18240

Hawai'i Alpine Dwarf-Shrubland

BpS Model/Description Version: Aug. 2020

Update: 6/5/2018

Vegetation Type

Shrubland

Map Zones

79

Geographic Range

This ecological system is restricted to dry alpine and upper subalpine slopes of Haleakala, Maui and Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa, Hawai‘i above 3,000 m.

Biophysical Site Description

This ecological system occurs on dry alpine slopes of Maui and Hawai'i from near 3,000-3,400m (9,835-11,150ft) elevation extending down into the subalpine (Gagne and Cuddihy 1990). This alpine ecological system is restricted to the arid zone (zone 1) of the seven moisture zones developed for the Hawai'ian Islands by Price et al. (2007). The wet trade winds frequently do not rise above 1,900m, being suppressed by the tropical inversion layer, leaving upper slopes too dry to support wet vegetation (Mueller-Dombois and Fosberg 1998). Annual rainfall is generally 750-1,250 mm and falls from October to March. Sites are wind exposed. Frost is frequent even during summer months. Substrates are well-drained and gravelly derived from cinder and ash, but can include glacial moraine.

Vegetation Description

Vegetation is characterized by open dwarf shrubs characterized by *Argyroxiphium* spp., *Dubautia menziesii*, *Silene struthioloides*, and sometimes scattered *Tetramolopium humile* or *Styphelia tameiameiae*, *Vaccinium* spp., *Geranium* spp. (Gagne and Cuddihy 1990). Scattered grasses may also be present (*Agrostis sandwicensis*, *Deschampsia nubigena*, *Trisetum glomeratus*), forbs (*Gnaphalium sandwicensium*), ferns (*Pellaea ternifolia*, *Asplenium adiantum-nigrum*, *A. trichomanes*), lichens (*Lecanora melaena*), and mosses (*Grimmia haleakalae*, *Rhacomitrium* spp.).

BpS Dominant and Indicator Species

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

Disturbance Description

Primary disturbances in this system include lava flow and/or ash deposition.

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

Adjacency or Identification Concerns

Adjacent ecological systems include Hawai'i Montane-Subalpine Dry Forest and Woodland and Hawai'i Montane-Subalpine Dry Shrubland. This ecological system may co-occur with the alpine bedrock and scree ecological system, but it generally occurs on more exposed, more xeric sites. May be confused with the subalpine dry shrubland, except the vegetation in this is more sparse, and perhaps "lower" in growth form.

Issues or Problems

Native Uncharacteristic Conditions

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 9 Early Development 1 - All Structures

Indicator Species

Description

Post lava or ash, pioneer stage, very small numbers of shrubs, ferns, forbs.

*Maximum Tree Size Class*  
None

Class B 91 Late Development 1 - Open

Indicator Species

Description

Despite late succession, stays very sparse, open, probably <2% total vascular cover. This seral stage persists indefinitely.

Disturbances in this class include fresh ashfall and lava flows.

*Maximum Tree Size Class*  
None

Model Parameters

Deterministic Transitions

Probabilistic Transitions

Optional Disturbances

Optional 1: Lava Flows

Optional 2: Ash Deposits

References

Gagne, W.C., and L.W. Cuddihy. 1990. Vegetation. Pages 45-114 in: W.L. Wagner, D.R. Herbst, and S.H. Sohmer, editors. Manual of the Flowering Plants of Hawaii. 2 Volumes. University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu.

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NatureServe. 2008. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.0. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available http://www.natureserve.org/explorer. (Accessed: September 3, 2008 ).

Price, J.P., S.M. Gon III, J.D. Jacobi, and D. Matsuwaki. 2007. Mapping plant species ranges in the Hawaiian Islands: Developing a methodology and associated GIS layers. Hawai'i Cooperative Studies Unit. Technical Report HCSU-008. Pacific Aquaculture and Coastal Resources Center (PACRC), University of Hawai'i, Hilo. 58 pp., includes 16 figures and 6 tables.

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