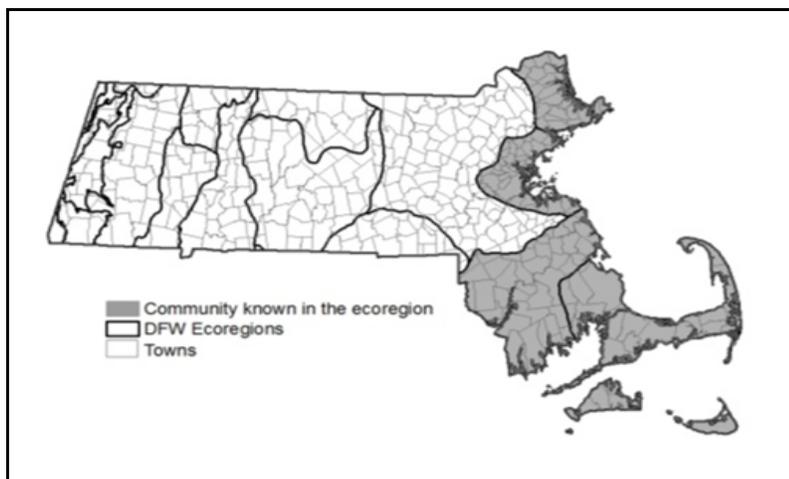


Marine Intertidal Gravel/Sand Beach Community

Community Code: CM2B000000

State Rank: S4



Concept: Invertebrates and nonvascular plants dominate the organisms of this highly stressed community in the intertidal (wave action) zone of beaches.

Environmental Setting: Marine beaches are exposed between high tides: they occur below the wrack line and above permanent water and are often interspersed with low areas that contain intertidal pools. These are high energy habitats. Marine beaches are between Maritime Beach strand communities above the high tide line and Marine subtidal communities below the low tide line.

Vegetation Description: Sparse non-vascular plants. Invertebrates are the most abundant resident group, with shorebirds among the most visible animals in the habitat.

Differentiating Occurrences: Marine Intertidal Gravel/Sand Beach are below the wrack line and submerged twice daily by tides. Any vegetation in the Marine Intertidal Gravel/Sand Beach is non-vascular. Maritime Beach Strand Communities are above the daily high tides, between the wrack line and the dunes and support scattered vascular plants. Seagrass beds tend to be Subtidal communities, occurring below the low tide line.

Habitat Values for Associated Fauna: Many shorebirds such as Sanderlings (*Calidris alba*), Least Sandpipers (*C. minutilla*), Semipalmated Sandpipers (*C. pusilla*), Semipalmated Plover (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) and Rufa Red Knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*) forage along shorelines during migrations. Part of important resting areas for shorebirds when exposed. Piping plovers (*Charadrius melodus*) nest on the beach strand and forage in the wrack line. Gulls (*Larus* spp.) are ubiquitous in all shore and shallow water environments. Tiger beetles also forage on exposed portions of the intertidal beach. Few mammals use this portion of the beach for more than passing through. Horseshoe crabs spawn in intertidal beaches.

Threats: Disturbance of foraging and resting birds by domestic animals and people, off-road vehicles, and recreational boaters.

Management Needs:

USNVC/NatureServe: Sand, non-vegetated.

