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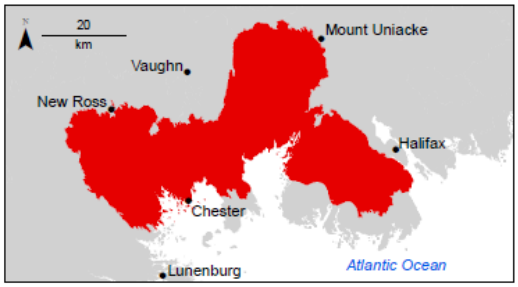

Ecodistrict Profile

Ecological Landscape Analysis Summary
Ecodistrict 780: **St. Margarets Bay**

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 provides detailed information on the forest and timber resources of the various landscape components of St. Margarets Bay Ecodistrict 780. 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.

The St. Margarets Bay Ecodistrict covers the eastern part of the South Mountain Batholith, a large, irregularly shaped slab of granite.

On a map, the ecodistrict looks like a billowing cumulus cloud, with the central part stretching north into Hants County. One side tilts to the east and covers most of the Chebucto Peninsula, including communities such as Timberlea, Seabright, Spryfield and Harrietsfield. The other side curls west into Lunenburg County, including Chester and extending nearly to Mahone Bay.

Granite outcrops, part of the South Mountain Batholith, are found in the St. Margarets Bay Ecodistrict.

St. Margarets Bay is part of the South Mountain uplands and shares similar landscape features with neighbouring ecodistricts to the west and south. The effects of lower elevations adjacent to the coastal waters of St. Margarets Bay and Mahone Bay, however, create conditions of more rain and fog and higher moisture levels.

Hurricanes have played a significant role in shaping the forests of this ecodistrict, likely due to its geographic position near the Atlantic Coast and at the end of two major coastal bays.

For the most part the soils are shallow and stony and the landscape is dotted with large granite boulders. Dispersed throughout the ecodistrict are small streams and rivers, bogs and swamps and several large lakes. The largest river, the Gold River, drains the western part of the ecodistrict. The Pockwock Lake watershed is a significant water supply source for the Municipality of Halifax and is within the ecodistrict.

Four-toed salamanders have been found in a few of the wetlands common in the ecodistrict that are known to support a variety of native reptile and amphibian species.

Wetlands provide important habitat for the endangered mainland moose, generally found on the Chebucto Peninsula, about 10 kilometres from Halifax.

Four-toed salamanders, which have four toes on their back legs instead of the usual five, are sometimes found in the St. Margarets Bay Ecodistrict.
(Photo by Nova Scotia Museum)

The ecodistrict contains Lewis Lake, a popular 150 hectare day use park, specially designed to offer outdoor recreation opportunities for seniors and people with disabilities.

The main vegetation feature of this ecodistrict is the red spruce forest that is generally found on the slopes of hills and hummocks. Hemlock is usually found on the lower parts of slopes near watercourses. White pine and black spruce, over-topping a heavy cover of heath-like shrubs, are found on the shallow, coarse textured and drier soils. Black spruce will occupy the poorly drained soils.

Private land ownership accounts for a little more than 70% of the ecodistrict area. Approximately 20% of the ecodistrict is under provincial Crown management. Less than 1% is considered aboriginal lands. The remaining lands are transportation corridors and inland waters.

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 eight key landscape elements – one dominant matrix element, six smaller patch elements and a corridor element– in St. Margarets Bay.

Spruce Hemlock Pine Hummocks and Hills is the matrix element, representing about two-thirds of the ecodistrict. A little over half of the element is softwoods, such as red spruce, eastern hemlock and white pine. The remainder is mixedwood and hardwoods. **Spruce Pine Hummocks** is the largest patch element, which is most prominent around Martins River, Sponds Lake, Seffernsville and Beech Hill. The area is dominated by a mature and multi-aged red and black spruce. The other patch elements, in order of size, are **Tolerant Mixedwood Drumlins**, **Spruce Pine Flats**, **Wetlands**, **Tolerant Hardwood Hills** and the tiny **Coastal Beach**.

Valley Corridors is the corridor element, providing routes for wildlife and other travel throughout the ecodistrict.