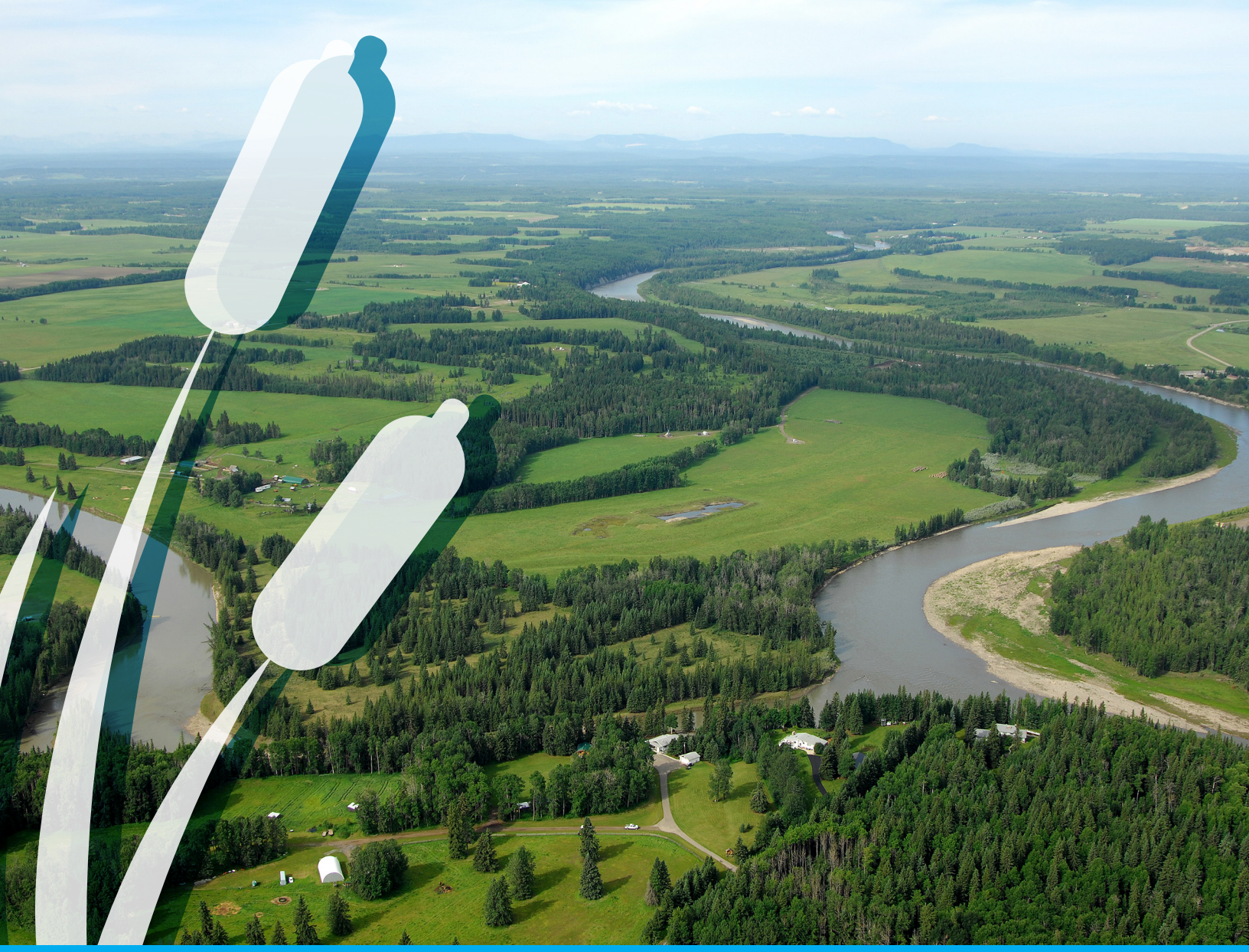


Shoreline and Riparian Condition Assessment

Yellowhead County

RIPARIAN
WEB PORTAL

January 2022

Yellowhead County Summary:
Your Shoreline and Riparian Condition Assessment

Purpose of this Report

This report presents information about the condition of riparian areas in your municipality. Satellite-based mapping techniques were used to assess riparian intactness, catchment pressure, and prioritization for select waterbodies and areas in the Pembina River Watershed; some areas were excluded from the assessment. Results can be used to inform planning, conservation, and restoration efforts.

Details about the study scope and results can be found in the Appendix and through the Riparian Web Portal (*riparian.info*).

Riparian Areas 101: Why They Matter

Riparian areas are transitional areas between a waterbody and the adjacent upland area.

Photo credit: *Images Alberta Camera Club.*

- Improve water quality by trapping sediments, filtering nutrients and pollutants, reducing aquatic plant and algal growth
- Mitigate floods and droughts by storing and slowing the release of water and reducing erosion
- Improve biodiversity by providing fish and wildlife habitat and cooling water temperatures
- Provide aesthetically pleasing areas for recreation or cultural activities
- Add economic value by increasing property values or providing areas for nature viewing

To learn more about the importance of riparian areas, please go to:
riparian.info

Project Partners

This work has been carried out by Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPACs) in your area:

Athabasca WATERSHED COUNCIL

What is Riparian Intactness?

Illustration by: Terra Simieritsch

Riparian intactness is a measure of how "natural" a shoreline is. Riparian intactness measures riparian condition at a broad scale, using satellite data. This is a new method, which has been scientifically validated, to assess riparian conditions across a large area in Alberta.

How to Use This Information

- To compare the condition of water bodies or watersheds across a region
- To prioritize restoration and conservation efforts
- To complement field-based assessment methods by showcasing broad-scale results
- To guide voluntary stewardship efforts by municipalities, community groups, and landowners

Beneficial Management Practices for Municipal Leaders

Ensure that your municipality has policies for sufficient development setbacks and buffers of native plants to safeguard water bodies

Utilize and enforce policy tools such as Environmental Reserves, Conservation Reserves and Conservation Easements to ensure that hazard and sensitive lands are not developed

Minimize erosion, maintain slopes and prevent disturbance in or close to riparian areas

Encourage and support landowners and community initiatives to maintain and improve riparian areas through water and land stewardship groups

Eliminate or control invasive species in municipal riparian areas and promote natural and native species along shorelines

Educate the public about recreational use impacts and why some activities are restricted to specific places or seasons

What is Intactness?

- Intactness is a measure of riparian condition at a broad scale (watershed or region)
- Measures if natural habitat has been altered or impaired by human activity
- Measures the quantity of natural and woody vegetation, as well as human footprint, using satellite data

Intactness Results for Yellowhead County

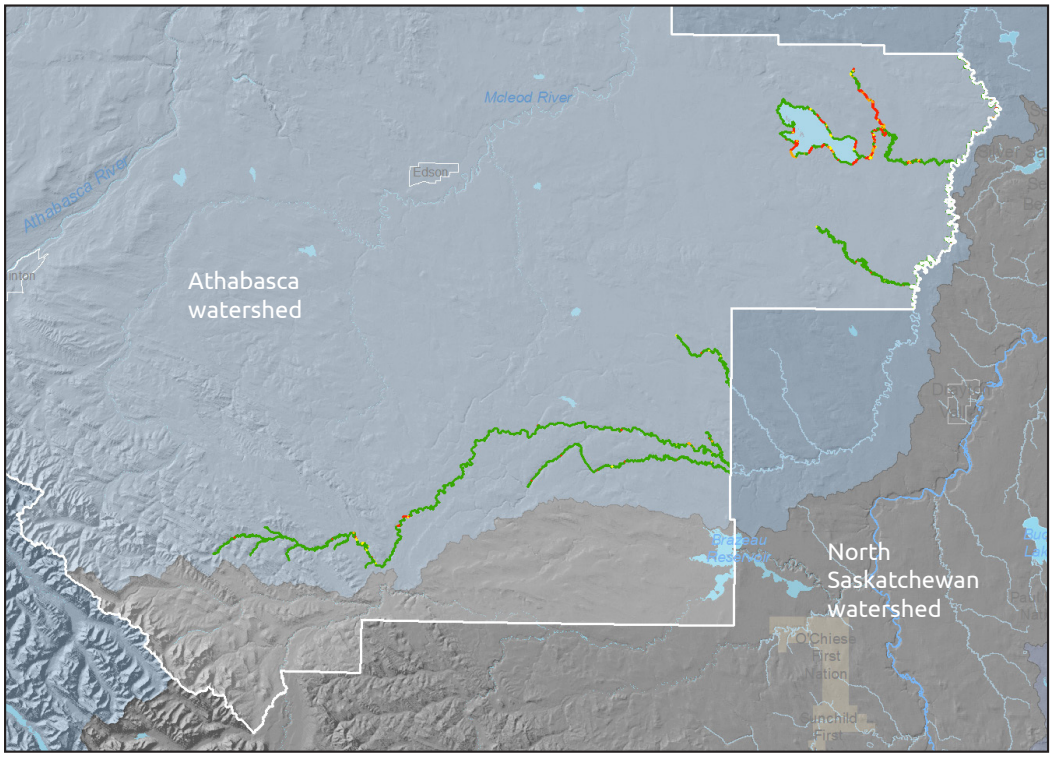
1,109 KM
of shorelines assessed in Yellowhead County

1/1
lake had 65%+ High Intactness

11/12
creeks had 65%+ High Intactness

Intactness Ratings

- Vegetation mostly cleared. Human footprint dominant.
- Vegetation limited. Human footprint prevalent.
- Vegetation present. Some human footprint.
- Vegetation present. Little or no human footprint.



Map 1: Riparian Intactness in the municipality. Note that some areas were not assessed.
To view more data, please see the attached Appendix.

Yellowhead County Overall Intactness

6%	1%	2%	90%
Very Low	Low	Moderate	High

What is Catchment Pressure?

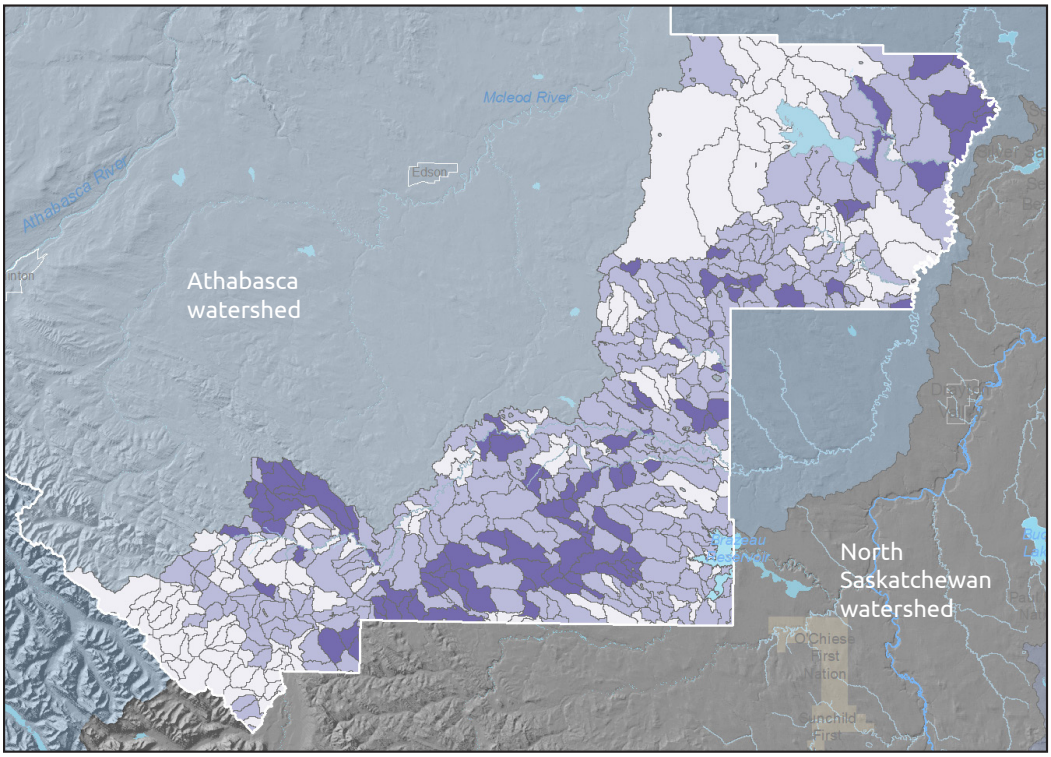
- Indicates pressures on the landscape that might impact riparian health
- Includes natural stressors (e.g. slope, forests) and human stressors (e.g. land-use intensity)
- High pressure = high potential stress for riparian areas. Data was collected to inform prioritization dataset.

Catchment Pressure Results for Yellowhead County

6,956 KM²
area of land assessed

Pressure Ratings

- High Pressure
- Moderate Pressure
- Low Pressure



*Map 2: Catchment Pressure in the municipality. Note that some areas were not assessed. To view more data, please see the attached **Appendix**.*

Yellowhead County Overall Pressure

12%	54%	35%
High	Moderate	Low

What is Prioritization?

- Combines intactness scores and pressure scores to highlight which riparian areas are most affected by landscape pressures
- Conservation rating is prioritized where riparian intactness is high and landscape pressure is low
- Restoration rating is prioritized where riparian intactness is low and landscape pressure is high

Prioritization Results for Yellowhead County

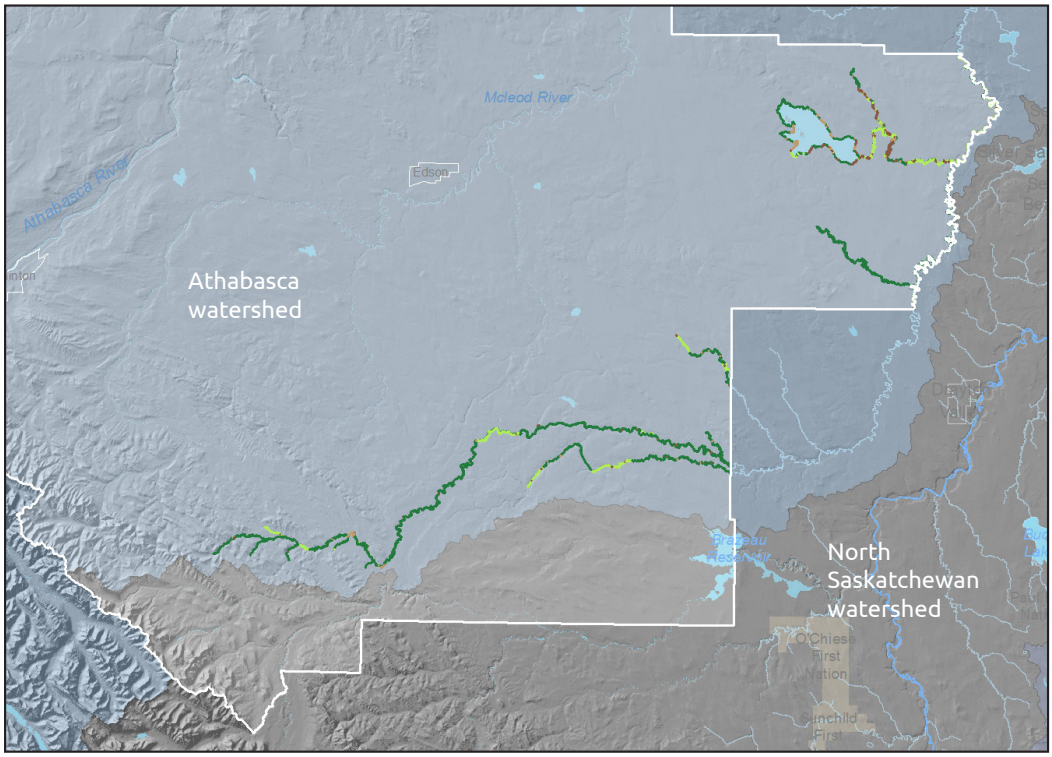
1,109 KM of shorelines assessed in Yellowhead County

58 KM high restoration priority

850 KM high conservation priority

Priority Ratings

- High Restoration Priority
- Moderate Restoration Priority
- Moderate Conservation Priority
- High Conservation Priority



Map 3: Restoration and Conservation Priorities in the municipality. Note that some areas were not assessed.
*To view more data, please see the attached **Appendix**.*

Yellowhead County Overall Prioritization

5%	2%	16%	77%
High Restoration	Moderate Restoration	Moderate Conservation	High Conservation

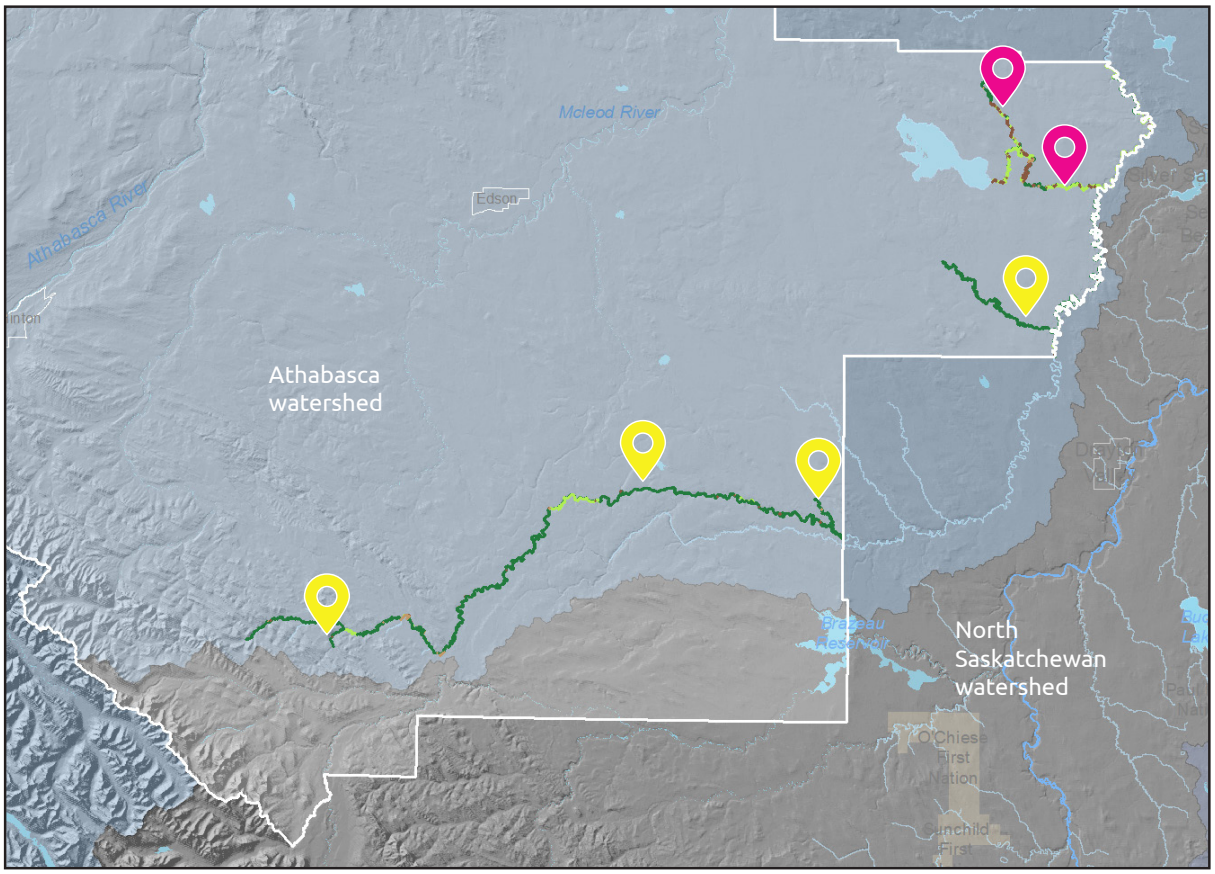
Top Conservation & Restoration Priorities

Restoration

- **River:** Lobstick River
- **Named Creek:** Deep 1 Creek

Conservation

- **Named Rivers:** Bigoray and Pembina Rivers
- **Named Creeks:** Zeta and Hanson Creeks



Map 4: The top Conservation and Restoration Priorities recommended for the County. Recommendations are based on the top results from the Prioritization assessment shown in Map 3. To view more data, please see the attached Appendix.

Next steps to conserve or restore priority riparian habitats:

1. Use priority maps to direct conservation and restoration efforts.
2. Develop policies at the municipal level for land management.
3. Provide incentives for private landowners to restore degraded riparian habitats.
4. Restore and conserve riparian habitats through municipal reserves, land trusts and/or conservation groups.

See the Appendix for a comprehensive list of priorities. To find out more about riparian condition data and resources, go to: **riparian.info**

Acknowledgments

This work was an inter Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPAC) project with funding and support from many sources. A special thanks to the Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program and the governments of Canada and Alberta, through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership.

Intactness, Pressure, and Prioritization data was created by Fiera Biological Consulting Ltd. Base Map Data was provided by the Government of Alberta.

CANADIAN AGRICULTURAL PARTNERSHIP

Alberta

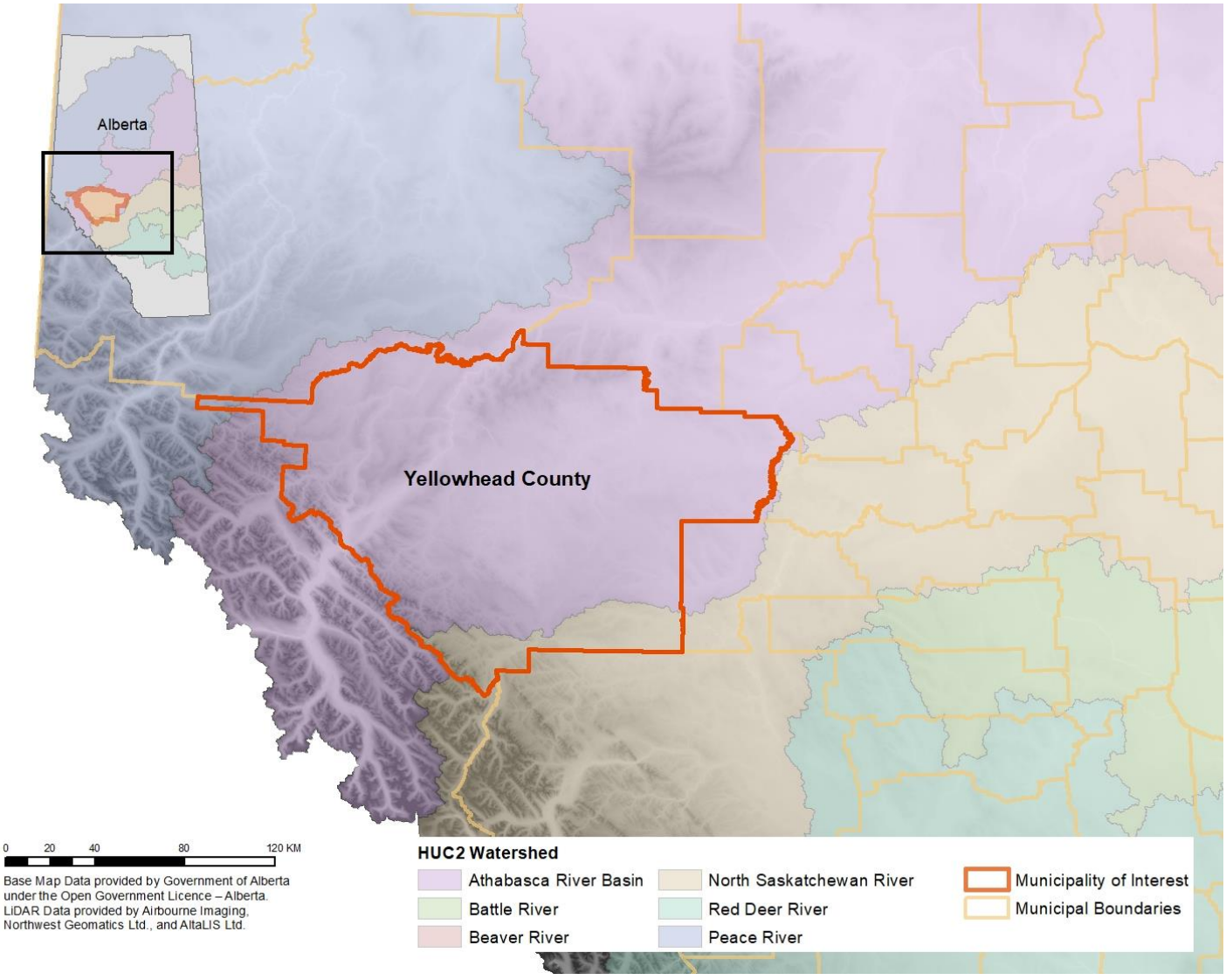
Canada

The following appendix is a summary of waterbodies assessed in your municipality, and includes results of the intactness, pressure, and prioritization assessments.

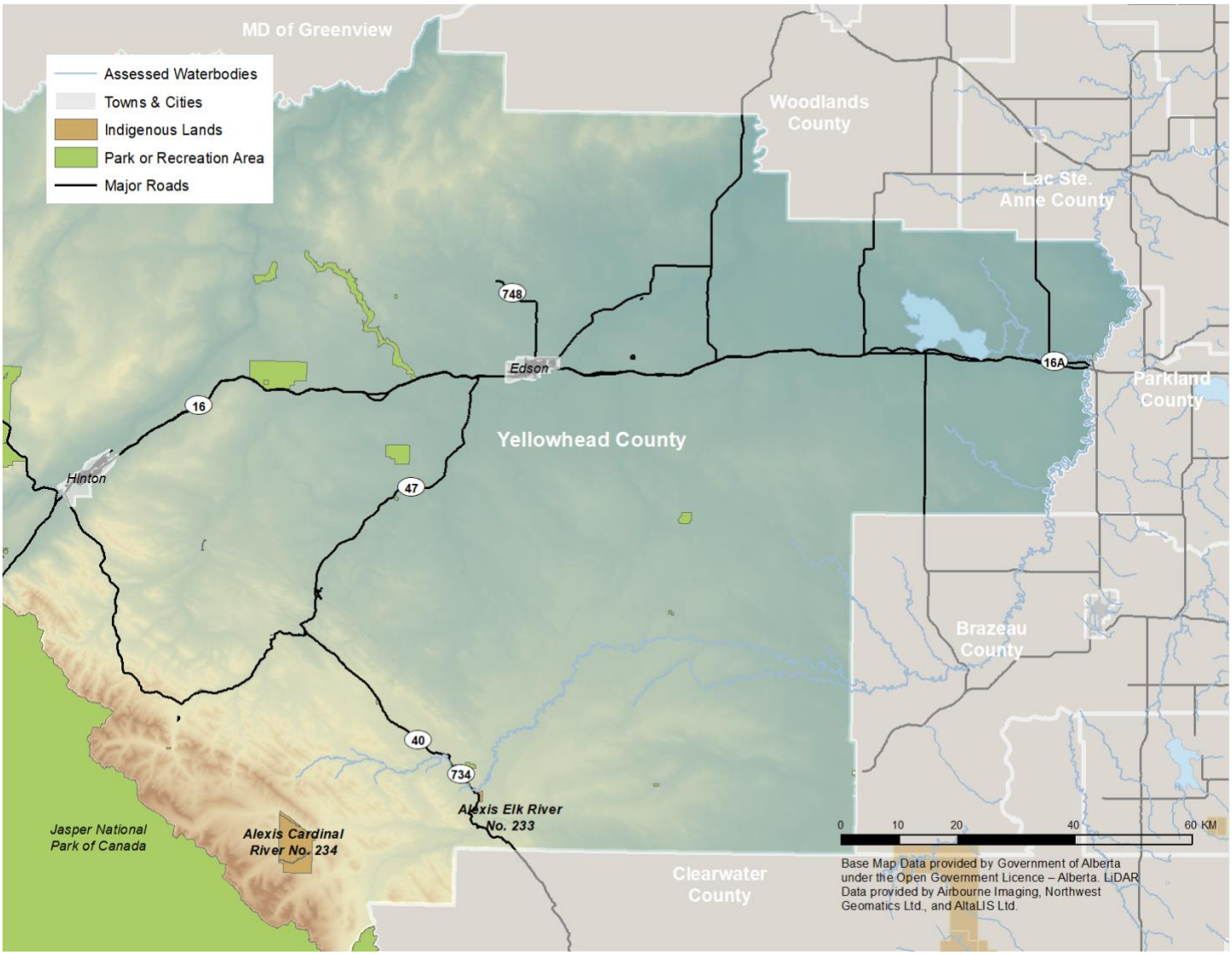
Please note that the assessment methods were applied to specific waterbodies; some areas were not included. As such, results described in this report apply only to those areas assessed. See the supporting documents for more details. Please note that waterbodies that flow through multiple municipalities have been 'clipped' to demonstrate the portion which applies only to your municipality.

The data has been extracted from the ***Riparian Area Assessments of the Pembina River Watershed*** (Fiera Biological Consulting Ltd, 2021). These reports can be found in the project section of ***awc-wpac.ca***.

Yellowhead County

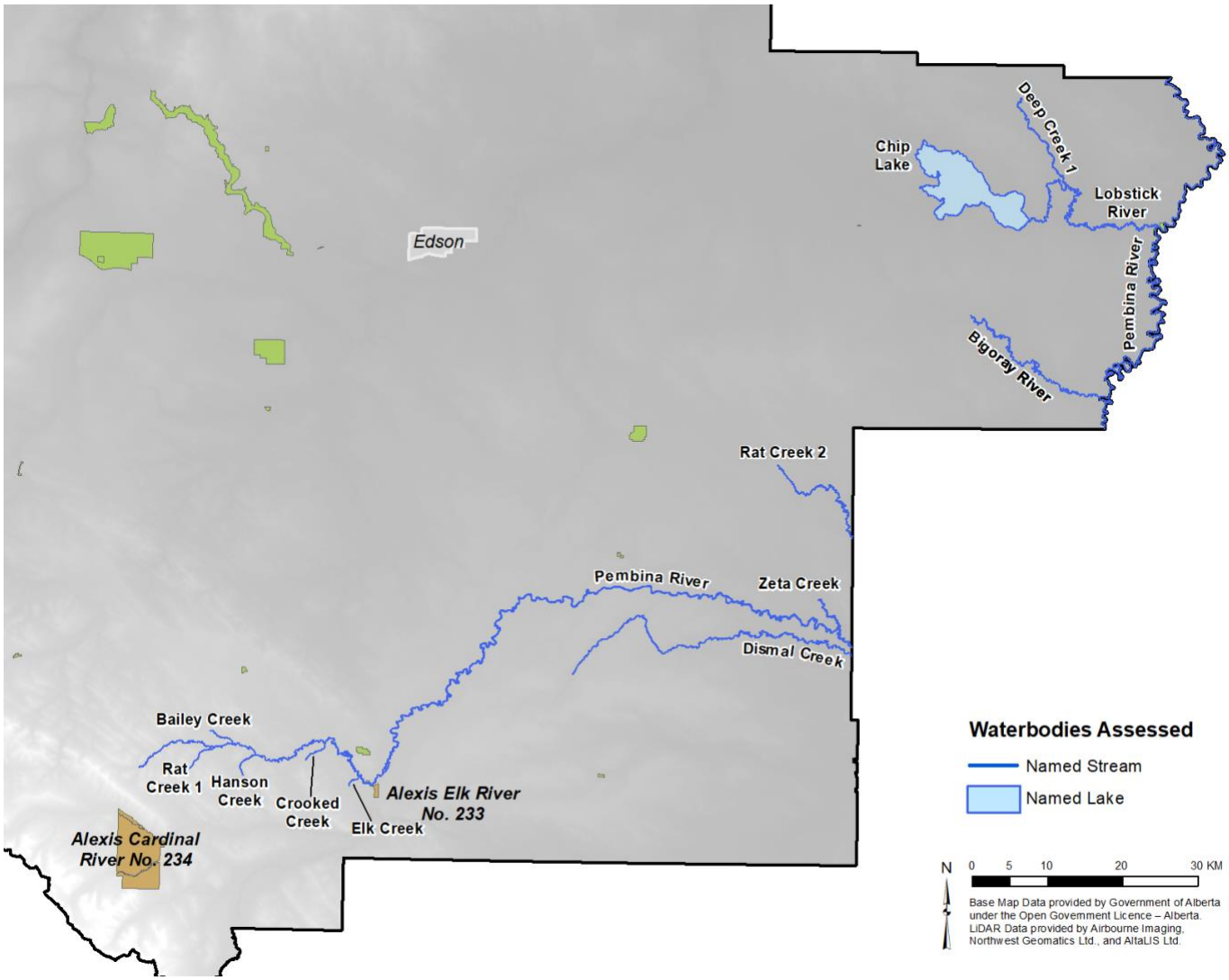


1.1. Municipal Overview

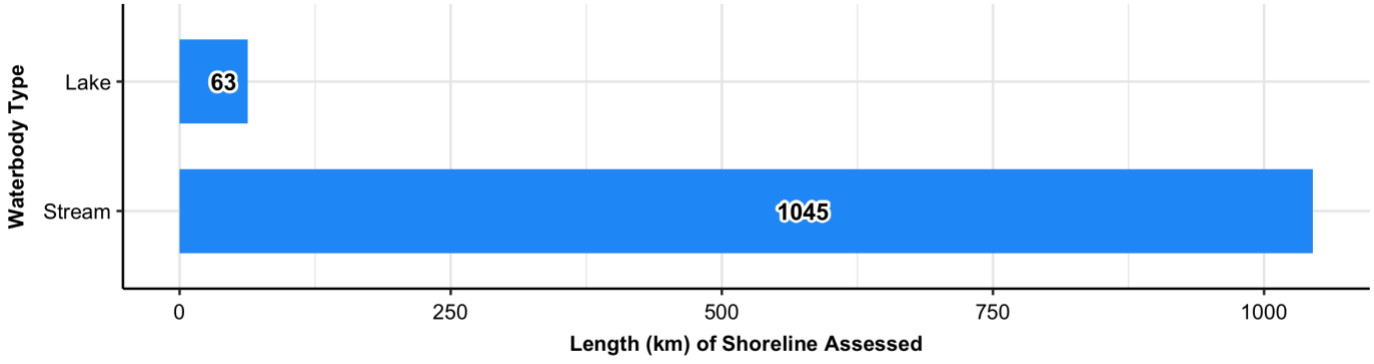


1.2. Shorelines of Interest

Location of Waterbodies Assessed within the Municipality

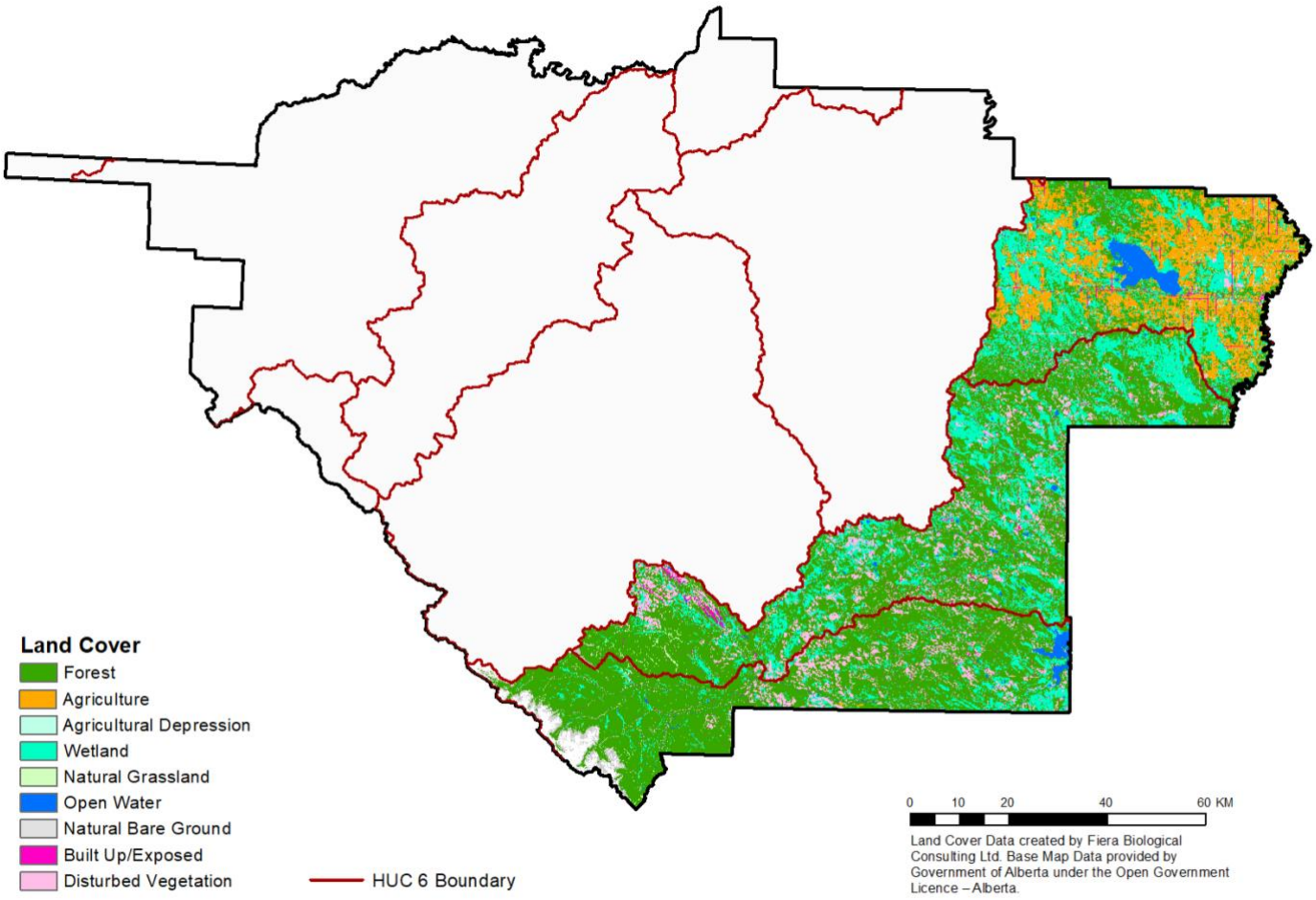


Total Length of Riparian Shoreline Assessed within the Municipality



NOTE: Numbers indicate the total length (km) of shoreline assessed by waterbody type.

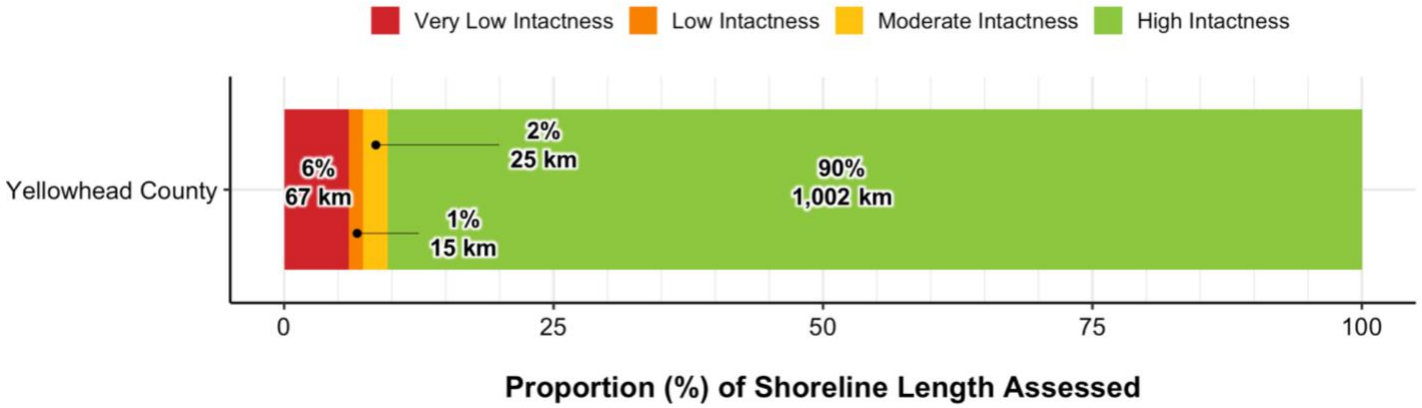
1.3. Land Cover[1]



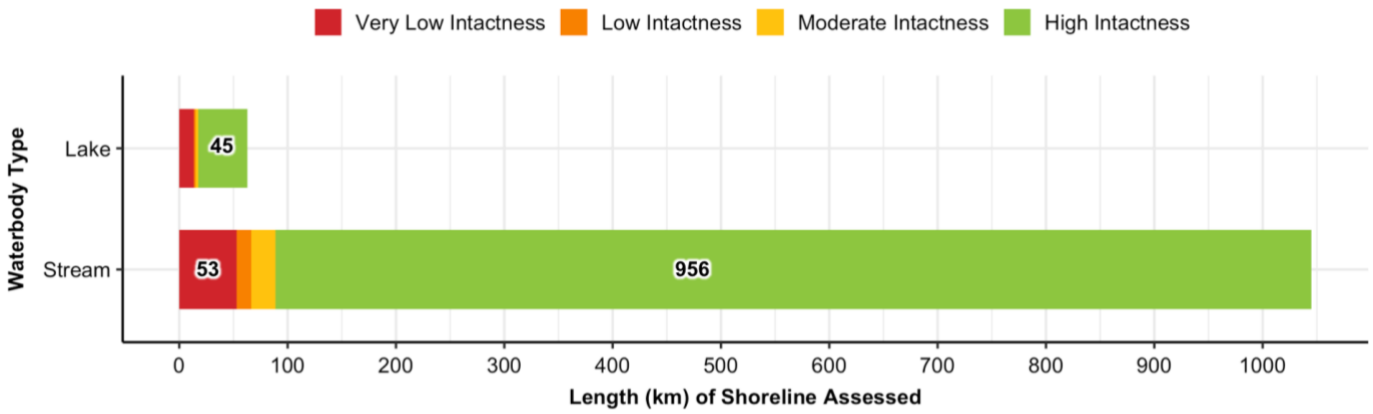
NOTE[1]: A 6 m resolution wall to wall land cover only exists for the Brazeau River, Upper Pembina, and Mid Pembina HUC 6 watersheds. The wall to wall land cover was used to assess intactness and pressure for selected waterbodies within these HUC 6 watersheds.

1.4. Riparian Management Area Intactness

Overall Municipal Intactness

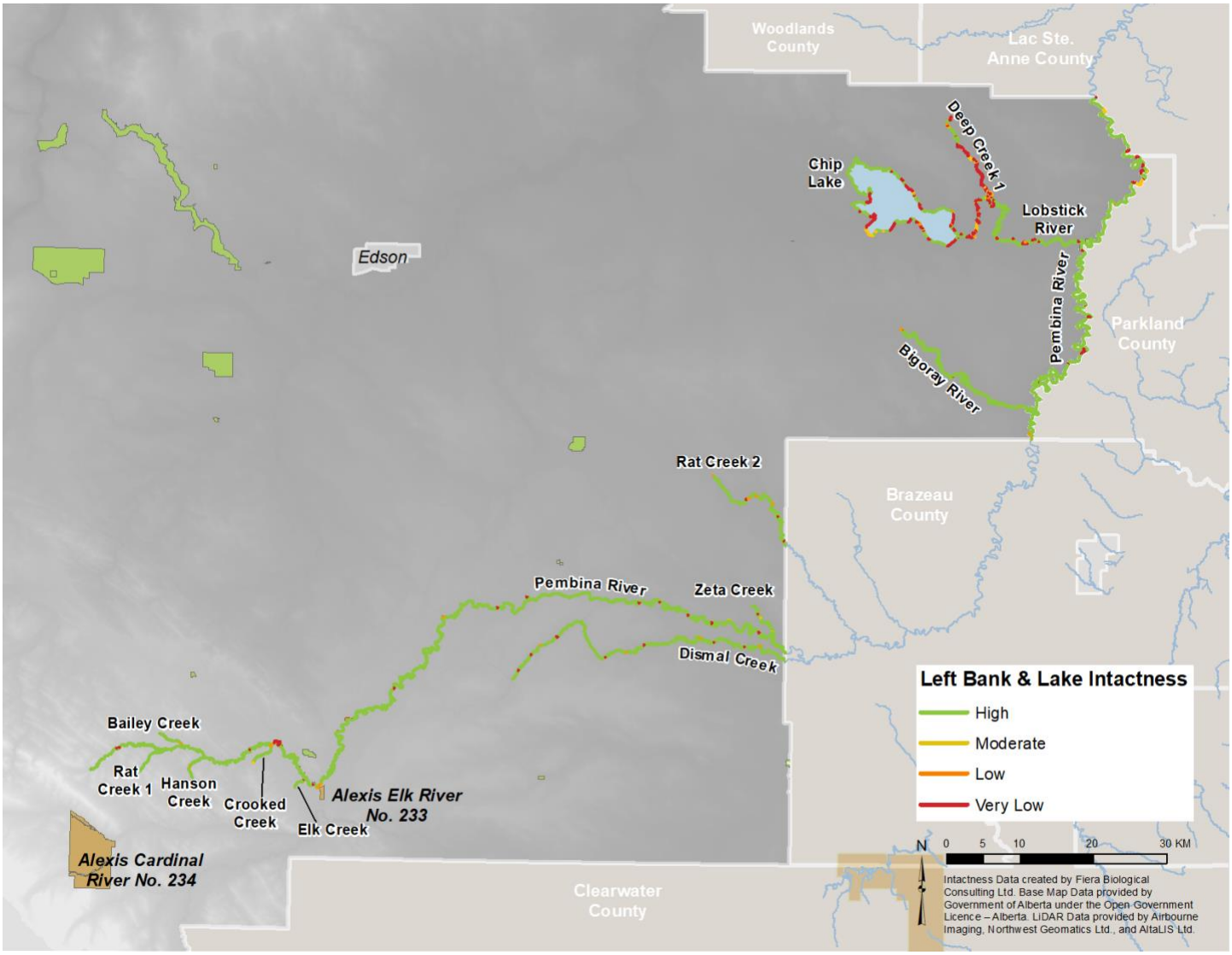


Intactness By Waterbody Type

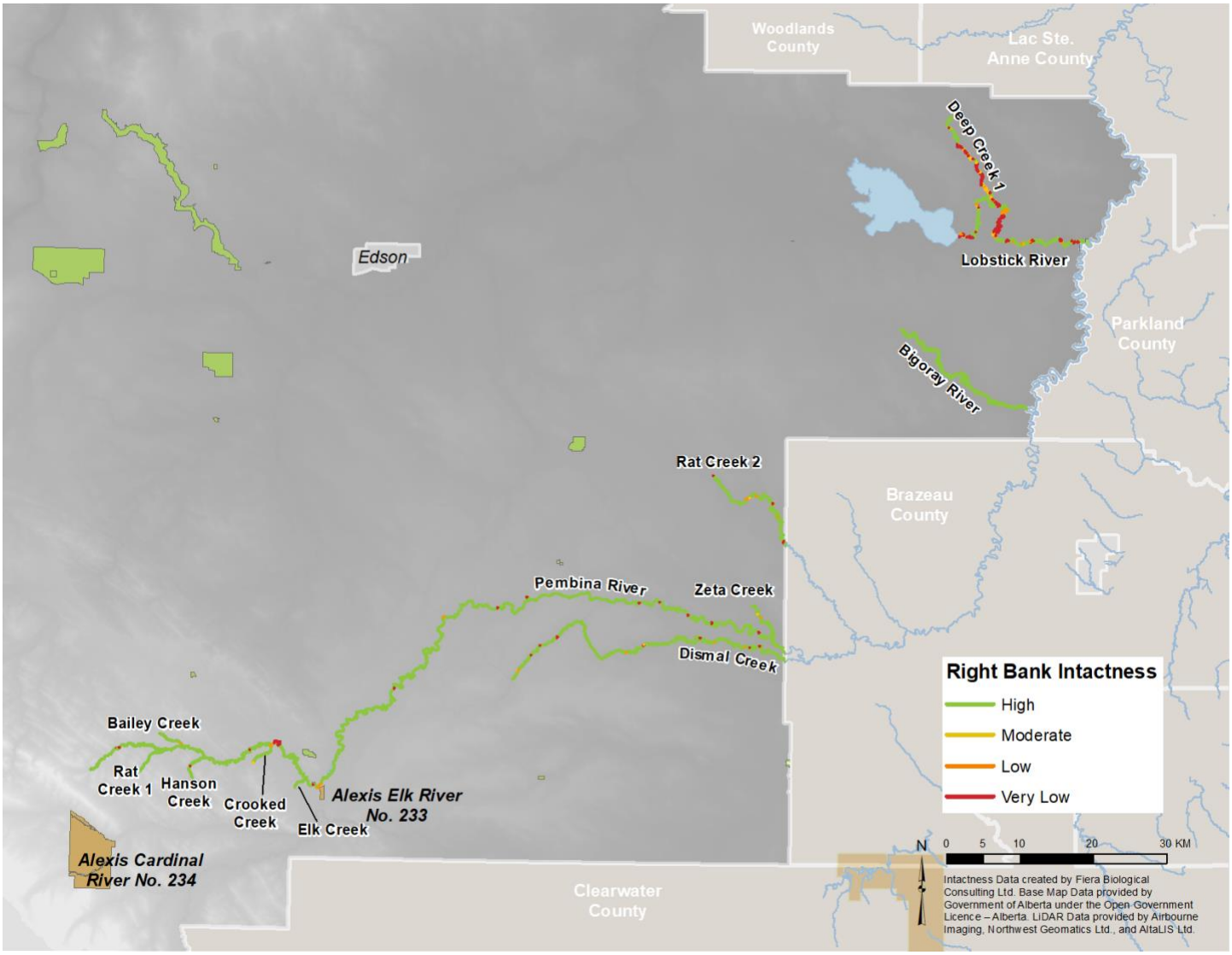


NOTE: Numbers indicate the total length (km) of shoreline associated with each intactness category. Categories with no label contain <25 km of shoreline.

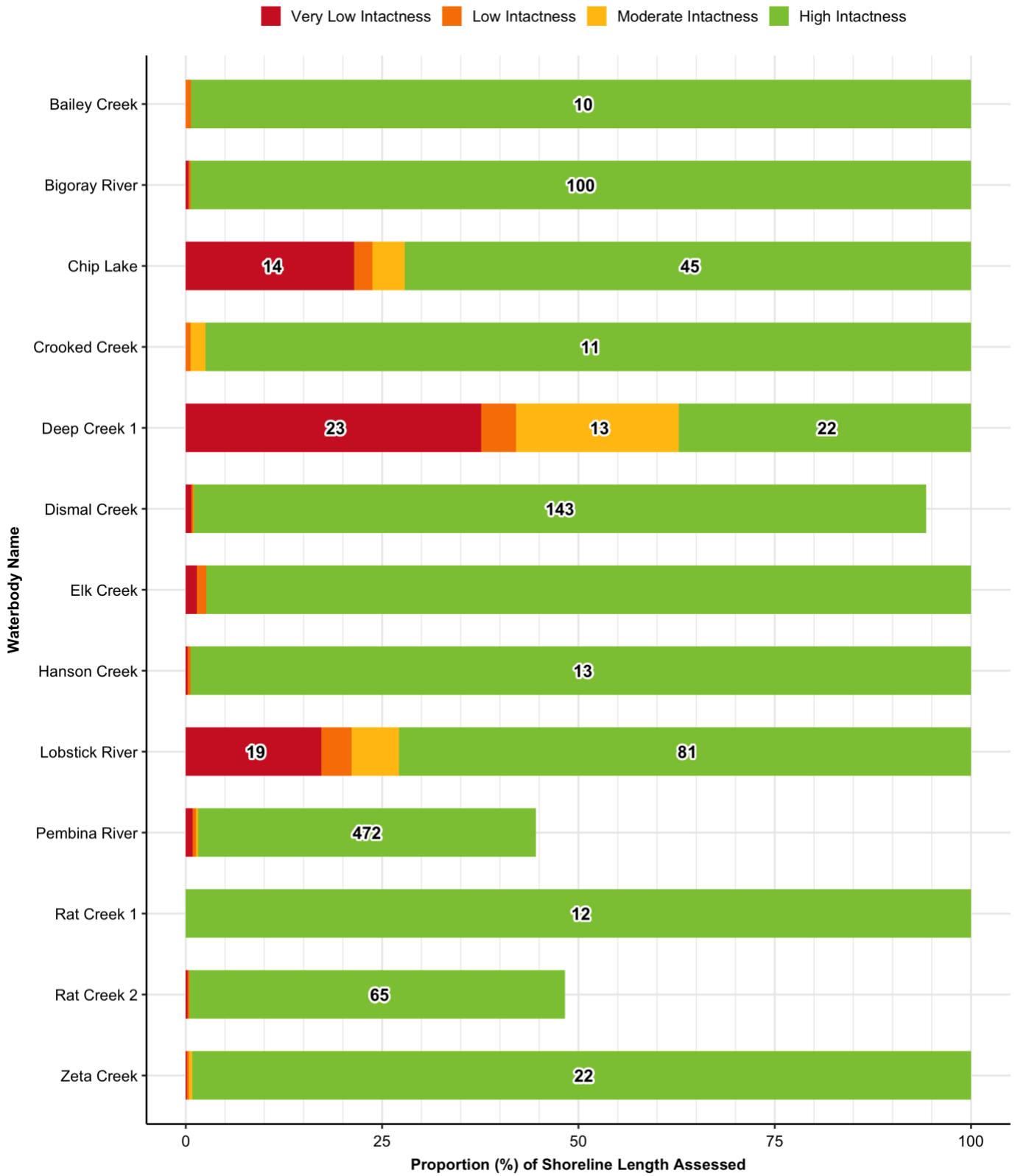
Intactness – Left Bank and Lakes



Intactness – Right Bank



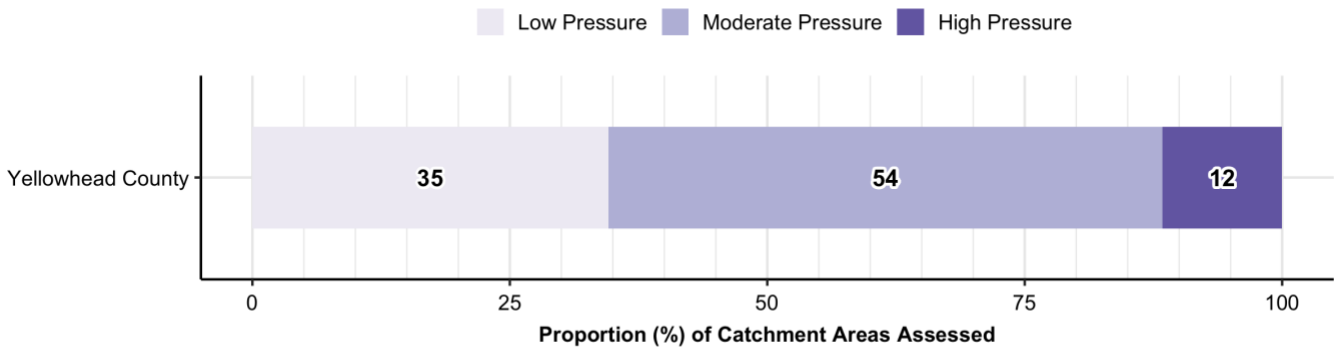
Intactness – All Waterbodies



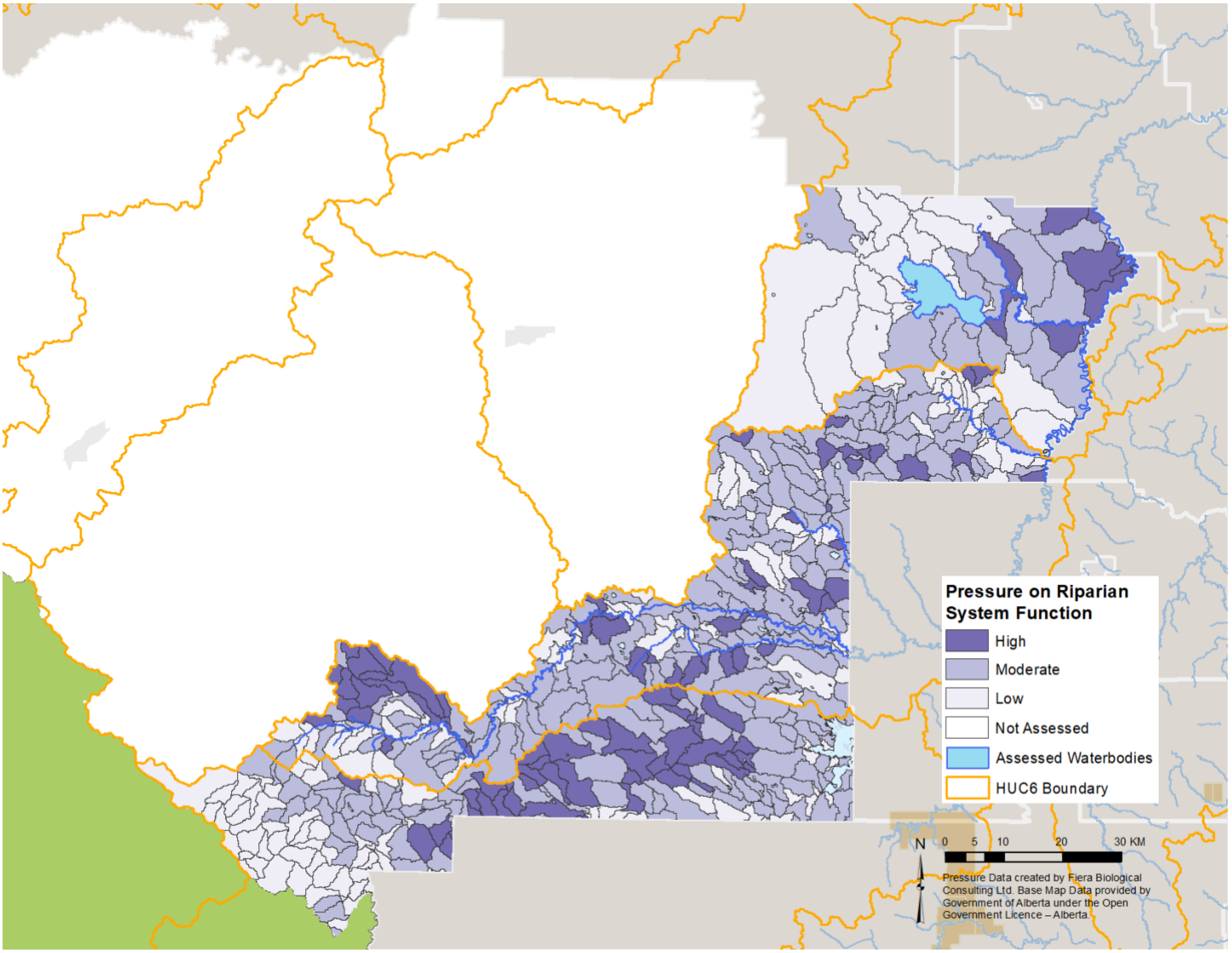
NOTE: Numbers indicate the total length (km) of shoreline associated with each intactness category. Categories with no label contain <10 km of shoreline.

1.5. Pressure on Riparian System Function

Overall Municipal Pressure

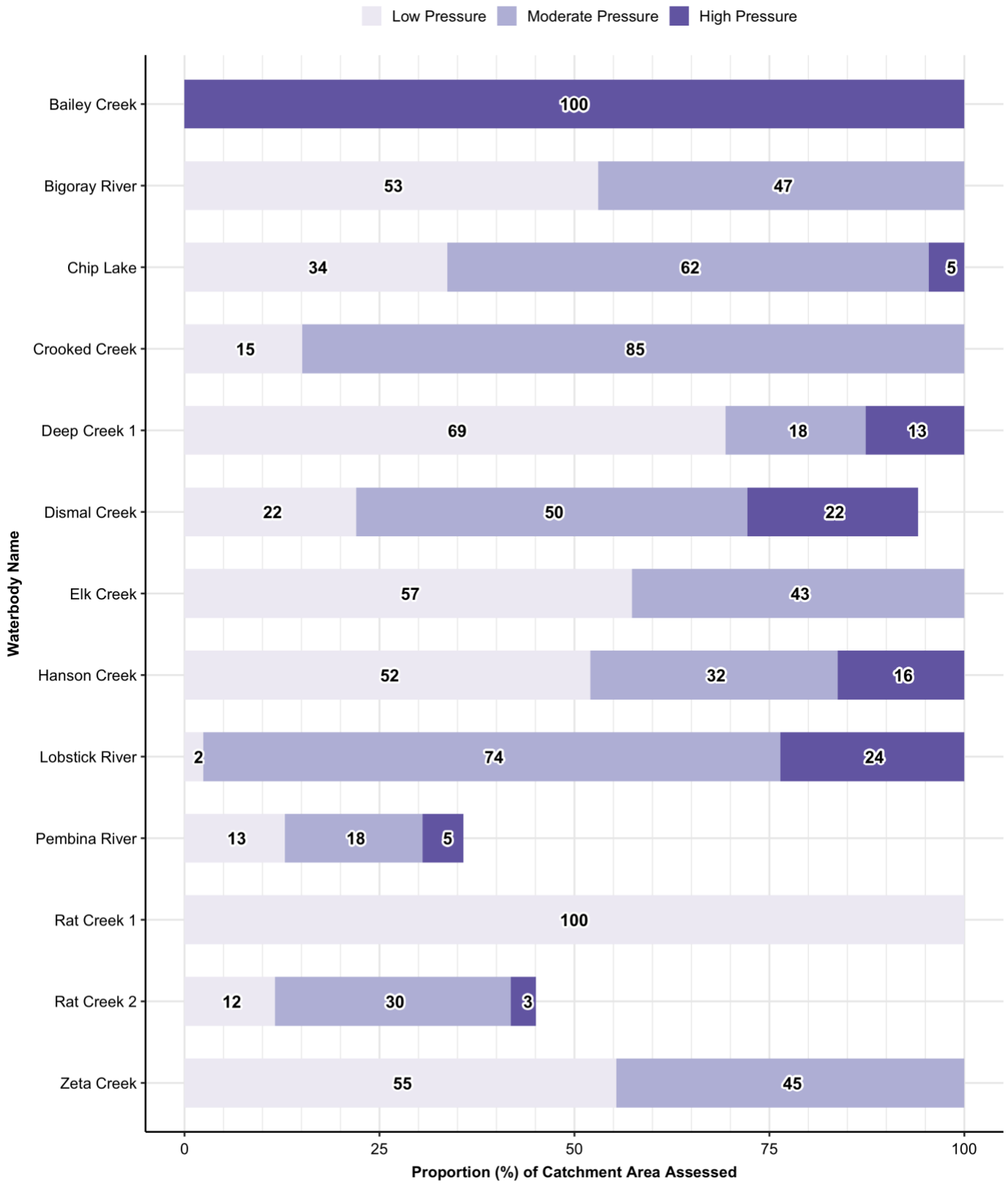


NOTE: Numbers indicate the proportion (%) of shoreline associated with each pressure category.



NOTE: Pressure can only be assessed for catchment areas that have a complete wall-to-wall land cover.

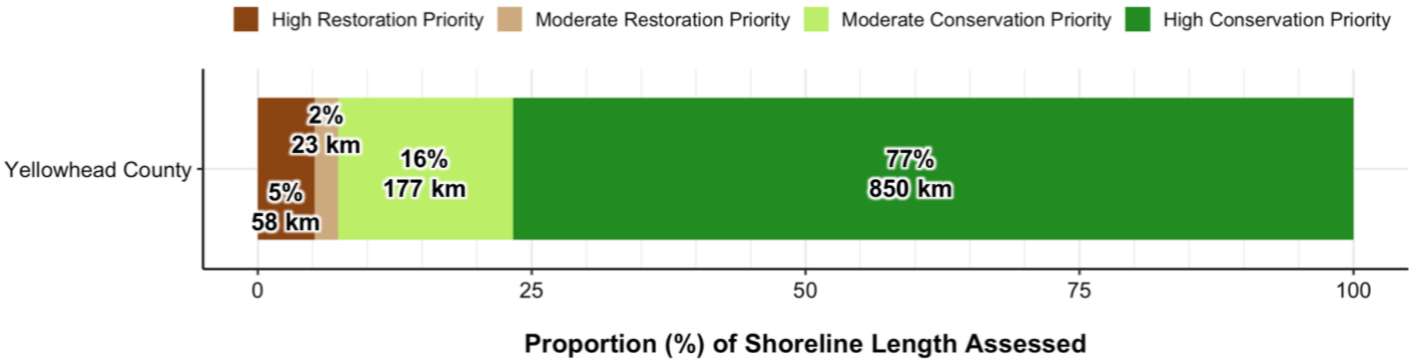
Pressure – All Waterbodies



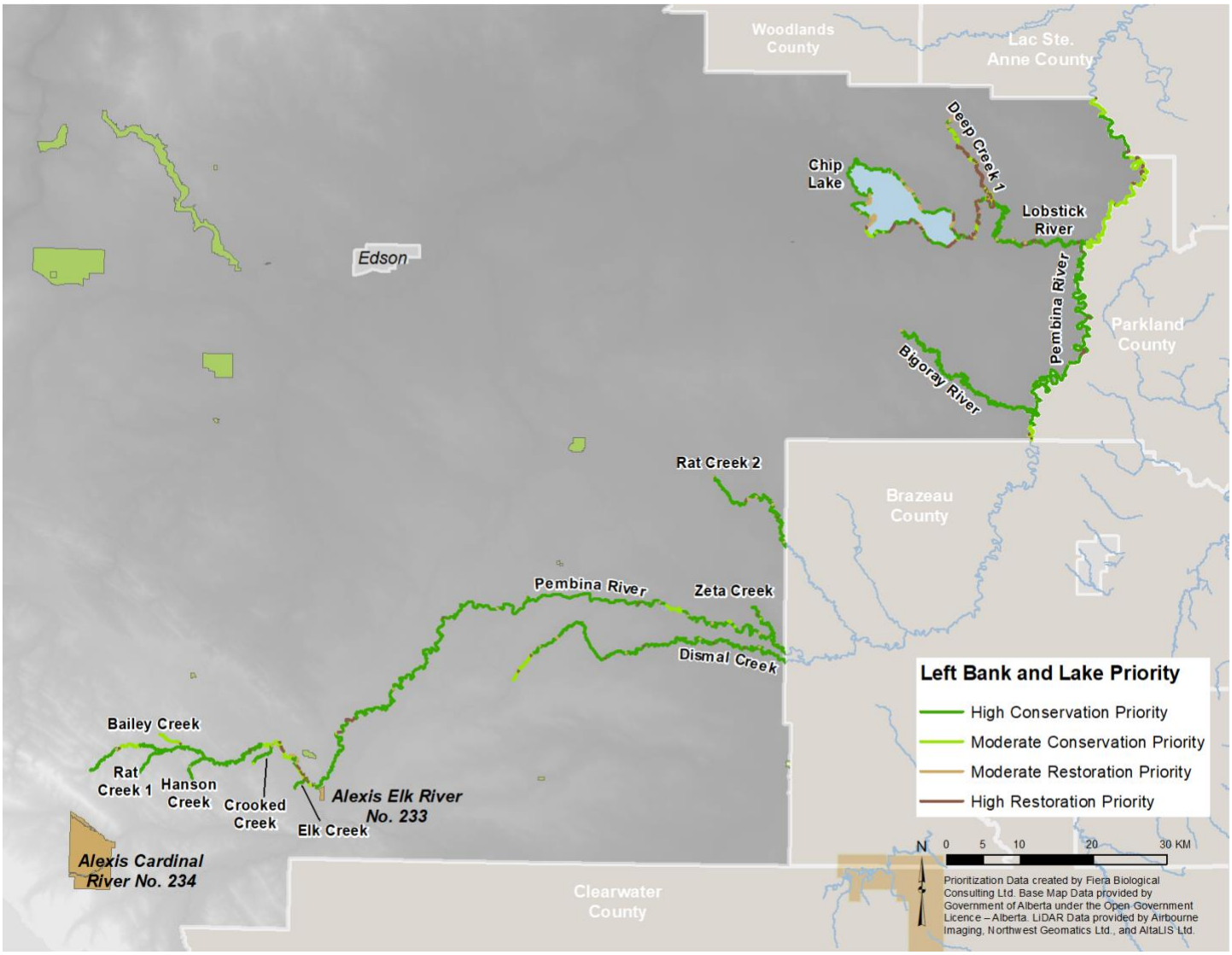
NOTE: Numbers indicate the proportion (%) of shoreline associated with each pressure category.

1.6. Conservation & Restoration Priority

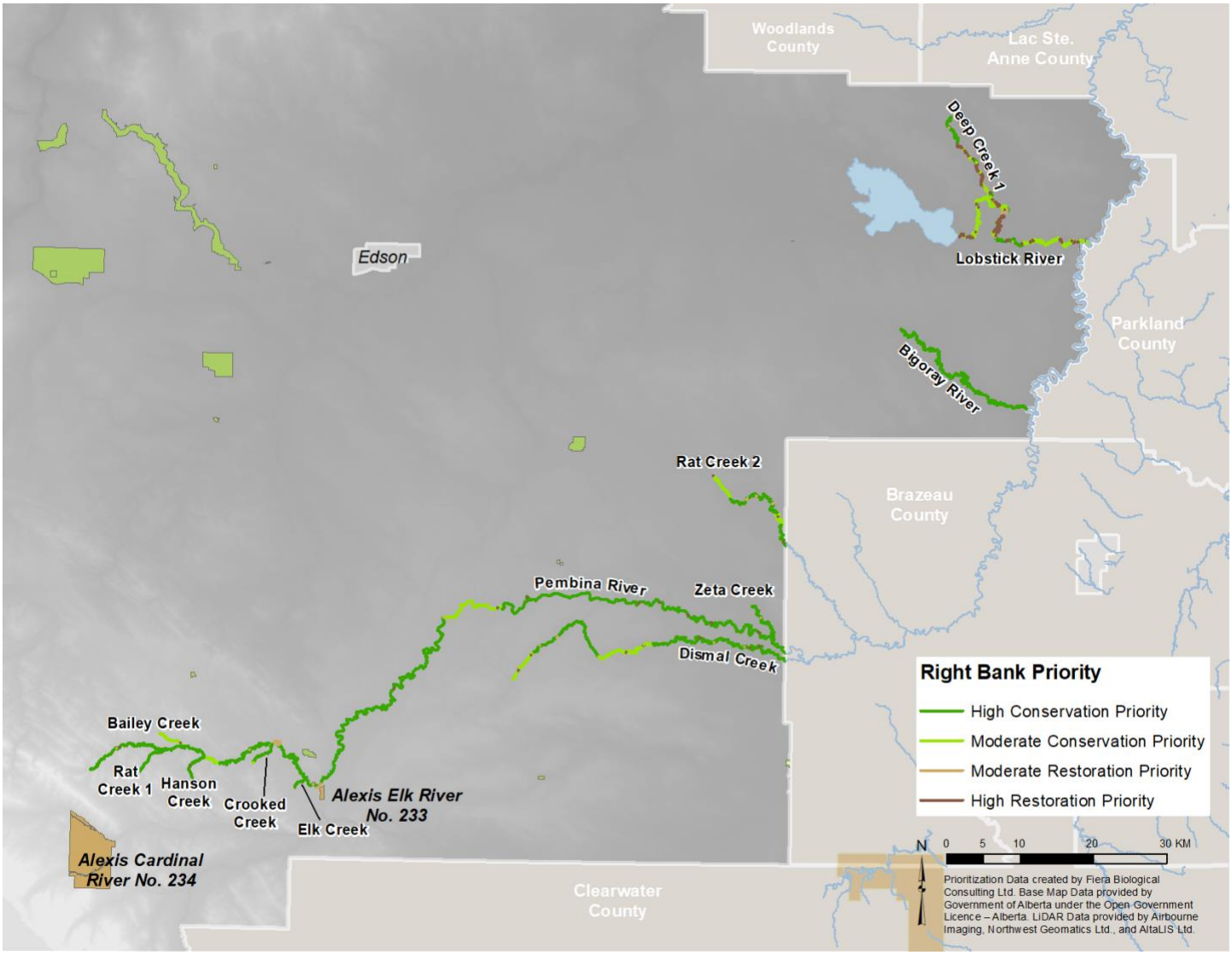
Overall Municipal Conservation & Restoration Priority



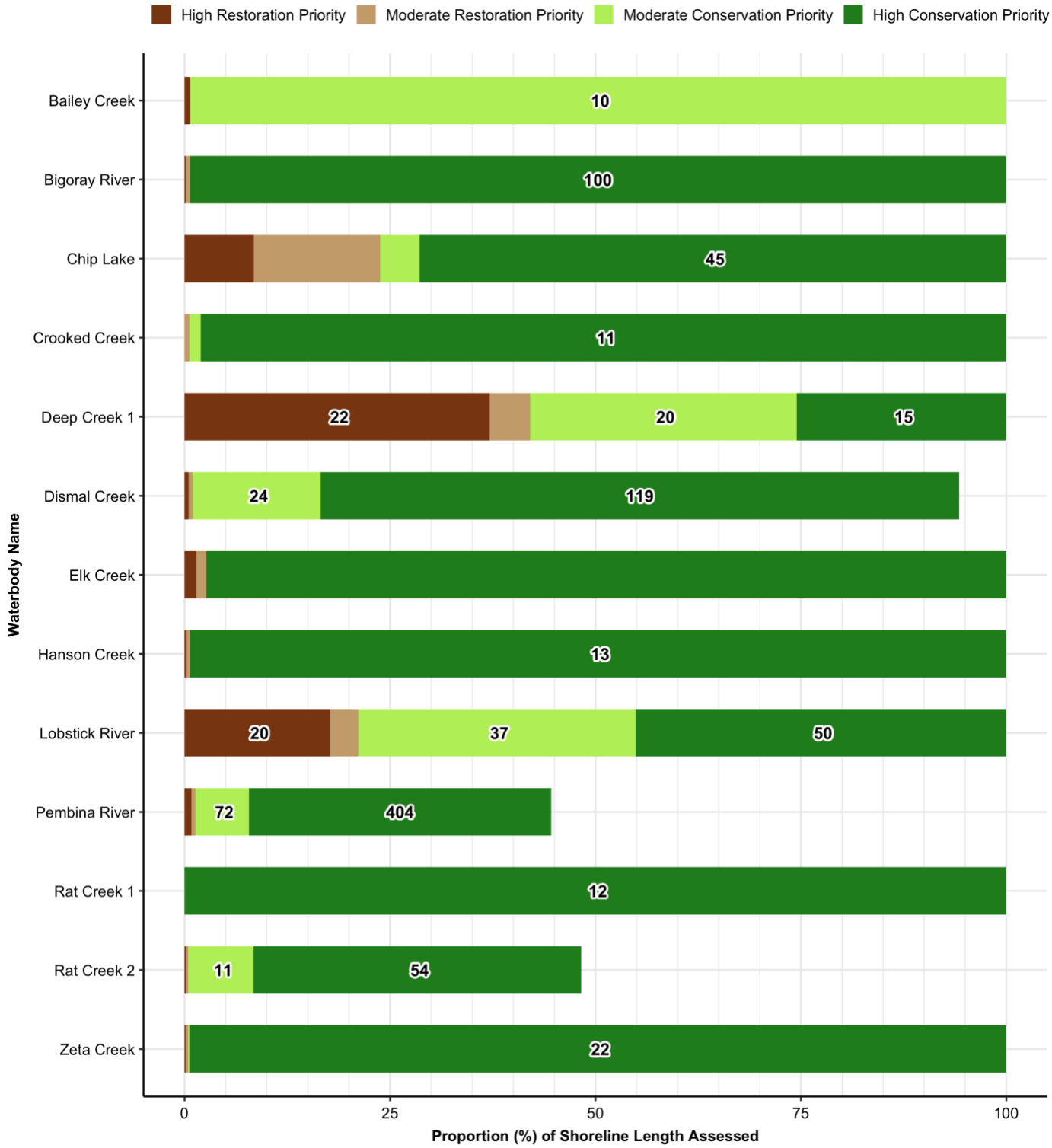
Conservation & Restoration Priority – Left Bank and Lakes



Conservation & Restoration Priority – Right Bank



Conservation & Restoration Priority – All Waterbodies



NOTE: Numbers indicate the total length (km) of shoreline associated with each prioritization category. Categories with no label contain <10 km of shoreline.