

T12.12 RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

Recreation may be broadly defined as all forms of leisure activity that provide relaxation and enjoyment. It includes both active and passive pursuits and may be undertaken indoors or outdoors, in urban or rural settings. Sports are included if they require little skill or organization and lack a strong competitive element.

The focus here is on rural or countryside recreation, rather than activities undertaken in towns or cities. The latter are important but seldom relate to the capabilities of the natural environment—they usually occur indoors or in artificial outdoor settings such as playing fields or softball diamonds. (Even in the countryside, however, many recreational activities use artificial facilities and may be located with more thought to consumer demand than to the land's natural capabilities.) Clawson and Knetsch,¹ the authorities on outdoor recreation, divide activities into user oriented (e.g., theme parks, go-karting, golf), intermediate (e.g., skiing, camping, picnicking) and resource oriented (e.g., beach activities, angling, hiking, canoeing, nature study). Even activities in the latter group often require some investment to develop the resource, such as a boat ramp, a scenic lookoff, a road or trail. It is important, therefore, to differentiate between the potential of an area or site for recreational use—its carrying capacity of capability for sustained use—and the current or actual degree of development and use for recreation.

Degree of use, whether potential or actual, is measured in terms of visitor-days (use by one visitor for a portion of one day constitutes a visitor-day). Some activities by their nature lead to intensive use, either because they are facility oriented (e.g., gold panning, downhill skiing) or oriented to a localized natural resource (e.g., a beach). Other activities, usually those that are more resource oriented, require and generate dispersed use (e.g., hiking, canoeing, cross-country skiing, hunting, wilderness camping). Again, it should be recognized that most outdoor activities are seasonal, so that a particular environment will support varying degrees of use in each season.

CLASSIFICATION

For Nova Scotia, by far the most important assessment of recreational resources is the Canada Land Inventory (CLI),² conducted in the late 1960s and early 1970s by the Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forests and the federal Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. Land capability for recreation was surveyed and mapped in detail, with ratings ranging from class 1 (very high natural capability to sustain one or more recreational activities of an intensive nature) to class 7 (practically no natural capability for any popular types of recreational activity). The 1: 50,000 manuscript maps were generalized and published at a scale of 1: 250,000, covering Nova Scotia in seven sheets.

Factors increasing or inhibiting recreational capability in the CLI scheme relate to the land in its natural or modified state and, thus, include human influences such as road access, current land use and presence of historic or prehistoric sites. The factors may be grouped under the headings of climate, topography, water features, natural vegetation and/or human land use, wildlife, human or cultural features and, as a composite of all the rest, scenery. Some factors operate primarily at the broad regional scale (e.g., climate), others vary over shorter distances (e.g., topography, land use), and still others are highly localized (e.g., beaches, rivers, scenic lookoffs, historic sites). As mentioned, intensive recreation is often concentrated on such localized features.

The accompanying map is a generalized version of the CLI maps. Though the CLI maps do not classify water bodies, Figure T12.12.1 suggests larger lake surfaces and sheltered coastal areas that have above-average capability.

Rivers

Rivers shown have high capability for fishing and canoeing, but low capability for boating and cottage use. Since fishing and canoeing are dispersed activities, these rivers almost all fall in class 4 (capability to sustain moderate annual use). The named rivers are class 4 along most or all of their length, while others, such as the Shubenacadie, Stewiacke and Musquodoboit, attain class 4 only in sections. Only one river in the province, the Northeast Margaree, has a lengthy stretch in capability class 3. The en-

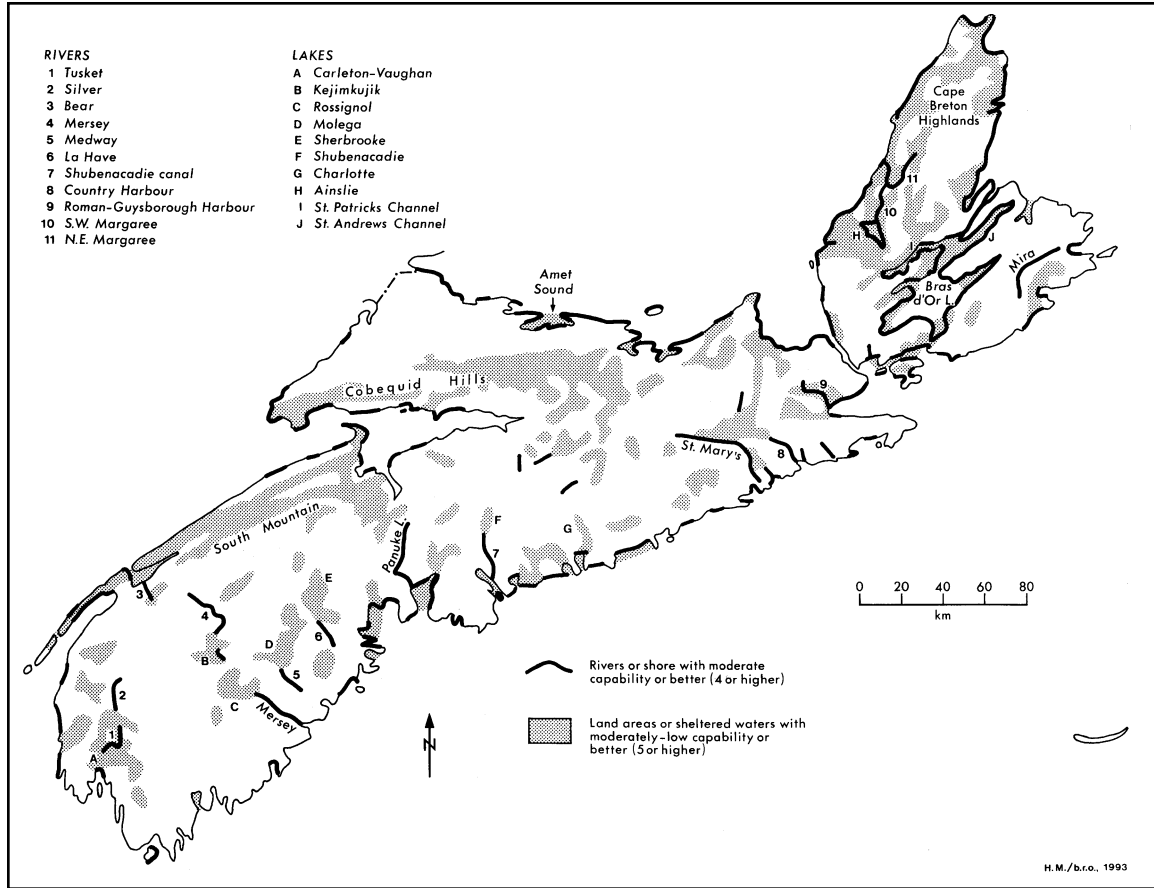


Figure T12.12.1: Land capability for Recreation. Areas in Nova Scotia with above-average capability—that is, linear features (rivers, narrow lakes and shorelines) in classes 1 to 4 and areal units in classes 3 to 5 (no such units exceed a capability of 3). Generalized from Canada Land Inventory maps at scale of 1: 250 000.

hancing factors in this case are high scenic quality, combined with road access on both sides of the valley.

Lakes

Lake shorelines possess few natural beaches, yet still often attain ratings of 3, owing to their capability for cottage use, fishing and boating. Examples are Molega and Ponhook lakes (Unit 432 Queens County), Sherbrooke and Mushamush (Unit 434 Lunenburg County), the chain of lakes along the old Shubenacadie canal route (sub-Unit 413a Dartmouth to Grand Lake) and sections of Porters Lake, Chezzetcook Lake and Lake Charlotte (Units 413a, 453, 833 Halifax County). The shores of Bras d’Or Lake (Unit 916 and District 560) also score 3 along extensive stretches, wherever high scenic quality (provided by views northwards) combines with sheltered waters for boating. Notable are the south shores of St. Andrews Channel, West Bay and East Bay.

Coastlines

Coastal shorelines are magnets for many recreational activities, both dispersed and intensive. Of those sections scoring above average (4 or higher), about half can support modestly intensive or intensive activities (e.g., beach activities, cottage use, boating, rockhounding) and thus fall in capability classes 3, 2 and even 1. These high-capability shorelines are particularly prevalent along the Northumberland Strait, around the Cape Breton Highlands (Regions 200, 500), where their score is based on superior scenery and the presence of the Cabot Trail, and along the Eastern Shore from Eastern Passage to Clam Bay (Unit 833). The waters of the Northumberland shore allow comfortable sea-bathing in the summer, so that the numerous fine sandy beaches score higher (2 and 1) than similar beaches fronting colder Atlantic waters. Most Atlantic beaches score 3, but accessible and developed beaches (notably Gabarus Bay in District 870 and Martinique, Lawrencetown, Queensland and Crescent beaches in Region 800) score 2. The Fundy and Minas shores are not only

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cold, but also lack sand beaches. The few exceptions (Evangeline Beach and Kingsport in District 610 and Five Islands, District 710) suffer from excessive tides and score 3.

Several saltwater areas of the province, including the Bras d'Or lakes, provide sheltered waters for boating and are shown on the map. Lunenburg Harbour (Unit 832), the western (lee) side of Mahone Bay (sub-Unit 460a), St. Margarets Bay (sub-Unit 460b) and Halifax Harbour (Unit 833) all have well-developed sailing facilities, while the Annapolis Basin (District 620, sub-Unit 913a), Amet Sound, Pictou Harbour (sub-Unit 521a), Lennox Passage (District 860) and the Eastern Shore inlets have similar but less fully realized capability. The Eastern Shore archipelago from Ship Harbour to Sheet Harbour (Unit 834) is being developed as a fine sea-kayaking venue.

Topography

Since most intensive recreation is water based, inland areas with few lakes typically have low or very low capability for recreation (class 6 or 7). This does not imply that they lack recreational value, but simply that they can support or attract only low levels of dispersed activity (hiking, hunting, angling, cross-country skiing and, to some extent, snowmobiling).

Uplands:

As the map shows, the more favoured areas for these activities fall in class 5 (moderately low capability) and tend to coincide with hilly terrain. Notable are North Mountain (District 720) and South Mountain (Unit 451), the Cobequid Hills (Unit 311), Pictou-Antigonish highlands (Unit 312), St. Marys fault-block (Unit 572), Mabou highlands (Unit 314), Ainslie uplands (Unit 584) and the perimeter of the Cape Breton highlands (Region 200). These hilly areas provide higher-quality scenery and typically are mantled in mature deciduous forest, which allows easier cross-country travel. Owing to their exceptional scenery and well-developed trail systems, the Mabou highlands, hillsides overlooking the Northeast Margaree River and the Cap Rouge and Ingonish gateways to the Cape Breton Highlands National Park attain scores of 4 (moderately high capability). Those few hilly localities of the province with elevation, slope and snow conditions suitable for downhill skiing score 3, while sites with developed ski slopes (Ingonish, Ben Eoin, Keppoch, Wentworth Valley and Martock) score 1.

Lowlands:

Lowland farming areas generally rate low for recreation (class 6), owing to lack of legal access across cultivated fields and pasture. Though farmers often do not forbid or deter cross-country access by hikers and hunters, they have legitimate concerns about crop and fence-line damage by snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles and about shooting near people and livestock. To partially compensate for the lack of cross-country access, access for automobile touring is enhanced in farming areas by well-developed road networks, and cleared fields provide wider vistas. The more intensively farmed and picturesque portions of the Annapolis Valley floor (District 610, Bridgetown to Kingston, and Kentville to Canning) are therefore rated at 5 and even 4.

Accessibility

Much of Nova Scotia is attractive for dispersed recreational activities, owing to scenic quality, low degrees of land exploitation (for urban development, agriculture and silviculture) and legal rights of public access. The interior, however, remains largely inaccessible by road and supports low levels of use by hunters and canoeists. The province's lengthy coastline and numerous lakes create many opportunities for nodes of more intensive activity, but — perhaps fortunately—few have been developed as such, owing to lack of demand (due to, for example, the province's small population). Road access to quality landscapes, boat access to rivers and lakes, trail systems and campsites in the forest, and the presence of amenities at public beaches are all rare, particularly away from major population centres.

Parks

The necessary investment in well-managed recreational areas for intensive and semi-intensive activity has been made by the Canadian Parks Service, by the Parks Division of the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources, and, on a smaller scale, by municipalities and the private sector. The federal government maintains two large parks as part of their national system for representing and protecting natural regions.³ The Cape Breton Highlands and Kejimikujik national parks provide completely different types of recreational experiences, located at opposite ends of the province. Kejimikujik National Park includes a seaside adjunct at St. Catherines River beach.

The Department of Natural Resources owns 276 parks properties, of which 121 are available for recreation as part of a broader system of parks, trails and waterways, and crown-land recreational oppor-

tunities.⁴ Their sizes and purposes vary considerably and the system includes wayside picnic areas and scenic lookoffs, beaches, and forested campgrounds. The larger provincial parks, such as Blomidon (District 720) and Dollar Lake (sub-Units 436b/413a), provide opportunities for camping, hiking, boating and swimming, as well as for the conservation of natural areas. Recreational needs are leaning towards more wilderness-travel experiences, and Nova Scotia's natural diversity provides the opportunity to integrate wilderness travel with natural area protection. The provincial parks program also includes Heritage Rivers, the Trails Act and the Nature Reserves program, originally managed by the Nova Scotia Museum under the Special Places Act, but transferred to the Department of Natural Resources in 1993. Activities on nature reserves are limited to conservation and research, although outdoor-education activities may be possible in some cases.

Municipal parks, such as Victoria Park in Truro and Point Pleasant Park in Halifax, also play a role in recreational access. In addition, provincial government agencies recognize forty-one trails maintained by municipalities. There are also fifteen waterways for which canoeist's guidemaps are available.⁵ Private-sector groups also provide park areas for recreational and educational purposes; Bowater Mersey, for example, "pocket wilderness" provides areas in western Nova Scotia.



Associated Topics

T5.2 Nova Scotia's Climate, T6.3 Coastal Aquatic Environments, T7.2 Coastline Environments, T8.2 Freshwater Environments, T12.5 Climate and Resources, T12.7 The Coast and Resources, T12.10 Plants and Resources, T12.11 Animals and Resources, T12.13 Scenic Quality

References

- 1 Clawson, M. and J. Knetsch (1966) *Economics of Outdoor Recreation*. Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore.
- 2 Canada Dept. of Energy, Mines and Resources (various dates) *Canada Land Inventory: Land Capability for Recreation*, 1: 250 000 map sheets 11E (Truro), 11D (Halifax), 11F/G/C/ (Canso), 11K/J/N (Sydney), 20 O/P (Shelburne), 21A (Annapolis), 21H (Amherst).
- 3 Beardmore, Roger M. (1985) *Atlantic Canada's*

Natural Heritage Areas. Parks Canada, Atlantic Region.

- 4 Nova Scotia Dept. of Lands and Forests (1991) *Nova Scotia Provincial Parks Map*. Province of Nova Scotia, Halifax.
- 5 Nova Scotia Dept. of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, Sport and Recreation Commission (1988) *Canoe Waterways of Nova Scotia Index, 1988*. Map series.

Additional Reading

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