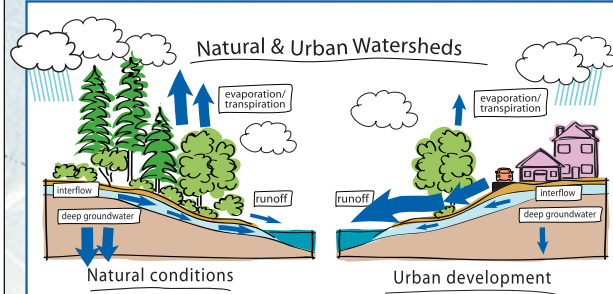
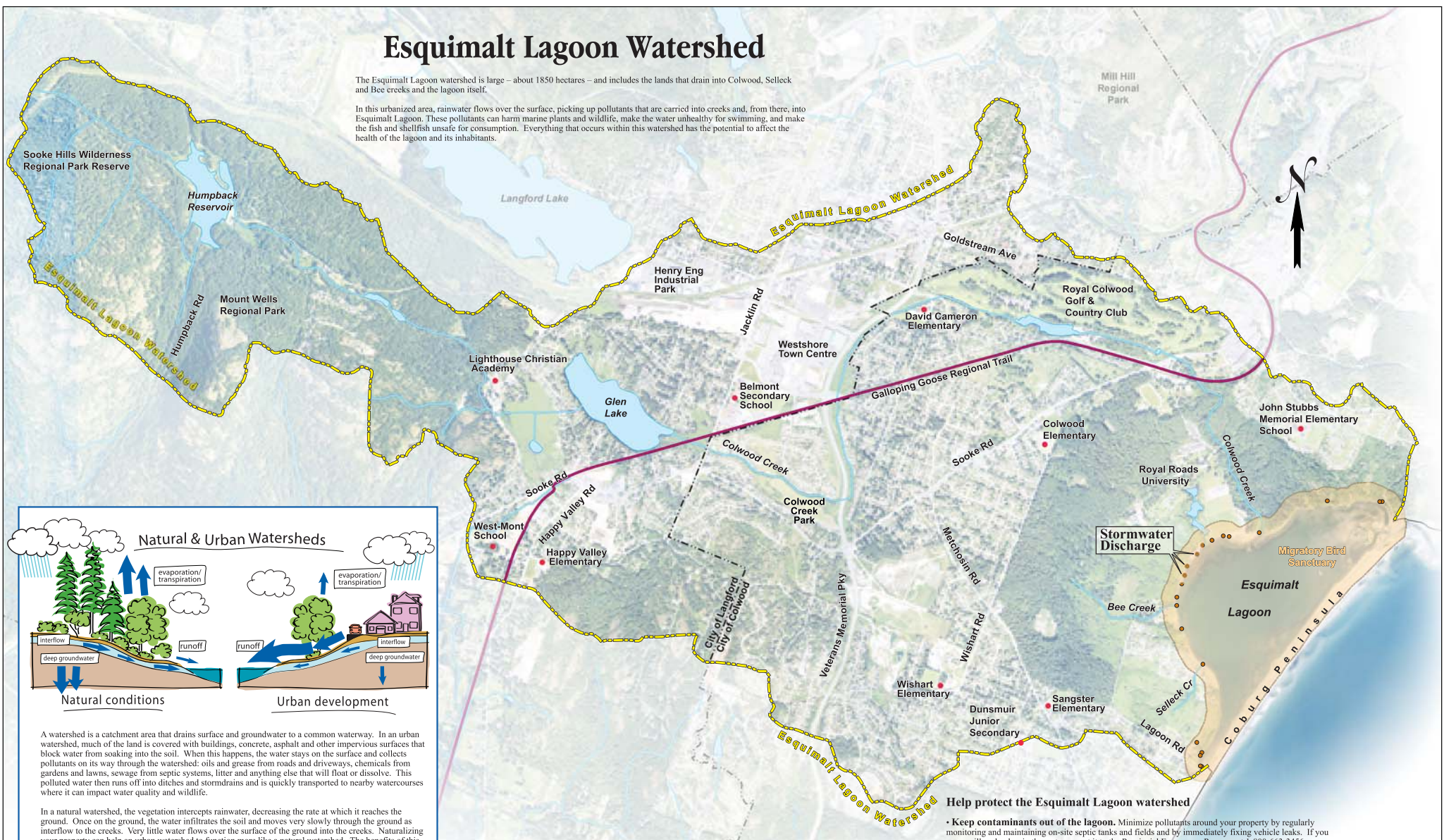


Esquimalt Lagoon Watershed

The Esquimalt Lagoon watershed is large – about 1850 hectares – and includes the lands that drain into Colwood, Sellick and Bee creeks and the lagoon itself.

In this urbanized area, rainwater flows over the surface, picking up pollutants that are carried into creeks and, from there, into Esquimalt Lagoon. These pollutants can harm marine plants and wildlife, make the water unhealthy for swimming, and make the fish and shellfish unsafe for consumption. Everything that occurs within this watershed has the potential to affect the health of the lagoon and its inhabitants.



A watershed is a catchment area that drains surface and groundwater to a common waterway. In an urban watershed, much of the land is covered with buildings, concrete, asphalt and other impervious surfaces that block water from soaking into the soil. When this happens, the water stays on the surface and collects pollutants on its way through the watershed: oils and grease from roads and driveways, chemicals from gardens and lawns, sewage from septic systems, litter and anything else that will float or dissolve. This polluted water then runs off into ditches and stormdrains and is quickly transported to nearby watercourses where it can impact water quality and wildlife.

In a natural watershed, the vegetation intercepts rainwater, decreasing the rate at which it reaches the ground. Once on the ground, the water infiltrates the soil and moves very slowly through the ground as interflow to the creeks. Very little water flows over the surface of the ground into the creeks. Naturalizing your property can help an urban watershed to function more like a natural watershed. The benefits of this are reduced stormwater runoff, improved water quality and better wildlife habitat.

Help protect the Esquimalt Lagoon watershed

- **Keep contaminants out of the lagoon.** Minimize pollutants around your property by regularly monitoring and maintaining on-site septic tanks and fields and by immediately fixing vehicle leaks. If you see a spill on land or in the water, report it to the Provincial Emergency Program at 1-800-663-3456.
- **Naturalize your property.** Keep your property well vegetated with native plants and trees and landscape your property to minimize hard surfaces that do not allow rainwater to infiltrate into the soil.
- **Minimize the use of chemicals.** Excessive use of herbicides, pesticides and other yard and garden chemicals can kill or damage eelgrass beds and the animals that live in them. Select non-toxic or biodegradable gardening and household products and use them sparingly.
- **Be a community steward.** As we live and work in the watershed, the choices we make in our daily lives affect the Esquimalt Lagoon and its watershed. Get involved with a community stewardship group to learn more about how you can help protect the lagoon and its watershed.

