

Natural Communities of Louisiana



Intermediate Marsh

Rarity Rank: S3S4/G4

	1	2	3	4	5
State					
Global					
	imperiled		rare	secure	

Synonyms: Oligohaline Marsh

Ecological Systems:

CES203.467 Gulf Coast Chenier Plain
Fresh and Oligohaline Tidal Marsh
CES203.470 Mississippi Delta Fresh and
Oligohaline Tidal Marsh



General Description:

- This natural community lies between brackish marsh and freshwater marsh, although it infrequently may be adjacent to the Gulf
- Intermediate marsh has an irregular tidal regime and is oligohaline (salinity of 3 to 10 ppt)
- Dominated by narrow-leaved, persistent species particularly *Spartina patens* (wire grass)
- Small pools or ponds may be scattered throughout
- Soil organic matter content is higher than in brackish marsh
- This marsh is characterized by a higher diversity of species than salt or brackish marsh, many of which are found in freshwater marsh and some of which are found in brackish marsh
- Two other major autotrophic groups in intermediate marsh are epiphytic and benthic algae
- Smallest in extent of the four marsh types
- Very important to many species of avian wildlife and supports large numbers of wintering waterfowl
- Also critical nursery habitat to larval marine organisms
- Gradual changes in salinity conditions can cause this habitat to shift towards brackish marsh

Plant Community Associates

Common species include:

Spartina patens (wire grass)
Sagittaria lancifolia (= *S. falcata*; bulltongue)
Eleocharis spp. (spikesedge)
Scirpus californicus (giant bulrush)
Scirpus americanus (common threesquare)
Paspalum vaginatum (seashore paspalum)
Leptochloa fascicularis (bearded sprangletop)
Cyperus odoratus (fragrant flatsedge)
Alternanthera philoxeroides (alligator weed)
Spartina spartineae (gulf cordgrass)

Phragmites communis (roseau cane)
Bacopa monnieri (coastal water hyssop)
Scirpus olneyi (three-cornered grass)
Vigna luteola (deer pea)
Panicum virgatum (switch grass)
Pluchea camphorata (camphor-weed)
Echinonchloa walteri (walter millet)
Najas guadalupensis (southern naiad)
Spartina cynosuroides (big cordgrass)

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Federally-listed plant & animal species:

Pelecanus occidentalis (brown pelican)

Endangered (PS:E); G4; S2

Range:

Presettlement acreage was estimated at 100,000 to 500,000 acres, but has been reduced by 50 to 75 % of this original extent. The largest contiguous tracts of intermediate marsh occur in Cameron, Vermilion, Terrebonne, and Lafourche parishes.

LA River Basins:

Pearl, Pontchartrain, Mississippi, Barataria, Terrebonne, Atchafalaya, Vermilion-Teche, Mermentau, Calcasieu, Sabine

Threats:

- Saltwater intrusion and subsidence
- Canal dredging
- Commercial, industrial and residential development
- Construction of roads, pipelines or utilities
- Contamination by chemicals or industrial discharge
- Fire suppression
- Invasive exotic species

Beneficial Management Practices:

- Prevent conversion of existing natural communities to other land uses
- Allow natural fires to burn freely (if feasible) and establish regular burning regime on managed lands to improve habitat and food quality for wildlife
- Remove any invasive exotic plant species with use of spot herbicides or mechanical means

