A NOVA SCOTIA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES PUBLICATION

Ecodistrict Profile

Ecological Landscape Analysis Summary
Ecodistrict 830: **South Shore**

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 South Shore Ecodistrict 830. 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 South Shore Ecodistrict follows the Atlantic Ocean coastline 180 kilometres from the Aspotogan Peninsula, near St. Margarets Bay, in the east to Pubnico Harbour in the west. The ecodistrict extends inland about 10 kilometres.

The coastline is irregular, with many bays, inlets, headlands, and islands, reflecting the inland geology and landforms of the adjacent ecodistricts. South Shore includes bedrock of granite, slates, and quartzites and a landscape of low hills and hummocks, extensive flats, and scattered drumlins.

Coarse, sandy beaches are common along with small scattered salt marshes. Coastal barrens and headlands can be extensive throughout this ecodistrict, particularly in the western portion.

The South Shore Ecodistrict includes beaches, salt marshes, forests, and coastal communities.

The climate of South Shore is influenced by the warmer waters of the Gulf Stream more than the Eastern Shore and Cape Breton Coastal ecodistricts, which are cooled by the colder waters of the Labrador Current. The South Shore Ecodistrict is cooler in summer and milder in winter than adjacent inland ecodistricts. Periods of foggy weather are common.

Coastal headlands, such as this one near Baccaro, are common in the ecodistrict. Winds off the Atlantic Ocean severely stunt trees, resulting in forests of black and white spruce and balsam fir.

Black spruce is the dominant species along the shore, along with white spruce and balsam fir. The coastal headlands receive the brunt of Atlantic winds, resulting in coastal forests of black and white spruce where the trees are severely stunted. Further inland from the wind, other tree species – such as red maple, white pine, red oak and yellow birch – will become established.

Private land ownership accounts for 79% of the South Shore Ecodistrict, which has an area of 136,171 hectares. About 15% is held by the provincial Crown and the remainder by other owners.

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 11 key landscape elements – one dominant matrix element, nine smaller patch elements, and a corridor element – in South Shore.

In the **Coastal Spruce** matrix element, representing 42% of the ecodistrict, forests of black spruce with lesser amounts of white spruce and balsam fir are typical. Earlier successional forests will have red maple and white birch but these species are quickly overtaken by the spruce.

Coastal Bogs and Hummocks, the largest patch element representing 13% of the ecodistrict, comprises treeless bogs and low hummocks forested with slow growing black spruce, balsam fir, and tamarack. The element occurs primarily between Round Bay and Barrington. The other patch elements, in order of size, are **Coastal Spruce Pine Hummocks**, **Coastal Mixedwood Hills and Drumlins**, **Coastal Spruce Ridges**, **Coastal Spruce Flats**, **Wetlands**, **Coastal Spruce Pine Oak Hills and Hummocks**, **Coastal Beach**, and **Salt Marsh**.

Valley Corridors, a linear element associated with major watercourses in the ecodistrict, plays an important role in regulating water temperature, input of nutrients, and erosion control.