

V.A.5.N.L. SEMIPERMANENTLY FLOODED TEMPERATE OR SUBPOLAR GRASSLAND

V.A.5.N.L.4. PHRAGMITES AUSTRALIS SEMIPERMANENTLY FLOODED HERBACEOUS ALLIANCE

Common Reed Semipermanently Flooded Herbaceous Alliance

Alliance Identifier: A.1431

***Phragmites australis* Western North America Temperate Semi-natural Herbaceous Vegetation**

Common Reed Western North America Temperate Semi-natural Herbaceous Vegetation

Western Reed Marsh

ELEMENT CONCEPT

GLOBAL SUMMARY: This reed marsh type is found across the west-temperate regions of the United States and Canada. Stands occur in semipermanently flooded marshes, ditches, impoundments, etc. that have often been disturbed by human activity. The vegetation is often variable, as *Phragmites australis* will often invade into existing natural or semi-natural communities present on the site. Once firmly established, this community is usually strongly dominated by *Phragmites australis*, with few or no other vascular plants present. In Colorado, this reed marsh often occurs in small wet patches in seeps and backwater areas of large floodplains, around the fringes of irrigation ponds, ditches, and along railroad embankments that have poor drainage. Stands have a dense, 1- to 1.5-m tall herbaceous layer dominated by the perennial graminoid *Phragmites australis*. Minor cover of associates such as *Agrostis stolonifera*, *Carex* spp., *Conyza canadensis*, *Glycyrrhiza lepidota*, *Iva axillaris*, *Mentha arvensis*, *Schoenoplectus acutus*, and *Typha latifolia* may be present.

ENVIRONMENTAL DESCRIPTION

USFWS WETLAND SYSTEM: PALUSTRINE

Ouray National Wildlife Refuge Environment: One patch of *Phragmites australis* Herbaceous Vegetation occurs along the edge of a saturated drainage and the other along the edge of a dike. Both sites have saturated clay soils, but neither site appears to be inundated at any time. The site near the entryway has a seleniferous odor, typical of this large drainage. Both appear to be individual clones that are roughly circular in shape.

Global Environment: This association is widespread in the western U.S. and Canada. Elevation ranges from 640-1980 m. Stands occur in temporarily to semipermanently flooded marshes, ditches, impoundments, pond and lake margins, swales, and wet meadows that often have been disturbed by human activity. Sites are usually flooded during the growing season, but the soil surface may dry out in late summer. Soils are often fine-textured silts and clays. In Colorado and Utah, this reed marsh often occurs in small wet patches in seeps and backwater areas of large floodplains, around the fringes of irrigation ponds, ditches, and along railroad embankments that have poor drainage.

VEGETATION DESCRIPTION

Ouray National Wildlife Refuge Vegetation: Clones of *Phragmites australis* are dense, e. g., approximately 90% foliar cover, and common reed provides nearly 80% of the foliar cover in a stand or patch. Common reed is a tall grass, usually between 3-4 m in height, and the shade produced tends to limit understory species. Associated species are typically found growing in and around the edge of common reed patches; these species include *Typha latifolia*, *Schoenoplectus acutus*, *Iva axillaris*, *Conyza canadensis*, and *Lepidium latifolium*.

Global Vegetation: The vegetation is often variable, as *Phragmites australis* will often invade into existing natural or semi-natural communities present on the site. Once firmly established, this community is usually strongly dominated by *Phragmites australis*, with few or no other vascular plants present. Stands have a dense, 1- to 3-m tall herbaceous layer dominated by the perennial graminoid *Phragmites australis* usually with over 80% cover. Associates include *Agrostis stolonifera*, *Carex* spp., *Conyza canadensis*, *Glycyrrhiza lepidota*, *Iva axillaris*, *Mentha arvensis*, *Schoenoplectus acutus* (= *Scirpus acutus*), and *Typha latifolia*. Introduced species such as *Lepidium latifolium* and *Cirsium arvense* may be present and compete well against *Phragmites australis* in disturbed sites.

Ouray National Wildlife Refuge Vegetation Mapping Project

Dynamics: *Phragmites australis* generally requires seasonal flooding in the spring with water table fluctuating from 0.6 m above to 0.6 m below the surface (Johnston 1987). This rhizomatous species can out compete all but the most aggressive weedy species. With heavy disturbance, however, introduced species such as *Cirsium arvense* or *Lepidium latifolium* may invade this plant association (Hansen et al. 1995, Von Loh 2000).

MOST ABUNDANT SPECIES

Ouray National Wildlife Refuge

Stratum	Species
HERBACEOUS	<i>Phragmites australis</i> , <i>Typha latifolia</i> , <i>Schoenoplectus acutus</i> , <i>Lepidium latifolium</i>

Global

Stratum	Species
GRAMINOID	<i>Phragmites australis</i>

CHARACTERISTIC SPECIES

Ouray National Wildlife Refuge

Species
Phragmites australis, *Typha latifolia*, *Schoenoplectus acutus*, *Lepidium latifolium*

Global

Species
Phragmites australis

OTHER NOTEWORTHY SPECIES

Ouray National Wildlife Refuge

Stratum	Species
N/A	

Global

Stratum	Species
N/A	

GLOBAL SIMILAR ASSOCIATIONS:

Phragmites australis Eastern North America Temperate Semi-natural Herbaceous Vegetation (CEGL004141)

SYNONYMY:

Phragmites australis Wetland (Baker 1984a) =
Phragmites australis Habitat Type (Hall and Hansen 1997) =
Phragmites australis Habitat Type (Hansen et al. 1995) =
Phragmites communis / *Carex lacustris* Plant Association (Johnston 1987) =
Phragmites australis Herbaceous Vegetation (Kittel et al. 1999) =

CLASSIFICATION COMMENTS

Ouray National Wildlife Refuge: N/A

Global Comments: This vegetation has variable hydrology and is often treated as part of other marshes and meadows. The geographic distribution of the type is arbitrarily limited to Bailey's Dry and Humid Temperate Domain in western North America (Bailey 1997, 1998). Compare with *Phragmites australis* Eastern North America Temperate Semi-natural Herbaceous Vegetation (CEGL004141). The two types need to be better distinguished, both conceptually and nomenclaturally.

ELEMENT DISTRIBUTION

Ouray National Wildlife Refuge Range: Only two large patches of *Phragmites australis* Herbaceous Vegetation were observed in the Refuge, one in the large drainage near the entryway and the other in Wyasket Bottom. *Phragmites australis* is observed occasionally in the Refuge, intermixed with other emergent plant species, or growing along dikes and levees.

Ouray National Wildlife Refuge Vegetation Mapping Project

Global Range: This reed marsh type is found across the west-temperate regions of the United States and Canada, ranging from western North Dakota and Saskatchewan to Oregon, south to California and Texas. Its distribution is somewhat incomplete as not all states have listed semi-natural types in their state.

Nations: CA US

States/Provinces: CA CO ID MT ND NV OK OR SK TX? UT WY

TNC Ecoregions: 10:C, 11:C, 17:C, 19:C, 26:C, 27:C, 28:?, 33:?, 35:C, 48:C, 6:C

USFS Ecoregions: 212Ja:PPP, 251Aa:CCC, 322A:CC, 331C:CC, 331D:CC, 331G:CC, 331I:CC, 341A:CC, 341C:CC, 341E:CC, 342B:CC, 342C:CC, 342D:CC, 342E:CC, 342F:CC, 342G:CC, 342I:C?, M331D:CC, M331H:CC, M332A:CC, M332D:CC, M332E:CC, M332F:CC, M333B:CC, M333D:CC, M341A:CC

Federal Lands: USFWS (Ouray)

ELEMENT SOURCES

Identifier: CEGL001475 **Confidence:** 1 **Conservation Rank:** G5

REFERENCES: Bailey 1997, Bailey 1998, Baker 1982a, Baker 1984a, Hall and Hansen 1997, Hansen et al. 1991, Hansen et al. 1995, Johnston 1987, Kittel et al. 1995, Kittel et al. 1999, Von Loh 2000.