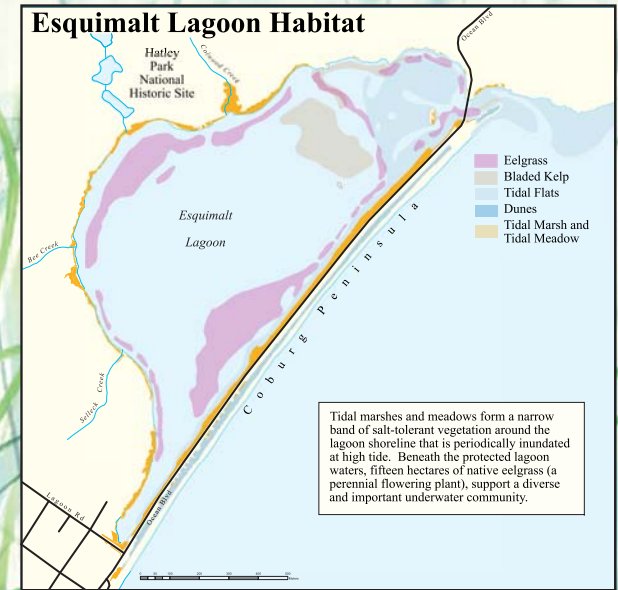


Estuary Habitats at Esquimalt Lagoon

Esquimalt Lagoon and Coburg Peninsula form a semi-enclosed tidal estuary where the dynamic mixing of fresh water and salt water is influenced by the tidal flow through the lagoon entrance. Eelgrass, tidal marshes and tidal meadows are types of estuary habitats that occur at Esquimalt Lagoon and they represent some of the most sensitive and ecologically significant habitats on earth.

These estuary habitats provide a sanctuary for many species of waterfowl and marine plants and animals, store nutrients for larval and juvenile marine life and serve as breeding grounds for many species of fish. They also perform important ecosystem services such as filtering pollution from urban runoff before it reaches the lagoon, retaining and slowly releasing rainwater to the lagoon, and preventing erosion by trapping sediment with dense roots and dampening wave action with their foliage.



Help protect sensitive estuary habitats

- **Watch where you step.** Estuary plants are very sensitive to trampling and can be destroyed when walked on. Please be aware of where you and your dog are walking and stay on the existing pathway on the lagoon side.
- **Protect a wide buffer of shoreline vegetation.** A vegetated shoreline helps to filter pollutants from surface water flowing into the lagoon, protects the soil from eroding and provides habitat for fish and other wildlife.
- **Let eelgrass thrive.** Avoid the construction of seawalls, docks and other structures that can shade out and destroy eelgrass. Ensure that sediment from land-based construction activities is contained to prevent it from flowing into nearby streams or the lagoon where it can smother estuary vegetation.
- **Navigate with care.** Avoid navigating watercraft through eelgrass beds or near sensitive estuary vegetation to minimize damage to these habitats and disturbance of the species that inhabit them.

Eelgrass

Eelgrass produces tiny yellow flowers on the blades of the plant. Pollen is spread on or under the surface by currents. The plant can also reproduce with shoots that grow from an underground, horizontal stem.

Red Algae

Eelgrass blades provide a surface for other marine algae to grow. These algae are the favorite food of isopods and other invertebrates.

Bay Pipefish

Cutthroat Trout

Eelgrass provides cover for sea-run cutthroat trout and is excellent rearing habitat for coho smolts and juvenile chinook salmon.

Hooded Nudibranch

Coho Salmon Smolt

Juvenile Chinook Salmon

Plumose Anenome

Herring (laying spawn)

Historically, herring used the eelgrass in the lagoon for spawning and shelter.

Vosnesensky's Isopod

Kelp Crab

Many marine animals, such as crabs, sea stars, clams, snails and anemones spend all or part of their lifecycle in eelgrass.

Nuttall's Cockle

Butter Clam

First Nations once harvested butter clams from the lagoon.

Pacific Littleneck Clam

Eccentric Sand Dollar

Clam Worm

Three-spined Stickleback



Funding for these signs generously provided by: