



Laurentian River Beach

State Rank S2

Community Description

These exposed river beaches feature sparse to extensive cover of low shrubs, forbs, and grasses, with species of northern affinity characteristic. Dominant plants include tufted hairgrass, roses, and mats of sand cherry. Poison ivy may be locally abundant. Canadian tick-trefoil, wild chive, New York aster, and freshwater cordgrass are characteristic herbs. Several rare plants such as Huron tansy, alpine sweet-broom, or alpine milk-vetch may be locally common. Bryoids are virtually absent.

Soil and Site Characteristics

These are rivershores where coarse deposits remain after flooding and ice scour. The substrate is usually cobbly and often dry at the surface. Sites flood in the spring and may be partially underwater for brief periods in the summer. The slope is usually very slight and the sites are exposed to full sun.



Glaucous Rattlesnake-root

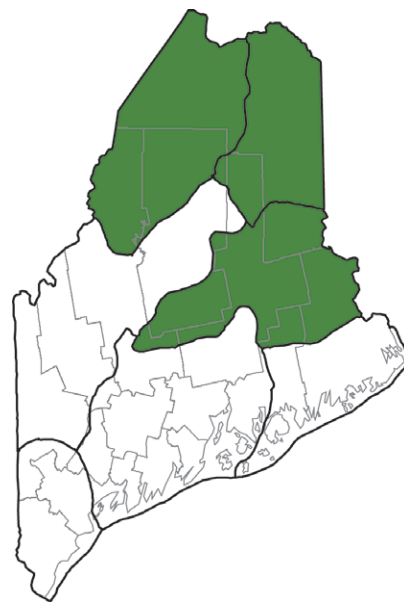
Diagnostics

Patchy herbs and low shrubs occur on a rivershore below the high water mark and adjacent trees, with sandy cherry typical and circumneutral indicator plants present (e.g., freshwater cordgrass, wild chive). The cover of grasses and forbs exceeds that of sweetgale and sedges, and the substrate is unconsolidated gravelly to cobbly glaciofluvial deposits.

Similar Types

This type is related to and sometimes contiguous with other rivershore types. Bluejoint Meadows are dominated by bluejoint and occur on finer substrates. Circumneutral Riverside Seeps have more

Location Map



Community is known from this Ecoregion
 Community may occur in this Ecoregion
 Bailey's Ecoregion
 County



Alpine Sweet-broom

sweetgale and sedges, seepage waters at the surface, and certain indicator species (e.g., grass-of-parnassus and yellow sedge). Dogwood - Willow Shoreline Thickets are dominated by shrubs over 1 m tall. Hudsonia River Beach features beach heather, little bluestem, and other temperate species compared to the northern plants typical of this type.

Conservation, Wildlife, and Management Considerations

This community is tightly linked to naturally fluctuating water levels and occasional ice scour. Most known sites are privately owned and conservation depends on the landowner. Foot traffic has been light and poses no threat, but if off road vehicles are used, the shore and the vegetation could be easily degraded. Exotic agricultural species are common at some sites, and at least one site has the invasive Japanese knotweed.

Distribution

Currently known only from the St. John River, but may be elsewhere in northern Maine; poorly documented. Presumably extends to eastern Canadian rivers. (New England - Adirondack and Laurentian Mixed Forest Provinces.)

Landscape Pattern: Small Patch, linear.

Characteristic Plants

These plants are frequently found in this community type. Those with an asterisk are often diagnostic of this community.

Sapling/shrub

Meadowsweet
Poison-ivy
Red osier dogwood
Smooth rose
Willow

Dwarf Shrub

Sand cherry*

Herb

Bladder campion
Bluebell
Canadian tick-trefoil
Early goldenrod
Freshwater cordgrass
Hemp dogbane
New York aster
Northern blue flag
Reed canarygrass
Silverweed
Tufted hairgrass*
Wild chive

Associated Rare Plants

Alpine milk-vetch
Alpine sweet-broom
Anticosti aster
Canada burnet
Glaucous rattlesnake-root
Huron tansy
Northern gentian
Soft-leaf muhly
St. John oxytrope

Examples on Conservation Lands You Can Visit

- St. John River Preserve - Aroostook Co.