



Natural Communities of Louisiana

Mississippi Terrace Prairie

Rarity Rank: S1/G2

Synonyms:

Ecological Systems: CES203.549 Lower Mississippi Alluvial Plain Grand Prairie

General Description:

- Prairie type of northeastern Louisiana on terraces within the Mississippi River alluvial floodplain
- Generally small, pocket prairies of only a few acres in size
- Likely extirpated, however a very few relicts of this natural community may remain
- Very little is known about this prairie type; similar to Grand Prairie in Arkansas
- As other prairie types lacked trees and woody vegetation, being dominated by grasses
- Frequent fire and soil type would have prevented invasion of woody species



Plant Community Associates

Varying dominant grass species include:

Schizachyrium scoparium (little bluestem),
Sorghastrum nutans (Indian grass),
Panicum virgatum (switchgrass),
Tripsacum dactyloides (eastern gammagrass)

Andropogon gerardii (big bluestem),
Panicum spp. (panic grasses),
Sporobolus asper (tall dropseed),

Common forb species include:

Liatris spp. (blazing-stars),
Silphium spp. (rosin-weeds)

Baptisia spp. (indigos),

Federally-listed plant & animal species:

None

Range:

Historically known from the Mississippi River Alluvial Plain ecoregion in northeast LA.

Threats & Management Considerations:

Mississippi terrace prairies were not extensive in presettlement times, with total area estimated at less than 2,000 acres. Within Louisiana this prairie type is likely





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extirpated, however a few acres may remain. Conversion to agriculture and urban and residential development brought about the demise of this natural community type.

If remaining prairies are discovered, then 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 prairies. Such management strategies should include:

- Use of periodic prescribed fire (every 1 to 3 years)
- Monitoring for and removal of any invasive or exotic species by prescribed burning, spot herbicide treatments or mechanical means
- Preventing use of prairie openings as logging sets
- Prohibiting off-road vehicle use or restricting use to existing trails