

INDIAN BAY WATERSHED

Indian Bay Watershed is known as one of the best fishing spots for Brook Trout in Eastern Newfoundland. The 700 km² watershed is used chiefly for hunting, fishing, and recreation, but is also the drinking water supply for Indian Bay. Located in Bonavista North, it is accessible to vehicles on old forest resource roads from Route 320, near the Town of Indian Bay.



Indian Bay Watershed lies in the Northcentral Subregion of the Central Newfoundland Forest ecoregion. Typical of the boreal forest in this ecoregion, it consists of mainly black spruce with some balsam fir, and a small portion of hardwoods. In the early 1900s the watershed supported three local sawmills and an operation that built camps and cookhouses for logging activities. Logging was a mainstay in the area until a fire in 1961 burned part of the watershed and harvesting activities slowed.

The numerous large and small ponds in the watershed boast the largest brook trout in eastern Newfoundland, as well as salmon, char, smelt, and stickleback. Certain ponds in the Indian Bay Watershed are also home to the Banded Killifish, a small fish similar to minnows. Banded Killifish are listed as “Vulnerable” under the Newfoundland and Labrador Endangered Species Act, and the Indian Bay Watershed population is an outlier to the other killifish populations on the south and southwest coasts of the Island. As in other forested areas in Newfoundland, the watershed is also home to a variety of wildlife such as moose, bear, coyote, waterfowl and other bird species.

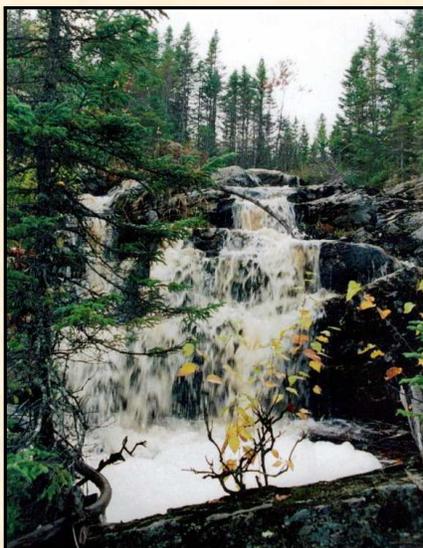


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The Indian Bay Ecosystem Corporation (IBEC) is a non-profit organization actively involved in the conservation, protection, and sustainable development of the watershed. Its roots date back to 1988, when growing concern over the deterioration of the Indian Bay Watershed led to the formation of a committee of the Gambo-Indian Bay and Cape Freels Development Associations, to address decreased fish populations and the general decline in the quality of the environment. Since its incorporation in 1995, IBEC has initiated a number of activities: a major clean-up of the watershed; habitat restoration projects; a trout assessment project; angler surveys; monitoring and enforcement projects; and public awareness.



IBEC has also built a field research station at the Indian Bay Big Pond. This station is used to conduct research (which in the past has been largely fisheries-related, and some buffer zone and watershed management research), host field courses and corporate retreats, and offer eco-tourism opportunities. And under a Crown Lands Agreement, IBEC has negotiated protected/restricted development zones surrounding a couple of the ponds in the watershed. IBEC's plans for the future include continued restoration and preservation of fish stocks, watershed management that allows for utilization of resources in a sustainable manner, and further development and promotion of the field research station.



The Indian Bay Watershed is visited largely by cottage owners and avid outdoor enthusiasts, who utilize the area for hunting, fishing, and recreation. As such, there is also a tremendous opportunity for eco-tourism related activities in the region. Corner Brook Pulp and Paper Ltd. (CBPPL) own timber rights to about one-third of the Indian Bay Watershed, in the southwestern corner. CBPPL and IBEC have signed a Memorandum of Understanding concerning the watershed, in which the company has agreed to: leave large buffers on three ponds on their limits to protect fish stocks; conduct harvesting operations in the winter to minimize environmental impacts; and dig up roads after operations are completed to restrict access.

For more information on the watershed, contact IBEC at ibec@eastlink.ca or 709-522-3222.

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