



**DIVISION OF  
FISHERIES & WILDLIFE**

1 Rabbit Hill Road | Westborough, MA 01581  
**MASS.GOV/MASSWILDLIFE**

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**NHESP Priority Types of Natural Communities**

<b>Terrestrial</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Palustrine</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Black Oak - Scarlet Oak Woodland	S3S4	Acidic Graminoid Fen	S3
Calcareous Rock Cliff Community	S3	Acidic Shrub Fen	S3
Calcareous Rocky Summit/Rock Outcrop Community	S2	Alluvial Atlantic White Cedar Swamp	S2
Circumneutral Rock Cliff Community	S3	Alluvial Hardwood Flat Community	S3
Circumneutral Rocky Summit/Rock Outcrop Community	S2S3	Alluvial Red Maple Swamp	S3
Hickory - Hop Hornbeam Forest/Woodland	S2	Atlantic White Cedar Bog	S2
High Elevation Spruce - Fir Forest/Woodland	S1	Black Gum - Pin Oak - Swamp White Oak Perched Swamp	S1
Maritime Beach Strand Community	S3	Calcareous Basin Fen	S1
Maritime Dune Community	S3	Calcareous Pondshore/Lakeshore Community	S2
Maritime Erosional Cliff Community	S2	Calcareous Seepage Marsh	S2
Maritime Forest/Woodland	S2	Calcareous Sloping Fen	S2
Maritime Juniper Woodland/Shrubland	S1	Coastal Atlantic White Cedar Swamp	S2
Maritime Pitch Pine Woodland on Dunes	S1	Coastal Plain Pondshore Community	S3
Maritime Rock Cliff Community	S2	Coastal Plain Pondshore Community - Inland Variant	S1
Maritime Shrubland	S3	Cobble Bar Forest	S2
Oak - Tulip Tree Forest	S1	High-energy Riverbank Community	S3
Open Oak Forest/Woodland	S3	High-energy Rivershore Meadow	S2
Open Talus/Coarse Boulder Community	S2	High-terrace Floodplain Forest	S2
Pitch Pine - Scrub Oak Community	S2	Inland Atlantic White Cedar Swamp	S2
Rich, Mesic Forest	S3	Interdunal Marsh/Swale	S2
Ridgetop Heathland	S2	Kettlehole Level Bog	S2
Ridgetop Pitch Pine - Scrub Oak Community	S2	Kettlehole Wet Meadow	S3
Riverside Rock Outcrop Community	S3	Level Bog	S3
Sandplain Grassland	S1	Major-river Floodplain Forest	S2
Sandplain Heathland	S1	Northern Atlantic White Cedar Swamp	S1
Sandplain Heathland - Inland Variant	S2	Red Maple - Black Ash - Bur Oak Swamp	S2
Scrub Oak Shrubland	S2	Red Maple - Black Ash - Tamarack Calcareous Seepage Swamp	S2
Sugar Maple - Oak - Hickory Forest	S3	Red Maple - Black Ash Swamp	S2
Yellow Oak Dry Calcareous Forest	S1	Red Maple - Black Gum Swamp	S2
		Red Spruce Swamp	S3
<b>Estuarine</b>	<b>Rank</b>	Rich Conifer Swamp	S3
Brackish Tidal Marsh	S2	Riverside Seep Community	S2
Coastal Salt Pond Community	S2	Sea-level Fen	S1
Fresh/Brackish Tidal Shrubland	S1	Small-river Floodplain Forest	S2
Fresh/Brackish Tidal Swamp	S1	Spruce - Tamarack Bog	S2
Freshwater Tidal Marsh	S1	Transitional Floodplain Forest	S2
Salt Marsh	S3		
Seagrass Community	S3		

**Updated 2016**

## Natural Community Ranks

Each type of natural community is assigned an “element rank”, based on the species element ranking developed for the Natural Heritage system by The Nature Conservancy and maintained by NatureServe. The state rank (S) reflects the rarity and threat within Massachusetts. Every state assigns its own “S” rank based on the rarity and threat within that state, with regard to regional conditions. Global ranks for communities are not included because Massachusetts’ classification system is different from the US National Vegetation Classification system.

### State Ranks (Definitions derived from NatureServe, accessed December 2013)

<http://www.natureserve.org/explorer/ranking.htm>

**S1 = Critically Imperiled in Massachusetts** —Critically imperiled in the state because of extreme rarity (often 5 or fewer occurrences) or because of some factor(s) such as very few remaining acres or miles of stream or other factors making it especially vulnerable to extirpation from the state.

**S2 = Imperiled in Massachusetts** —Imperiled in the state because of rarity (typically 6 -20 occurrences), very restricted range, few remaining acres, or miles of stream or other factors making it very vulnerable to extirpation from the state.

**S3 = Vulnerable in Massachusetts**—Vulnerable due to a restricted range, relatively few occurrences (often 80 or fewer), limited acreage, or miles of stream, recent and widespread declines, or other factors making it vulnerable to extirpation from the state.

**S4 = Apparently Secure in Massachusetts** —Uncommon but not rare; some cause for long-term concern due to declines or other factors.

**S5 = Secure in Massachusetts** —Common, widespread, and abundant in the state.

**S#S# = Range Rank**—A numeric range rank (e.g., S2S3) is used to indicate the range of uncertainty in the status of a species or community.