

# Natural Communities of Louisiana



## Salt Dome Hardwood Forest

**Rarity Rank:** S1/G1

	1	2	3	4	5
State					
Global					
	imperiled		rare		secure



**Synonyms:** None

**Ecological Systems:** CES203.466 West Gulf Coastal Plain Chenier and Upper Texas Coastal Fringe Forest and Woodland

### General Description:

- Restricted to salt domes in coastal Louisiana called the “Five Islands”
- Developed on fertile, circum-neutral to slightly alkaline loessial deposits over salt dome cap rock
- Upland hardwood dominated forest similar to hardwood slope or Southern mesophytic forests
- Highly erodible loess soils that have worn over thousands of years to form a characteristic well-dissected landscape of high, narrow ridges, steep slopes, and deep ravines
- Topographic characteristics of the region create a relatively cool, moist micro-climate on the slopes and in the ravines

### Plant Community Associates

#### Common overstory tree species include:

*Quercus virginiana* (live oak)  
*Quercus pagoda* (cherrybark oak)  
*Celtis laevigata* (hackberry)  
*Tilia americana* var. *caroliniana* (basswood)  
*Carya glabra* (pignut hickory)

*Magnolia grandiflora* (Southern magnolia)  
*Ulmus americana* (American elm)  
*Liquidambar styraciflua* (sweetgum)  
*Quercus nigra* (water oak)

#### Common midstory & understory species include:

*Prunus caroliniana* (cherrylaurel)  
*Sabal minor* (dwarf palmetto)  
*Aesculus pavia* (red buckeye)  
*Parthenocissus quinquefolia* (Virginia creeper)  
*Vitis rotundifolia* (muscadine grape)  
*Ampelopsis arborea* (peppervine)

*Ilex vomitoria* (yaupon)  
*Callicarpa americana* (french mulberry)  
*Asimina triloba* (pawpaw)  
*Smilax rotundifolia* (common greenbriar)  
*Toxicodendron radicans* (poison ivy)  
*Smilax bona-nox* (saw greenbriar)

#### Common herbaceous layer species include:

*Oplismenus hirtellus* ssp. *setarius* (bristle basketgrass) *Sanicula canadensis* (black snakeroot)  
*Malvaviscus arboreus* var. *drummondii* (wax mallow) *Rubus* spp. (blackberry)  
*Elephantopus carolinianus* (Carolina elephant’s foot)

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## **Common epiphytes include:**

*Tillandsia usneoides* (Spanish moss)

*Polypodium polypodioides* (resurrection fern)

*Phoradendron tomentosum* (mistle-toe)

## **Federally-listed plant & animal species:**

*Ursus americanus luteolus* (Louisiana black bear)

Threatened; G5T2; S2

## **Range:**

Gulf Coast Prairies and Marshes ecoregion in the southwest portions of Louisiana; specifically restricted to the five salt domes, or “islands” of south central Louisiana: Avery, Belle Isle, Cote Blanche, Jefferson, and Weeks Islands.

## **LA River Basins:**

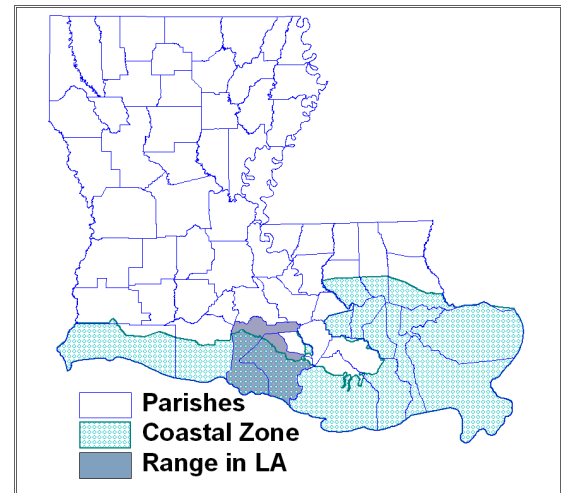
Atchafalaya, Vermilion-Teche

## **Threats:**

- Industrial activities
- Residential development
- Construction of roads, pipelines and utilities
- Invasive exotic species
- Overgrazing

## **Beneficial Management Practices:**

- Prevent conversion of existing natural forests to other land uses
- Maintain natural species composition by following appropriate hardwood management techniques
- No harvesting on steep slopes and during wet periods to prevent soil damage
- Remove any invasive exotic plant species with use of spot herbicides or mechanical means
- Prohibit off-road vehicle use or restrict use to existing trails
- Prohibit livestock grazing



Louisiana black bear

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For more information, please visit our Web pages at

[www.wlf.la.gov/wildlife/louisiana-natural-heritage-program](http://www.wlf.la.gov/wildlife/louisiana-natural-heritage-program) or 225-765-2811

[www.BTNEP.org](http://www.BTNEP.org) or 1-800-259-0869