

## T12 CULTURAL ENVIRONMENTS

The *Natural History of Nova Scotia* takes an all-inclusive or holistic approach to understanding how physical and ecological processes and elements are represented and interact in the landscape. This section, Cultural Environments, recognizes that human activities and built environments are an inseparable part of the processes and elements that characterize Nova Scotia and strongly influence its evolution. Forman and Godron,<sup>1</sup> in their work on landscape ecology, describe the landscape as a heterogeneous composition of ecosystems. Disturbances to these ecosystems (including human activities) are a consistent part of ecological processes.

In their report on sustainability, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)<sup>2</sup> recognized that the modification of ecosystems is an inevitable process. They go on to determine that a modified system must provide life support and biodiversity as well as the production of resources. By introducing a cultural component into the ecological equation, the *Natural History of Nova Scotia* provides a more complete picture of the factors that shape and change the province, providing the groundwork for sustainable resource use and for interpretive and education opportunities.

In the *Natural History*, the term “resource” implies a base used by humans for harvesting, exploitation, recreation/tourism and conservation. In this context, resource use refers to how we manage our natural and cultural heritage. “Sustainable” implies that the need for balanced resource use is acknowledged and maintained through land-use policies recognizing natural and cultural limitations and potentials.

Nova Scotia has developed several methods for classifying natural resources, habitats and landscapes. These include the Department of Natural Resources’ Forest Inventory, Wetlands Classification and Systems Plan for Parks and Protected Areas, in addition to the *Natural History of Nova Scotia*. These classification systems can be used separately or together to make natural history information accessible and to provide an ecological framework for managing resources and for conducting research into carrying capacity.

The province also has a history of human use that has left imprints on the physical and ecological base of the landscape, creating cultural environments.

We have reached a point where our value system and our technology could be in conflict with the carrying capacity of our resources. However, we have no system within which to classify or measure cultural interactions with natural processes and elements. In order to make sound resource-use decisions or to interpret our heritage, we need a standardized data base of all the factors at work in shaping our environment: an inventory of cultural and natural elements including special or unique features of our heritage, knowledge of the natural and cultural processes and events that effect change and how they interact, and a system to keep the information up to date and accessible to a variety of users.

This section is the beginning of such a process. It does not present a comprehensive cultural history of Nova Scotia; rather, the Topics that follow summarize the history of resource use as processes that have had documented effects on the environment. The section establishes the relationships between resource use and the natural environment by identifying human activities that change the natural environment and factors within the natural environment that limit human activities. We discuss the direct use of resources—such as mining, the fishery and park development—as well as the indirect linkages between human activities and natural ecosystems—such as sedimentation of aquatic systems as a result of land clearing. They are presented as an overview, recognizing that this subject requires continued research and analysis. One type of resource management is not advocated over another. It is important to recognize, however, that certain resource-use practices are more sustainable than others.

The section begins with a summary of major cultures and settlement patterns in the province—T12.1. Colonization by People provides the context for the classification of cultural landscapes and anthropogenic habitats introduced in T12.2. Topics 12.3–12.12 summarize the spectrum of historical and contemporary resource use in Nova Scotia, from conservation to economic development. These Topics are organized to correspond to the categories of natural-history Topics from T2 to T11; for example, T2 is the Geology section, T12.2 discusses Geology and Resources. There is overlapping information in many of the T12 Topics; for example, fishing may be

discussed in T12.8 Fresh Water and Resources as well as in T12.11 Animals and Resources. The information is cross-referenced in each Topic. The fact that there is more information on some subjects reflects the availability of documented research. T12.13 is an overview of recreation as a resource in Nova Scotia in relation to the landscape, and T12.4 assesses scenery in the landscape as a resource. *Volume 2, Theme Regions*, also includes descriptions of the cultural environments and scenic quality of the Regions, Districts and Units.

### **References**

- 1 Forman, R. T. T and M. Godron (1986) *Landscape Ecology*. John Wiley and Sons, New York
- 2 *Caring for the World: A strategy for Sustainability*. (1990) World Conservation Union, Gland, Switzerland.