



Slash Pine-Pondcypress/Hardwood Forest

Rarity Rank: S2S3/G2?

Synonyms: Wet Slash Pine Flatwoods

Ecological Systems: CES203.375 East Gulf Coastal Plain Near-Coast Pine Flatwoods

General Description:

- Restricted to the wet acidic flatwoods on the far eastern Pleistocene prairie terraces of Louisiana's East Gulf Coastal Plain
- Found in a mosaic with longleaf pine flatwoods and savannahs, and bayhead swamps, existing in a hydrologic/topographic transitional zone between the higher, "drier" longleaf pine flatwood savannahs to the lower, wetter bayhead swamps
- May also be present on broad flats that are partially protected from frequent surface fires by surrounding bayheads or seeps
- Soils are hydric, strongly acidic and nutrient poor silt loams and fine sandy loams
- Two principal soils are Myatt fine sandy loam and Guyton silt loam
- Surface soils are typically saturated for much of the year and shallow water may be present in the late fall/winter/early spring and after rains during the growing season
- Varies considerably in structure and somewhat in composition from one place to another, apparently as a consequence of minor variations in topography, soil conditions, and hydrologic and fire regimes
- Fire dependent natural community; both slash pine and pondcypress are fire-adapted species however, neither is as fire resistant as longleaf pine.
- Fire interval is difficult to estimate but is believed to have varied between 5 and 20 years



Plant Community Associates

Common woody species include:

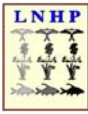
Pinus elliottii (slash pine),
Nyssa biflora (swamp black gum),

Taxodium ascendens (pondcypress),
Magnolia virginiana (sweetbay)

Common understory species include:

Cyrilla racemiflora (swamp cyrilla),
Lyonia lucida (fetterbush),
Itea virginica (Virginia willow),
M. cerifera (waxmyrtle),
Arundinaria gigantea (switch cane)

Ilex coriacea (sweet gallberry),
I. glabra (littleleaf gallberry),
Morella heterophylla (bigleaf waxmyrtle),
Smilax spp. (greenbriers),



Natural Communities of Louisiana



Common ground layer species include:

Sphagnum spp. (sphagnum moss),
minimal herbaceous undergrowth

Pteridophytes (ferns),

Scattered, depauperate specimens of herbs, more typical of sunny wet pine savannahs (e.g., *Sarracenia alata*, yellow pitcher-plant), may be observed.

Federally-listed plant & animal species:

Picoides borealis (red-cockaded woodpecker)

Endangered; G2; S2

Range:

Restricted to the East Gulf Coastal Plain; primarily associated with pine flatwoods including eastern longleaf pine savannah and occasional bogs

Threats & Management Considerations:

Presettlement extent of this habitat is estimated at 50,000 to 100,000 acres, with only 10 to 25% currently remaining. Land conversion, development, and timber production were initial factors in this habitat loss. Activities causing direct impacts or destruction of slash pine flatwoods include construction of roads, pipelines or utilities, conversion to slash or loblolly pine plantations, and residential or commercial development.



Other threats include: soil damage from timber harvesting and planting activities (eg. bedding), hydrological alterations (to include adjacent areas), contamination by chemicals (herbicides, fertilizers), off-road vehicle use, fire exclusion or inappropriate fire regime, and introduction of invasive or exotic species.

Use of appropriate management activities and developing a compatible management plan prevents destruction or degradation of this habitat type and promotes long-term maintenance of healthy slash pine-pondcypress/hardwood forests. Such management strategies should include:

- Preventing conversion of existing natural forests to other land uses
- Use of growing season prescribed fire (April-June) at a frequency of every 5 to 10 years
- No logging during wet periods when the soil is saturated
- No bedding or other soil disturbance that may alter natural water flow patterns
- Prohibiting off-road vehicle use, or restricting use to pre-existing trails
- Surveying for and removal of any invasive plant species with use of spot herbicides or mechanical means



Georgia tickseed (*Coreopsis nudata*), rare plant found in slash pine flatwoods and eastern longleaf pine savannahs.