

PLANT REGIONS OF LOUISIANA

A plant region is a broad generalization of the primary habitat type in an area. Each plant region is divided into many types of plant communities. These communities are shaped by geographically distinct environmental conditions and natural histories, which dictate the types of plants and animals found in each community.



2. Longleaf Pine Savannas and Woodlands

Prominent Physical Features: Occurs on infertile soils of both poorly-drained flatwoods and dry hills. The combination of infertile soils and frequent lightning-strike fires, occurring every one to three years, historically maintained open stands of longleaf pine with diverse prairie-like understories.

Prominent Vegetation: Longleaf pine with a rich herbaceous understory supporting little bluestem, slender bluestem, western bracken fern and many wildflowers.



1. Coastal Marshes and Barrier Islands

Prominent Physical Features: Includes freshwater, intermediate, brackish, and salt marshes, barrier islands, and fringing coastal forests. Due to a number of human activities, the Coastal Marshes and Barrier Islands plant region has suffered significant losses.

Prominent Vegetation: Grasses (cordgrasses and maidencane), sedges and rushes in the marshes. Forested coastal habitats support live oak, sugarberry, red bay, toothache tree and many other species.



3. Shortleaf Pine-Oak-Hickory Woodlands

Prominent Physical Features: Occurs on dry hills and consists of mixed species stands with dry-sited hardwoods mixed with shortleaf pine. Canopy cover varies from open woodland with a grassy understory to more densely wooded stands. The community is maintained with beneficial forest fires every five to 15 years.

Prominent Vegetation: Shortleaf pine, post oak, southern red oak, blackjack oak, hickories and blackgum.



4. Hardwood-Pine Flatwoods

Prominent Physical Features: Occupies older flat to gently undulating surfaces, slightly up gradient from bottomland hardwoods and is not directly influenced by flooding of nearby rivers and streams. Soils are typically poorly drained silt loams to clays. Several inches of standing water in the winter can cause soils to be saturated into early spring.

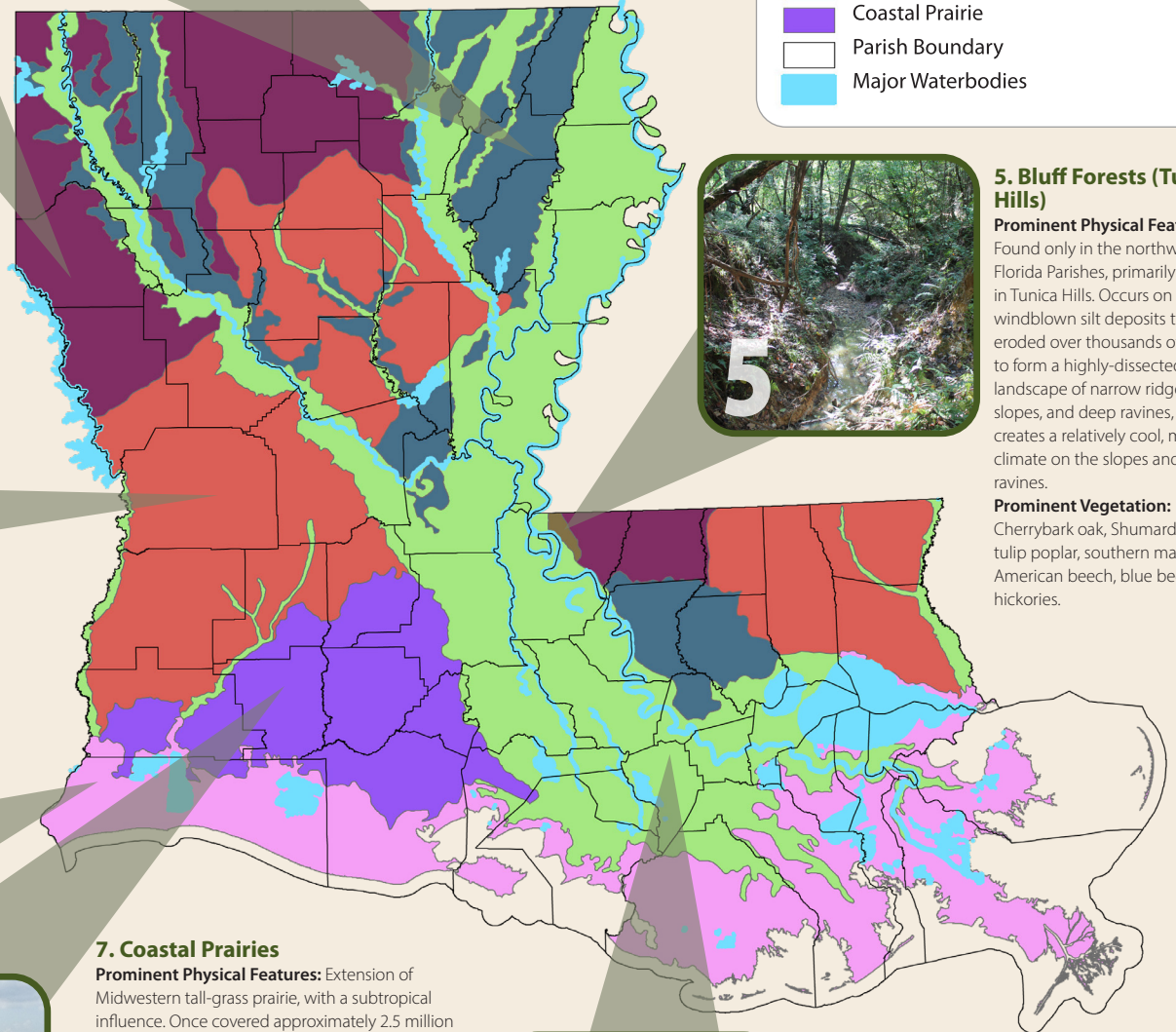
Prominent Vegetation: Oaks, elms, maples, loblolly pine, spruce pine (southeastern LA only), sweet gum and sugarberry.



5. Bluff Forests (Tunica Hills)

Prominent Physical Features: Found only in the northwestern Florida Parishes, primarily in Tunica Hills. Occurs on windblown silt deposits that eroded over thousands of years to form a highly-dissected landscape of narrow ridges, steep slopes, and deep ravines, which creates a relatively cool, moist climate on the slopes and in the ravines.

Prominent Vegetation: Cherrybark oak, Shumard oak, tulip poplar, southern magnolia, American beech, blue beech and hickories.



Plant Regions of Louisiana

- Coastal Marshes and Barrier Islands
- Longleaf Pine Savannas and Woodlands
- Shortleaf Pine-Oak-Hickory Woodlands
- Hardwood-Pine Flatwoods
- Bluff Forests (Tunica Hills)
- Bottomland Hardwood Forests and Swamps
- Coastal Prairie
- Parish Boundary
- Major Waterbodies



7. Coastal Prairies

Prominent Physical Features: Extension of Midwestern tall-grass prairie, with a subtropical influence. Once covered approximately 2.5 million acres in Louisiana. Modern agriculture has reduced Louisiana's coastal prairie to less than 1% of its former extent. Today, coastal prairie is limited to small remnants on grazing land, along railroads and a few small patches in urban areas. Fire, along with harsh soil conditions, restrict woody species to forests along streams dissecting the plant region.

Prominent Vegetation: A diverse mix of lush grasses (little bluestem, big bluestem, eastern gamma grass, switchgrass, and Indian grass), sedges, rushes, and many wildflowers.



6. Bottomland Hardwood Forests and Swamps

Prominent Physical Features: Forested wetlands that occupy broad floodplains and depressions bordering large river systems. The soil, hydrology and plant community vary based on river influence and landscape position. Floodplain soils are fertile and desired for agriculture, so most of the original forests have been converted to agriculture. Flood control efforts have also degraded the forests of this plant region.

Prominent Vegetation: Oaks, cottonwood, sycamores, elms, maples and ashes in bottomland hardwood forests. Bald cypress, water tupelo and swamp tupelo occur in the swamps.