

Terrestrial & Palustrine Plant Communities Of Pennsylvania

By Jean Fike

Great Lakes Region dry sandplain

These are dry grasslands occurring on sand deposits along the Lake Erie shoreline. In Pennsylvania, this community type occurs only at Presque Isle. The dominant species are *Sorghastrum nutans* (Indian grass), *Panicum virgatum* (switch grass), and *Schizachyrium scoparium* (little bluestem). Other species commonly present include *Carex muhlenbergii* (a sedge), *C. tinsa* (a sedge), *Rumex acetosella*^l (sheep sorrel), and *Panicum commonsianum*^s (panic grass). There may be scattered shrubs and small trees, although they usually contribute less than 25% cover overall. The most common woody species are *Populus deltoides* (cottonwood), *Betula pendula*^l (European white birch), and *Myrica pennsylvanica* (bayberry). This community type is part of the "Great Lakes Region beach - dune - sandplain complex."

Related types: This type often grades into the "Great Lakes Region bayberry - cottonwood community", which represents a somewhat later successional stage. This type may also resemble the "Great Lakes Region palustrine sandplain." Because of the sandy soils on which both types occur, the wetter type may appear dry for much of the year. It is the difference in species composition that distinguishes the two types.

Range: Great Lakes Region.

Selected references: Bissell and Bier, 1987.

[Crosswalk: Smith's "Eastern Great Lakes Sand Plain," TNC's *Panicum virgatum* - *Schizachyrium scoparium* Herbaceous Alliance.]