

Ecosystems and Natural Communities in Maine

Ecosystems

An ecosystem, as the term is used in Maine, is a group of communities and their environment, occurring together over a particular portion of the landscape, and held together by some common physical or biotic feature. The natural communities within or each ecosystem will not all occur in one particular location of the ecosystem; rather, each ecosystem will be made up of some assortment of communities. Ecosystem types for Maine, with the natural communities that occur in each type are listed at <http://www.maine.gov/dacf/mnap/features/ecosystems.htm>. If a rare or exemplary ecosystem type has been documented in this town, a copy of the relevant web page will be included.

Natural Communities

The Maine Natural Areas Program (MNAP) has classified and distinguished 104 different natural community types that collectively cover the state's landscape. These include such habitats as floodplain forests, coastal bogs, alpine summits, and many others. Each type is assigned a rarity rank of 1 (rare) through 5 (common) both within Maine (state rank) and globally (global rank). MNAP is particularly interested in *any* example of a natural community type ranked S1, S2, or S3, and outstanding examples (e.g., large, old growth stands) of S4 and S5 types. If a rare or exemplary natural community has been documented in this town, a copy of the relevant fact sheet will be included. Descriptions of all the community types are available at: <http://www.maine.gov/dacf/mnap/features/commsheets.htm>

Natural Landscapes of Maine describes the composition, rarity, and distribution of each of the 104 natural community types, as well as the methods used to classify them. It also describes the 24 broader ecosystem types within which these natural communities typically occur, and it provides cross-walks to other classification systems, including those used by the National Vegetation Classification System and Society of American Foresters. Purchasing information can be found on the web at http://www.maine.gov/dacf/mnap/about/publications/community_classification.htm.