

**V.A.5.N.k.29. SPARTINA PATENS SEASONALLY FLOODED HERBACEOUS ALLIANCE**

Saltmeadow Cordgrass Seasonally Flooded Herbaceous Alliance

Physiognomic Class       Herbaceous Vegetation (V.)  
Physiognomic Subclass   Perennial graminoid vegetation (grassland) (V.A.)  
Physiognomic Group       Temperate or sub-polar grassland (V.A.5.)  
Physiognomic Subgroup   Natural/Semi-natural (V.A.5.N.)  
Formation                 Seasonally flooded temperate or subpolar grassland (V.A.5.N.k.)

**Alliance                   SPARTINA PATENS SEASONALLY FLOODED HERBACEOUS ALLIANCE (V.A.5.N.k.29)**

Spartina patens - Eleocharis parvula Herbaceous Vegetation

Saltmeadow Cordgrass - Dwarf Spikerush Herbaceous Vegetation

*Brackish Interdunal Swale*

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CLASSIFICATION CONFIDENCE LEVEL:       2

USFS WETLAND SYSTEM: PALUSTRINE

RANGE:

***Fire Island National Seashore***

This brackish interdunal swale association occurs in low areas behind the foredune. It is apparently restricted to the Wilderness area of Fire Island.

***Globally***

This association occurs in maritime dunes of the North Atlantic Coast. It is known from Long Island, New York and from Massachusetts.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING:

***Fire Island National Seashore***

This community occurs in brackish, interdunal swales behind primary and secondary dunes. Standing, oligohaline (salinity = 2 ppt) water pools to approximately 4 cm. The substrate is characterized by 10-55 cm of peat over sand.

***Globally***

This brackish, interdunal swale community of the northeastern coast occurs in low areas behind primary or secondary sand dunes. The substrate is sand with little or no organic accumulation. The water source for this wetland community is variable, including seasonally high groundwater table and sporadic tidal overwash, resulting in widely variable salinity levels.

MOST ABUNDANT SPECIES:

***Fire Island National Seashore***

<u>Stratum</u>	<u>Species</u>
Herbaceous	<i>Scirpus pungens, Spartina patens, Eleocharis parvula</i>

***Globally***

<u>Stratum</u>	<u>Species</u>
Herbaceous	<i>Spartina patens</i>

CHARACTERISTIC SPECIES:

***Fire Island National Seashore***

*Eleocharis parvula, Scirpus pungens, Spartina patens*

***Globally***

*Scirpus pungens, Spartina patens, Cyperus polystachyos, Juncus articulatus*

**USGS-NPS Vegetation Mapping Program**  
**Fire Island National Seashore**

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VEGETATION DESCRIPTION:

**Fire Island National Seashore**

This community is generally dominated by *Scirpus pungens*, *Eleocharis parvula*, or *Spartina patens*. Associated species include *Pluchea odorata*, *Scirpus robustus*, *Phragmites australis*, *Distichlis spicata*, *Scirpus americana*, and *Cyperus polystachyos*, all of which occur sporadically and with low percent cover. There is often a sparse shrub layer comprised of *Baccharis halimifolia* that forms hummocks within the standing pools of water. In addition to the above species, Dowhan and Rozsa (1989) list *Iris prismatica* and *Potentilla anseria* as components of brackish marshes on Fire Island.

**Globally**

The dominant species is generally *Spartina patens*, with other characteristic species including *Eleocharis parvula*, *Schoenoplectus pungens* (= *Scirpus pungens*), *Cyperus polystachyos*, and *Juncus articulatus*. Other associates may be present, depending on salinity and hydrology, including *Leptochloa fusca* ssp. *fascicularis* (= *Diplachne maritima*), *Schoenoplectus maritimus* (= *Scirpus maritimus*), *Juncus ambiguus* (= *Juncus bufonius* var. *halophila*), *Juncus scirpoides*, *Ptilimnium capillaceum*, *Rumex maritimus*, *Symphytotrichum subulatum* (= *Aster subulatus*), *Chenopodium rubrum*, *Pluchea odorata*, *Hibiscus moscheutos* ssp. *moscheutos* (= *Hibiscus palustris*), *Polygonum ramosissimum*, and *Iva frutescens*.

COMMENTS:

**Fire Island National Seashore**

**Globally**

Hunt (1997b) equates this type with CEGL004117, *Fimbristylis (castanea, caroliniana) – Schoenoplectus pungens* Herbaceous Vegetation. However, this association is characterized by a number of species of more southern affinity. Further classification work is required to fully describe and rectify these two associations.

**Synonymy:** Brackish interdunal swale (NY)

**States/Provinces:** CT?:SP, DE?:SP, MA?:SP, MD?:SP, NJ?:SP, NY:S?, RI?:SP, VA:S?

OTHER NOTEWORTHY SPECIES:

CONSERVATION RANK: G?

DATABASE CODE: CEGL006342

MAP UNITS: FIIS plots 15, 49, 51, 48

REFERENCES:

Dowhan and Rozsa 1989

Hunt 1997b