

Ecodistrict Profile

Ecological Landscape Analysis Summary Ecodistrict 840: **Tusket Islands**



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 Tusket Islands Ecodistrict 840. 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 Tusket Islands Ecodistrict extends along the coast of southwestern Nova Scotia from Pubnico to Yarmouth. This ecodistrict has similar topography and geology to the adjacent Clare (730) and Sable (760) ecodistricts, but can be separated from them due to the climatic influence of the Gulf of Maine.

The moderating effect of the gulf gives this area the mildest winters in the province and a frost-free period of over half the year, longer than any other place in Atlantic Canada.

The Tusket Islands Ecodistrict is made up of a submerged coastline with tidal rivers and inlets, numerous islands, long linear peninsulas, and salt marshes. At any point, the ecodistrict seldom exceeds 10 kilometres in width.

Forests in this ecodistrict have been heavily impacted by human activity. Black spruce is the dominant species along the shore. White spruce and balsam fir are also common. In areas where shelter is provided by topography, conditions are suitable for other species such as red spruce, white pine and red oak and shade-tolerant hardwoods, such as sugar maple and yellow birch.



The Tusket Islands Ecodistrict includes islands and seascapes from southwestern Nova Scotia.

Offshore islands provide critical habitat for colonial nesting birds that require isolation from humans and predators to reproduce. Communally nesting species include great blue herons, double-crested cormorants, common eiders, common terns, Arctic terns, and Leach's storm petrels.



Extensive salt marshes such as this one at Abrams River provide significant habitat for migratory waterfowl.

Private land ownership accounts for 84% of the ecodistrict, with 9% held by the Crown and the remainder under other ownership.

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 seven key landscape elements – one dominant matrix element, seven smaller patch elements, and a corridor element in Tusket Islands.

In the matrix **Coastal Spruce** element, representing 41% of the ecodistrict area, forests of black spruce and white spruce are typical. Red spruce may be found on better-drained soils, while on wetter soils red maple, tamarack, and alder are common.

Coastal Red Spruce Hills and Drumlins is the largest patch element and is located inland and on the interior islands of Lobster Bay. This element is sheltered from the coastal exposure and possesses conditions suitable for species such as red spruce, white pine, red oak, and shade-tolerant hardwoods. Where exposure is more prominent, a climax of black and white spruce can be expected. The other patch elements, in order of size, are **Coastal Spruce Flats**, **Salt Marsh, Wetlands**, **Coastal Spruce Islands**, **Coastal Spruce Ridges**, and **Coastal Beach**.

Valley Corridors is a linear element associated with major waterways in the ecodistrict, including the Tusket, Annis, Chebogue, and Argyle rivers.