

Ecological Site Description

Ponded Floodplain Prairie

R115CY005MO

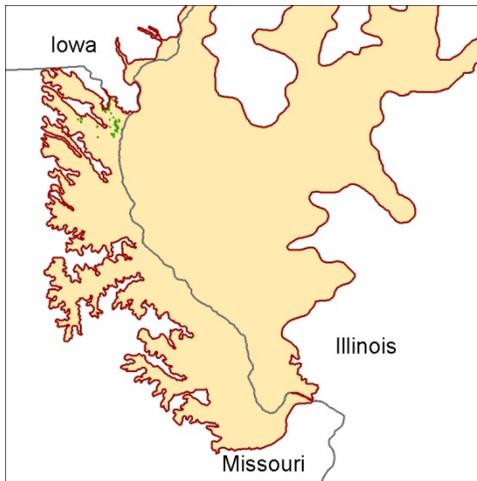
- (/Cephalanthus occidentalis/Spartina pectinata - Schoenoplectus)
- (/buttonbush/prairie cord grass – bulrush)

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: 115C – Central Mississippi Valley Wooded Slopes, Northern Part

Introduction

The Central Mississippi Valley Wooded Slopes, Northern Part (area outlined in red on the map) is centered on the dissected, loess-covered hills bordering the Mississippi and Illinois River floodplain and terrace systems, and associated tributaries. Local physiographic regions include the Galesburg Plain and the Springfield Plain in Illinois, and the Lincoln Hills in Missouri. Elevation ranges from

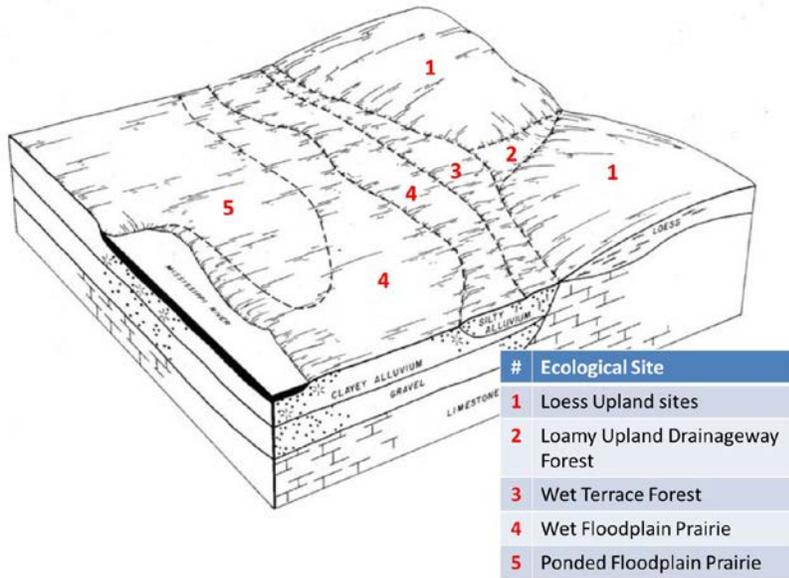


about 420 feet along the Mississippi River just upstream from St. Louis, to nearly 900 feet on the highest upland summits in Illinois. Local relief varies from 10 to 20 feet in the major river floodplains, to 50 to 100 feet in the dissected uplands, with bluffs of up to 250 feet along the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers. Loess caps both stream and glacial outwash terraces along the major rivers, as well as both Illinoian and Pre-Illinoian till near the edges of the area. The underlying Mississippian-aged limestone influences soils on lower, steeper slopes.

Ponded Floodplain Prairies are within the green areas on the map (Missouri portion only; Illinois distributions are currently under review). These sites in Missouri are not extensive, occurring in scattered areas on the Mississippi River floodplain and tributaries in Clark County, Missouri. Soils are very deep and loamy, and are subject to flooding and ponding.

Physiographic Features

This site is in depressional areas on floodplains of the Mississippi River and tributaries. Slopes are less than 2 percent. The site receives runoff from adjacent floodplain sites. Areas not protected by levees are subject to flooding. The site is subject to intermittent ponding.



The adjacent figure (adapted from Tummons, 1982) shows the typical landscape position of this ecological site, and landscape relationships among the major ecological sites of the floodplains and stream terraces. This site is within the area labeled as “5” on the figure, and are closely associated with Wet Floodplain Prairie sites.

Soil Features

These soils are very deep, with seasonal high water tables. They were formed under herbaceous wetland vegetation, and have dark, organic-rich surface horizons. Parent material is alluvium. They have sandy loam surface horizons, with sandy loam to sand subsurface layers. Soil series associated with this site include Gilford.

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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.

Ponded Floodplain Prairie ecological sites exist because of their association with low, depressional areas with seasonal high water tables. These conditions along with periodic fire have a strong influence on excluding trees. Ponded Floodplain Prairies are dominated by a dense cover of wetland species, including prairie cord grass, sedges and wet tolerant forbs. Shrubs, such as buttonbush and willow, are scattered throughout.

The lowest and wettest areas may have marshes with cattails, river bulrush and other emergent wetland species, and minor areas of open water. These sites share the floodplain with Sandy/Gravelly, Loamy and Clayey Floodplain Forests.

Prior to levee development and channeling, these areas were regularly flooded by typically slow-moving backwater floods. Some further inundation and ponding occurred through groundwater movement. Unaltered sites usually were flooded at least six months of the year. In addition to flooding, periodic fire also played a role in controlling woody species.

Fire during dry periods removed the dense mat of leaf litter creating opportunities for plants less aggressive than the grasses and sedges. Over the long term, siltation slowly fills these depressions, altering flood duration and causing a shift toward floodplain forest or woodland communities.

Today most of these ecological sites have been drained and farmed. Only a few quality remnants exist. However, because of their site conditions, during wet years, they do act as ephemeral farmed wetlands in the agricultural landscape. While their flood regime usually has been altered, their position and soil properties still make them good candidates for wet prairie and marsh development management. Left unfarmed, these wet depressions can quickly develop into naturally wet communities.

Reference State Plant Community

Shrubs

Common Name	Botanical Name	Cover % (low-high)	Canopy Height (ft)
BUTTONBUSH	<i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>	5-20	5
SANDBAR WILLOW	<i>Salix exigua</i>	5-20	8
FALSE INDIGO	<i>Amorpha fruticosa</i>	5-20	4

Forbs

Common Name	Botanical Name	Cover % (low-high)
SWAMP MILKWEED	<i>Asclepias incarnata</i>	5-20
SMALL WHITE ASTER	<i>Aster fragilis</i>	5-20
SAWTOOTH SUNFLOWER	<i>Helianthus grosseserratus</i>	5-20
BLUE FLAG	<i>Iris virginica</i>	5-20
WINGED LOOSESTRIFE	<i>Lythrum alatum</i>	5-20
BEGGAR TICK	<i>Bidens cernua</i>	5-20
AMERICAN BUGLEWEED	<i>Lycopus americanus</i>	5-20
TICKSEED SUNFLOWER	<i>Bidens aristosa</i>	5-20
SPOTTED TOUCH-ME-NOT	<i>Impatiens capensis</i>	5-20
SMARTWEED	<i>Polygonum hydropiperoides</i>	5-20
IRONWEED	<i>Vernonia fasciculata</i>	5-20
SWAMP AGRIMONY	<i>Agrimonia parviflora</i>	5-20
WATER SMARTWEED	<i>Polygonum amphibium (Marsh)</i>	5-20
GIANT BUR-REED	<i>Sparganium eurycarpum (Marsh)</i>	5-20
AMERICAN LOTUS	<i>Nelumbo lutea (Marsh)</i>	5-30
SPADDERDOCK	<i>Nuphar lutea (Marsh)</i>	5-20
BLADDERWORT	<i>Utricularia gibba (Marsh)</i>	5-20
ARROWHEAD	<i>Sagittaria latifolia (Marsh)</i>	5-20
DUCKWEED	<i>Lemna minor (Marsh)</i>	5-30

Grasses and sedges

Common Name	Botanical Name	Cover % (low-high)
HOP SEDGE	<i>Carex lupulina</i>	10-20
SHORELINE SEDGE	<i>Carex hyalinolepis</i>	10-20
FOX SEDGE	<i>Carex vulpinoidea</i>	10-20
FESCUE SEDGE	<i>Carex festucacea</i>	10-20
AWLFRUIT SEDGE	<i>Carex stipata</i>	5-10
RICE CUTGRASS	<i>Leersia oryzoides</i>	10-20
PRAIRIE CORD GRASS	<i>Spartina pectinata</i>	20-40
GREAT BULRUSH	<i>Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani (Marsh)</i>	10-20

BROADLEAF CATTAIL	<i>Typha latifolia (Marsh)</i>	5-40
NARROW-LEAF CATTAIL	<i>Typha angustifolia (Marsh)</i>	5-40
RIVER BULRUSH	<i>Schoenoplectus fluviatilis (Marsh)</i>	10-20

Site Interpretations

Influencing Water Features

- Cowardin wetland types include: Palustrine Emergent Seasonally Flooded, Palustrine Emergent Temporarily Flooded, and Palustrine Emergent Semipermanently Flooded.

*Wildlife**

- Game species that likely utilize this ecological site include:
Waterfowl: Mallard, Blue-Winged Teal, Green-Winged Teal, American Black Duck, Northern Pintail, Gadwall, Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead, American Widgeon, and Northern Shoveler.

Other waterbirds: Sora, Virginia Rail, Common Snipe

Furbearers: Muskrat, Beaver, and Mink.

- Bird species associated with this ecological site’s reference state condition:
Breeding birds likely associated with herbaceous perennial plant dominated (*Spartina pectinata*, *Typha* species, *Polygonum amphibium*, *Schoenoplectus fluviatilis*, *Carex* species, *Sparganium eurycarpum*) areas of this ecological site (Palustrine Emergent Semipermanently Flooded): Sedge Wren, Red-Winged Blackbird, Least Bittern, Mallard, Sora, Pie-billed Grebe, King Rail, Common Moorhen, Marsh Wren, and Common Yellowthroat.

A number of migratory bird species are likely associated with annual plant (*Eleocharis* species, *Bidens* species, *Cyperus* species, *Polygonum lapathifolium*, *Polygonum hydropiper*) dominated areas and mudflats of this ecological site (Palustrine Emergent Seasonally Flooded, Palustrine Emergent Temporarily Flooded): Great Egret, Common Snipe, Pectoral Sandpiper, Greater Yellowlegs, Semipalmated Plover, and dabbling ducks (e.g., Mallard, Blue-Winged Teal, Gadwall, and Northern Pintail).

Breeding birds associated with woody vegetation dominated areas of this ecological site: Common Yellowthroat, Yellow Warbler, and Song Sparrow.

- Amphibian and reptile species that may be associated with this ecological site’s reference state: Western Chorus Frog (*Pseudacris triseriata triseriata*), Plains Leopard Frog (*Rana blairi*), Bullfrog (*Rana catesbeiana*), Southern Leopard Frog (*Rana sphenoccephala*), Western Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta bellii*), Diamond-backed Water Snake (*Nerodia rhombifer rhombifer*), Graham’s Crayfish Snake (*Regina grahamii*), Midland Brown Snake (*Storeria dekayi wrightourm*), and Western Ribbon Snake (*Thamnophis proximus proximus*). In association with sand prairies, this ecological site provides habitat for Western Fox Snake (*Elaphe vulpina vulpina*) and Blandings Turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*).

- Small mammals likely associated with this ecological site's reference state condition: Muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*), Southern Bog Lemming (*Synaptomys cooperi*), and Mink (*Mustela vison*).
- Many native insect species are likely associated with this ecological site, especially native dragonflies and damselflies, beetles, and ants. However information on these groups is often lacking enough resolution to assign them to individual ecological sites.

Insect species known to be associated with this ecological site's reference state condition: Swamp Milkweed Leaf Beetle (*Labidomera clivicollis*), Cordgrass Planthopper (*Prokelisia crocea*), Dion Skipper butterfly (*Euphyes dion*), Duke's Skipper butterfly (*Euphyes dukesi*), Sedge Grasshopper (*Stethophyma celatum*), the Lance-tipped Darner dragonfly (*Aeshna constricta*) and the Ruby Meadowhawk dragonfly (*Sympetrum rubicundulum*).

Other invertebrates: Grassland Crayfish (*Procambarus gracilis*), Northern Crayfish (*Orconectes virilis*), Papershell Crayfish (*O. immunis*)

*This section prepared by Mike Leahy, Natural Areas Coordinator, Missouri Department of Conservation, 2013

Forestry

- **Management:** **This ecological site is not recommended for traditional timber management activity.** Historically this site was dominated by a ground cover of native prairie grasses and forbs. Some scattered open grown trees may have also been present. May be suitable for non-traditional forestry uses such as windbreaks, environmental plantings, alley cropping (a method of planting, in which rows of trees or shrubs are interspersed with rows of crops) or woody bio-fuels.

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

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