

Riverwash Sand Barren

State Rank S1

Community Description

These riverside barrens support dwarf shrub - graminoid vegetation dominated by little bluestem and other grasses, with beach heather in patches. Big bluestem is characteristic, as are pinweed and goldenrod species. Small white pine trees may be scattered throughout. The vegetation is patchy, with blowouts and other areas of bare sand or gravel. Some occurrences also support populations of the rare silverling. Although individual plants shift over time as their substrates are reworked by floods, the overall composition of the community does not change appreciably over the short term (10-20 years).

Soil and Site Characteristics

Sites occur on gravelly or sandy barrens along river beaches and back beach areas where periodic flooding

and xeric soils produce a distinctive disturbance regime. Most are in the two-year floodplain. Soils are very nutrient poor.

Diagnostics

Sites occur on sandy floodplains with tree cover less than 25%. Little bluestem is prominent in the herb layer, and beach heather is present and locally dominant.

Similar Types

This type is quite distinct. Little Bluestem - Blueberry Sandplain Grasslands share some species with this type, but are on flat outwash plains, not in rivercourses.



Beach Heather

Conservation, Wildlife, and Management Considerations

All occurrences in Maine are on or adjacent to private land. Heavy recreational use on the Saco River poses a threat to some occurrences, which can be attractive picnicking or camping spots. Although this is a disturbance-adapted community, the impacts of ATVs and heavy foot traffic can be more concentrated and ecologically different from the natural flooding. Because of the dynamic riparian environment required by this community, conservation entails protection of the entire floodplain on particular segments of the river where these communities occur.

Distribution

Known only from the Saco River in southern Maine and adjacent New Hampshire.

Landscape Pattern: Small Patch

Characteristic Plants

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

Sapling/shrub

- Pitch pine
- Red Oak
- White pine

Dwarf Shrub

- Beach heather*

Herb

- Big bluestem
- Early goldenrod
- Flat-topped goldenrod
- Gray goldenrod
- Jointweed
- Little bluestem*
- Pinweed
- Poverty oatgrass
- Rand's goldenrod
- Silverling
- Silverrod
- Wooly panic-grass

Bryoid

- Awned hair-cap moss
- Reindeer lichen

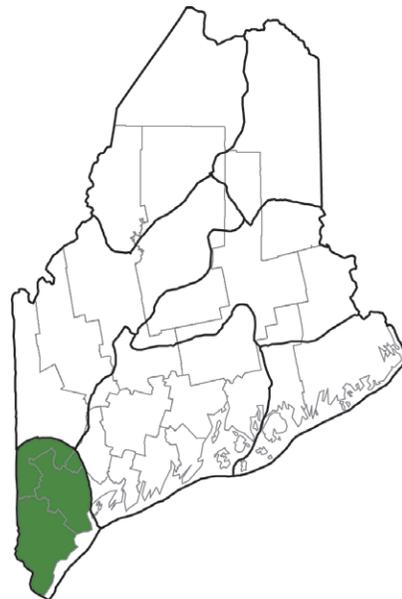
Associated Rare Plants

- Silverling

Examples on Conservation Lands You Can Visit

- None documented on conservation lands.

Location Map



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



Silverling