



Ecodistrict Profile

Ecological Landscape Analysis Summary Ecodistrict 340: **Cobequid Hills**

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 Cobequid Hills Ecodistrict 340. 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.

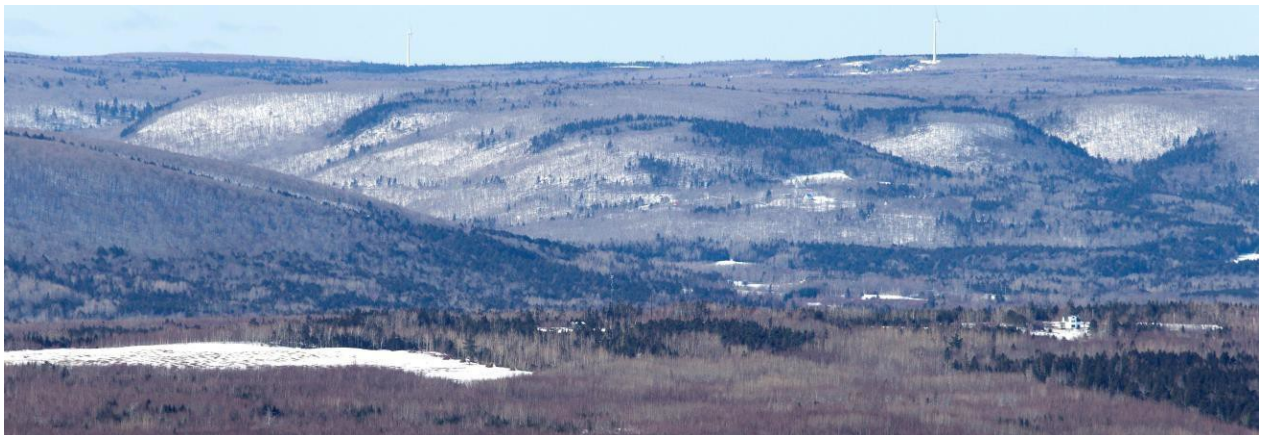
Cobequid Hills is an uplands cigar-shaped ecodistrict that extends 150 kilometres across the northern part of Nova Scotia and forms a distinct and important large-scale geographic and ecological feature of the province.

Cobequid Hills supports one of the largest intact Acadian Forests of shade-tolerant hardwoods, such as sugar maple, yellow birch, and beech, on the mainland.

This ecodistrict extends across three counties – Cumberland, Colchester, and Pictou – from the Parrsboro area in the west to the Pictou area in the east. Cobequid Hills 340 separates two lowland ecodistricts, Minas Lowlands 620 to the south and Northumberland Lowlands 530 to the north.

The hills of the ecodistrict receive the greatest snowfall on the mainland with over 300 centimetres of snow in an average year. Yet within the Nova Scotia Upland Ecoregion, Cobequid Hills is the driest ecodistrict with annual precipitation of about 1,200 millimetres.

The highest points on the mainland are found in the Cobequid Hills at Nuttby Mountain and Dalhousie Mountain, which rise to 335 metres above sea level.



Rolling hills are one of the defining features of Cobequid Hills Ecodistrict 340.

The lakes are small and generally shallow, but Folly Lake, which resulted from glacial ice resting in the valley of an old river, choking both ends with gravel deposits from the melting ice, has depths of over 100 metres. The Cobequids provide a watershed for river and streams running north or south, which leave the mountains' ravines and gorges in a series of falls or cascades. There are 20 major river systems within Cobequid Hills, most emptying into the Minas Basin and Cobequid Bay.

Private land ownership accounts for 82% of the total Cobequid Hills Ecodistrict area of 190,295 hectares, with 17% under provincial Crown management.

The ecodistrict contains three wilderness protected areas, located in Economy River, Portapique, and Gully Lake.

Old iron mine workings in the Londonderry area have been used as wintering sites by bats. The size of the winter shelter for hibernating bats has the potential to be one of the largest in the province. *Bat populations in Nova Scotia have declined dramatically in recent years due to a fungal infection.*



Streams and rivers en route to the Minas Basin leave the Cobequid Hills through deep, steep-walled ravines and gorges in a series of falls or cascades.

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 six key landscape elements – one dominant matrix element, four smaller patch elements, and a corridor element– in Cobequid Hills.

Tolerant Hardwood Hills is the matrix element, representing more than 65% of the ecodistrict. This element naturally supports long-lived hardwood species that grow well in shade, such as sugar maple, yellow birch, and beech.

The two largest patch elements are close in size, each representing about 12% of the ecodistrict. **Tolerant Mixedwood Hummocks** is fragmented, with the largest areas occurring in Economy Lake and Lynn Mountain. **Red and Black Spruce Hummocks** is distributed throughout the ecodistrict. The two other patch elements are **Tolerant Mixed Slopes** at a little over 7% of the area and the tiny **Wetlands** element.

Valley Corridors is a linear element associated with the about 20 major watercourses in the ecodistrict.