

Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge

Major Habitat Types and Wildlife Typical of the Refuge

Major Habitat Types

Estuarine



The estuary is a complex and highly integrated system that serves as critical habitat for migratory waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors, waterbirds, and salmon. Estuarine habitats include aquatic bed, unconsolidated shore, and vegetated intertidal areas. Eelgrass beds, found in aquatic beds, provide shelter for fish and invertebrates and food for waterfowl and shorebirds. Unconsolidated shore areas (mudflats and sandflats) provide habitat for shellfish, shorebirds, and marine mammals, as well as nursery areas for fish. Vegetated intertidal areas are better known as salt marshes and are used by many wildlife species.

Freshwater Wetland



Freshwater wetland habitats include permanent and seasonal ponds, wet meadows, and marshes. These wetlands are fed by artesian wells and rainfall that collect in low lying depressions, channels, and ditches. Wildlife species found in freshwater habitats include dabbling ducks, geese, herons and other waterbirds, amphibians and mammals (river otters and mink).

Riverine and Riparian



Riverine and riparian habitats are found within and along the Nisqually River, McAllister Creek, and Red Salmon River. Surge plain forests are a type of riparian habitat that is influenced by tides and freshwater storm events. Riverine areas are important for salmon and other fish species, and fish-eating birds such as osprey, bald eagles, mergansers, and kingfishers. Riparian areas are important for many species.

Upland



Upland habitats include upland forest and grassland. Upland forests can be found along the steep bluffs and dikes. They support a variety of nesting birds, including eagles, hawks, herons, woodpeckers and passerines, as well as mammals and amphibians. Grassland areas on the Refuge are former pasturelands, comprised of non-native grasses. These areas are important for migrating waterfowl, landbirds, and mammals.

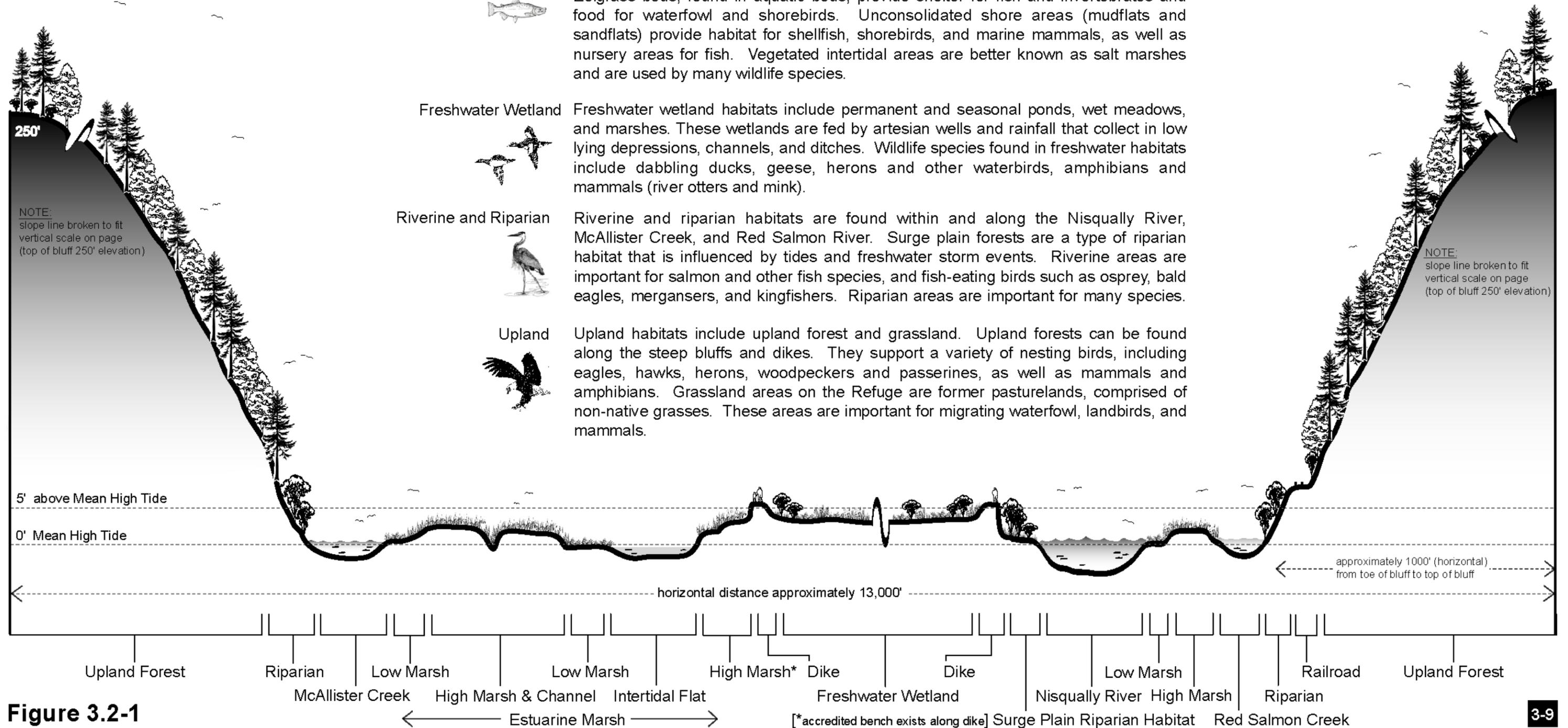


Figure 3.2-1