



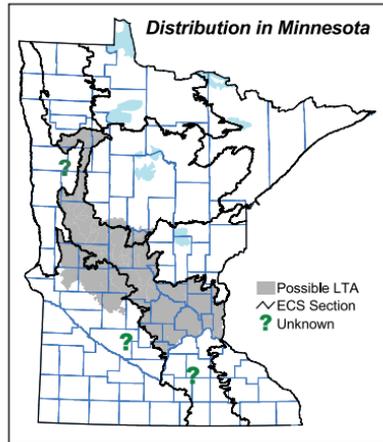
Southern Wet Aspen Forest

Wet to wet mesic forests on slightly raised “islands” in large open wet meadows and in transition zones between wet meadows and adjacent forested uplands. Present mostly on level to gently rolling outwash plains.

Vegetation Structure & Composition

Description is based on field observations.

- Ground-layer** cover is patchy to continuous (25–100%) and composed of a mixture of wet prairie, wet forest and upland forest species. Common species include mountain rice grass (*Oryzopsis asperifolia*), bluejoint (*Calamagrostis canadensis*), false melic grass (*Schizachne purpurascens*), long-stalked sedge (*Carex pedunculata*), large-leaved aster (*Aster macrophyllus*), wild sarsaparilla (*Aralia nudicaulis*), dwarf raspberry (*Rubus pubescens*), common strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*), Canada mayflower (*Maianthemum canadense*), Peck’s sedge (*Carex peckii*), and field horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*). In wetter parts of the community, lake sedge (*Carex lacustris*), tussock sedge (*C. stricta*), Hayden’s sedge (*C. haydenii*), swamp thistle (*Cirsium muticum*), spotted water hemlock (*Cicuta maculata*), and bottle gentian (*Gentiana andrewsii*) are common.
- Shrub layer** cover is patchy to interrupted (25–75%). Common species include downy arrowwood (*Viburnum rafinesquianum*), Saskatoon juneberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*), chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*), gray dogwood (*Cornus racemosa*), prickly rose (*Rosa acicularis*), wild honeysuckle (*Lonicera dioica*), highbush cranberry (*Viburnum trilobum*), pussy willow (*Salix discolor*), beaked hazelnut (*Corylus cornuta*), red raspberry (*Rubus idaeus*), poison ivy (*Toxicodendron rydbergii*), and nannyberry (*Viburnum lentago*).
- Subcanopy** cover is patchy to interrupted (25–75%). The most common species are quaking aspen, bur oak, American elm, and black ash.
- Canopy** cover is mostly interrupted to continuous (50–100%). The most common species are quaking aspen, black ash, and bur oak.



Landscape Setting & Soils

WFs55 occurs on level to gently rolling outwash plains. Parent material is deep, circumneutral, sandy glacial outwash. Soil texture is sandy-loam over loose sand. The top 14in (35cm) are very dark to dark. Below this, soils are grayish to light brownish gray. Soils are moderately well drained to poorly drained with moderate to high organic matter. The water table is usually not high enough to affect the ground-layer composition of the community or to cause peat accumulation.

Natural History

Wet aspen forests develop in the absence of fire on small, slightly raised “islands” in areas of open wet prairie, wet meadow, or shrub swamp. They may also occur in transition areas between wet prairies and upland forests and around the edges of wet meadows. Soil moisture can vary from site to site. In transition areas between uplands and lowlands and also around the edges of raised islands, where broad-leaved sedges are dominant, soils are wet. In the interior of these islands, species with affinity for mesic and dry-mesic soils are common.

Similar Native Plant Community Classes

• WFs57 Southern Wet Ash Swamp

The range of WFs57 overlaps with WFs55 in southern and western Minnesota. WFs57 is



almost always dominated by black ash and has little if any quaking aspen, while WFs55 is dominated by quaking aspen with only scattered black ash. WFs57 is generally wetter than WFs55 and is more likely to have shallow open pools and wetland plants such as marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*), fowl manna grass (*Glyceria striata*), and brome-like sedge (*Carex bromoides*) in the ground layer. WFs57 is dependent on groundwater seepage and is often present at the bases of steep slopes in strongly rolling to steeply dissected terrain. WFs55 is more likely to have species characteristic of dry-mesic to mesic woodlands and wet meadows such as gray dogwood, false melic grass, and Hayden's sedge (*Carex haydenii*).

- **WFw54 Northwestern Wet Aspen Forest**

WFw54 is very similar to WFs55 but occurs only in the extreme northwestern part of the state on lacustrine deposits in the Glacial Lake Agassiz plain. WFw54 is more likely to have occasional white spruce or tamarack in the canopy or understory, while WFs55 is more likely to have bur oak.

Native Plant Community Types in Class

- **WFs55a Lowland Aspen Forest**

WFs55a is the only plant community type recognized in this class. Further sampling and analysis is needed to better describe the community class and may result in alteration of the concept of the community.



Ottertail County, MN

photo by T.J. Whitfield MN DNR