



## Ecodistrict Profile

### Ecological Landscape Analysis Summary Ecodistrict 350: **Cobequid Slopes**

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 Slopes Ecodistrict 350. 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.

This ecodistrict is wedged between the uplands of the Cobequid Mountains and the lowlands of the Minas Basin and, as such, there are representative forests of both areas in this ecodistrict.

For example, stands of shade-tolerant hardwoods, such as sugar maple, yellow birch, and beech – one of the main types of forest in the ecodistrict – are found on the hills of well-drained, coarse soils between Pleasant Hills and Upper Bass River.

In areas with gentler slopes or fairly level terrain, pure stands of red spruce or red spruce and yellow birch occur as the dominant forest of the slopes. Hemlock occurs on the steeper slopes along streams and rivers.

As a narrow band of rolling hills from North River in the east to Economy in the west, the southerly part of this ecodistrict provides significant winter habitat for large populations of white-tailed deer that come down from higher elevations as deep snow restricts movement.

Wetlands are generally absent and lakes few in this ecodistrict. Most of the freshwater, only 0.4% of the area, is found in streams and rivers that flow through the ecodistrict on their way to the Minas Basin.



The upper elevations of the Cobequid Hills are visible in the distance as red spruce forests and yellow birch dominated mixedwoods define the lower slopes of the Cobequid Slopes ecodistrict.

The largest rivers in this ecodistrict include the North, Debert, Portapique, Folly, and Economy.

Private land ownership accounts for about three-quarters of the total Cobequid Slopes Ecodistrict area of 37,087 hectares. About one-quarter of the ecodistrict is under provincial Crown management. The remainder is federal or other lands.



As snow in higher elevations deepens, white-tailed deer, such as this doe and fawn, move into the warmer, south-facing slopes of the ecodistrict.

Natural disturbance agents in the ecodistrict are primarily associated with climate and include hurricanes and wind storms, ice storms, and damage associated with freeze and thaw cycles. Occasional stand-level mortality will occur due to insect and disease epidemics such as the spruce budworm, tussock moth, and birch dieback.

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 five key landscape elements – one dominant matrix element, three smaller patch elements, and a corridor element– in Cobequid Slopes.

**Tolerant Mixedwood Hills** is the matrix element, representing 58% of the ecodistrict. This element naturally supports shade-tolerant species of the Acadian Forest, such as sugar maple, yellow birch, beech, and red spruce. In areas of stand-level disturbances, early successional species often become established, such as red maple, white and grey birch, aspen and balsam fir.

**Red Spruce Hummocks**, representing 36% of the ecodistrict, is the largest patch element. The dominant species is red spruce. The two other patch elements, in order of size, are **Tolerant Mixedwood Slopes** and **Spruce Pine Hummocks**.

**Valley Corridors**, a linear element associated with the major watercourses in the ecodistrict, also includes floodplains.