Slender Water-milfoil
Myriophyllum tenellum

Description

Slender Water-milfoil is an aquatic herb with slender erect stems averaging about 1/16 inch (1-2 mm) in width that also produce horizontally creeping stems at their base, which often results in a colony or cluster of connected erect stems. The erect stems that remain submersed produce tiny alternately-arranged leaves, usually scale-like and up to about 1/16 inch (1-2 mm) in length, but they may be little more than "bumps" on the stem surface. The erect stems that grow above the water line may produce tiny flowers above each leaf. The flowers, which appear in summer, have 4 dull reddish petals that are about 1/16 inch (1-2 mm) in length. The fruit is a minute nut less than 1/16 inch (1 mm) in length. The other species of Water-milfoil in Pennsylvania have well-developed leaves with a feather-like, finely-dissected appearance, with each leaf having an elongate central axis and numerous slender segments that project outward in an ascending manner along the length of the axis.

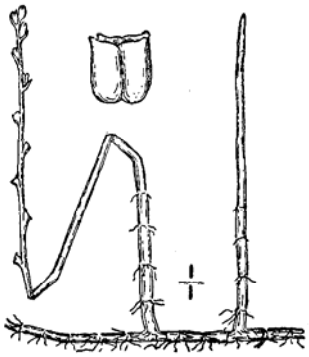


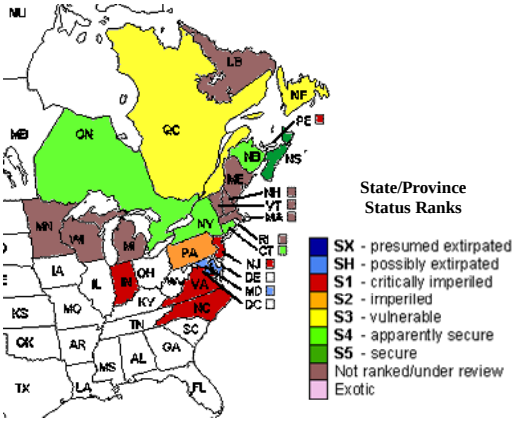
Photo source: USDA-NRCS PLANTS database

Distribution & Habitat

Slender Water-milfoil ranges from Newfoundland to Ontario and south into North Carolina and the Great Lakes states. In Pennsylvania, it represents a northerly species and has been documented historically in a few northeastern counties. The species grows in shallow water along the shorelines of lakes and ponds.

North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2010

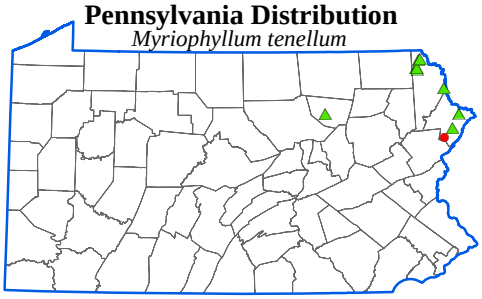


Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers Slender Water-milfoil to be a species of special concern, based on the few numbers of locations recently confirmed and the specialized habitat. It has a PA legal rarity status and a PABS suggested rarity status of Threatened.

Pennsylvania Distribution

Myriophyllum tenellum



records since 1980 ● records pre-1980

Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program Data 3-2011

Conservation Considerations

The viability of populations of Slender Water-milfoil and its habitat may be enhanced by creating buffers and protecting the natural hydrology around lakes and ponds, controlling invasive species, and avoiding indiscriminate use of aquatic herbicides.

NatureServe conservation status ranks

G5 – Globally secure; **S2** – Imperiled in Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program

References

- NatureServe. 2011. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available http://www.natureserve.org/explorer.
- Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program. 2011.
- Rhoads, A.F. and W.M. Klein, Jr. 1993. The Vascular Flora of Pennsylvania. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- Rhoads, A.F. and T.A. Block. 2007. The Plants of Pennsylvania: An Illustrated Manual. 2nd edition. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.