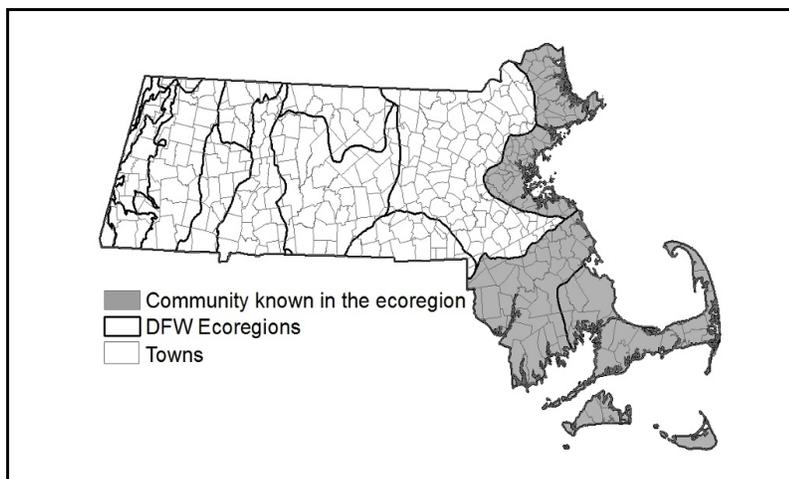


Coastal Forest/Woodland

Community Code: CT1A2A2000

State Rank: S4



Concept: Coastal Forests are often shorter than forests further inland, but taller than Maritime Forests. There is often a dense shrub layer and vines, particularly near the edges.

Environmental Setting: Coastal Forests occur in protected areas along the coast, such as behind dunes and on slopes away from the ocean, and behind Maritime Forests. They are sheltered from direct daily maritime influences (not in the daily salt spray zone), but receive wind and salt during storms. The coastal climate has more moisture and warmer winters and cooler summers than more inland areas. The heights of Coastal Forests are variable but often 10-20m (~ 30 to 60 ft); not as tall as further inland, but taller than Maritime Forests. The deciduous canopy is often closed (>75% cover) with a dense to open shrub layer, some vines in openings and along edges, and a typically scattered herbaceous layer.

Vegetation Description: The Coastal Forest is a variant of the widespread broadly defined Oak - Hemlock - White Pine Forest that includes a continuum of communities dominated by tree oaks and pines. Coastal Forests occur in the coastally moderated, moister part of the habitat spectrum and includes multiple species with primarily southern distributions, such as American holly (*Ilex opaca*), black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*), and sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*), all of which are regular associates. Tree oaks (scarlet oak (*Quercus coccinea*), black oak (*Q. velutina*), white oak (*Q. alba*), and chestnut oak (*Q. montana*)) are the dominant species of the Coastal Forest, with post oak (*Q. stellata*) important in occurrences along Buzzards Bay and on Martha's Vineyard. Red maple (*Acer rubrum*), black cherry (*Prunus serotina*), beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*), and white pine (*P. strobus*) commonly occur in low percentages, but are occasionally abundant. American holly is a regular associate in southeastern occurrences. Red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) can be scattered in the forests, and sometimes is a dominant in woodland thickets. Sweet pepper-bush (*Clethra alnifolia*) is abundant in many sites. A low-shrub heath layer dominated by low bush blueberries (*Vaccinium pallidum*, *V. angustifolium*) and black huckleberry (*Gaylussacia baccata*) is characteristic. The herbaceous layer is usually sparse, with Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*), bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*), wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*), and wild sarsaparilla (*Aralia nudicaulis*) being typical. Most occurrences of coastal forests have many vines on forest edges and in openings. Poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*), Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), grape (*Vitis* spp.), and greenbriers (*Smilax* spp.) can be locally abundant.



Coastal Forest/Woodland

Differentiating Occurrences:

Coastal Forests grade into Maritime Forests along the coast in the areas of daily salt spray and they grade into forests of the oak and oak-pine continuum on the inland side. Edges of communities on the ground may be difficult to differentiate requiring arbitrary determinations of boundaries. Small patches (<5000 ft²) of different types should be noted in descriptions, but considered as part of the variation of the prevailing community. Coastal Forest/Woodlands are within a few miles of the coast at <~60 ft elevation, not affected by salt spray on a daily basis, but receive storm winds and spray. They are predominantly deciduous forests with canopies usually at about 10-20m (~30-60 ft) and an often dense shrub layer consisting primarily of low bush blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*) and black huckleberry (*Gaylussacia baccata*). Maritime Forests/Woodlands are very near the ocean, receive regular salt spray, and have stunted canopies of mixed tree species. Oak - Hemlock - White Pine Forests and its named variants (including but not limited to) Pitch Pine - Oak Forests, White Pine - Oak Forests, and Mixed Oak Forests abut and grade into Coastal Forests. They receive much less storm spray and mature examples are taller than 20m (~60 ft). Forests dominated by pines are identified as those forest types.

Habitat Values for Associated Fauna:

No animal species are restricted to Coastal Forests. Animal are those of typical coastal oak areas such as the birds Eastern Towhees (*Pipilo erythrophthalmus*), Gray Catbirds (*Dumetella carolinensis*), Common Yellowthroats (*Geothlypis trichas*), Ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapillus*) and Black-and-white Warbler (*Mniotilta varia*). Small mammals such as meadow voles (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*), and white footed mice (*Peromyscus leucopus*), are common with gray squirrels (*Sciurus carolinensis*) abundant in mainland forests. Eastern box turtles (*Terrapene carolina*) use Coastal Forests as parts of their habitats. Moths, butterflies, and other insects of the southeastern oak and oak-pine forest occur in Coastal Forests including uncommon species. High white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) densities may have an impact on the abundance of native species, particularly woody seedlings such as oaks, as well as herbaceous plants.

Threats:

Invasive exotics, development.

Management Needs:

USNVC/NatureServe:

A4209 *Quercus velutina* - *Quercus falcata* - *Pinus rigida* Coastal Plain Forest Alliance - *Quercus velutina* - *Quercus coccinea* - *Quercus prinus* / *Kalmia latifolia* Forest [CEGL006374]; *Quercus coccinea* - *Quercus velutina* / *Sassafras albidum* / *Vaccinium pallidum* Forest [CEGL006375]; *Quercus velutina* / *Ilex opaca* Forest [CEGL006378]; in part, *Pinus strobus* - *Quercus alba* / *Ilex glabra* Forest [CEGL006382].

