



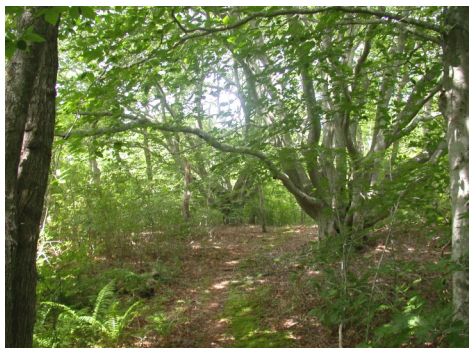
Sassafras in Coastal Forest/Woodland above sweet pepperbush. Photo: Tara Huguenin, NHESP.

Description: Coastal Forests/Woodlands occur in sheltered areas along the coast, such as behind dunes and on slopes away from the ocean, and behind Maritime Forests. They are 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. Coastal Forests/Woodlands grade into Maritime Forests towards the ocean and into a variety of oak and oak – pine forests inland away from the coast. The heights of Coastal Forests/Woodlands are variable but usually 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.

Characteristic Species: The Coastal Forest/Woodland is a variant of the widespread broadly defined Oak – Hemlock – White Pine Forest that includes a continuum of communities

Coastal Forests/Woodlands are mixed deciduous communities, often shorter than forests further inland, but taller than Maritime Forests. They may have dense shrubs and vines. This community is found in sheltered areas along the coast.

dominated by tree oaks and pines. Tree oaks (scarlet, black, white, and chestnut oak) are the dominant species of the Coastal Forest/Woodland, with post oak important in occurrences along Buzzards Bay and on Martha's Vineyard. The coastally moderated, moist habitat supports species sensitive to harsher inland conditions, such as American holly, black gum, and sassafras, all of which are regular associates. Red maple, black cherry, beech, and pitch and white pine commonly occur in low percentages, and are occasionally abundant. Sweet pepper-bush is abundant in particularly moist sites. A characteristic low-shrub layer is dominated by lowbush blueberries and black huckleberry. A typically sparse herbaceous layer includes Pennsylvania sedge, bracken fern, wintergreen, and wild sarsaparilla. Poison ivy, Virginia creeper,



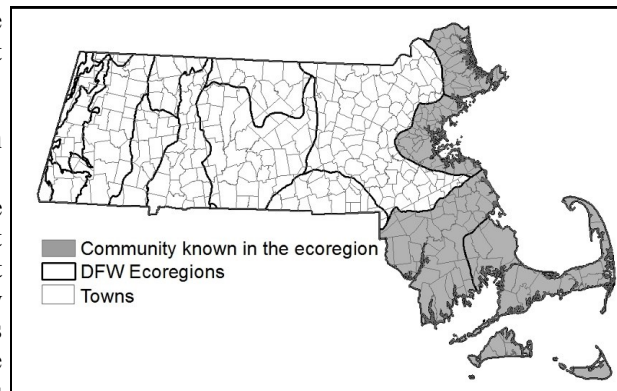
Coastal Forest/Woodland dominated by American beech. Photo: P. Swain, NHESP.

grape, and greenbriers can be locally abundant on forest edges and in openings.

Differentiating from Related Communities:

Coastal Forest/Woodlands are within a few miles of the coast at <~60 ft. elevation and are 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.). 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/Woodlands. 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.

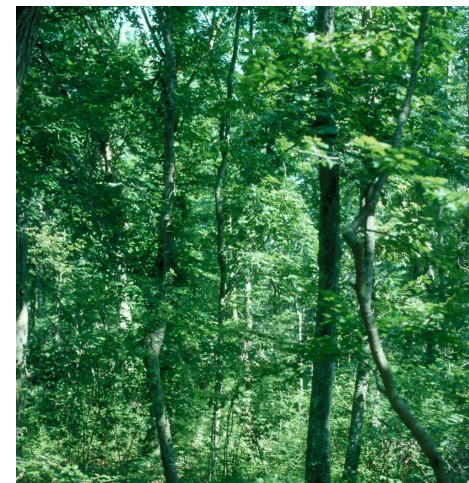
Habitat for Associated Fauna: No animal species are restricted to Coastal Forests/Woodlands. Animal are those of oak and oak-pine forests including: Rufous-sided Towhees, Gray Catbirds, Common Yellowthroats, Ovenbird, and Black-and-white Warbler; small mammals such as meadow voles, white footed mice, and gray squirrels (in mainland forests); Eastern box turtles; and moths, butterflies, and other insects including uncommon species. High white-tailed deer densities may have an impact on the abundance of



native species, particularly woody seedlings such as oaks, as well as herbaceous plants.

Examples with Public Access:

William Forward WMA, Rowley; Acushnet WMA, Freetown; Nasketucket Bay SR, Mattapoisett; Moraine Trail, Falmouth; Provincetown Beech Forest, Provincetown; Manuel F Correllus SF, West Tisbury.



Oak and black gum above hay-scented fern in a Coastal Forest/Woodland. Photo: P. Swain, NHESP.

