

## *N. Vancouver Island and South Coast*

Most previous electoral boundaries commissions treated the current Powell River–Sunshine Coast electoral district (formerly known as Mackenzie) as a separate region, not part of the North Shore and not part of Vancouver Island.

Later in this report (Part 10 – Proposed BC-STV electoral system boundaries) we will be proposing that the current Powell River–Sunshine Coast electoral district be grouped together with the three northern Vancouver Island electoral districts, to form a four-member North Island–South Coast BC-STV electoral district.

For that reason, we have decided to group the current Powell River–Sunshine Coast electoral district with the Vancouver Island districts, as we develop our proposals for SMP electoral districts for this area of the province.

### **1. Evolution of the Vancouver Island and South Coast electoral districts**

Immediately prior to the work of the 1966 Angus Commission, there were eight electoral districts on Vancouver Island (see Vancouver Island and South Coast, Map 1). And, since Victoria was



*Vancouver Island and South Coast, Map 1*



*Vancouver Island and South Coast, Map 2*

a three-seat riding, there were 10 MLAs on the Island, as follows:

- North Island – Comox and Alberni,
- Central Island – Cowichan-Newcastle and Nanaimo and the Islands,
- Capital Region – Saanich, Oak Bay, Victoria (3) and Esquimalt.

In addition, there was one South Coast electoral district on the Mainland, known as Mackenzie.

*a. The Angus Commission (1966)*

The commission concluded that the mainland electoral district of Mackenzie should be grouped with the northern part of Vancouver Island as constituting a single region:

The reason is that, sooner or later, one or more electoral districts seem likely to comprise both Island and mainland territory as a proposed regional council district already does. Proper and effective representation of the people of this region [south to the Malahat] requires five members in the Legislative Assembly, as at present.

It recommended that Mackenzie retain its existing boundaries, except that Lasqueti Island should be transferred to Nanaimo, and Bowen Island and Woodfibre should be transferred to the proposed new district of West Vancouver–Howe Sound. The commission decided to keep Bella Coola and Ocean Falls in Mackenzie, even though they had no close community interest with

other points. There was no complaint at the public meeting in Powell River that the absence of roads in the northern half of the district made the task of the MLA excessively difficult (see Vancouver Island and South Coast, Map 2).

The commission considered the suggestion that an additional district be added to the northern Vancouver Island/Mackenzie region on the basis of local convenience, but ultimately rejected an increase because the combined population counts did not warrant it. Increasing representation in this area would mean reducing it somewhere else.

With respect to the four Vancouver Island electoral districts north of the Malahat, the commission proposed as follows, moving from north to south:

- Comox – in order to reduce its population, its southern boundary should be moved north to Bowser.
- Alberni – this district should be enlarged, by absorbing territory from the Comox district, and by transferring Clo-oose (part of the West Coast Trail) from Esquimalt to Alberni.
- Nanaimo and the Islands – this district should be expanded to the north to absorb some territory from Comox and to the south to absorb some territory from Cowichan-Newcastle. Lasqueti Island should be

transferred from Mackenzie (because of ease of communication), and all the other southern Gulf Islands except Gabriola and Valdez should be transferred to Cowichan-Newcastle and Saanich. The district should be renamed Nanaimo.

- Cowichan-Newcastle – this district should be expanded in the south to include Mill Bay and the Malahat, as well as Thetis and Kuper Islands, and should be renamed Cowichan-Malahat.

With respect to Greater Victoria, which had six MLAs in four electoral districts, the commission concluded that it should be reduced to five single-member ridings, to be called Sidney, Oak Bay, North Victoria, South Victoria and Esquimalt. Although all these electoral districts bore the names of local municipalities, in every case there was some municipal boundary crossover.

The Legislative Assembly adopted the Angus Commission's recommendation that there be nine MLAs on the Island and one on the South Coast, but made several name and representation changes. It retained the name Cowichan-Newcastle, and it changed Saanich to Saanich and the Islands. It also restored Victoria to a single electoral district, electing two MLAs.



*Vancouver Island and South Coast, Map 3*

*b. The Norris Commission (1975)*

The commission recommended (see Vancouver Island and South Coast, Map 3) that the number of seats on the Island be increased from nine to 10 by the addition of a North Island riding, which would come as far south as the Oyster River on the east coast (just south of Campbell River), and as far south as Nootka Sound on the west coast. The commission also proposed renaming Oak Bay as Oak Bay–Gordon Head, and Esquimalt as Esquimalt–San Juan. On the Mainland, it proposed changing the name of Mackenzie to Mackenzie–Howe Sound.

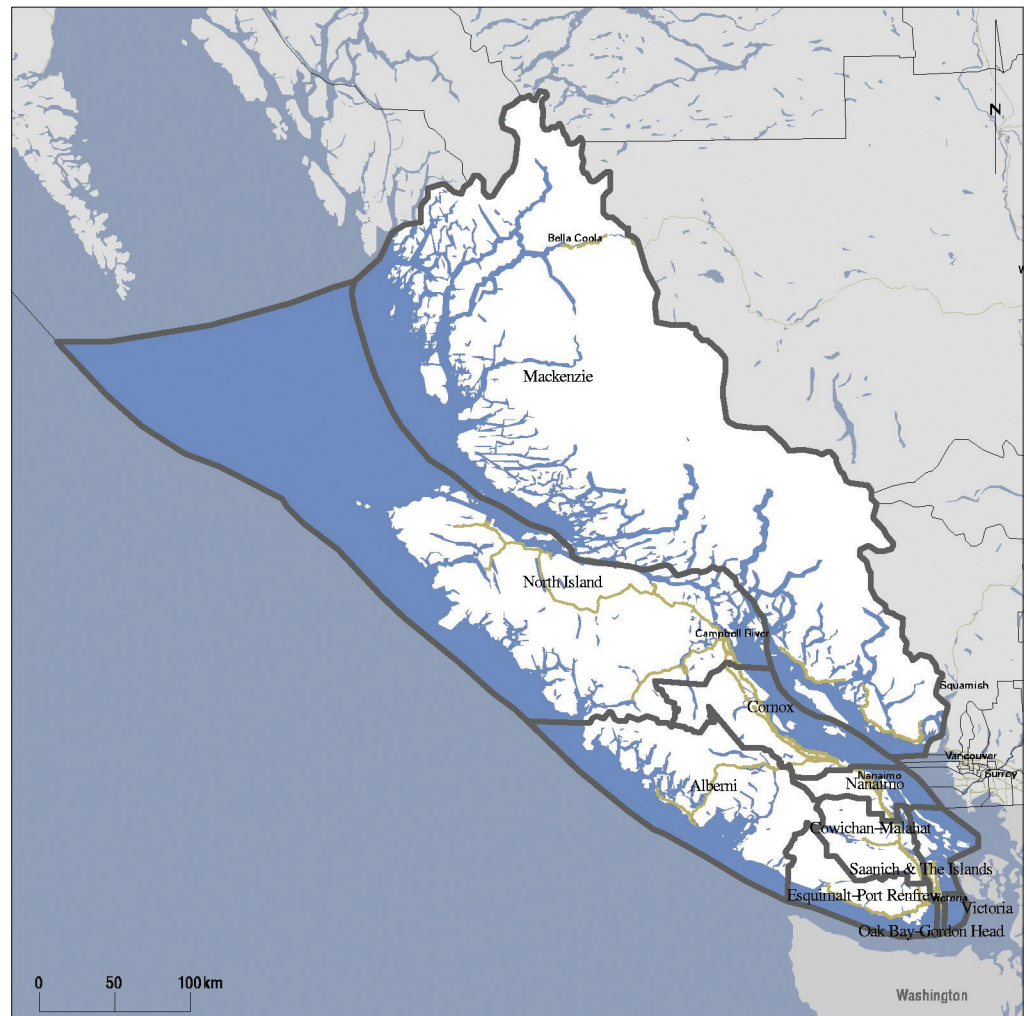
The Legislative Assembly did not adopt any of the Norris Commission’s recommendations.

*c. The Eckardt Commission (1978)*

Judge Eckardt repeated the Norris Commission recommendation that a new North Island electoral district be created (see Vancouver Island and South Coast, Map 4), citing a growing population and representations that the communities in the northern part of the Island were unique and deserving of separate representation. He recommended that the Mackenzie district remain the same, except that East and West Thurlow Islands and Hardwicke Island should be transferred to North Island, because access to these islands is most readily attained via Sayward on Vancouver Island.

With respect to the other four northern Island districts, Judge Eckardt recommended as follows:

- Comox – this district should be expanded southward to include Qualicum, Parksville and Nanoose Bay, and eastward to include Lasqueti Island. Qualicum and Parksville had until then been in the Alberni electoral district, and he received strong submissions that they shared little in common with Port Alberni, and transportation between the two areas was difficult at times.
- Alberni – that the entire Nitinat Reserve area be included in this district, as the Native Indian population had strong ties with the Coast Indian population.
- Nanaimo – that the southern boundary be extended farther south,



*Vancouver Island and South Coast, Map 4*

- to include Cassidy and Ladysmith.
- Cowichan-Malahat – as discussed above, this district would lose the Nitinat Reserve area, as well as Cassidy and Ladysmith.

Judge Eckardt recommended several boundary and name changes for the five districts in the Victoria Metro area. Oak Bay would extend farther into Gordon Head, and would be renamed Oak Bay–Gordon Head. Victoria would



*Vancouver Island and the South Coast, Map 5*

extend farther into Saanich, and that part of the municipality of Esquimalt currently within Victoria should be re-turned to Esquimalt so as not to fragment the community, and the district should be renamed Esquimalt–Port Renfrew.

The Legislative Assembly adopted all of Judge Eckardt’s recommendations, establishing 10 Island electoral districts, plus one on the Mainland.

*d. The Warren Commission (1982)*

None of Mr. Warren’s recommendations affected Vancouver Island or the South Coast.

*e. The McAdam Commission (1984)*

The McAdam Commission recommended that the one-member districts of Nanaimo and Saanich and the Islands be increased to two members each. In 1985 the Legislative Assembly adopted these recommendations, thereby increasing the number of Vancouver Island MLAs to twelve, plus one on the Mainland.

*f. The Fisher Commission (1988)*

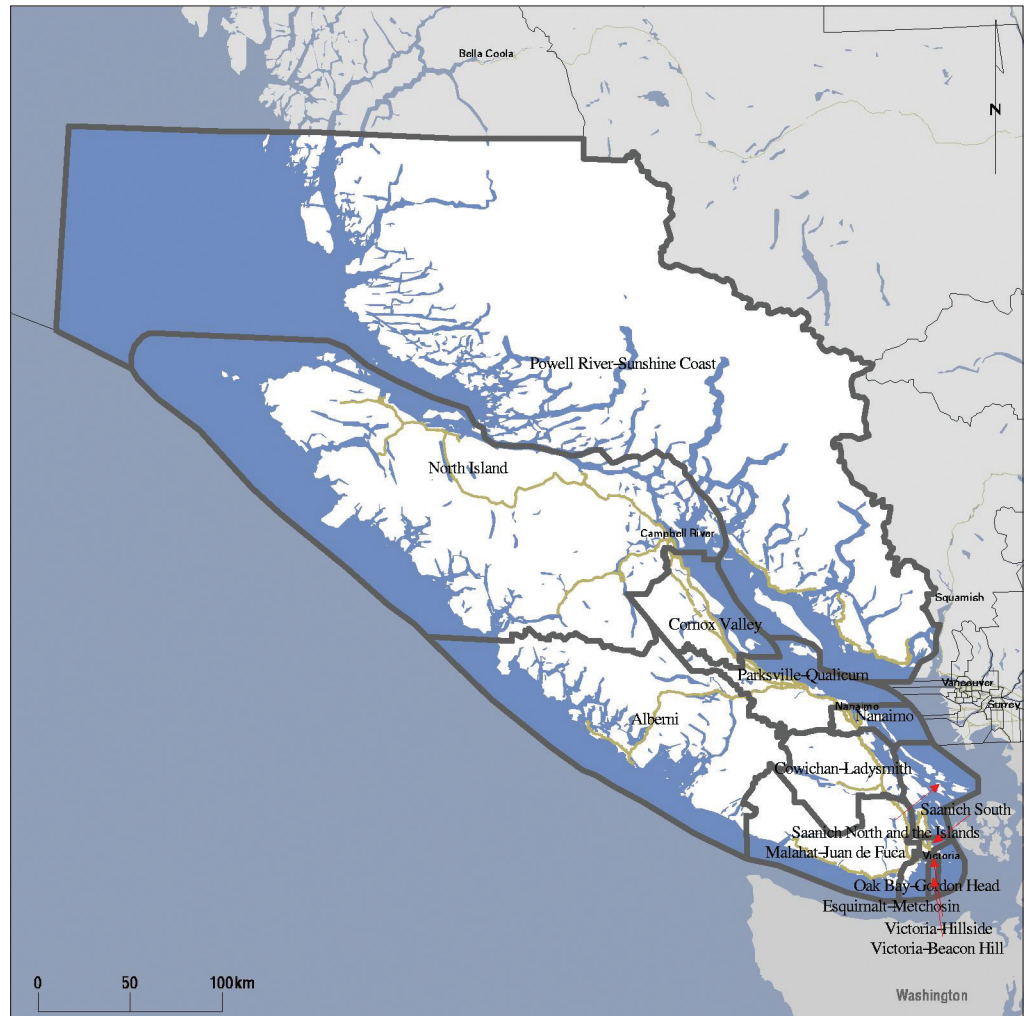
Judge Fisher’s terms of reference required that he eliminate all dual-member districts, including the three on Vancouver Island: Nanaimo, Saanich and the Islands, and Victoria. In addition, he was satisfied that the Island’s population warranted an additional electoral district, in the Ladysmith and Duncan area. Consequently, in his interim report he recommended 13 districts on the Island, plus one on the South Coast (see Vancouver Island and South Coast, Map 5).

In his final report, Judge Fisher recommended that the northern boundary of the current district of Mackenzie be moved farther south to the 52nd parallel, so that Bella Bella, Ocean Falls and Bella Coola would be included in the proposed North Coast district, and that

Mackenzie be renamed Powell River–Sunshine Coast. He also recommended several boundary and name changes to the Island electoral districts he had initially proposed. The Legislative Assembly adopted all of Judge Fisher’s recommendations (see Vancouver Island and South Coast, Map 6), but changed the name of Duncan-Ladysmith to Cowichan-Ladysmith, and changed the proposed name of Cowichan–Juan de Fuca to Malahat–Juan de Fuca.

*g. The Wood Commission (1999)*

The Wood Commission was faced with significant population disparities among electoral districts – Alberni had a deviation of minus 32.9 percent, while Comox Valley and Parksville-Qualicum had comparable positive deviations. The location of over-populated and under-populated electoral districts side-by-side led the commission to conclude, in its interim report, that population could be redistributed without the addition of any new electoral districts. The commission recommended retaining the existing 13 Island electoral districts, with some name changes (Vancouver Island and South Coast Map 7), but with several significant boundary changes:



*Vancouver Island and South Coast, Map 6*



*Vancouver Island and South Coast, Map 7*

- North Island – the southern boundary should be moved south to the Oyster River.
- Alberni-Qualicum – the only way to bolster the Alberni district’s population was to expand it eastward over the Highway 4 “hump,” to include Qualicum, and Denman, Hornby and Lasqueti Islands. The commission observed that Port Alberni had been joined with east coast communities between 1966 and 1979.
- Saanich North and the Islands – the commission transferred Hall and Norway Islands to Cowichan-Ladysmith, but rejected a suggestion that all the southern Gulf Islands constitute one new electoral district, as it would have a deviation of minus 52 percent.
- Victoria-Beacon Hill – the commission included Vic West in this district, to respect municipal boundaries, and increase Victoria-Beacon Hill’s population.

In its final report, the commission acknowledged the strong opposition voiced by residents of Qualicum to being separated from Parksville and joined with Alberni. The commission explained at length how it considered “a number of radical redistribution proposals which would have involved



redesigning the entire electoral map of Vancouver Island.” However, the commission found it impossible to redesign the electoral map in a reasonable way to keep the two communities together. It did, however, agree that Denman and Hornby Islands, and the adjacent coastal communities on Vancouver Island, should be transferred from Alberni-Qualicum to Comox Valley (see Vancouver Island and South Coast, Map 8).

The commission also agreed to adjust the boundaries between Malahat–Juan de Fuca and Saanich South (so that the entire Highlands District Municipality would be within Malahat–Juan de Fuca), and between Victoria–Hillside and Victoria–Beacon Hill (so that the boundary did not go through the Royal Jubilee Hospital grounds).

The Legislative Assembly adopted all the Wood Commission’s recommendations.



*Vancouver Island and South Coast, Map 8*

## 2. Our analysis of the Vancouver Island and South Coast electoral districts

The region we define as Vancouver Island–South Coast includes Vancouver Island and the Powell River–Sunshine Coast electoral districts (see map, page 302.) For convenience we have created three subsets: Capital region, Mid-Island region and Northern Island and South Coast region. Vancouver Island currently has 13 electoral districts, plus one district on the South Coast. These electoral districts, with their deviations at the time of the 1996 census, and now, are as follows (see Table 29):

**TABLE 29: CURRENT SMP ELECTORAL DISTRICTS ON VANCOUVER ISLAND AND SOUTH COAST**

Electoral District	1996 deviation*	2006 deviation**
North Island	+21%	+2.5%
Comox Valley	+16.5%	+14.2%
Powell River–Sunshine Coast	-4.8%	-8.7%
Alberni-Qualicum	+7.7%	+1.4%
Nanaimo-Parksville	+10%	+17.7%
Nanaimo	+9.1%	+7.1%
Cowichan-Ladysmith	+7.4%	+4.5%
Malahat–Juan de Fuca	+0.0%	+8.6%
Saanich North and the Islands	+7.9%	+6%
Saanich South	+1.7%	+0.4%
Oak Bay–Gordon Head	+1.2%	-6.2%
Victoria–Beacon Hill	+4.9%	+0.8%
Victoria-Hillside	+1.8%	-2%
Esquimalt-Metchosin	-0.5%	-1.9%

\* based on 1996 census data, and assuming 79 electoral districts

\*\* based on 2006 census data, and assuming 79 electoral districts

Vancouver Island has a total population of 704,577. Balancing the population among all 13 electoral districts would result in an average deviation of plus 4.1 percent based on 79 electoral districts. Although the Mid-Island (around Nanaimo) has seen strong population growth, overall the Island’s growth is moderate. We are satisfied that we can accommodate the Mid-Island’s growth adequately through the reconfiguration of existing electoral districts, and that Vancouver Island should continue to have 13 electoral districts.

We began our boundary-setting exercise by identifying several anomalies created by the current configuration of electoral districts, including the following:

- The current Malahat–Juan de Fuca electoral district is an aggregation of disparate communities, stretching from Port Renfrew in the southwest to Cowichan Bay in the northeast, not yet connected by paved roads.
- Qualicum has a much greater affinity and community interest with Parksville, than it has with Port Alberni and the Pacific Rim National Park communities.

### a. Capital Region

Starting in the south, the Capital Regional District has 13 municipalities and four unincorporated electoral areas (see map of Capital Region municipalities, page 298), which presented us with a real challenge in developing electoral districts that followed, as much as possible, municipal boundaries:

Municipality	Population
Sidney	11,315
North Saanich	10,823
Central Saanich	15,745
Saanich	108,265
Oak Bay	17,908
Victoria	78,057
Esquimalt	16,840
View Royal	8,768
Highlands	1,903
Langford	22,459
Colwood	14,687
Metchosin	4,795
Sooke	9,704

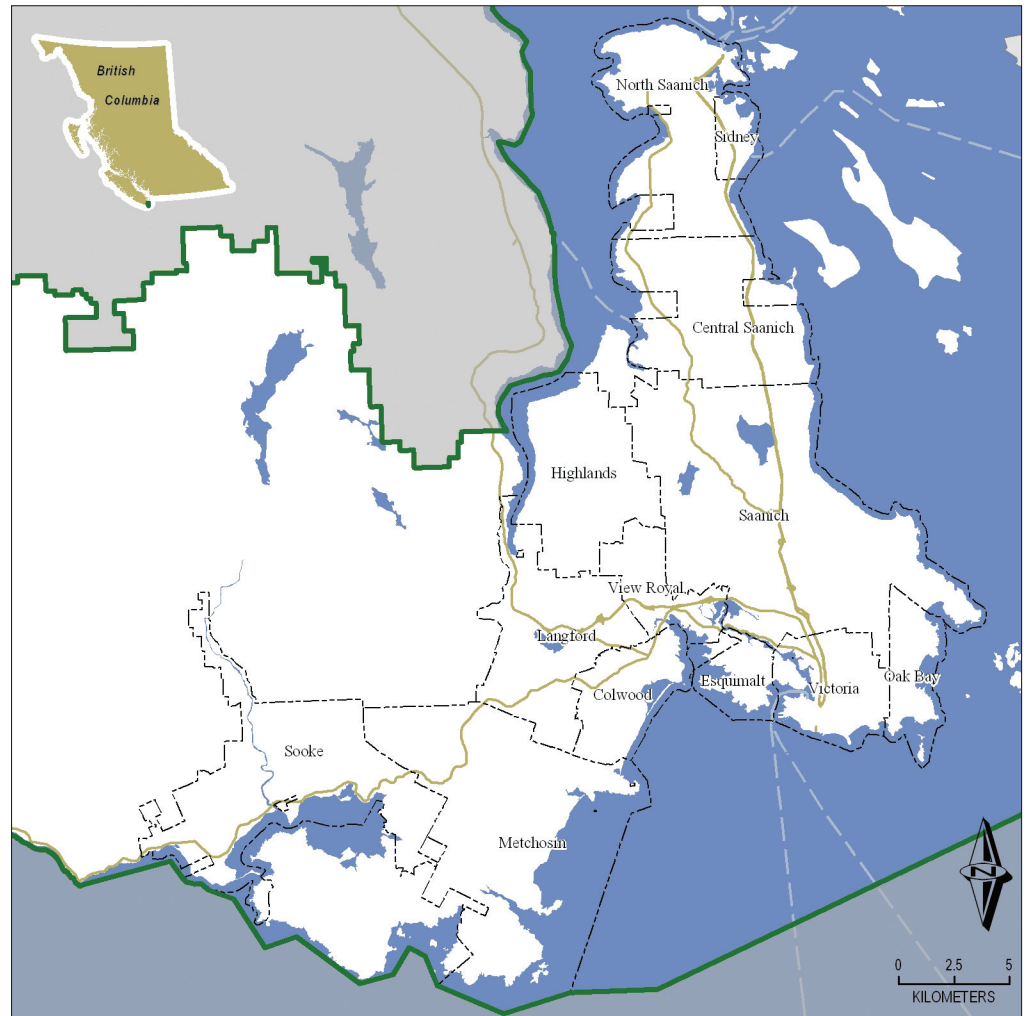
Saanich municipality is currently divided among three electoral districts, although its population is well-suited for two electoral districts. In our view, Saanich should have two electoral districts exclusively within its municipal

boundaries (see map of two proposed Saanich electoral districts, pages 304 to 305). We have relied on major arterials (Douglas Street, MacKenzie Avenue and Blenkinsop Road) and the western boundary of Mount Douglas Park to serve as a divider between these two electoral districts.<sup>63</sup>

We are proposing that the current Saanich North and the Islands district be retained, with no change. It includes the municipalities of Central Saanich, North Saanich and Sidney, as well as Saltspring, Saturna, North and South Pender, Mayne and Galiano Islands (see map of proposed Saanich North and the Islands electoral district, page 306).

Victoria is too large for one electoral district, but not large enough for two. Neither of the adjacent municipalities of Oak Bay and Esquimalt is large enough for its own electoral district. Consequently, we have grouped all three municipalities together, to form two electoral districts, using major arterials in Victoria (Cook Street, Hillside Avenue and Quadra Street) as the dividing line (see maps of two proposed Victoria electoral districts, pages 307 and 308).

Moving westward, there are strong community interests among the Western Communities (View Royal,



*Capital Region Municipalities*

<sup>63</sup> Our proposed Saanich East electoral district deviates from the Saanich municipal boundary in one area (by following Haultain Street between Richmond Road and Foul Bay Road), to avoid having the boundary cut through the middle of Royal Jubilee Hospital.

Highlands, Langford, Colwood and Metchosin) and, farther west, the communities of Sooke, Jordan River and Port Renfrew. Ideally, they should all be joined together into one electoral district. However, that would have resulted in a deviation of plus 31.5 percent, which we consider to be too high. Consequently, we have had to use the Island Highway as a divider, with the result that Highlands and those portions of Langford and View Royal that lie north of the Island Highway will be included in our proposed Cowichan-Goldstream electoral district, discussed below. We propose that the new west coast electoral district be named Juan de Fuca (see map of proposed Juan de Fuca electoral district, page 309).

Proposing these six electoral districts for the Capital Region results in deviations averaging plus 9.8 percent. However, BC Stats' population projections to 2013 (see Appendix O) and other information we have received, indicates that population growth in the six electoral districts in the Capital Region will be modest. The average deviation for these electoral districts may drop.

#### *b. Mid-Island*

Moving north from the Malahat, there is a series of communities on eastern Vancouver Island in an area known

locally as Mid-Island. The communities include, from south to north, Shawnigan Lake, Mill Bay, Cowichan Bay, Cowichan Lake, Duncan, North Cowichan (including Chemainus), Ladysmith, Nanaimo, Lantzville, Parksville and Qualicum.

Beginning in the south, we created a Cowichan-Goldstream electoral district that stretches from Duncan and Lake Cowichan in the north to Highlands and those portions of Langford and View Royal that are north of the Island Highway, in the south (see map of proposed Cowichan-Goldstream electoral district, page 310). This proposed district will have a deviation of plus 8.2 percent.

We then combined the municipalities of North Cowichan, Ladysmith and the southern part of Nanaimo into an electoral district that we propose be named Nanaimo–North Cowichan (see map of proposed Nanaimo–North Cowichan electoral district, page 311). This proposed district will have a deviation of plus 3.8 percent.

We then created an electoral district (which we propose be named Nanaimo) that combined central Nanaimo and Gabriola Island (see map of proposed Nanaimo electoral district page 312).

This proposed electoral district will have a deviation of plus 6.2 percent.

Due to population growth since the 1999 Wood Commission, there is now sufficient population north of our proposed Nanaimo district to form a new electoral district that combines that part of Nanaimo north of Hammond Bay Road and Rutherford Road with Lantzville, Parksville and Qualicum (see map of proposed Parksville-Qualicum electoral district, p. 313.) We propose that this district be named Parksville-Qualicum. This proposed electoral district will have a deviation of plus 5 percent.

#### *c. Northern Island and South Coast*

Moving to the north end of the Island, we are recommending that the North Island district retain its current southern boundary at the Oyster River, just south of Campbell River. However, we believe that the small communities lying east of Johnstone Strait and Queen Charlotte Strait, including Minstrel Island, Echo Bay, Sullivan Bay and Kingcome Inlet (currently in the Powell River–Sunshine Coast electoral district) should be included in the North Island district. We were told that their trading routes and community interests are with Sayward and Port McNeill, and they share the same regional district.

Although no previous electoral boundaries commission has joined mainland and Island communities in this manner, we discovered that many other provincial administrative groupings do, including:

- Comox-Strathcona Regional District
- Mount Waddington Regional District
- Vancouver Island Health Area
- North Island College Region
- Vancouver Island Environment Region
- South Coast Transportation Region
- BC Assessment Authority Courtenay Area
- North Island–Central Coast Forest District
- Vancouver Island/Coast Development Region.

We are satisfied that the people living in the small mainland and island communities that are included within Mount Waddington Regional District's Electoral Area A have a stronger community interest with people living in the North Island electoral district, and should be joined with them.

We now turn to the existing electoral districts of Comox Valley and Alberni-Qualicum. The current electoral district of Comox Valley has a deviation of plus 14.2 percent, while neighbouring Alberni-Qualicum, having now lost the Town of Qualicum Beach and several

small adjacent communities, is left with a deviation of minus 20 percent. Notwithstanding several submissions that the Comox Valley district can live with a high positive deviation because it works well with its present boundaries, we concluded that we needed to realign the boundaries of these two electoral districts in order to moderate their disparate deviations.

We considered the creation of a West Coast electoral district, but there is simply inadequate population to the north and south of the current Alberni-Qualicum boundaries to make that feasible. In any event, the trade routes of the West Coast communities on the northern portion of Vancouver Island run eastward to Port Hardy and Campbell River, not southward to Tofino or Port Alberni. Similarly, the trade and transportation routes of West Coast communities to the south run southward to Victoria or eastward to Lake Cowichan, not northward to Ucluelet.

We concluded that the only feasible way to bring the Alberni district up to an acceptable population level is to join it with communities on the east coast of the Island (as three previous commissions have done). We are thus recommending that the southeastern boundary of this electoral district begin at the northern boundary of the Town of Qualicum Beach, extend north

nearly to the southern boundaries of the Village of Cumberland and the City of Courtenay, and include Denman and Hornby Islands. This district, which we propose be named Central Island, will have a deviation of minus 9 percent (see map of proposed Central Island electoral district, page 315). Although high, this deviation reflects the rural, and relatively sparsely-populated nature of the district.

We have retained the Comox Valley electoral district (see map of proposed Comox Valley electoral district, page 316). As discussed above, its southern boundary has been moved farther north, to just south of the Cumberland and Courtenay municipal boundaries. It will have a deviation of plus 9.4 percent.

We are proposing that the current Powell River–Sunshine Coast electoral district be retained. However, it will be smaller, extending northward only to the southern boundary of Electoral Area A of the Mount Waddington Regional District (see map of proposed Powell River–Sunshine Coast electoral district, page 317). As discussed earlier, we are proposing that Electoral Area A be included in our proposed North Island electoral district, and that our proposed North Coast electoral district extend farther south, to the northern boundary of Electoral Area A.

### 3. Conclusion

Accordingly, we propose that there be 14 electoral districts on Vancouver Island–South Coast, as follows:

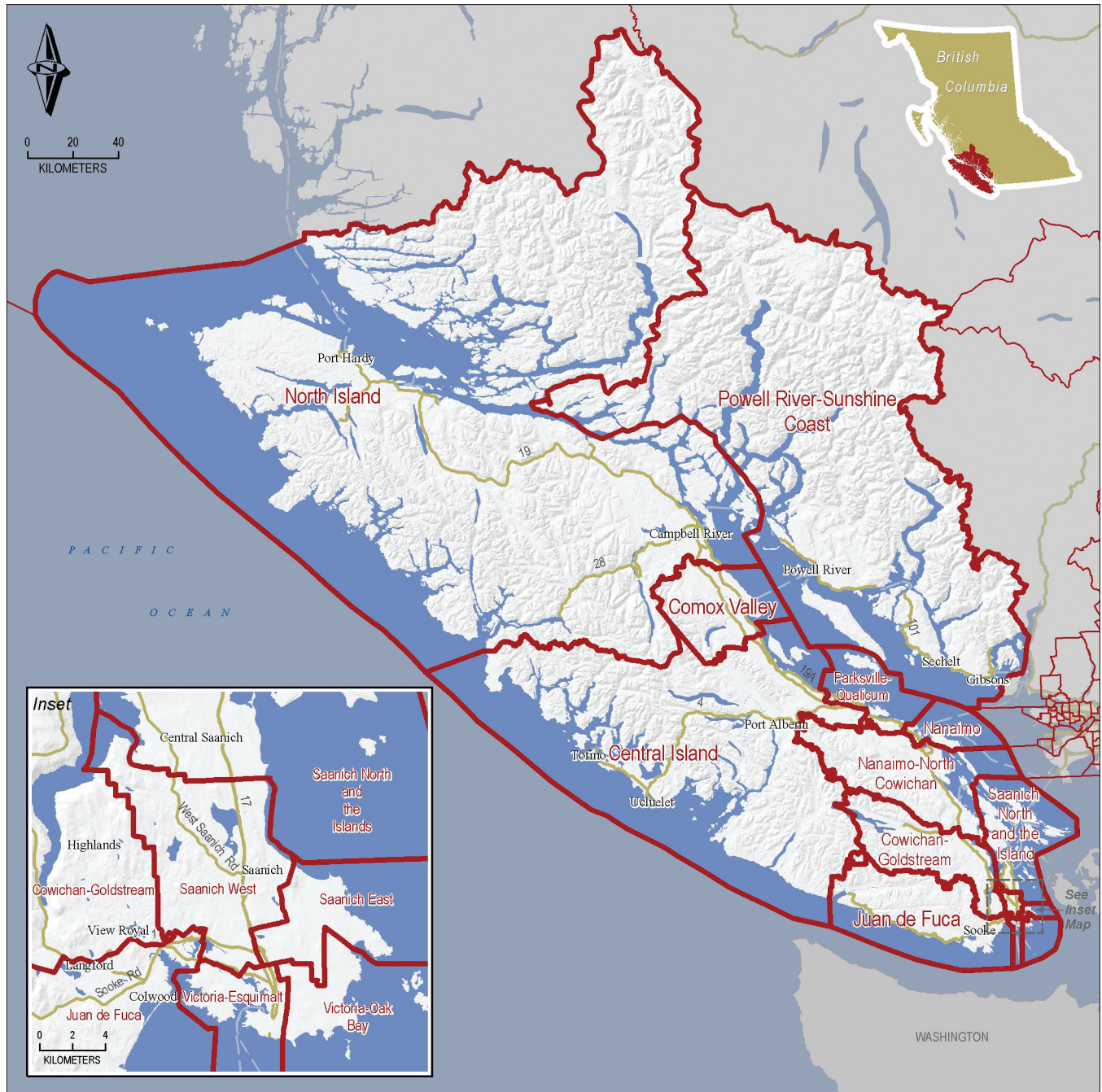
TABLE 30: PROPOSED SMP ELECTORAL DISTRICTS ON VANCOUVER ISLAND–SOUTH COAST

Electoral District	Sq. Km.	Population	Deviation*
<i>Northern Island and South Coast</i>			
North Island	44,502	53,654	+5.7%
Comox Valley	1,707	55,543	+9.4%
Powell River–Sunshine Coast	21,232	47,109	-7.2%
Central Island	13,903	46,214	-9%
<i>Mid-Island</i>			
Parksville-Qualicum	1,070	53,318	+5%
Nanaimo	627	53,940	+6.2%
Nanaimo–North Cowichan	2,528	52,695	+3.8%
Cowichan-Goldstream	1,731	54,946	+8.2%
<i>Capital Region</i>			
Saanich North and the Islands	1,526	55,201	+8.7%
Saanich West	93	56,548	+11.4%
Saanich East	91	51,880	+2.2%
Victoria–Oak Bay	290	57,571	+13.4%
Victoria-Esquimalt	99	57,133	+12.5%
Juan de Fuca	2,646	56,240	+10.7%
* based on 81 electoral districts, with a provincial electoral quotient of 50,784			

*Region: Vancouver Island and South Coast – Current Electoral Districts*

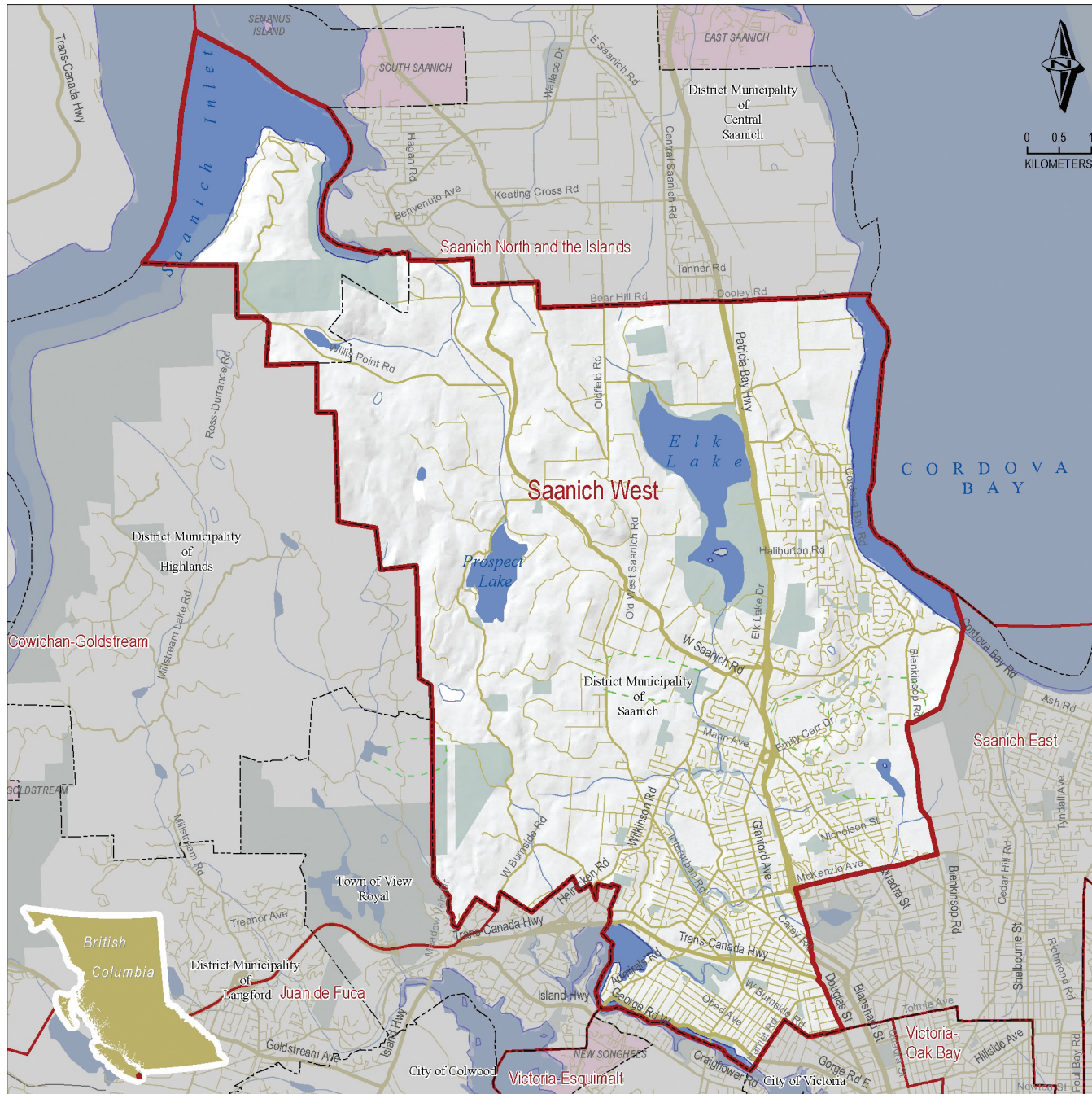


*Region: Vancouver Island and South Coast – Proposed Electoral Districts*

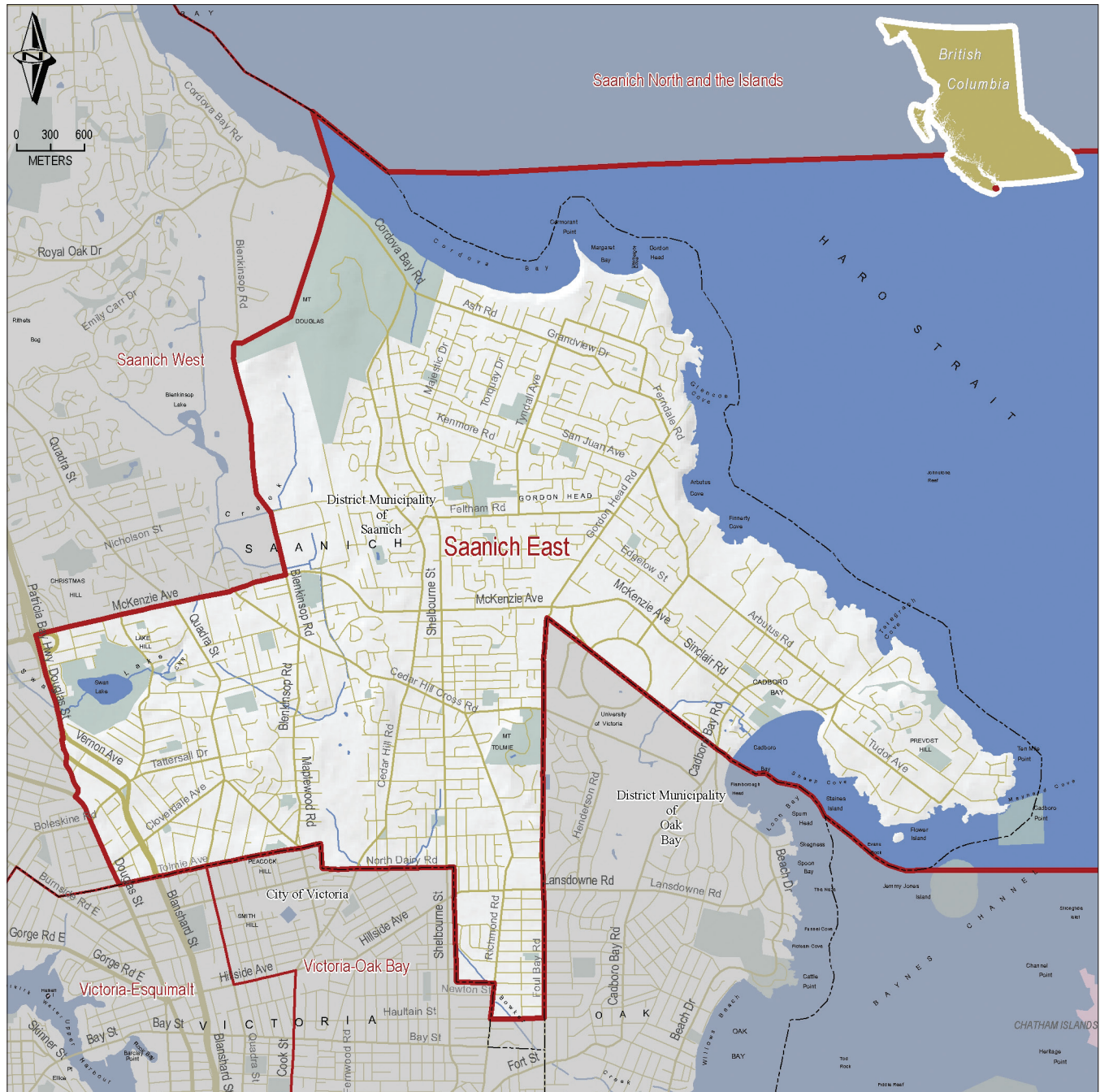




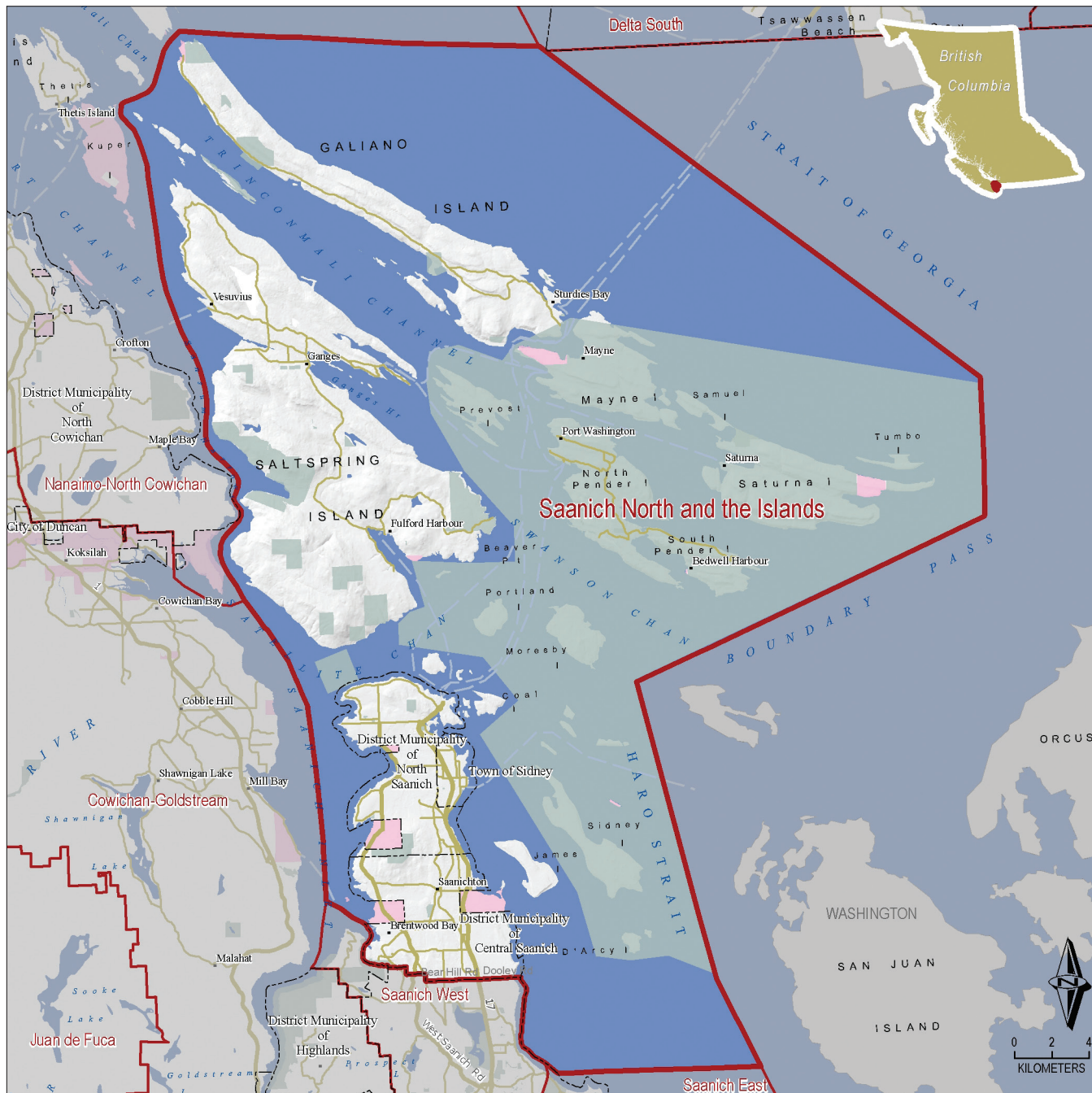
## Region: Vancouver Island and South Coast – Proposed Saanich West Electoral District



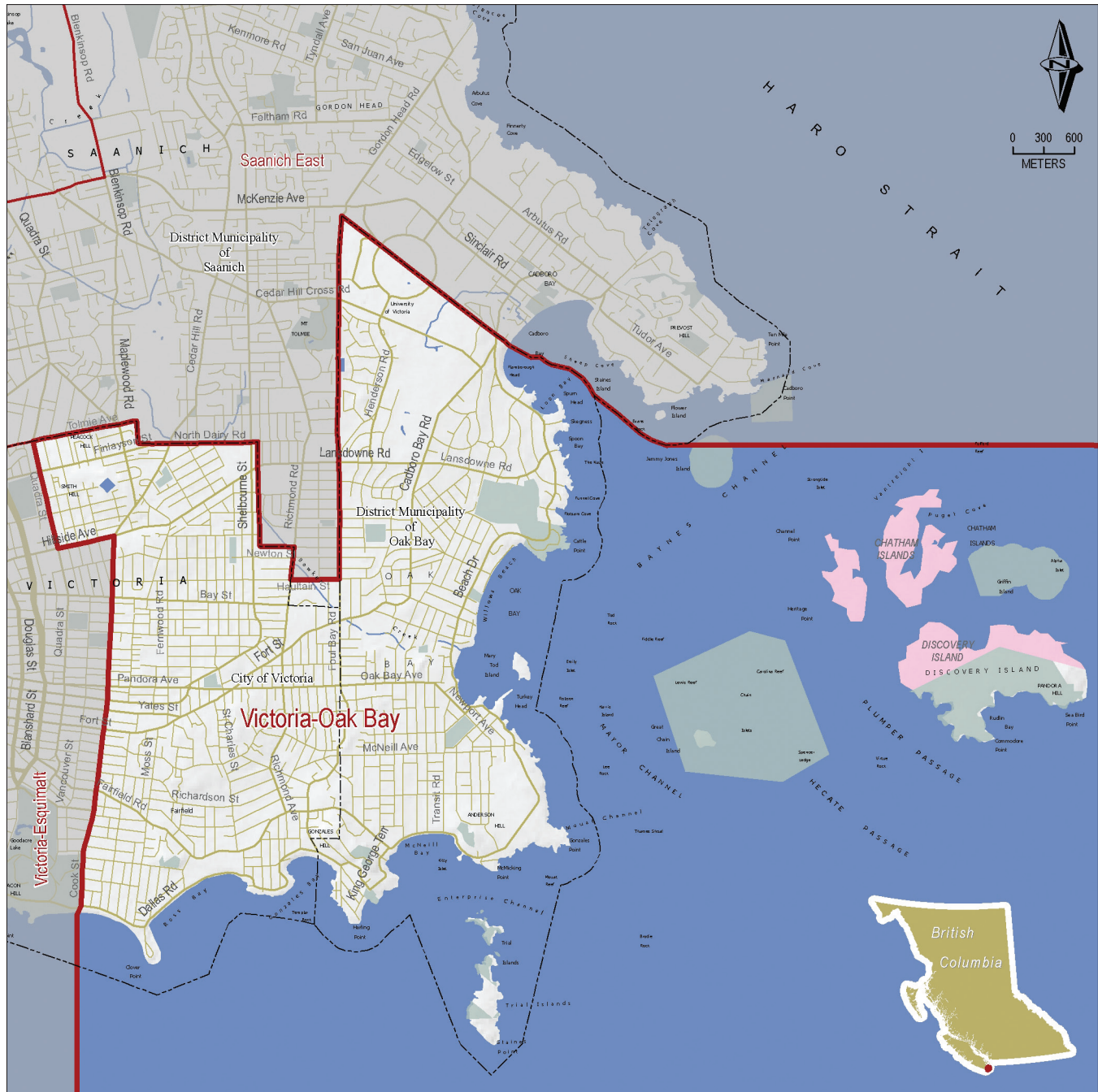
Region: Vancouver Island and South Coast – Proposed Saanich East Electoral District



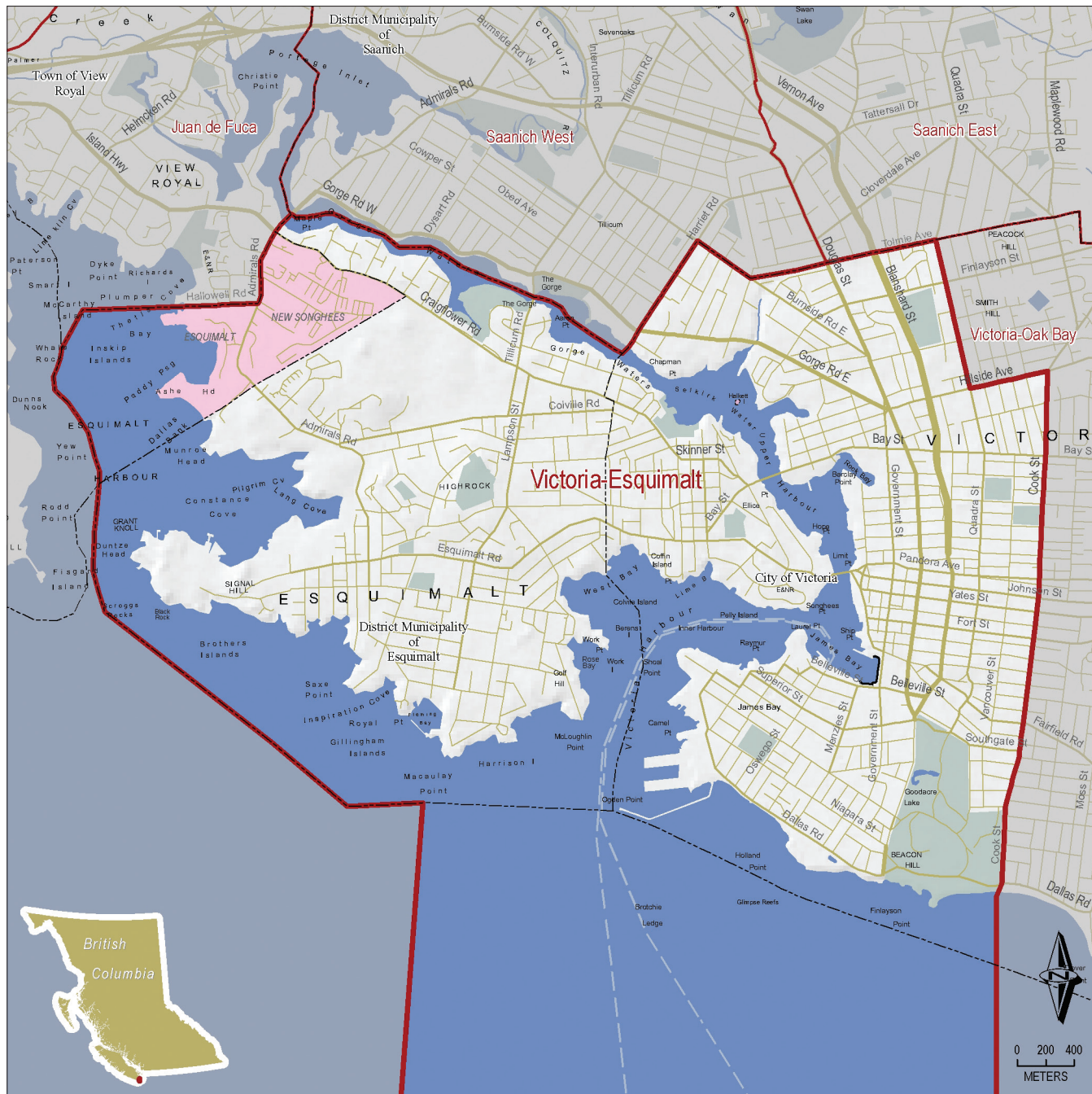
*Region: Vancouver Island and South Coast – Proposed Saanich North and the Islands Electoral District*



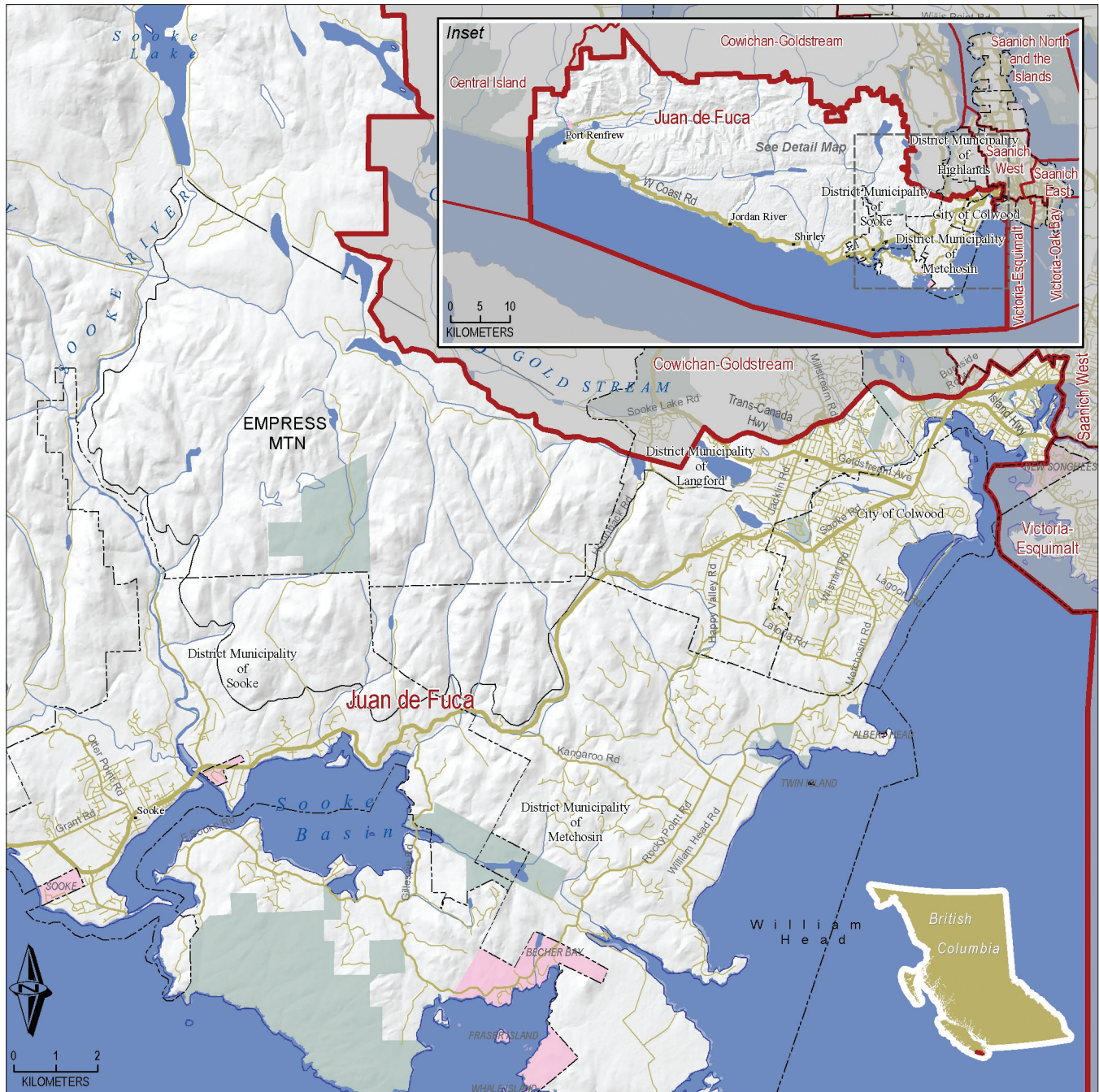
*Region: Vancouver Island and South Coast – Proposed Victoria–Oak Bay Electoral District*



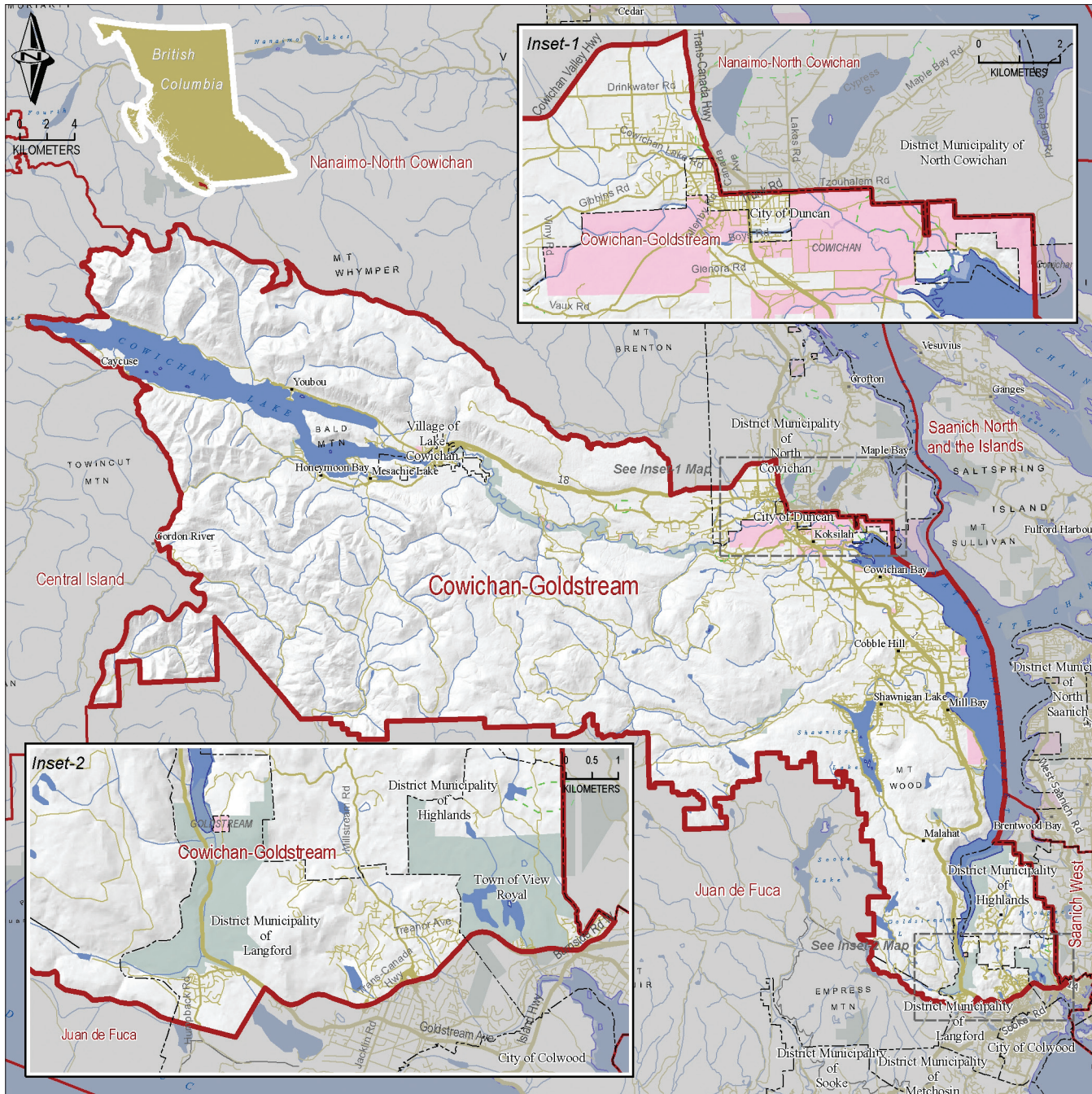
## Region: Vancouver Island and South Coast – Proposed Victoria-Esquamalt Electoral District



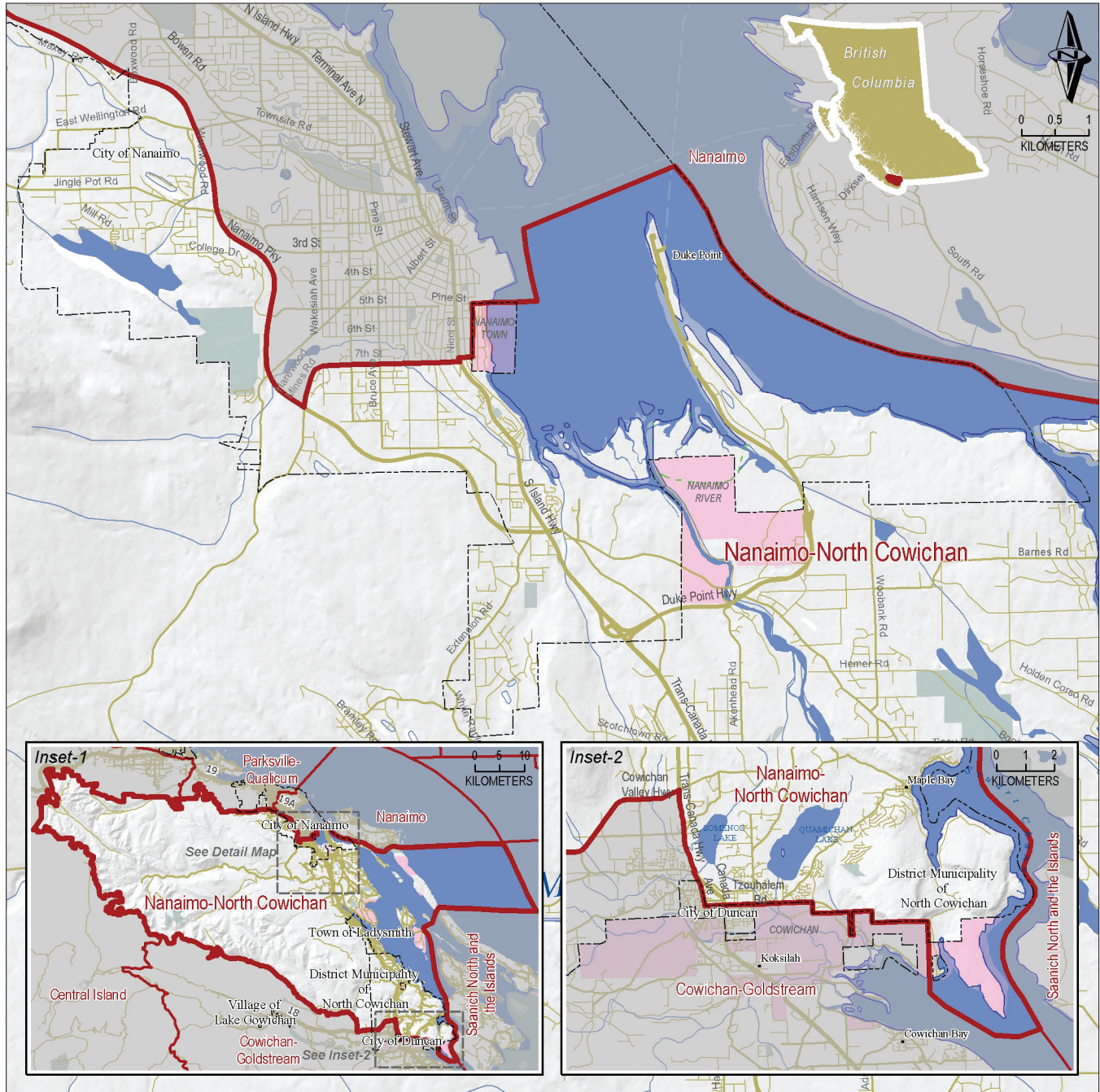
*Region: Vancouver Island and South Coast – Proposed Juan de Fuca Electoral District*



Region: Vancouver Island and South Coast – Proposed Cowichan-Goldstream Electoral District

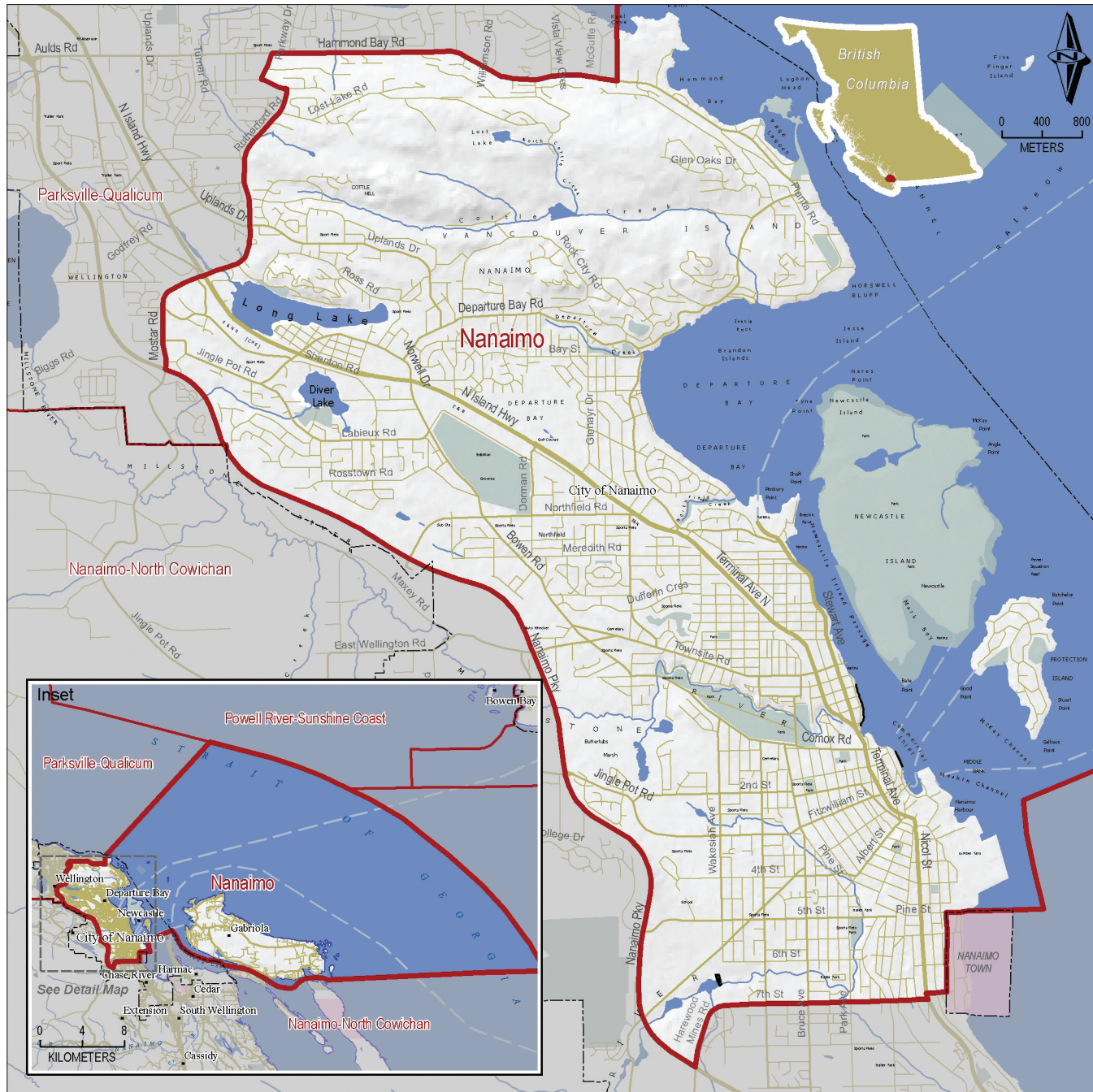


Region: Vancouver Island and South Coast – Proposed Nanaimo–North Cowichan Electoral District

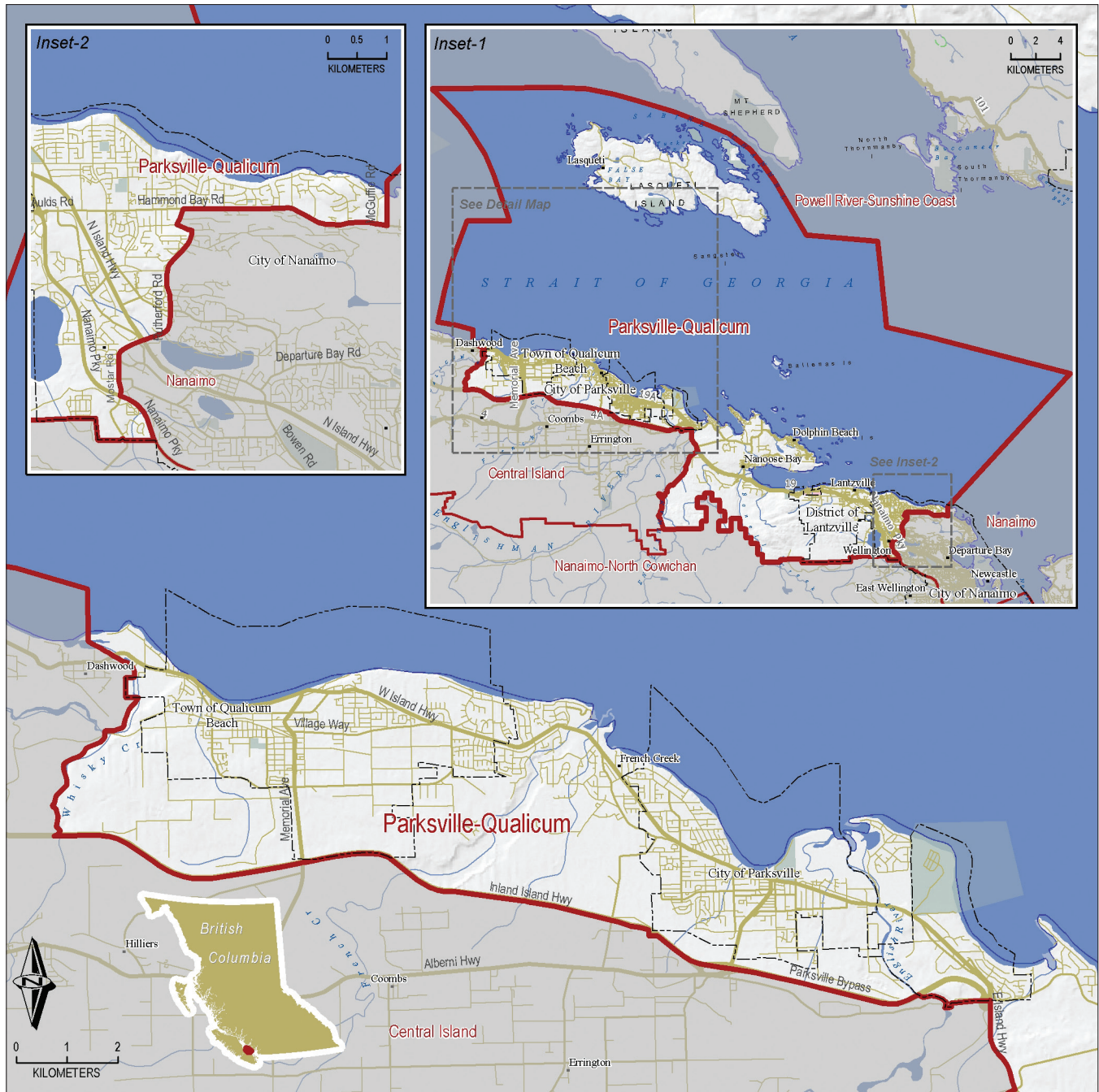




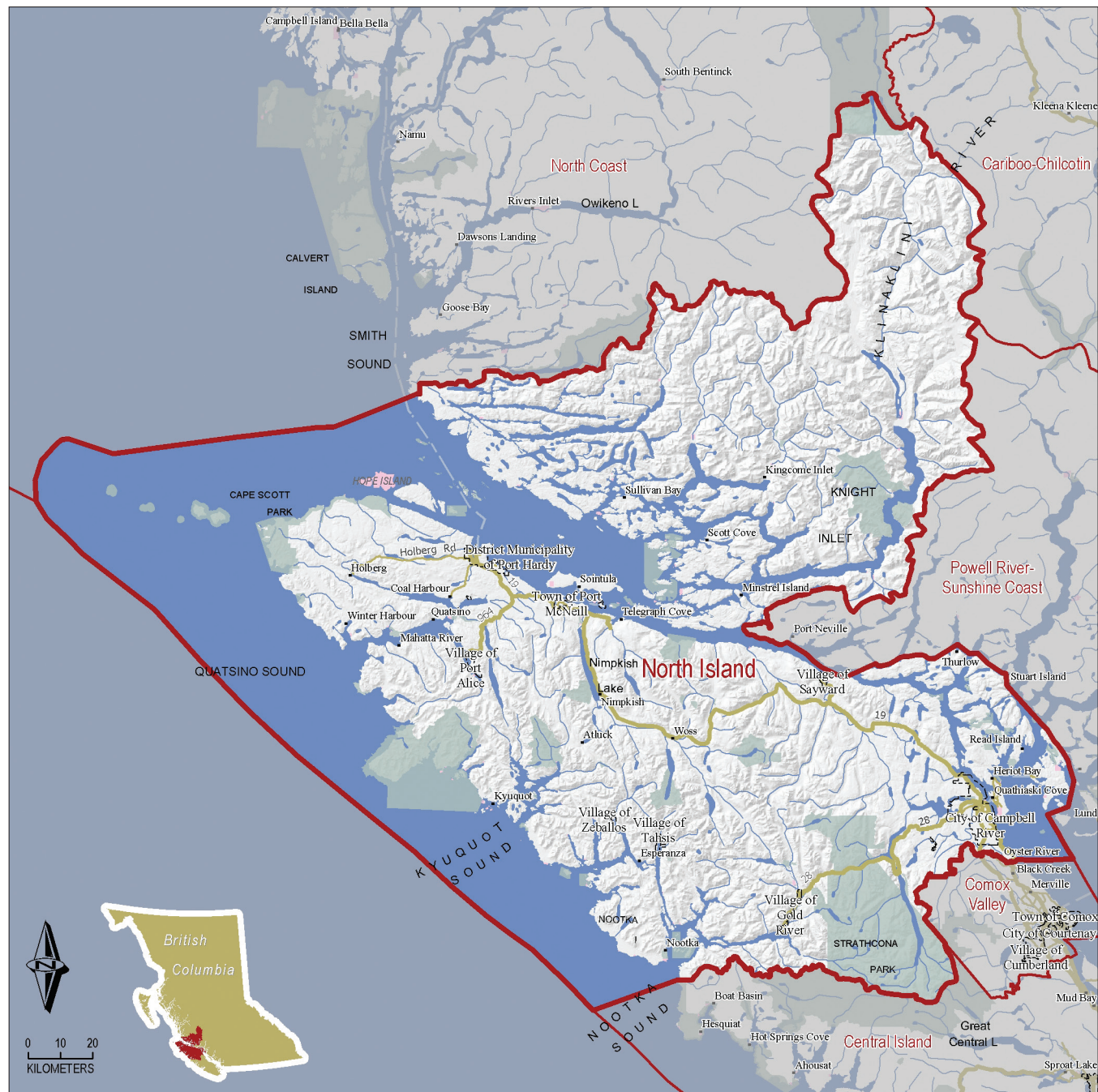
## Region: Vancouver Island and South Coast – Proposed Nanaimo Electoral District



*Region: Vancouver Island and South Coast – Proposed Parksville-Qualicum Electoral District*



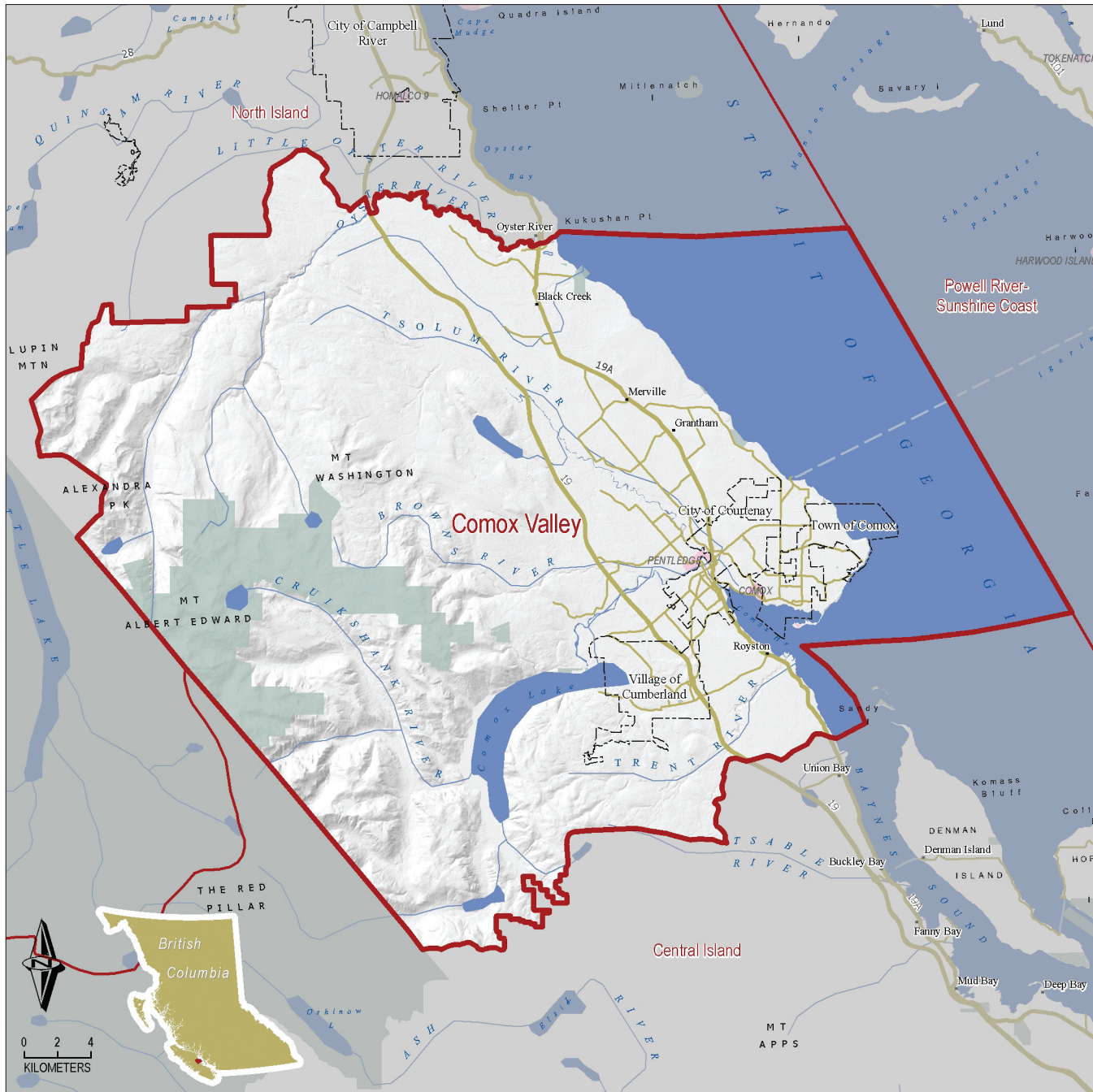
*Region: Vancouver Island and South Coast – Proposed North Island Electoral District*



*Region: Vancouver Island and South Coast – Proposed Central Island Electoral District*



*Region: Vancouver Island and South Coast – Proposed Comox Valley Electoral District*



*Region: Vancouver Island and South Coast – Proposed Powell River–Sunshine Coast Electoral District*



