



Coastal Live Oak-Hackberry Forest

Rarity Rank: S1S2/G2

Synonyms: Cheniere, Maritime Forest, Chenier Maritime Forest

Ecological Systems: CES203.466 West Gulf Coastal Plain Chenier and Upper Texas Coastal Fringe Forest and Woodland



General Description:

- Coastal Live Oak-Hackberry Forest or Cheniere (French for "place of oaks") formed on abandoned beach ridges primarily in southwest Louisiana
- These ancient beaches were stranded via deltaic sedimentation by the constantly shifting Mississippi River
- Composed primarily of fine sandy loams with sand and shell layers or deposits, these ridges are mostly 4 to 5 feet above sea level
- Soils of medium fertility; rapid permeability
- Serve as important storm barriers limiting saltwater intrusion into marshes. Typically, marshes north of chenieres are fresher than those gulfward.
- Functions as important wildlife habitat and serves as vital resting habitat for trans-gulf-migrating birds

Plant Community Associates

Common overstory tree species include:

Quercus virginiana (live oak),
Gleditsia triacanthos (honeylocust),
Zanthoxylum clava-herculis (toothache tree),
Salix nigra (black willow)

Celtis laevigata (hackberry or sugarberry),
Ulmus americana (American elm),
Carya illinoensis (sweet pecan),

Common midstory & understory species include:

Crataegus viridis (green hawthorn),
Sabal minor (palmetto),
Sideroxylon lanuginosum (chittim wood),
Cephalanthus occidentalis (buttonbush),

Diospyros virginiana (persimmon),
Ilex decidua (deciduous holly),
Morella cerifera (wax myrtle),
Ilex vomitoria (yaupon),

Common herbaceous layer species include:

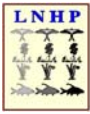
Opuntia spp. (prickly pear cactus),
Ampelopsis arborea (peppervine),
Toxicodendron radicans (poison ivy),
Parthenocissus quinquefolia (Virginia creeper)

Oplismenus hirtellus (basket grass),
Vitis spp. (wild grape),
Campsis radicans (trumpet creeper),

Common epiphytes include:

Tillandsia usneoides (Spanish moss),
Polypodium polypodioides (resurrection fern)

Phoradendron tomentosum (mistle-toe),



Natural Communities of Louisiana



Federally-listed plant & animal species:

None

Range:

Gulf Coast Prairies and Marshes ecoregion in the southwest portions of Louisiana.

Threats & Management Considerations:

Louisiana’s coastal chenier forests occur in the Chenier Plain from Iberia Parish westward across Vermilion and Cameron parishes. Of the original 100,000 to 500,000 acres in Louisiana, only 2,000 to 10,000 acres remain, 2-10 % of presettlement extent. Since this forest type is found only on remnant beach ridges which are higher and drier than the surrounding marshes, they were the first areas to be cleared and developed. The majority of these remnant forests are altered and fragmented, and threats continue from residential development, roads and utility construction, invasive and exotic species introduction, and overgrazing which damages understory vegetation and inhibits natural stand regeneration.



Use of appropriate management activities and developing a compatible management plan prevents destruction or degradation of this habitat type and promotes long-term maintenance of healthy coastal live oak-hackberry forests. Such management strategies should include:

- Preventing conversion of existing natural forests to other land uses
- Prohibiting livestock grazing
- Surveying for and removal of any invasive plant species (exotics or woody) with use of spot herbicides or mechanical means



Magnolia Warbler (*Dendroica magnolia*) is one of the migratory bird species that utilize coastal live oak-hackberry forests.