

## *Ecological Site Description*

### **Loamy Braided Terrace Forest**

**F131AY005MO**

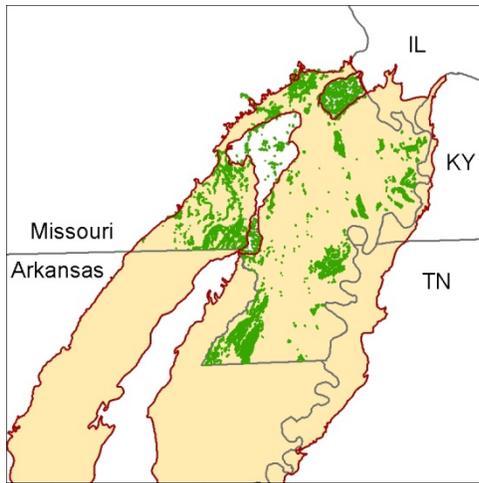
- (*Quercus pagoda* - *Quercus michauxii* /*Euonymus atropurpureus*/*Hydrophyllum virginianum* - *Carex*)
- (cherrybark oak – swamp chestnut oak/ wahoo/Virginia waterleaf – sedge)

An Ecological Site Description (ESD) is a reference document of ecological knowledge regarding a particular land area (ecological site). An ESD describes ecological potential and ecosystem dynamics of land areas and their potential management. Ecological sites are linked to soil survey map unit components, which allows for mapping of ecological sites. (**NOTE:** *This is a “provisional” ESD, and is subject to change. It contains basic ecological information sufficient for conservation planning and land management in Missouri. After additional information is developed and reviewed, a “Correlated” ESD will be published and will be available via the Web Soil Survey <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov> .*)

**Major Land Resource Area:** 131A – Southern Mississippi River Alluvium

### **Introduction**

The Southern Mississippi River Alluvium (area outlined in red on the map; northern portion only) is a vast alluvial plain, stretching from the confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers to tidewater areas of the Gulf of Mexico. The area is formed primarily in sediments deposited by the Mississippi River, with significant contributions from the St Francis and Black Rivers west of Crowley’s Ridge, in the northern part of the area. A variety of alluvial landforms are present, including natural levees, sand splays, backswamps, channels, swales, stream terraces and braided terraces. Dunes have formed from wind redistribution of alluvial sand and loess deposits overlie older terraces to the west. Elevation ranges from about 330 feet in the north to sea level in the south. Local relief is low, and much of the area appears flat, although low escarpments and other slight changes in elevation often indicate major changes in hydrology and soils.



Loamy Braided Terrace Forests are within the green areas on the map (Missouri portion only; distributions farther south are currently under review). These sites are widely distributed on braided stream terraces and floodplains throughout the area. Soils are very deep and loamy.

### **Physiographic Features**

These sites are on braided stream terraces and floodplains, with slopes of less than 5 percent. Some areas not protected by levees are subject to flooding.

## Soil Features

These soils have no major rooting restriction. The soils were formed under forest vegetation, and have thin, light-colored surface horizons. They have silt loam or fine sandy loam surface horizons, and loamy subsoils. Parent material is loamy alluvium. They are not affected by a high water table. Soil series associated with this site include Adler, Askew, Collins, Dubbs, and Tiptonville.

## Ecological Dynamics

*Information contained in this section was developed using historical data, professional experience, field reviews, and scientific studies. The information presented is representative of very complex vegetation communities. Key indicator plants, animals and ecological processes are described to help inform land management decisions. Plant communities will differ across the MLRA because of the naturally occurring variability in weather, soils, and aspect. The Reference Plant Community is not necessarily the management goal. The species lists are representative and are not botanical descriptions of all species occurring, or potentially occurring, on this site. They are not intended to cover every situation or the full range of conditions, species, and responses for the site.*

Loamy Braided Terrace Forest flooded occasionally, probably once every 5 to 10 years. Much of the flooding was from ponding of rainfall and sheet flow across these landscapes. These sites occurred in association with a wide variety of poorly drained more flood prone units, as well as Claypan terrace sites. Because their soils were better drained they represent one of the dryer forest types in the region. Consequently, cherrybark oak and swamp white oak, as well as American elm and bitternut hickory were more prominent, and the understory better developed than adjacent wet areas. A diverse array of ground flora species, especially sedges, carpeted the forest floor.

Flooding, wind and perhaps ice storms were likely the most important disturbances in this region. All would have created occasional canopy gaps so that the oak species could regenerate.

Today most Loamy Braided Terrace Forests in the Mississippi Alluvial Plain are cleared and converted to cropland. However occasional remnants do exist, and because their flood regime relies on ponding and movement of rainfall, their hydrology may be minimally altered. These blocks of forest play an important role as a source of food and shelter for migrating birds.

Planting of these later successional species on the appropriate landscape position and soils has proven to be quite successful.

## Reference State Plant Community

### Canopy Trees

Common Name	Botanical Name	Cover % (low-high)	Canopy Height (ft)
BITTERNUT HICKORY	<i>Carya cordiformis</i>	10-20	80
CHERRYBARK OAK	<i>Quercus pagoda</i>	10-20	80
SHUMARD OAK	<i>Quercus shumardii</i>	10-20	90
SWEETGUM	<i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>	10-20	90
AMERICAN ELM	<i>Ulmus americana</i>	10-20	80
BLACK WALNUT	<i>Juglans nigra</i>	5-10	80
WHITE ASH	<i>Fraxinus americana</i>	5-10	70
GREEN ASH	<i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i>	5-10	70
SWAMP CHESTNUT OAK	<i>Quercus michauxii</i>	10-20	80
KENTUCKY COFFEE TREE	<i>Gymnocladus dioica</i>	5-10	70

## Understory Trees

Common Name	Botanical Name	Cover % (low-high)	Canopy Height (ft)
OHIO BUCKEYE	<i>Ascleus glabra</i>	10-20	40
PERSIMMON	<i>Diospyros virginiana</i>	5-10	40
PAWPAW	<i>Asimina triloba</i>	5-10	30
BLUE BEECH	<i>Carpinus caroliniana</i>	20-30	20

## Shrubs

Common Name	Botanical Name	Cover % (low-high)	Canopy Height (ft)
CAROLINA BUCKTHORN	<i>Rhamnus caroliniana</i>	5-10	6
SPICE BUSH	<i>Lindera benzoin</i>	5-10	6
LEATHERWOOD	<i>Dirca palustris</i>	5-10	8
GIANT CANE	<i>Arundinaria gigantea</i>	0-20	15

## Vines

Common Name	Botanical Name	Cover % (low-high)
SUMMER GRAPE	<i>Vitis aestivalis</i>	5-10
CAT GREENBRIER	<i>Smilax glauca</i>	5-10
VIRGINIA CREEPER	<i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i>	5-10
MOODSEED	<i>Minispermum canadensis</i>	5-10

## Forbs

Common Name	Botanical Name	Cover % (low-high)
EASTERN WATERLEAF	<i>Hydrophyllum virginianum</i>	5-10
WOOD NETTLE	<i>Laportea canadensis</i>	5-10
YELLOW WOOD SORREL	<i>Oxalis stricta</i>	5-10
TOOTHWORT	<i>Cardamine concatenata</i>	5-10
FALSE RUE ANEMONE	<i>Enemion biternatum</i>	5-10
OCEANBLUE PHACELIA	<i>Phacelia ranunculacea</i>	5-10
FALSE MERMAID	<i>Floerkea proserpinacoides</i>	5-10
WILD GINGER	<i>Asarum canadense</i>	5-10
EARLY MEADOW RUE	<i>Thalictrum dioicum</i>	5-10

## Grasses and sedges

Common Name	Botanical Name	Cover % (low-high)
JAMES SEDGE	<i>Carex jamesii</i>	5-10
ROSY SEDGE	<i>Carex rosea</i>	5-10
EASTERN STAR SEDGE	<i>Carex radiata</i>	5-10
VIRGINIA WILDRYE	<i>Elymus virginicus</i>	5-10

## Site Interpretations

## Wildlife

- This ecological site is a dense, multi-layered forest, with snags and cavities and down dead wood that provides habitat for many species requiring cool, rich, moist conditions.
- Bird species associated with these mature forests include Great Blue Heron (colonies especially in large sycamores and cottonwoods), Bald Eagle, Belted Kingfisher, Red-shouldered Hawk, Northern Parula, Louisiana Waterthrush, Wood Duck, Hooded Merganser, Kentucky Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Acadian Flycatcher, Barred Owl, Pileated Woodpecker, Cerulean Warbler, and Yellow-throated Warbler.

- Reptiles and amphibians associated with this ecological site include small-mouthed salamander, central newt, midland brown snake, and gray tree frog.

### Forestry

- **Management:** Estimated site index values range from 70 to 100. Timber management opportunities are good. Create group openings of at least 2 acres. Large clearcuts should be minimized if possible to reduce impacts on wildlife and aesthetics. Uneven-aged management using single tree selection or small group selection cuttings of ½ to 1 acre are other options that can be used if clear cutting is not desired or warranted. Where possible, favor cherrybark oak, black walnut, Shumard oak, and bitternut hickory. Maintain adequate riparian buffer areas.
- **Limitations:** No major limitations or restrictions. Occasional periods of seasonal wetness; Use of equipment may be restricted in spring and other excessively wet periods. Equipment use when wet may compact soil and damage tree roots. Tree planting may be difficult during spring flooding periods.

### Glossary

*Backslope* – a hillslope profile position that forms the steepest and generally linear, middle portion of the slope.

*Backswamp* – marshy or swampy, depressed areas of flood plains between natural levees and valley sides or terraces

*Calcareous* – the presence of calcium carbonate in the soil parent material within the rooting zone; relatively alkaline

*Claypan* – a dense, compact, slowly permeable layer in the subsoil having much higher clay content than the overlying material

*Chert* – hard, extremely dense or compact crystalline sedimentary rock, consisting dominantly of interlocking crystals of quartz

*Cliff* – a significant vertical, or near vertical, rock exposure

*Dolomite* – a type of sedimentary rock that is a carbonate mineral composed of calcium magnesium carbonate

*Drainageway* – the upper most reach of a stream channel system characterized by little meandering

*Dry* – a site where soil moisture is limiting during the growing season; low available water capacity

*Dune* – a low mound, ridge, bank or hill of loose, wind-blown sand

*Exposed* – steep, south and west-facing slopes, which are warmer and drier than other slope aspects

*Flatwoods* – a type of woodland that occurs on soils with a root restricting subsoil layer within 20 to 30 inches, resulting in very slow runoff and ponding that remains saturated for most of the winter

and early spring months but dries out and becomes very dry in the summer months; plants that grow there must be adapted to both conditions

*Floodplain* – the nearly level plain that borders a stream and is subject to inundation under flood-stage conditions

*Footslope* – a hillslope position at the base of a slope where hillslope sediment (colluvium) accumulates

*Forest* – a vegetative community dominated by trees forming a closed canopy and interspersed with shade-tolerant understory species

*Fragipan* – a dense, brittle subsoil horizon that is extremely hard and compact when dry

*Glade* – open, rocky, barren vegetative community dominated by drought-adapted forbs and grasses, typically with scattered, stunted woody plants

*Igneous* – bedrock formed by cooling and solidification of magma. Granite and rhyolite are typical igneous bedrocks in Missouri

*Limestone* – a type of sedimentary rock composed largely of calcium carbonate

*Loess* – material transported and deposited by wind and consisting predominantly of silt-size particles

*Loamy* – soil material containing a relatively equal mixture of sand and silt and a somewhat smaller proportion of clay

*Marsh* – a type of wetland that is dominated by herbaceous rather than woody plant species

*Moist* – a site that is moderately well to well drained and has high available water capacity, resulting in a well-balanced supply of moisture (neither too dry nor too wet).

*Mudstone* – blocky or massive, fine-grained sedimentary rock in which the proportions of clay and silt are approximately equal

*Natric* – a soil horizon that displays a blocky, columnar, or prismatic structure and has a subhorizon with an exchangeable-sodium saturation of over 15%

*Outwash* – stratified sediments of sand and gravel removed or “washed out” from a glacier by melt-water streams

*Prairie* – a vegetative community dominated by perennial grasses and forbs with scattered shrubs and very few trees

*Protected* – steep, north- and east-facing slopes, which are cooler and moister than other slope aspects

*Residuum* - unconsolidated, weathered, or partly weathered mineral material that accumulates by disintegration of bedrock in place

*Riser* – a component of terraces and flood-plain steps consisting of the steep side slope; the escarpment

*Riverfront* – a vegetative community in the floodplain immediately adjacent and generally parallel to a river or stream channel

*River hills* – a geographic area characterized by thick, dissected loess deposits, formed immediately adjacent to the edges of the Missouri and Mississippi River floodplains

*Sandy* – a coarse-sized soil containing a large mixture of sand and gravels and a somewhat smaller proportion of silts and clays with excessive drainage

*Sandstone* – a sedimentary rock containing dominantly sand-size particles

*Savanna* – grasslands interspersed with open-grown scattered trees, groupings of trees, and shrubs

*Shale* – a sedimentary rock formed from clay, silty clay, or silty clay loam deposits and having the tendency to split into thin layers

*Shallow* – a site with bedrock within 20 inches of the surface

*Shoulder* – the slope profile position that forms the convex surface near the top of a hill slope; it comprises the transition zone from summit to backslope

*Sinkhole* – a closed, circular or elliptical depression, commonly funnel-shaped, characterized by subsurface drainage and formed either by dissolution of the surface of underlying bedrock or by collapse of underlying caves within bedrock

*Summit* – the top or highest area of a hillslope

*Swale* – shallow, closed depressions irregularly spaced across a floodplain or terrace with an irregularly undulating surface.

*Swamp* – an area of low, saturated ground, intermittently or permanently covered with water, and predominantly vegetated by shrubs and trees.

*Talus* – rock fragments of any size or shape (usually coarse and angular) derived from and lying at the base of a cliff or very steep rock slope.

*Terrace* – a step-like surface, bordering a valley floor that represents the former position of a flood plain

*Till* – dominantly unsorted and unstratified soil material deposited directly by a glacier

*Upland* – a general term for the higher ground of a region, in contrast with a low-lying, adjacent land such as a valley or floodplain

*Wet* – a somewhat poorly, poorly or very poorly drained site that has an oversupply of moisture during the growing season

*Woodland* – a highly variable vegetative community with a canopy of trees ranging from 30 to 100 percent closure with a sparse midstory and a dense ground flora of grasses, sedges and forbs

## References

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