



Sand Prairie

Rarity Rank: S1/G2G3

Synonyms: none

Ecological Systems: C EGL003974

General Description:

- Sand prairies are open areas imbedded in bottomland hardwood floodplain forests
- Sand prairies may best be regarded as barrens, since the open character is a function of soil conditions and plant diversity is naturally low
- Form on sandy soil of the Haggerty series which has high levels of exchangeable aluminum that is toxic to plants
- This community is hydro-xeric, being inundated by Ouachita River overflow/backwater during winter and early spring and being extremely dry due to the sandiness of the soil during the summer and fall
- Largely dominated by grasses and a few forbs, some woody encroachment may occur
- The role of fire in this community is not known; it is possible that fire played some role in keeping the habitat open
- Adjacent forests on lower topographic positions are often dominated by *Quercus lyrata* (overcup oak) and *Q. phellos* (willow oak). Higher knolls and ridges are often dominated by *Pinus taeda* (loblolly pine). *Crataegus opaca* (mayhaw) is a conspicuous shrub on the edges of sand prairies.



Plant Community Associates

Common herbaceous species include:

Schizachyrium scoparium (little bluestem; high sites), *Panicum virgatum* (switchgrass; low sites)

Diodia teres (poorjoe; often dominates in areas with highest aluminum toxicity),

Croton capitatus (goat weed)

Federally-listed plant & animal species:

None

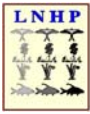
Range:

Northeast Louisiana and southeast Arkansas in the Ouachita River bottoms.

Threats & Management Considerations:

At this point little is known about sand prairies. The role of fire and therefore affects of fire exclusion are unknown. Also unknown are the impacts from loss of herbivores, beaver control and haying.





Natural Communities of Louisiana



Road going through sand prairie, Morehouse Parish.



Abundant switchgrass in the foreground, standing water visible in the background.

For more information, please visit our web pages at
www.wlf.louisiana.gov/experience/naturalheritage or call 225-765-2821