

ECOTRUST GIS: PUTTING WATERSHEDS ON THE MAP

A watershed, or basin, is an area defined by a ridgeline and drained by a single river or river-system. Since Ecotrust's inception in 1991, our mission has included an effort to inventory and assess the watersheds of this region. These assessments allow us both to prioritize protection and restoration activities within watersheds and to monitor trends on the ground.

That first year we performed an inventory of watersheds in the coastal temperate rain forest of British Columbia. The results identified the 275,000-hectare Kitlope as the largest undeveloped coastal temperate watershed in the province and, as we later verified, in the entire world.

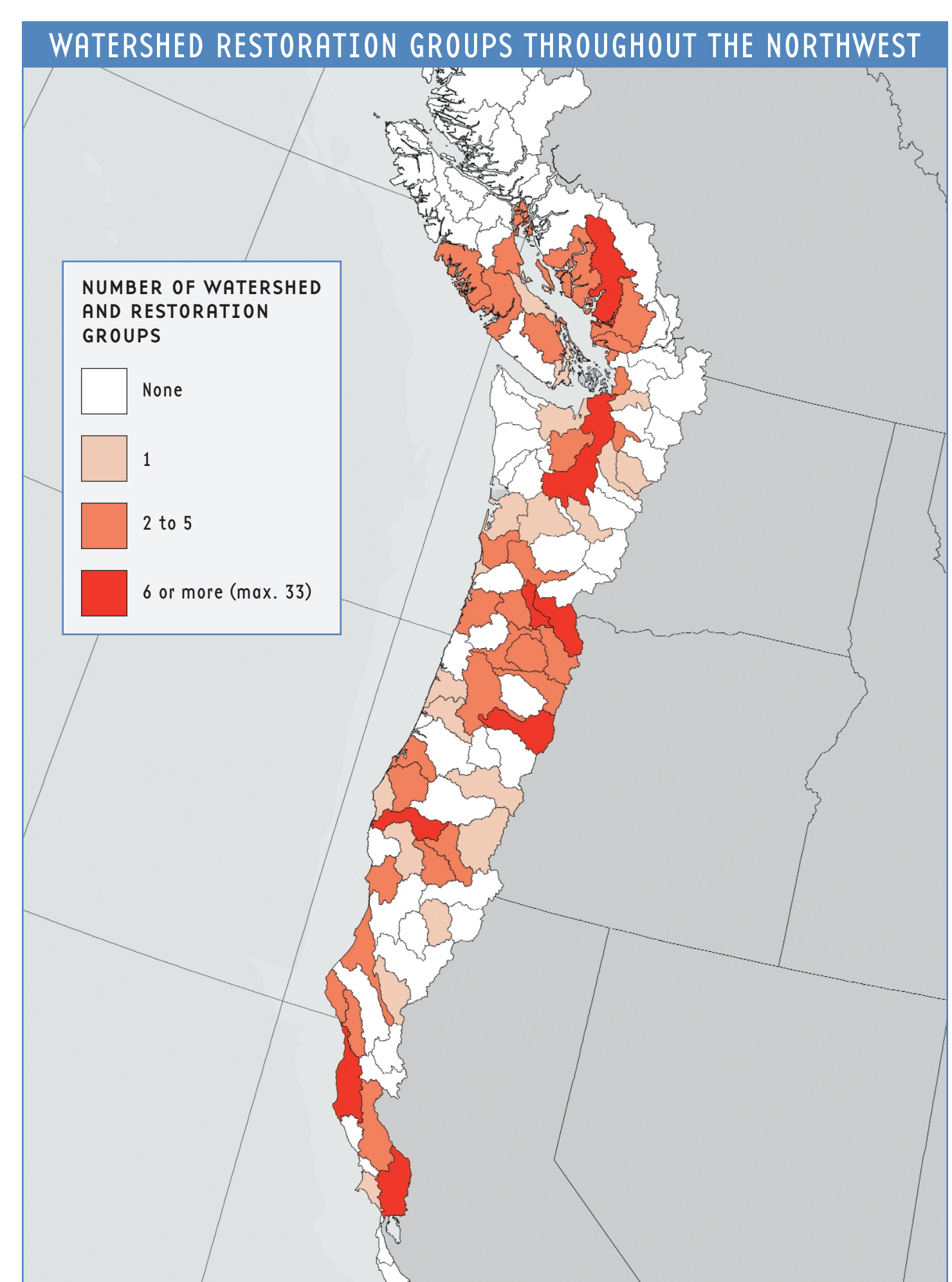
The Kitlope is traditional Haisla territory and we soon discovered that Haisla leaders had recently initiated efforts to regain this land as part of their cultural heritage. The findings of our inventory bolstered their claim. In 1994 the West Fraser Timber Company, which held logging rights to the Kitlope, bowed to increasing pressure and relinquished those rights without condition or compensation. The BC Provincial Government and the Haisla now jointly manage the watershed as the Kitlope Heritage Conservancy Protected Area.

Today, Ecotrust GIS brings its experience to the aid of communities, agencies and organizations on a contractual basis through Ecotrust Consulting Initiatives (ECI). Clients have included the US Forest Service, Portland Metro, watershed councils and First Nations bands. Examples of some of this work are featured on this wall. A recent assessment for the Siuslaw Basin Council included evaluations of ecological capital, ownership patterns and potential threats for each of more than a hundred catchments in the basin, analysis that will help determine the most important protection and restoration projects the watershed.

The number of civic groups organized around watershed boundaries has risen dramatically in recent years. Watershed councils can bring a wide variety of stakeholders to the table and create a sense of stewardship for places defined not by political demarcations but by ecological characteristics.

“Organizing our social and ecological response to declining water quality and salmon runs along hydrological boundaries is necessary to protect and restore the lands and waters that are critical to both our health and the health of our ecosystem.”

– Ken Bierly
Oregon Watershed
Enhancement Board



GIS DEFINED

GIS stands for Geographic Information Systems, a computer-based system for the storage, analysis and display of geographically-referenced data.

FOR MORE
INFORMATION,
CONTACT:
GIS@ECOTRUST.ORG

