

Riverside Seep

State Rank S2

Community Description

This type can include graminoid dominated, graminoid/forb, or shrubby vegetation, often with all three forms adjacent to one another. Shrubs include sweetgale, willows, and alders, either low or tall depending on how recently they have been scoured by ice. An array of forbs and graminoids grows among the sparse or low shrubs or downslope on the shore and includes fen indicators such as sticky false asphodel, grass-of-parnassus, various sedges and grasses, and forbs both native (various asters, Canada goldenrod, rose twisted-stalk) and introduced (clovers, ox-eye daisy, cow vetch). The bryoid layer is typically extensive, and features numerous bryophytes other than peat mosses.

Soil and Site Characteristics

These riparian seeps are below the annual high water mark on a substrate of unconsolidated, coarse textured soil and are constantly saturated by groundwater seepage. The substrate varies from fairly steep gravelly banks with locally extensive moss cover to lower shore flats with stabilized cobble. This type is restricted to larger rivers where spring floods and ice scour maintain a semi-open shore, versus a shoreline of dense shrubs. Continued exposure of glacial tills produces



Hairy Arnica

comparatively high pH.

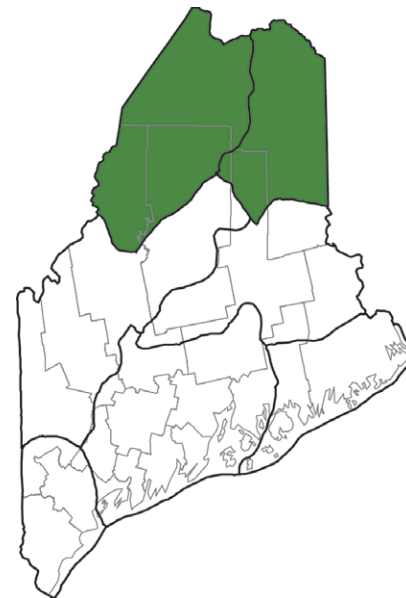
Diagnostics

Intermingled short graminoids, forbs, and shrubs grow on an open rivershore. The substrate is usually unconsolidated sandy to gravelly soil, saturated by groundwater discharge. Indicator species include grass-of-parnassus, hidden-scale sedge, and sweetgale.

Similar Types

Shrubby Cinquefoil - Sedge Circumneutral Fens contain many of the same species but occur in a peatland setting, not on a rivershore. Bluejoint Meadows, which may be adjacent to these seeps, are more homogeneous and are dominated by tall graminoids, particularly bluejoint grass. Sand Cherry - Tufted Hairgrass River Beach vegetation occurs on somewhat drier cobble

Location Map



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



Circumneutral Riverside Seep

or sand substrates and includes few if any sedges.

Conservation, Wildlife, and Management Considerations

The structure and richness of this community is linked to naturally fluctuating water levels and occasional ice scour. Maintenance of an intact forest buffer is important, both for light conditions and for ensuring the flow of seepage waters. Many seeps are protected along the upper portions of the St. John River, but elsewhere conservation depends on the individual landowner. Some sites have been degraded by clearing the adjacent overstory. Foot traffic has been light and poses no threat, but where off road vehicles use the shore, the effects can be devastating.

Distribution

Known primarily from the St. John River and sparsely on other northern Maine rivers and lakes, west to other parts of northern New England (New England - Adirondack and Laurentian Mixed Forest Provinces). Many Canadian affinities, but distribution there unknown.

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

Beaked hazelnut*
Bush-honeysuckle*
Meadowsweet
Mountain alder*
Mountain maple*
Red-tipped willow
Shining willow
Speckled alder*

Dwarf Shrub

Shrubby cinquefoil*
Sweetgale*

Herb

Bluejoint
Common horsetail*
Dwarf raspberry
Field mint
Flat-topped white aster
Fowl mannagrass
Grass-of-parnassus
Purple-stemmed aster
Sticky false asphodel
Swamp buttercup
Tall meadow-rue
Wild strawberry*

Associated Rare Plants

Auricled twayblade
Black sedge
Furbish's lousewort
Garber's sedge
Glaucous rattlesnake-root
Mistassini primrose
Mountain timothy
Northern gentian
Northern painted-cup

Examples on Conservation Lands You Can Visit

- Allagash Public Lands - Aroostook Co.
- St. John River Preserve - Aroostook Co.