



## Ecodistrict Profile

### Ecological Landscape Analysis Summary Ecodistrict 810: Cape Breton Coastal

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 Cape Breton Coastal Ecodistrict 810. 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 coastal ecodistrict extends along the north shore of Chedabucto Bay and the east coast of Cape Breton Island and has a Maritime Boreal coastal forest. This forest includes stands of white spruce, balsam fir, and black spruce extending several kilometres inland. In sheltered areas and on drumlins occasional white pine and tolerant hardwoods will be found. However, red maple and white birch dominate the hardwood component of the coastal forests. Throughout the ecodistrict, small patches of jack pine and scattered red oak occur.

The coastal landscape is shaped by the waters and winds of the Atlantic Ocean, producing a stunning variety of islands, isthmuses, and inlets.

The coastal forests are subject to serious wind exposure and damage, abundant moisture, cool temperatures, a susceptibility to fungus attack, and windfall. As a result, balsam fir seldom exceeds 70 years of age. Windfall areas quickly regenerate to another crop of balsam fir.

Since the construction of the Canso Causeway in 1953, there has been no movement of spring ice from the Gulf of St. Lawrence through the Strait of Canso, where currents once flowed at about 20 knots per hour from St. Georges Bay.



The Atlantic Ocean and the lands it has helped shape create landscapes of striking beauty in the Cape Breton Coastal Ecodistrict.

The glacial history of the Cape Breton portion of this ecodistrict includes various depths of glacial deposits and drumlins.

Lakes and rivers are significant within this ecodistrict, accounting for 7% of the area.

The ecodistrict includes wilderness areas on Scatarie Island, at Gabarus, and Middle River Framboise, several provincial designated and non-designated parks and park reserves, and also a site of cultural and ecological significance at Baleine in Cape Breton County. The Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Site is a major tourism attraction.



Fortress Louisbourg is one of the main cultural and tourism attractions in the Cape Breton Coastal Ecodistrict.

Private land ownership accounts for 56% of the total Cape Breton Coastal Ecodistrict area. Provincial Crown land makes up 33% of the ecodistrict. Only 4% is federal Crown land. The remaining lands are in transportation corridors, inland waters, and all other ownerships.

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 Cape Breton Coastal.

**Coastal Spruce** is the matrix element, representing 51% of the ecodistrict. The main species in this element are the softwoods black spruce, white spruce, and balsam fir.

**Coastal Mixedwood Hills and Drumlins** is the largest patch element, representing 41% of the ecodistrict. In addition to the species in the matrix, this element also contains hardwood forests of red maple, yellow birch, and white birch. The other patch elements, in order of size, are **Wetlands**, **Coastal Beach**, and **Salt Marsh**. The two corridors in **Valley Corridors**, a linear element that usually follows major waterways, are the Mira River and the Grand River.