

Riverside Rock Outcrop Community

State Rank: S3 - Vulnerable



Riverside Rock Outcrop Community with sparse vegetation in cracks. Photo: Matthew R. Burne, NHESP.

Description: Only rock outcrops influenced by river processes are considered to be Riverside Rock Outcrop Communities, which nonetheless support terrestrial communities with non-wetland vegetation. The community occurs on flood and ice scoured bedrock stream banks and adjacent exposed ledges that are at or below the high water mark. The habitat is subject to flooding during much of the year. The outcrops may be low or steep on the river's edge or extending into the river channel. Mineral soil accumulates in crevices in the rocks. River spray and proximity to water may alleviate some of the harsh conditions usually encountered by plants growing in shallow soil in open areas.

Characteristic Species: Riverside Rock Outcrop Communities have scattered low upland herbaceous plants, with few woody plants due to annual ice scouring. Generally there is a mix of only a few species per site that might include harebell, big bluestem grass, prairie-dogbane, goldenrods, or various asters

Sparsely vegetated, Riverside Rock Outcrop Communities occur in crevices where soil accumulates on flood scoured bedrock outcrops along rivers.

such as New York aster. Very occasional woody shrubs might be smooth rose or running serviceberry. Non-native species that commonly occur are Canada bluegrass and purple loosestrife.



Rock outcrop beside a cobbly river, through bordering alders. Photo: B.A. Sorrie, NHESP.

Differentiating from Related Communities: Riverside Rock Outcrop Communities are open terrestrial communities often associated with Riverside Seep Communities, High-energy Riverside Meadows, and/or High-energy Riverbank Communities, all of which are wetter and support wetland vegetation. Riverside Rock Outcrop Communities are on bedrock and have the sparsest vegetation. High-energy Riverbank Communities occur on cobble and sand substrates and usually also have

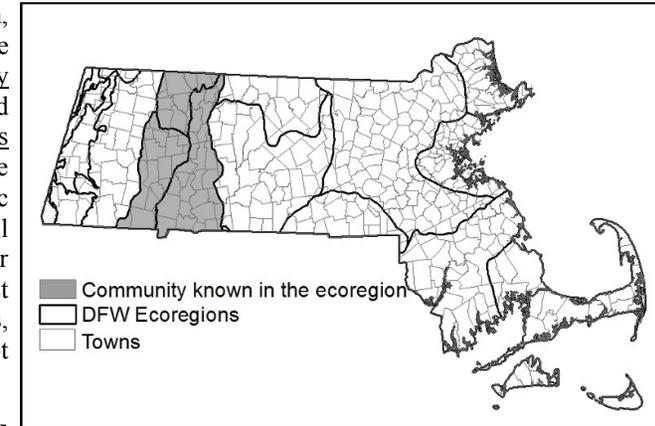
sparse, open low vegetation, but with some bare cobble and sand. High-energy Riverside Meadow and Riverside Seep Communities are wet, have fairly dense vegetation with some organic as well as mineral soil development. All occur along the shores of fast flowing, high energy rivers, and differences may not always be distinct.

Habitat for Associated

Fauna: These small, exposed communities have few, if any, animals that are restricted to them, but rather are parts of the habitat of wide ranging riverine and upland animals including shoreline foragers such as North American river otter, mink, and raccoons. Occasional bull frogs or northern water snakes would be expected. Common species of dragonflies and tiger beetles hunt over the rock areas.



Plants in cracks in bedrock in a Riverside Rock Outcrop community. Photo: Patricia C. Swain, NHESP.



Examples with Public Access: Visitation to Riverside Rock Outcrops is discouraged because of damage caused by trampling of plants.



Riverside Rock Outcrop Community with scattered plants. Photo: M.R. Burne, NHESP.

