



Ecodistrict Profile

Ecological Landscape Analysis Summary

Ecodistrict 380: **Central Uplands**

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 Central Uplands Ecodistrict 380. 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 upland extension of the St. Marys fault block has some of the most productive red spruce forests in Nova Scotia. Red spruce is the dominant forest species in the ecodistrict and occupies many of the moist sites, which in other ecodistricts could be covered by black spruce. Pure stands of shade-tolerant hardwoods, such as sugar maple and yellow birch, are present on the crests and upper slopes of hills and steeper hummocks.

Partially wedged between the Cobequid Hills Ecodistrict 340 to the north and the Pictou Antigonish Highlands Ecodistrict 330 to the east, this ecodistrict occupies the gently rolling uplands of central Nova Scotia. Elevations average 300 metres above sea level.

Central Uplands contains the headwaters of several rivers. The Stewiacke and Calvary rivers flow into Cobequid Bay. The East, Middle, and West rivers of Pictou County empty into the Northumberland Strait. The Musquodoboit River flows into the Atlantic Ocean.

The geology is somewhat similar to that of the St. Marys River 370 and Cobequid Slopes 350 ecodistricts. Soils are predominantly well-drained to moderately well-drained with finer textured soils imperfectly drained.

First, second, and third order streams with a trellised drainage pattern and a few small shallow lakes cover less than 1% of the ecodistrict.



Red spruce forests near Shepherders Junction.

Lakes in the ecodistrict are generally shallow, providing habitat for many species of wildlife, including beavers, fish, amphibians, reptiles, waterfowl, and osprey. Loons have been recorded breeding at Perch, Grant, and West Branch lakes.



Old growth hemlock- red spruce forest at West Branch Lake.

Private land ownership accounts for 83% of the total Central Uplands Ecodistrict area of 129,118 hectares. Only 15% of the ecodistrict is under provincial Crown management. Less than 1% is considered Aboriginal lands. The remaining lands are in transportation corridors and inland waters.

About 87% of the Central Uplands is forested. Wetlands at 4% and agriculture at 3% are the other main land 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 nine key landscape elements – one dominant matrix element, seven smaller patch elements, and a corridor element – in Central Uplands.

Spruce Hemlock Pine Hummocks and Hills is the matrix element, representing 47% of the ecodistrict. This is a softwood dominated element with climax forests typical of the Acadian Forest, including red spruce, hemlock, and yellow birch.

Tolerant Mixedwood Hills, representing nearly one-third of the ecodistrict, is the largest patch element. As a mixedwood element that supports climax species of the Acadian Forest, common species include sugar maple, beech, yellow birch, red spruce, and hemlock.

Other patch elements, in order of size, are **Tolerant Hardwood Hills**, **Tolerant Hardwood Drumlins and Hummocks**, **Tolerant Mixedwood Drumlins**, **Tolerant Mixedwood Slopes**, **Wetlands**, and **Floodplain**.

Valley Corridors features strong linear river corridors that dissect the ecodistrict in several locations. Salmon River, Murray Brook, Pembroke River, Stewiacke River, Calvary River, West River, and branches of the East River are among the most prominent corridors.