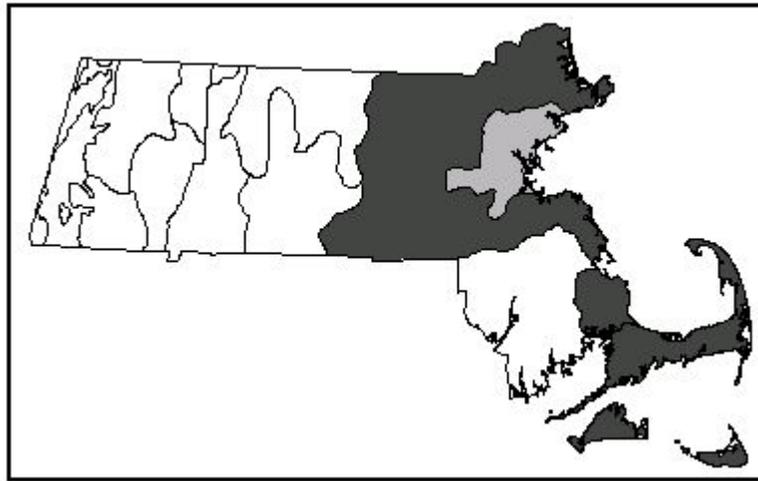


**Community Name:** COASTAL INTERDUNAL MARSH / SWALE  
**Community ELCODE:** CP2A0A1100  
**SRANK:** S1



**Concept:** Small graminoid- or shrub-dominated coastal community occurring in shallow basins (swales) between sand dunes.

**Environmental setting:** Interdunal swales are low, shallow depressions that form between sand dunes along the coast. They occur as part of a dune system, and the best examples are complexes of numerous swales. Soils generally have a thin, about 1 cm, organic layer over coarse sand. The water regime ranges from seasonally flooded to permanently inundated.

**Vegetation Description:** Interdunal swales range from unvegetated pools to graminoid-dominated to low shrub-dominated communities. The most common type is a low shrub community dominated by large cranberry (*Vaccinium macrocarpon*; often with greater than 90% cover) with lesser amounts of bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*). Typical associates include various rushes (*Juncus pelocarpus*, *J. canadensis*, etc.), spatulate-leaved and thread-leaved sundews (*Drosera intermedia* and *D. filiformis*), beak sedges (*Rhynchospora capitellata* and *R. alba*), yellow-eyed grasses (*Xyris* spp.), St. John's-worts (*Hypericum* spp.), southern bog clubmoss (*Lycopodium adpressum*), and several orchid species such as rose pogonia (*Pogonia ophioglossoides*), grass-pink (*Calopogon pulchellus*), and nodding ladies'-tresses (*Spiranthes cernua*). *Arethusa (Arethusa bulbosa)* and ragged fringed orchis (*Platanthera lacera*) are two orchid species that occur occasionally. Graminoid-dominated swales are characterized by a mixture of rushes (*Juncus* spp.), beak-sedges (*Rhynchospora* spp.) and other graminoids. Some interdunal swales have large numbers of Plymouth gentian (*Sabatia kennedyana*). Scattered pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*) and sheep laurel (*Kalmia angustifolia*) can also occur.

**Associations:** The coastal interdunal marsh/swale community includes the six interdunal swale vegetation associations that have been described for Massachusetts [Lundgren, 1998]. Those associations are: *Myrica pensylvanica-Vaccinium macrocarpon* swale; *Vaccinium macrocarpon*-graminoid swale (variants = *V. macrocarpon-Scirpus pungens-Panicum virgatum* swale; *V. macrocarpon-Rhynchospora capitellata* swale); *Juncus* spp. (*J. greenii*, *J. pelocarpus*, *J. canadensis*, *J. balticus*) swale; *Juncus* spp.-(*Cyperus*) swale; *Scirpus pungens-Juncus* swale; and *Scirpus pungens-Triglochin* brackish swale.

**Habitat values for Associated Fauna:** Interdunal swales can function as vernal pool habitat if water remains standing for 2-3 months and they lack fish; these swales provide important amphibian breeding habitat, particularly for toads, including American, Fowler's, and spadefoot toads. Interdunal swales have a high habitat value to birds and mammals for food, cover, and nesting sites.

**Associated rare plants:**

ARETHUSA BULBOSA	ARETHUSA	T
DROSERA FILIFORMIS	THREAD-LEAVED SUNDEW	- WL
SABATIA KENNEDYANA	PLYMOUTH GENTIAN	SC

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**Associated rare animals:**

SCAPHIOPUS HOLBROOKII EASTERN SPADEFOOT T

**Examples with Public Access:** Sandy Neck, Barnstable. Parker River NWR, Newbury.

**Threats:** Invasion of non-native species, especially phragmites (*Phragmites australis*) and purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*).

**Management needs:** Control the spread of phragmites and purple loosestrife.

**Synonyms**

**USNVC/TNC:** Vaccinium macrocarpon-Myrica pensylvanica dwarf-shrubland [CEGL006141]; Spartina patens seasonally flooded herbaceous vegetation [CEGL006342].

**MA [old name]:** Coastal interdunal marsh/swale [CP2A2A0000].

**ME:** Not described.

**VT:** Not described.

**NH:** Coastal interdunal marsh/swale.

**NY:** Maritime freshwater interdunal swales.

**CT:** Not described.

**RI:** Not described.

**Golet & Larson, 1974:** may fall within Compact shrub swamp (SS-3).

**Other:**

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