## Douglas Fir - Tanoak (DFTO)

### General Information

### Cover Type Overview

* 6663.61 acres / 2696.67 hectares
* Crosswalks
  + EVeg: Regional Dominance Type 1
    - Pacific Douglas Fir
    - Tanoak
  + EVeg: Regional Dominance Type 2
    - Tanoak (regardless of RD Type 1 value)
  + LandFire BpS Model: 0610430 Mediterranean California Mixed Evergreen Forest (shared with Montane Hardwood)
  + Presettlement Fire Regime Type: Mixed Evergreen
* Ultramafic
  + This type is created by intersecting an ultramafic soils/geology layer with the existing vegetation layer. Where cells intersect with DFTO they are assigned to the ultramafic modifier.

### Vegetation Description

This habitat forms a complex mosaic of forest expression due to the geologic, topographic, and successional variation typical within its range. Deep mesic soils support aggregations that include a lower layer of dense, sclerophyllous, broad-leaved evergreen trees like *Lithocarpus densiflorus* and *Arbutus menziesii* up to 35 m tall, with an irregular, often open, higher layer of tall needle-leaved evergreen trees, typically *Psuedotsuga menziesii*,up to 90 m tall. A small number of pole and sapling trees occur throughout stands. On wet sites, shrub layers are well developed, often with 100 percent cover. Cover of the herbaceous layer under the shrubs can be up to 10 percent. At higher elevations, the shrubs disappear and the herb layer is often 100 percent. Diversity of tree size typically increases with stand age, as does tree spacing. Young stands have closely spaced and uniformly distributed trees, whereas older stands show a more patchy stem distribution. Snags and downed logs, an important structural component of this habitat, increase in density or volume with stand age (Raphael 1988).

Additional hardwood tree associates may include *Quercus chrysolepis*, *Quercus kelloggii*, and *Umbellularia californica*. Potential additional conifer associates include *Abies concolor*, *Pinus lambertiana*, and *Pinus ponderosa* (Tappeiner 1990).

A large variety of shrubs, forbs, grasses, sedges, and ferns are also associated with the Douglas Fir-Tanoak landcover type. Generally these plants are not abundant once the canopy has closed, but, along with *L. densiflorus* sprouts, often become aggressive on burned or cutover areas. Among the most common shrubs are *Ceanothus*, *Corylus*, *Gaultheria*, *Morella*, *Rhododendron*, *Ribes*, *Rubus*, *Toxicodendron diversilobum*, and *Vaccinium*. Common forbs include *Chimaphila*, *Mahonia,* *Cirsium vulgare*, *Erechtites*, and *Whipplea*. Grass species include *Bromus*, *Festuca*, and *Hierochloe*. *Polystichum munitum* and *Pteridium aquilinum* var. *pubescens*) sometimes grow abundantly. *Carex* spp. also are represented in some places (Tappeiner 1990).

* **Ultramafic Modifier** Sites are likely to be dominated by *Pinus jeffreyi* in an open grassland or shrubland. Other tree associates on ultramafics include *P. menziesii*, *C. decurrens, Pinus attenuata,* and *Q. chrysolepis*. Common shrubs include *Ceanothus, Arctostaphylos,* and occasionally *Quercus breweri*. Dominant grasses include *Stipa, Festuca,* and *Danthonia* (LandFire 2007b, McDonald 1988).

### Distribution

Douglas Fir–Tanoak is typically found on soils that are deep, well-drained, and loamy, sandy, or gravelly. It grows in valleys, coves, ravines, along streams, and on north slopes. It is found between elevations of 580 and 1220 m (1,900 and 4,000 ft) (Tappeiner 1990).

* **Ultramafic Modifier**  Low to moderate elevations in ultramafic and serpentinized areas often produce soils low in essential minerals like calcium potassium, and nitrogen, and have excessive accumulations of heavy metals such as nickel and chromium. These sites vary widely in the degree of serpentinization and effects on their overlying plant communities (“CalVeg Zone 1” 2011). Note, the terms “ultramafic rock” and “serpentine” are broad terms used to describe a number of different but related rock types, including serpentinite, peridotite, dunite, pyroxenite, talc and soapstone, among others (O’Geen et al. 2007).

**Disturbances**

### Wildfire

With its flammable leaves and successional position in the understory or subcanopy, tanoak is adapted to catch fire easily. In the lower montane zone of the Sierra Nevada where tanoak occurs, the historic fire regime was characterized by dry-season fires of mostly low to moderate severity. Patchy, stand-replacement fires were most common on north-facing slopes and during extended droughts (Tappeiner 1990). Most fires are started by lightning. There is evidence that Native American burning prior to 1850 may have been extensive (LandFire 2007a).

Tanoak seedlings and saplings are typically top-killed by even low-severity surface fire. Large trees usually survive moderate-severity fire, bearing fire scars afterward. Even tanoaks with thick bark (3-10 cm) typically sustain bole damage from fire. Relative to associated conifers, mature Douglas fir is fairly resistant to surface fires. Crown fires cause extensive mortality (Tappeiner 1990).

For mixed evergreen-tanoak in the Klamath mountains, Skinner and Chang (1996) report a median FRI of 13 years, minimum of 3 years, and a maximum of 41 years. Van de Water and Safford (2011) estimated a mean FRI of 29 years, with a median of 13 years, mean minimum of 15 years and mean maximum of 80 years. The LandFire model for this type (2007a) predict an average FRI of 8 years. Replacement FRI averages 333 years with a range of 65 to 500 years, while surface FRI averages 10 years with a range of 7 to 15 with an average of 10 years. We recalculated these numbers using condition-specific information and using only high and low mortality fire categories, which resulted in an interval of 75 years for high mortality fire, 8 years for low mortality fire, and 8 years for any fire.

* **Ultramafic Modifier** Skinner and Chang (1996) reported fire intervals for *P. jeffreyi* in the Klamath Mountains. They found a median FRI of 13 years, with a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 157. This is a surprisingly short FRI, but these results are consistent with the general consensus that fire intervals on ultramafic sites are longer and more variable than on adjacent non-ultramafic sites. The Landfire model for Klamath-Siskiyou Xeromorphic Serpentine Savanna and Chaparral (2007b) predicted a replacement FRI averaging 200 years with a range of 100-300 years, no mixed severity fire, a surface FRI averaging 15 years with a range of 10-20 years, and an all-fire FRI averaging 14 years. We recalculated these numbers using condition-specific information and using only high and low mortality fire categories, which resulted in an interval of 87 years for high mortality fire, 17 years for low mortality fire, and 14 years for any fire.

Table 1. Fire return intervals (years) and percentage of high versus low mortality fires. Values for DFTO were derived from BpS model 0610430 (Landfire 2007a) and Van de Water and Safford (2011). Values for DFTO on ultramafic soils were derived from BpS model 0711700 (Landfire 2007b).

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| **Variant** | **Modifier** | **Fire Severity** | **Average** | **Min** | **Max** | **% of Fires** |
| DFTO | None | High | 75 |  |  | 10 |
| Low | 8 |  |  | 90 |
| All Fires | 8 | 5 | 41 |  |
| Ultramafic | High | 87 |  |  | 16 |
| Low | 17 |  |  | 84 |
| All Fires | 14 | 15 | 80 |  |

### Other Disturbance

Other disturbances are not currently modeled, but may, depending on the condition affected and mortality levels, reset patches to early development, maintain existing stages, or shift/accelerate succession to a more open stage. All of the tree species associated with this vegetation type are susceptible to a wide variety of pathogens and insects.

### Vegetation Condition Classes

### Early Development (ED)

**Description** Grasses,

**References**

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