

Cattail Marsh

Description

Cattails are the dominant emergent species in fresh, shallow wetlands and lakes. They grow in the zone where water is 0.5 – 1 m in depth. They are often fringed by sedges, reedgrasses, mannagrasses and fowl bluegrass on the riparian margin. This community occupies a very similar situation as Great bulrush community. Separation may be that Cattails occur on more nutrient rich sites on areas less exposed to wave action and have greater depth of an organic soil horizon.

Wetlands in natural drawdown should not be confused with poor function, unless the plant community has been altered and the soils trampled and compacted. Periodic drawdown allows these wetland communities to rejuvenate themselves by seed and by re-sprouting from rhizomes. Decomposition and the release of bound nutrients also occur during these dry cycles. Water that is too deep (>1.5m) for too long tends to thin out the cover of cattails.

Location

Ubiquitous in shallow nutrient rich fresh still water less than 1.5m at elevations below 1600m

Representative Reference Area

Ball Diamond, Highway slough, Rock Lake

BEC Correlation

Wm05 in all BEC zones except the ESSF and AT

Site Characteristics

Soils

These sites often have organic veneers of well-decomposed, odiferous muck. Soil types can be Humisols or Humic Gleysols. Water depths may be up to 1 m in the spring but recede in late summer, sometimes to the surface. (From <http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfd/pubs/Docs/Lmh/Lmh52.pdf>)

Elevation range

0 to 1600m

Cattail Marsh

Seral Stages

PNC Climax & Late Seral



*A cattail marsh.
PNC*

Plant Community PNC & Late Seral	
Species	Canopy cover (%)
Cattail	80-100
Cow parsnip	<5
Bulrush	<10
Reedgrasses/mannagrass/fowl bluegrass	<10

Productivity

200 – 400 kg/ha based on cow parsnip and grasses only. Cattail and bulrushes should not be included in the assessment of forage supply.

Range Management consideration

Cattail marshes are prone to damage and degradation if livestock have uncontrolled, season-long access to these wetlands. Uncontrolled access allows selective grazing of plants and trampling of wet soils, encouraging encroachment by undesirable plants including bluegrasses, foxtail barley and reedgrasses.

To limit damage, land managers should be encouraged to permit livestock watering at a single watering point, where feasible.

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Properly Functioning condition

PNC and late seral sites will score as properly functioning.

Early Seral



Trampling and grazing have altered this cattail marsh community resulting in a bare soil and a lack of emergent vegetation. Early Seral.

Cattails will be grazed by cattle and horses if other forage is in short supply or if livestock are allowed unlimited access.



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Plant Community Early Seral	
Species	Canopy cover (%)
Foxtail barley (salinity)	20-100
Kentucky bluegrass	20-100
Reedgrass spp.	<5
Dandelions	<10

Productivity

50-300kg/ha

Range Management consideration

Rest is the best prescription for recovery. These sites need an opportunity for plants to grow without grazing, to put down litter, and set seed. If rest is infeasible, early spring use is preferred. During spring, other temporary water sources are usually available, upland grasses are lush, hot temperatures are not a factor, and wetland levels are usually at their highest, discouraging cattle use.

Where practical, livestock watering should be limited to a single access (watering) point.

Properly Functioning condition

Sites will score as moderate risk to non-functional depending on the degree of compaction and bare soil.