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Conserving South Carolina's At-Risk Species:

Species facing threats to their survival

Wireleaf dropseed (*Sporobolus teretifolius*)



Spikelets are purplish-brown. The plant flowers July-September (and later in response to growing-season fire). with seeds shed in the fall and germinating the following spring. Like all grasses, it is wind-pollinated. Its seeds are dispersed by insects and small mammals.

Range

With approximately 46 occurrences known rangewide, the species ranges from the Coastal Plain of southeastern North Carolina into northeastern South Carolina, southern Georgia, and southeastern Alabama. In South Carolina, it is known from the following five counties: Chesterfield, Georgetown, Horry, Kershaw, and Lexington.

Habitat

Wireleaf dropseed inhabits permanently moist to wet savannas on essentially flat terrain underlain by a clay layer. The open canopy is composed of pond pine (*Pinus serotina*) and/or longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) with sparse to locally dense shrub patches. It is also found in the ecotones between pine/oak/wiregrass (*Aristida stricta*) uplands and drainages containing red maple (*Acer rubrum*), sweet gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), and swamp tupelo (*Nyssa sylvatica* var. *biflora*). These narrow areas are ecologically similar to wet pine savannas but differ in having a dense shrub and wetland tree border. A third habitat type is broad seepage slopes at the headwaters of small streams. In this habitat, branching rivulets form wet areas interspersed with drier spots. Wireleaf dropseed can also found in pitcherplant bogs.

Status

NatureServe's Rounded Global Status is G2 - Imperiled. The U.S. Fish and Wild-

life Service was petitioned to list the species in April 2010 and in September 2011 issued a 90-day finding indicating listing may be warranted.

Threats

Primary threats to the species include habitat destruction (conversion to pine plantations, pasture, row crops, human infrastructure) and habitat degradation, predominantly from fire exclusion and hydrological alteration. Fire exclusion is a particular concern since this species is adapted to flower following fire, although mechanical disturbance can also stimulate flowering in some cases.

Management/Protection Needs

Prescribed burnings and/or thinning of overstory is a necessary part of a management regime for this species. Its habitat should not be drained. Prescribed fire, where feasible, appears to be the most effective form of management, as the species is adapted to flower post-fire. Mechanical clearing can stimulate reproduction at some sites, but apparently is not always effective.

References

Georgia Department of Natural Resources - Rare Plant Species Profiles: <http://georgiawildlife.com/speciesinfo/plants>

NatureServe. 2017. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://explorer.natureserve.org>.

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USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database/Hitchcock, A.S. (rev. A. Chase). 1950. *Manual of the grasses of the United States*. USDA Miscellaneous Publication No. 200. Washington, DC.

Description

Wireleaf dropseed is a densely tufted perennial grass with round, wiry leaves. Leaf blades are narrow, cylindrical or rolled inward, 25-50 cm long, green to yellowish-green, and generally hairless (may have sparse hairs at the base). Flowering stems are typically 35-80 cm tall, erect, and wiry, with slender, delicate flowering branches. Flowers (spikelets) are in an open, branched arrangement with an overall narrow pyramid to egg shape.