

# Awned Sedge

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## Description

This wetland community occurs mainly in pure stands. Awned sedge is able to tolerate anaerobic soil conditions for the entire growing season. Minor amounts of beaked sedge, slough grass, slimstem reedgrass and meadow foxtail may be present. Deeper wetland basins may have open water and emergent vegetation zones.

Where sites dry because of hydrological changes (loss of connectivity), or trampling and compaction due to cattle, slimstem reedgrass may replace sedge as the dominant species. Further drying and degradation can lead to a bluegrass community.



A grazed awned sedge community surrounding a wetland with a cattail and open water zone in the background.

## Location

Throughout the southern interior at all elevations on lake shores with shallow gradients, and depressions that sustain season long water saturation.

## Representative Reference Area

Akehurst, Venner meadow, Burnette lake, Fork meadow, paradise meadow, Rimrock swamp, Goose Carex,

## BEC Correlation

Main Occurrence Wm03 in BG, PP and IDF

## Site Characteristics

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## **Soils**

Organics and gleysols that are subject to prolonged saturation and anaerobic conditions.

## **Elevation range**

Valley bottoms to sub alpine.

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## Seral Stages

### PNC Climax & Late Seral



*An awned sedge community, with minor amounts of slimstem reedgrass.*

| Plant Community PNC |                  |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Species             | Canopy cover (%) |
| Awned sedge         | up to 100        |
| Beaked sedge        | 1-5              |
| Slimstem reedgrass  | 1                |
| Slough grass        | 1                |
| Meadow foxtail      | 1                |
| Hook-moss           | 5                |

### Productivity

Up to 2000 kg/ha

### Range Management consideration

Sedge roots are strong and resistant to hoof damage. These sites can produce high volumes of forage and are best grazed later in the growing season when soils are not saturated. Cattle will regrow sedge plants sequentially lower the longer they remain on a meadow. Plants should on average be grazed no lower than 20 cm, unless they are rested entirely during the following year. Sites that dry and are compacted will tend to develop a more open and hummocky appearance. Exposed soils are subject to pugging and compaction if grazed when wet. Eventually the hummocks may breakdown and reedgrasses may replace sedge as the dominant species. Further drying and compaction can lead to invasion by dandelions, bluegrass and silverweed.

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During extremely dry years, sedge meadows can provide a forage buffer to droughty upland range.

## Properly Functioning condition

PNC and late seral sites will score as properly functioning.

## Early Seral



*A sedge community next to an incised creek. The meadow has dried and bluegrass has replaced sedge, except in the narrow band next to the creek.*

| Plant Community Early Seral |                  |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Species                     | Canopy cover (%) |
| Slimstem reedgrass          | 50-100           |
| Slough grass                | 5                |
| Bluegrass                   | 50-100           |
| Dandelion                   | 5                |
| Silverweed                  | 5                |
| Pussytoes                   | 5                |

## Productivity

200 – 1000 kg/ha (depending on the degree of change)

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## **Range Management consideration**

The health and seral stage of the plant community will influence the management treatments necessary for recovery. Total rest from grazing is always the best treatment for non-brittle wetland types, but planned grazing can also work.

In the case of early-seral bluegrass communities, bluegrass should be grazed to a 10 cm stubble height. Any remnant sedge plants should be lightly grazed, leaving a 20 cm stubble.

If a wetland is flooded and inaccessible to cattle in the spring and early summer, grazing of the surrounding uplands, followed by summer and fall rest will help to restore this community.

Once a community is restored to sedge co-dominance, it can be safely grazed later in the season when soils are not saturated. Fall grazing can be tricky, however, as it is a time when cattle will begin to target willows. Willows retain their leaves and forage value longer than other deciduous shrubs, and cattle will browse them heavily as the volume of sedge is incrementally reduced over time. Sedge meadows should be grazed no lower than 20 cm on average.

Winter grazing is the least damaging to this community type but cattle may need a protein supplement if feeding exclusively on sedges.

Larger meadows can be fenced into separate riparian pastures, allowing for better control of cattle distribution, level use, time of use and rest.

## **Properly Functioning condition**

Sites will score as moderate risk to non-functional depending on the amount of litter, soil compaction, bare soil and the degree of change to the plant community and its root system.