

Terrestrial & Palustrine Plant Communities Of Pennsylvania

By Jean Fike

Golden saxifrage - sedge rich seep

These are typically small (less than 0.1 hectare) wetlands that occur where base-rich groundwater (alkaline to circumneutral) saturates the surface for most of the growing season in most years. There may be an accumulation of organic matter (peat or muck), but it is seldom more than 50 cm deep. The species composition is highly variable, and includes common species with a wide range of pH tolerance, as well as calciphilic, typically rarer species. Species composition also varies according to light availability. Sites that occur in completely open areas are usually characterized by dense graminoid cover, while those that receive some shading from surrounding vegetation typically have more forbs. The species composition is variable, but usually includes several of the following: *Carex leptalea* (a sedge), *C. granularis* (a sedge), *C. flava*^S (yellow sedge), *C. sterilis*^S (Atlantic sedge), *C. atlantica* (a sedge), *Poa palustris* (fowl bluegrass), *Cardamine pensylvanica* (Pennsylvania bitter cress), *Senecio aureus* (golden ragwort), *Eupatorium* spp. (boneset), *Impatiens* spp. (jewelweed), *Symplocarpus foetidus* (skunk cabbage), *Chrysosplenium americanum* (golden saxifrage), *Vernonia noveboracensis* (New York ironweed), *Equisetum arvense* (common horse-tail), *E. fluviatile* (water horsetail), *Chara* spp. (stoneworts), *Rhynchospora capillacea*^S (capillary beak-rush), *R. alba* (white beak-rush), *Thelypteris palustris* (marsh fern), *Parnassia glauca*^S (grass-of-Parnassus), *Lobelia kalmii*^S (brook lobelia), *Saxifraga pensylvanica*, (swamp saxifrage), and *Chelone glabra* (turtlehead). There may be open seepage areas dominated by *Chara* spp. (stoneworts).

Related types: This community type may occur in combination with either of the fen types ("Buckthorn - sedge (*Carex interior*) - golden ragwort fen", or "Open sedge (*Carex stricta*, *C. prairea*, *C. lacustris*) fen").

Range: Glaciated NE, Glaciated NW, Pittsburgh Plateau, Ridge and Valley, Piedmont, Great Lakes Region.

Selected references: PNDI field surveys, WPC and TNC 1998.

[Crosswalk: Smith's "Northern Appalachian Calcareous Seep," TNC's *Carex (flava, hystericina, interior, sterilis) -Campylium stellatum* Herbaceous Alliance (?).]