

Natural Heritage Resource Highlight: Coastal Plain / Outer Piedmont Seepage Bog

Global Rarity Rank: G1- Critically Imperiled **State Rarity Rank:** S1-Critically Imperiled

Legal Status: Federal Listing-None / State Listing-None



The Coastal Plain / Outer Piedmont Seepage Bog significant natural community type is currently known from the inner Coastal Plain from central and southern Maryland to southeastern Virginia (NatureServe, 2011). The saturated shrub and herbaceous vegetation of this group occupies oligotrophic spring-heads, seepage slopes, and less frequently small, headwater stream bottoms. Sites are scattered throughout the Coastal Plain (except the maritime zone) and outer Piedmont, typically on lower or toe slopes, where groundwater is forced to the surface by impermeable clay layers. Surficial soils are usually peaty or sandy, very acidic, infertile, and covered by dense mats of *Sphagnum* mosses. Natural examples of these communities have nearly been extirpated by decades of fire exclusion, hydrologic alterations (ditching, draining, and impoundments), or outright destruction. The elimination of fire as an ecological process has allowed many former bogs to become overgrown with shrubs and trees. The most "natural" occurrences of this vegetation are now restricted to military base impact areas (Quantico Marine Base, Fort Walker, and Fort Barfoot) and dedicated natural areas that are burned frequently. Artificially maintained bog habitats are frequent in powerline clearings. The vegetation of seepage bogs is usually a mosaic of scattered trees, shrub patches, and graminoid-dominated herbaceous patches. A large number of state-rare plants and several state-rare odonates (dragonflies and damselflies) are associated with seepage bogs (Fleming, et al., 2021). As of 2025, there are 11 total extant occurrences of this globally rare community in Virginia, seven of which occur in the coastal zone counties of Accomack, Caroline, Prince George and Prince William.

Literature Cited

Fleming, G.P., K.D. Patterson, and K. Taverna. 2021. The Natural Communities of Virginia: a Classification of Ecological Community Groups and Community Types. Third approximation. Version 3.3. Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Division of Natural Heritage, Richmond, VA.
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NatureServe. 2011. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>. (Accessed: April 2, 2012)