

4.17 ESSFmw - Moist Warm Engelmann Spruce - Subalpine Fir Subzone

DISTRIBUTION: The ESSF occurs at high elevations in subcontinental areas along the eastern extremities of the Vancouver Forest Region. Elevational ranges vary from approximately 1300 to 1650 m in the south; and from 1200 to 1550 m in the north.

CLIMATE (Table 17): The ESSFmw has long, cold winters featuring heavy snowfall, and short, cool summers. The continental temperature regime is moderated somewhat by its proximity to the Pacific Ocean. This is the mildest subzone of the ESSF zone. Total snowfall is high, resulting in substantial snowpacks that can persist into June. Soils may freeze when temperatures drop in the fall before a snowpack forms.

VEGETATION (Table 13): Forests on zonal sites are dominated by Bl, Se, and, to a lesser extent, Ba. Pl is common in fire-regenerated early successional stands. Ba and Hm may dominate in the upper reaches of narrow valleys and on steep northerly aspects (refer to MHmm2 in these situations). The understorey is dominated by black huckleberry, white-flowered rhododendron, *Pleurozium schreberi*, and *Rhytidiopsis robusta*. Less common species include one-sided wintergreen, Sitka valerian, and five-leaved bramble. Snow avalanche tracks, dominated by slide alder, commonly bisect the continuous forest in the ESSFmw. Upper elevations grade into discontinuous forests of the parkland subzone (ESSFmwp).

DISTINGUISHING ADJACENT UNITS FROM THE ESSFmw (using zonal sites)

IDFww - occurs below; it has:

- no Bl or Se
- common Fd

CWHms - occurs below and adjacent, it has:

- rare Bl and Se
- common Hw, Ba, Fd, and Cw

CWHws2 - occurs below north of Knight Inlet; it has:

- rare Bl and Se
- common Hw, Ba, Alaskan Blueberry, and *Hylocomium splendens*