

Texas Conservation Action Plan 2011: Habitat Types and Descriptions

Note: Table is formatted 8-1/2" x 11", landscape orientation

HABITAT TYPES	DEFINITIONS
NATURAL AND SEMI-NATURAL TYPES	These broad habitat types will assist with “roll-up” reporting of conservation actions across statewide, multi-state, regional and national systems, most of which use different finer-scale habitat classifications
Barren/Sparse Vegetation <i>See also Coastal</i>	Desert playa, badlands, volcanic ash beds, talus slopes, cliff faces, rocky outcrops, <i>inland dunes</i> <i>Note: Playas are shallow, mostly ephemeral wetlands that may function as grassland habitat when dry, according to workshop biologists; if more often wet than dry, or if wetland vegetation or soil characteristics persist or are important to the ecological function, then habitat should be captured in wetland categories.</i>
Desert Scrub	Cool desert scrub, cool desert steppe, warm desert scrub, warm desert steppe
Grassland	Temperate grasslands, prairie, montane, meadow
Shrubland	Temperate chaparral, shrubland and shrub steppe; successional herbaceous/shrubland
Savanna/Open Woodland	Open to broadly open tree canopy; grass dominated understory; deciduous, evergreen or mixed
Woodland	Variable, non-closed canopy; typically non-grass dominated understory; deciduous, evergreen or mixed
Forest <i>See also Riparian and Wetlands</i>	Closed canopy; deciduous, evergreen, and mixed Excludes riparian, forested wetland and bottomland hardwoods - see 1) <i>Freshwater Wetland</i> and/or 2) <i>Riparian</i> <i>Note: Riparian, forested wetland and bottomland hardwood habitat types are recognized as distinctly different from surrounding lands because of unique soil and vegetation characteristics <u>strongly influenced</u> by water and the influence those types have on the health of aquatic systems. They are separated here to emphasize that difference and function.</i>
Riparian	<u>River- or creek-dependent</u> habitats which rely on periodic flooding/flushing, sub-irrigated substrates, and other influences of the ephemeral or perennial rivers/creeks to which they are adjacent: floodplains, wet woodlands, gallery riverine forests, oxbows; swamps, vegetated islands
Riverine	Perennial or ephemeral river, stream, creek headwater and <i>in-stream</i> habitats (e.g. riffle, glide, pool, plunge; may include substrate descriptions such as mud, silt, gravel, cobble, bedrock, woody/vegetation inputs, etc.)
Lacustrine <i>See also Freshwater Wetland, Saltwater Wetland, or Cultural Aquatic</i>	Freshwater and saline/salt lake environments – natural and manmade ponds, lakes, reservoirs – which are <u>managed primarily for natural resources conservation</u> , but may also have contact recreation and/or aesthetic objectives; typically these sites have deepwater and shallow-water habitats. <i>Note: these are different from "cultural aquatic habitats" which are managed primarily for human uses – commercial, stock, or industrial purposes – and do not have conservation management objectives in their primary purpose</i>

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Freshwater Wetland	Freshwater-dependent <u>non-riverine</u> habitats, which rely on filling, flushing, and irrigated substrates caused by rain, runoff, groundwater, and/or perched water tables; includes their hydrophilic vegetation: swamps, bog, fen, freshwater marsh, non-desert playa, wet prairie, wet meadow, <i>surface expressions of groundwater</i> (seeps, springs, cienegas), vernal pools, tinajas, interdunal wetlands
Saltwater Wetland	Brackish, saline or saltwater-dependent habitats: Brackish marsh, salt marsh, saline springs, shallow saline groundwater swales, saline or salt shallow pools
Estuary/Estuarine	Area where fresh water from rivers and streams mixes with salt water from the Gulf of Mexico <i>Note: While “estuaries” do not occur in all ecoregions, the river systems within many ecoregions eventually flow to the estuaries and bays of the Gulf of Mexico; therefore, actions crafted for riverine systems should continue to support instream flows and estuary/bay health</i>
Coastal See also <i>Barren/Sparse Vegetation</i> and <i>Saltwater Wetland</i>	Beach and shoreline, dunes (shoreline and barrier island, but <i>not</i> including inland dunes like Gypsum Dunes in west Texas), intertidal “flats” – rocky, mud, sand, wind, algal
Marine	Subtidal (e.g. <i>sea grass beds</i>), shallow (e.g. <i>submerged sand or mud substrates</i>) and deepwater Gulf of Mexico habitats (<i>non-estuarine, non-marsh such as natural reefs, rocky bottoms, or muddy bottoms</i>)
Aquifer	Saturated, permeable geologic formation (whole or in part) under the ground surface (<i>Edwards, Ogallala, Trinity, Carrizo – Wilcox, etc.</i>)
Caves/Karst	Dry or wet solution-formed shelters, grottos, caves, sinkholes, crevices, karst, fractures, fissures

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CULTURAL (Human-Created) TYPES	These habitat types are human-created, anthropogenic, not necessarily “desired ecological condition;” primary purpose is not to mimic or replace native, natural habitats, but could contribute to the natural community in positive ways (e.g. migratory stopovers, alternative food sources, travel corridors) and/or negative ways (e.g. loss of native natural habitat, predator conduit, chemical sink, physical hazard). These sites may provide significant and necessary habitats; however, they would not be preferred over natural habitats that serve the same and/or better function
Agricultural	Cleared or altered natural areas to produce food, fiber, or fuel; typically includes row crops, non-native or "improved" pasture, woody crops (e.g. vineyard, orchard, plantation). <i>Note: native or mostly native rangeland or pasture can be categorized under other “desired future condition” landscapes such as grassland/prairie, woodland, shrubland, savanna</i>
Developed	Most “developed” sites are considered “issues” rather than “habitats” however some SGCN choose to use these as surrogate habitats; consider only those sites which are known to provide suitable/important habitats for SGCN or need to be addressed to prevent stress on SGCN populations and habitats.
Developed: Urban/Suburban/Rural	Areas occupied by humans; a concentration of buildings, infrastructure and population <u>Examples:</u> city or county parks that function as important migratory bird stopovers, open space or riparian corridors through town which function like a stepping stone to important habitat outside of the metropolitan area, some golf courses, gravel rooftops used by plovers for nesting, green rooftops used by invertebrates, native landscapes if demonstrated to be important to SGCN.
Developed: Industrial	Human-made, but not human-living <u>Examples:</u> mines, quarries, power generation sites, drilling pads/well sites, refineries, oil platforms
Developed: Rights of Way	Linear development <u>Examples:</u> highways, roadways, bridges, culverts (e.g. bat roosts, swallow colonies, amphibian passages, etc.), groomed/managed trails, pipelines, communications corridors, transmission lines
Cultural Aquatic	Water/aquatic habitats <u>not</u> managed primarily for aquatic life or wildlife, recreation, or aesthetics <u>Examples:</u> community water supply reservoirs, agricultural irrigation pond/ditch, livestock watering stock ponds, industrial use cooling ponds, stormwater containment, flood control reservoirs, wastewater treatment ponds, shipping channels and managed transportation waterways
Artificial Refugia	Purposeful human-built replication of natural/native systems/habitats with the intention to create <u>surrogate habitats</u> following loss or severe impact to natural/native habitats – not the same as restored natural/native habitat and not the same as human structures used opportunistically by SGCN (e.g. culverts or bridges for bats)