14790

Central Interior and Appalachian Swamp Systems

BpS Model/Description Version: Aug. 2020

Vegetation Type

Woody Wetland

Map Zones

52, 62

Geographic Range

These wetlands are scattered throughout the north-central Midwest (south of the Laurentian region), the north-central Appalachians and southern New England at low to mid elevations. In MZ62 the system occurs primarily on the glaciated landscapes of Subsections 222Ha, 222Hb, 222Ia, 221Fa, 221Fc, and 222Fb (Cleland et al. 2007).

Biophysical Site Description

Central Interior and Appalachian Swamp Systems can be found in several landscapes. Some swamp systems are found in surface-water depressions where the vegetation is separated from the water-table and the hydrology is driven by surface water. This type of system is found commonly over clay where there would be a perched water table. These sites experience significant seasonal hydrologic fluctuation, with the water table typically above the soil surface in spring and significantly below the surface during summer. Forested wetlands primarily impacted by surface water are common over broad areas of glacial lakeplain. Also, swamp systems are found in ground-water depressions where groundwater is influencing the hydrology of the system. This type of system would be found over a coarse-textured soil substrate. These sites experience less hydrologic fluctuation than the surface-water depressional sites, and typically occupy relatively small areas relative to surface water influenced sites (Mitsch and Gosselink 2000). This system is found primarily in glaciated regions.

Vegetation Description

This system is comprised of a variety of lowland hardwoods, including silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*), red maple (*Acer rubrum*), green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*), black ash (*Fraxinus nigra*), American elm (*Ulmus americana*), pin oak (*Quercus palustris*), swamp white oak (*Quercus bicolor*), sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*), cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*), and a variety of other canopy associates. Silver maple, green ash, sycamore and cottonwood favor sites that experience seasonal inundation, whereas black ash favors organic deposits that are not subject to extreme hydrologic fluctuations. Some occurrences may contain a significant conifer component, primarily of hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*), often associated with yellow birch (*Betula alleghaniensis*). In Pennsylvania, additional associates may include red spruce (*Picea rubens*) and great rhododendron (*Rhododendron maximum*). Stands are generally closed-canopy. Shrub and groundlayer diversity depends on canopy closure and hydrology, but is generally low on seasonally inundated sites. Hummocks, canopy openings and decomposing wood support higher diversity. Stands referred to as "flatwoods" range from wet to mesic, with species composition changing accordingly. Flatwoods on relatively dry substrate may be dominated by sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), oaks and occasionally beech *(Fagus grandifolia*). See 6115100 model for North-Central Interior Flatwoods.

Typical ground layer species may include *Onoclea sensibilis* (sensitive fern), *Osmunda cinnamomea* (cinnamon fern), *Osmunda regalis* (royal fern), *Symplocarpus foetidus* (skunk cabbage) *Toxicodendron radicans* (poison ivy), *Parthenocissus quinquefolia* (Virginia creeper), *Caltha palustris* (marsh-marigold), *Glyceria striata* (manna grass), *Mitchella repens* (partridgeberry), *Viola* spp. (violets), and *Lycopus* spp. (water-horehound).

BpS Dominant and Indicator Species

Species names are from the NRCS PLANTS database. Check species codes at http://plants.usda.gov.

Disturbance Description

The dominant disturbance in this BpS is seasonal water table fluctuation, leading to varying periods of inundation. In some sites, spring flooding restricts seed germination and diversity of shrubs and ground layer species. Summer drought is an additional stressor. Shallowly rooted trees are subject to windthrow, but are typically rooted in mineral soils, which have greater structural stability than organic soils. Fires likely occurred during periods of drought and/or following significant windthrow or storm damage events, but the return interval was likely very long in most sites.

Fire Frequency

Fire interval is expressed in years for each fire severity class and for all types of fire combined (All Fires). Average FI is the central tendency modeled. Percent of all fires is the percent of all fires modeled in that severity class. Minimum and Maximum FIs show the relative range of fire intervals as estimated by model contributors, if known.

Scale Description

This system typically occurs as small to large patches, the largest patches occurring on glacial clay and sand-clay lakeplain.

Adjacency or Identification Concerns

This system commonly occurs as small to large patches in a matrix of fire-resistant systems, including beech-maple forest, and sometimes associated with fire-adapted systems, including oak savanna. This system is often referred to as ash, red maple, or maple-ash-oak swamp (the latter particularly in Ohio). The majority of pre-European settlement acreage has been drained and converted to agriculture. Structure of remaining sites may be simplified by anthropogenic disturbances, including hydrologic alteration, grazing, and introduction of invasive species. Invasive species occurring in this system include glossy buckthorn (*Rhamnus frangula*), garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*), Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*), and multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*). Also the introduction of Dutch elm disease into North American forests has largely eliminated large elms from native ecosystems.

Issues or Problems

Native Uncharacteristic Conditions

Strong dominance by red maple may indicate previous disturbance (grazing or pasturing, hydrologic alteration, beaver flooding, etc.).

Comments

Succession Classes

**Mapping Rules**

Succession class letters A-E are described in the Succession Class Description section. Some classes use a leafform distinction where a qualifier is added to the class letter: Brdl (broadleaf), Con (conifer), or Mix (mixed conifer and broadleaf). UN refers to uncharacteristic native or a combination of height and cover that would not be expected under the reference condition. NP refers to not possible or a combination of height and cover which is not physiologically possible for the species in the BpS.

**Description**

Class A 14 Early Development 1 - All Structures

Indicator Species

Description

This stage is an early successional stand following flooding or a rare stand-replacing fire. Shrubs increase in dominance over time, although open grass- and sedge-dominated wet meadow may be dominant at first, particularly in areas in which existing shrubs were flood-killed. Open to dense thicket dominated by species such as *Ilex verticillata* (winterberry), *Vaccinium corymbosum* (highbush blueberry) (much more frequent in N. Ohio), *Lindera benzoin* (spicebush), *Viburnum* spp., *Alnus rugosa* (speckled alder) (northern Ohio), *Cephalanthus occidentalis* (buttonbush), *Corylus cornuta* (hazelnut), *Salix* spp.(willows), and *Cornus* spp. (dogwoods).

This stage results from major disturbance, including stand-replacement fire, flooding, or windthrow. Flooding caused by beaver or other natural hydrologic alteration occurs. Shrub thickets are sometimes relatively stable and long-persistent, but the concept used for this model is of a site that, due to edaphic factors, favors the development of forested wetland in the absence of major disturbance(s). As with all stages of this system, seasonal annual spring flooding, would occur annually and maintain the swamp forest instead of allowing it to succeed to drier forest type.

*Maximum Tree Size Class*  
None

Class B 21 Mid Development 1 - Closed

Indicator Species

Description

Mid-development forested swamp stage: Scattered tree canopy develops from seedlings that establish under shrubs. Typical species include silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*), red maple (*Acer rubrum*), green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*), black ash (*Fraxinus nigra*), American elm (*Ulmus americana*), pin oak (*Quercus palustris*), swamp white oak (*Quercus bicolor*), sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*), cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*), and a variety of other canopy associates. General appearance is of a shrub-dominated system with an open tree canopy, grading into forested wetland at the end of this period.

As with all stages of this system, seasonal annual spring flooding, would occur. This natural process was not explicitly modeled but it should be assumed that it is occurring annually and maintaining the swamp forest instead of allowing it to succeed to drier forest type.

*Maximum Tree Size Class*  
Large 21-33" DBH

Class C 65 Late Development 1 - Closed

Indicator Species

Description

Mature forested swamp: Mature, multi-seral stands. This stage is dominated by the same tree species as class B although the shrub layer is greatly reduced.

This stage is maintained by frequent windthrow of single trees or small to large patches of trees. As with all stages of this system, seasonal annual spring flooding, would occur annually and maintain the swamp forest instead of allowing it to succeed to drier forest type.

*Maximum Tree Size Class*  
Very Large >33" DBH

Model Parameters

Deterministic Transitions

Probabilistic Transitions

Optional Disturbances

Optional 1: beaver impoundments

References

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