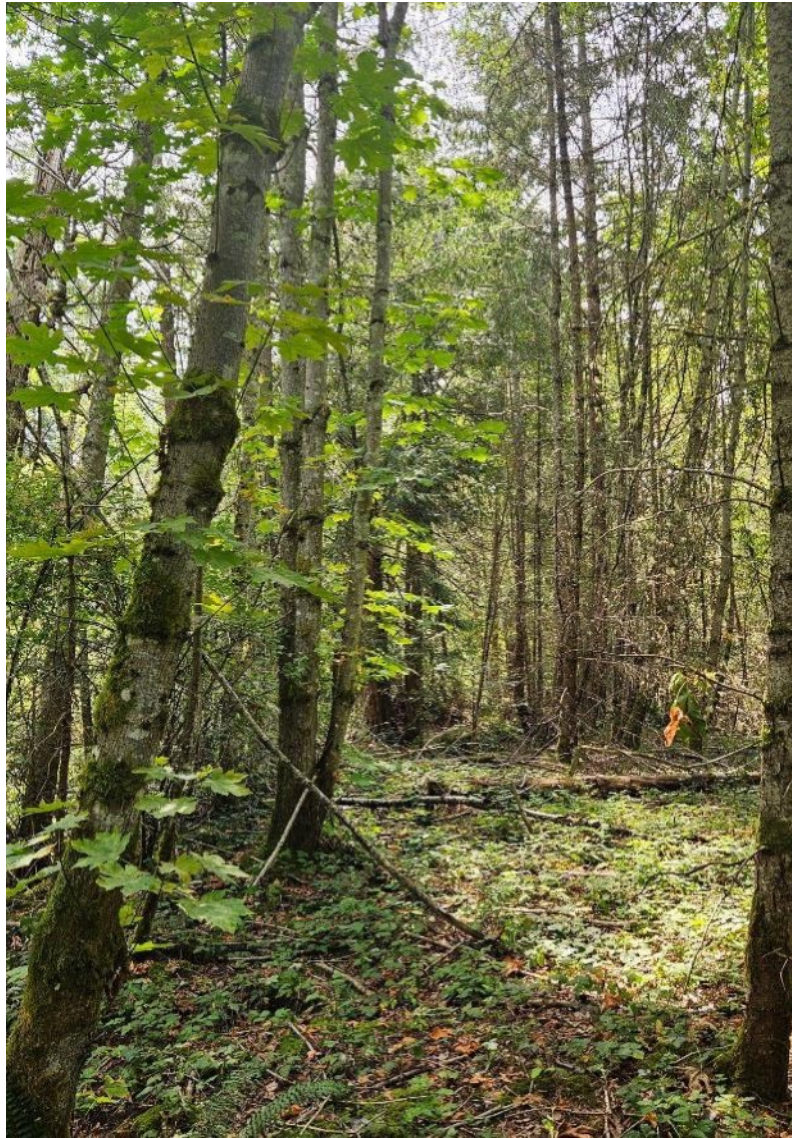


Figure 7. Typical vegetation of the YF4sM polygon.

This polygon is located in the northwest area of the park and is bordered by Readings Drive, the ephemeral stream, and the gully. The site is dominated by young Bigleaf maple and Red alder. There were many old Himalayan blackberry plants found closer to the road within this polygon. Most of this polygon contains young seral stage trees but some scattered mature trees also occur.

Table 11. YF4sM Site Characteristics

Elevation	108
Meso Slope Position	Terrace
Humus Form	Mull

Table 12. YF4sM Dominant Species

A – Tree Layer	B – Shrub Layer	C – Herb Layer
Western redcedar	Himalayan blackberry**	Trailing blackberry
Bigleaf maple (<i>Acer macrophyllum</i>)	Daphne**	Swordfern
Red alder		

** non-native

RSj5tM: Western redcedar – Snowberry

Figure 8. Typical vegetation of the RSj5tM polygon.

This polygon is surrounded by trails and the ephemeral stream and is bordered by the Black cottonwood – Red-osier dogwood area to the South, and the Douglas fir – Shore Pine – Arbutus section to the North. Western redcedar, Bigleaf Maple, and Douglas fir dominate the tree layer, while Snowberry and Red-osier dogwood are common within the shrub layer. This section contained many invasive Himalayan blackberry and Daphne plants. The soil pit is located within the Southern area of this polygon, which is expanded upon in Section 4.4.

Table 13. RSj5tM Site Characteristics

Elevation	110
Meso Slope Position	Middle Slope
Slope	14%
Aspect	190 SW
Humus Form	Mull

Table 14. RSj5tM Dominant Species

A – Tree Layer	B – Shrub Layer	C – Herb Layer
Red alder	Salmonberry	Threeleaf foamflower (<i>Tiarella trifoliata</i>)
Bigleaf maple	Thimbleberry (<i>Rubus parviflorus</i>)	Swordfern
	Sedges (<i>Carex spp.</i>)	English ivy**
	Daphne**	
	Himalayan blackberry**	
	English holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>)	

** non-native

CDgd5tB: Black cottonwood – Red-osier dogwood



Figure 9. Typical vegetation of the CDgd5tB polygon.

Bordered by two roads and the Western Redcedar-Snowberry section in the Southern half of the park, this polygon is dominated by mature Black cottonwood trees, with the shrub layer dominated by Oceanspray and June plum. Within the herb layer, Swordfern and Trailing blackberry were the two most common plants found, with Daphne as a commonly found invasive species.

Mensuration data was taken for this polygon, which shows that the average height, diameter, and age are 28.96 meters, 0.45 meters, and 38 years old respectively. A total of four trees were cored for age analysis but only two cores could be extracted due to high levels of

sap. The largest tree within the stand had too large a diameter to be cored with the available increment borer. The stand was sound overall and determined to have good growth conditions.

Table 15. CDgd5tB Site Characteristics

Elevation	103
Meso Slope Position	Level
Slope	3%
Aspect	190 SW
Mineral Soil Texture	Silty Clay Loam
Humus Form	Mull
Soil Moisture Regime	Udic

Table 16. CDgd5tB Dominant Species

A – Tree Layer	B – Shrub Layer	C – Herb Layer
Black cottonwood Red alder	Red-osier dogwood Snowberry Oceanspray Daphne** Himalayan blackberry**	Swordfern Trailing blackberry English ivy**

** non-native

Table 17. CDgd5tB Tree Mensuration Data

Tree	Species	DBH (m)	Height (m)	Counted Age	Comments
1	Ac	0.42	26.6	37	Codominant, sound with slight sweep at the top.
2	Ac	0.28	27.95	n/a	Codominant, sound.
3	Ac	0.16	29.2	n/a	Codominant, sound.
4	Ac	0.36	27.07	n/a	Codominant, sound.

5	Ac	0.32	21.5	n/a	Codominant, sound.
6	Ac	1.24	42.9	n/a	Dominant, sound.
7 ^E	Ac	0.36	27.5	39	Codominant, sound.

^E External to plot

DSj5tM: Douglas-fir – Salal



Figure 10. Typical vegetation of the DSj5tM polygon.

This polygon occurs in the west side of the park, extending the length of the park. Bordered by a fence, the Western Redcedar-Snowberry site, the Douglas Fir-Shore Pine-

Arbutus site, as well as the Black Cottonwood-Red-osier Dogwood site, this area was dominated by mature Douglas fir and Western redcedar trees. Salal (*Gaultheria shallon*) and June plum dominate the shrub layer, while Swordfern and Trailing blackberry dominate the herbs. This section of the park connects to Hillgrove Street.

Table 18. DSj5tM Site Characteristics

Elevation	103m
Meso Slope Position	Mid slope
Aspect	SW
Humus Form	Mull

Table 19. DSj5tM Dominant Species

A – Tree Layer	B – Shrub Layer	C – Herb Layer
Western redcedar	Salal (<i>Gaultheria shallon</i>)	Trailing blackberry
Douglas fir	June plum	Dull Oregon-grape (<i>Berberis nervosa</i>)
Arbutus	Daphne**	Bracken fern (<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>)
	Himalayan blackberry**	English ivy**

** non-native

4.3 Undescribed Polygons

The gully in the northwest corner of the park is the remaining polygon in the terrestrial ecosystem map of Readings Park not described with site associations. The gully is a depression in the greater topography of the park bordered by the young forest seral stage polygon to the west and the DAj5tM polygon to the east. The gully is contained to the north by an artificial rocky elevated trail and connects to the ephemeral stream.

The gully is a wetter habitat than the surrounding areas of the park indicated by species like Skunk Cabbage, sedges, and Salmonberry. The canopy is maple-dominated with some Western redcedar.

4.4 Soil Analysis

The soil pit was located within the Western Redcedar-Snowberry site association at the coordinates 48.68933, -123.44424, less than ten meters from the trail, on a slope of 3%. The soils were found to be borderline between a Brunisolic and a Gleysolic soil, which was attributed to a high and fluctuating water table. The Ah layer is 19 cm deep, and the Bmg layer is split into two sections Bmg1 and Bmg2 which are 19-36 cm and 36-54 cm deep respectively. The water table was encountered at a depth of 36 cm.

Soils from the Ah and Bmg1 horizons were moist when descriptions were completed. Soils from the Bmg2 and Cg horizons were saturated as they were below the water table. Water was bailed from the soil pit when descriptions were completed and the water recharge rate was noted as being very fast. The total rooting depth was measured at 75cm below the surface.



Figure 11. Soil profile of the Readings Park soil pit.

Table 20. Readings Park soil description data.

Horizon	Depth (cm)	Texture	Coarse Fragments	Colour	Roots	Comments
LFH	0-1	Leaves, sticks, branches, moss				
Ah	0-19	SiCL	5% cobbles, 5% sands	10YR 2/2 Moist	Frequent fine and medium	Medium to coarse angular blocky structure; Very dark colour
Bmg1	19-36	SCL	5% gravels, 10% cobbles, 5% sands	7.5YR 3/2 Moist	Infrequent fine, and rare medium	Medium to coarse, granular structure; Shale fragments present, gleyed type soil
Bmg2	36-54	SC	5% gravels, 15% cobbles	10YR 4/3 Wet	Infrequent fine to medium	Medium to coarse, angular blocky structure; Very saturated below the water table
Cg	54+	SL	10% gravels, 10% cobbles, 60% sands	10YR 5/8 Wet	Rare fine	Medium to coarse, subangular blocky structure; Very saturated; Mottles frequent medium, 10YR 4/6 sandy silt
Other notes: The soil pit was excavated in a depression location at 96m above sea level, 3% slope, and an aspect of 190°S.						

5.0 Discussion

Reay Creek Park and Readings Park share similarities because both are young forest stands with histories of disturbance from agriculture, logging, or fire. Both parks today are isolated in the larger landscape, fragmented by roads and development. Readings Park had more complex micro topography within its border, influencing the wide range of conditions and larger number of identified site associations. Although Reay Creek had fewer site associations, the extensive invasive species cover may have influenced the analysis of native vegetation.

Both parks may experience changes to their stand structures or vegetation site associations in the future as their forests mature, invasive species are removed, and climate change influences local environmental conditions. The findings of this report are documentation of the current vegetation communities and both parks should be revisited and reassessed in the future.

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