



Ecodistrict Profile

Ecological Landscape Analysis Summary Ecodistrict 320: **Inverness Lowlands**

An objective of ecosystem-based management is to manage landscapes in as close to a natural state as possible. The intent of this approach is to promote biodiversity, sustain ecological processes, and support the long-term production of goods and services. Each of the province's 38 ecodistricts is an ecological landscape with distinctive patterns of physical features. (Definitions of underlined terms are included in the print and electronic glossary.)

This Ecological Landscape Analysis (ELA) provides detailed information on the forest and timber resources of the various landscape components of Inverness Lowlands Ecodistrict 320. The ELA also provides brief summaries of other land values, such as minerals, energy and geology, water resources, parks and protected areas, wildlife and wildlife habitat.

Inverness Lowlands is a small, irregularly-shaped ecodistrict along the river valleys of seven of the main rivers in Inverness County as well as along the shores of the 20-kilometre-long Lake Ainslie, the largest natural freshwater lake in the province.

The fertile soils adjacent to the waterways led to farming and early settlement in the 1750s by European settlers, who established communities throughout the ecodistrict. Many of the original farms have since been abandoned. Currently, 54% of the area is forested and 12% is agriculture.

Inverness Lowlands, one of the smallest ecodistricts in the province, stretches from Cheticamp in the north to Mull River and Whycomomagh Bay in the south. The total area is 48,800 hectares.

The ecodistrict includes the fault valleys of both the Margaree and the Middle rivers. The Margaree has been designated a Canadian Heritage river and is well-known as an excellent spawning area for Atlantic salmon.

Between Mabou and Inverness, erosion has created wide valleys, with steep slopes and gorges, creating beautiful landscapes.



A mix of farmland and forests follow along the Mabou River near the scenic community of Mabou.

Another significant portion of the ecodistrict comprises freshwater wetlands, salt marshes, and coastal beaches. Colonies of gulls, cormorants, and kittiwakes are found nesting on the ocean-side cliffs of Chéticamp Island.



The Northeast Margaree River is home to some of the best Atlantic salmon fishing in Nova Scotia.

The Margaree Valley is known for having some of the coldest temperatures and shortest recorded frost-free periods in the province.

Fossil remains of mastodons have been found in overburden material in the Middle River Valley.

Private land ownership accounts for nearly 80% of the ecodistrict. Five percent of the ecodistrict is under provincial Crown management, with the remainder in other uses.

Landscapes are large areas that function as ecological systems and respond to a variety of influences. Landscapes are composed of smaller ecosystems, known as elements. These elements are described by their physical features – such as soil and landform – and ecological features – such as climax forest type. These characteristics help determine vegetation development.

Element descriptions promote an understanding of historical vegetation patterns and the effects of current disturbances. This landscape analysis identified and mapped seven key landscape elements – six patch elements, and a corridor element – in Inverness Lowlands. A matrix is the dominant element, but in this ecodistrict there was not an obvious matrix.

Inverness Lowlands is basically a valley-driven landscape with isolated areas from one end to the other. The main connection is through other ecodistricts, such as the adjoining Cape Breton Hills.

Spruce Fir Hills and Hemlocks is the largest patch element, representing 42% of the ecodistrict. The forests are dominated by black spruce, white spruce, and balsam fir.

Tolerant Hardwood Hills, representing nearly 35% of the ecodistrict, is the second largest patch element. Shade-tolerant hardwood species typical of the Acadian Forest, such as sugar maple, yellow birch and beech, dominate.

The **Floodplain** element, representing 5% of the ecodistrict, is associated with the major rivers. Alluvial deposits occur due to flooding. The other patch elements, in order of size, are **Wetlands**, **Salt Marsh**, and **Coastal Beach**.

Valley Corridors is a linear element associated with major watercourses in the ecodistrict.