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# Basic Woodland at Harpers Ferry

## Overview Page

Code: CEGL003683

**Scientific Name:** *Fraxinus americana - Carya glabra / Muhlenbergia sobolifera - Helianthus divaricatus - Solidago ulmifolia* Woodland

**Translated Name:** **White Ash - Pignut Hickory / Rock Muhly - Woodland Sunflower - Elmleaf Goldenrod Woodland**

**Common Name:** **Central Appalachian Basic Woodland**

## At A Glance

### Images of this Natural Community

Community image:

U:\Images\NCR\_photos\Field Guides\

[many more in this folder]

### What to Look For:

Can you find this combination of characteristic features?

* A very open canopy (and short) dominated by white ash and pignut hickory
* Oaks and Virginia pine present, but not always dominant
* Dry and rocky (but fertile) soils on south-facing slopes
* Native grasses and sedges, summer wildflowers (goldenrods, sunflowers, etc.), and low ferns in the field layer

If so, welcome to HAFE’s Basic Woodland Community.

### Tips to Distinguish this community from other similar communities:

This and one other woodland community (Xeric Chestnut Oak – Virginia Pine Woodland) are unlike any other communities at Harpers Ferry. Their shorter trees and very open canopies and their position on sunny, dry, south-facing slopes distinguish them from all other vegetation types at the park.

1. **Basic Woodland** vs. Xeric Chestnut Oak – Virginia Pine Woodland (CEGL008540)

Similarities: Both of these have shorter trees and very open canopies and they are found on sunny, dry, south-facing slopes; these characteristics distinguish them from all other vegetation types at Harpers Ferry.

Tips to Distinguish: The Basic Mesic Woodland should have its short and open canopy primarily composed of white ash and pignut hickory, while the Xeric Chestnut Oak – Virginia Pine Woodland should in contrast have a canopy dominated by chestnut oak and Virginia pine. Both woodland communities are mapped in the vicinity of the overlook on Maryland Heights, and they may interpenetrate there to some extent.

### Notable Variations at Harpers Ferry

Because there are relatively few trees in examples of this community, there can be fine-scale variation in terms of what these trees are or what plants are in the field layer.

### Conservation Status

To be autopopulated.

### Classification

To be autopopulated

## Where to See It Page

This natural community is most abundant on the southern end of Maryland Heights, on the steep slopes above the Potomac River. The most accessible example may be seen in the vicinity of the overlook on Maryland Heights. Both woodlands are mapped in this area; the Basic Mesic Woodland should have its short and open canopy primarily composed of white ash and pignut hickory, while the Xeric Chestnut Oak – Virginia Pine Woodland should in contrast have a canopy dominated by chestnut oak and Virginia pine. On Maryland Heights, the two woodland communities may intermingle there to some extent. Four small additional stands are located on the southern half of the park, along the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers, and on the crest of Short Hill Mountain.

## Seasonal Plant Highlights Page

#### Spring Highlights

#### Summer Highlights

Summer and fall are good seasons for this community. There are many native grasses and sedges, summer wildflowers, and low ferns in the field layer of this diverse community. Look for goldenrods and sunflowers, as well as mountain mint here.

#### Autumn Highlights

The overlook on Maryland Heights is a great place to see the changes in the colors of the leaves. Hickory will be a bright yellow and white ash has a purplish cast to its changing leaves.

#### Winter Highlights

These areas are exposed to the winds, it can be cold up here! Great place to have a view of the rivers and the lower town at any season!

## Seasonal Animal Highlights Page

#### Spring Highlights

?

#### Summer Highlights

#### Autumn Highlights

**?**

#### Winter Highlights

Images of bobcats have been captured on Maryland Heights in the winter by wildlife cameras.

## Characteristic Species Page

### Canopy Trees

White ash, pignut hickory

### Understory Trees

Virginia pine, chestnut oak

### Shrubs, Saplings, & Vines

Summer grape,

### Low Plants (Field Layer)

Eastern bottlebrush grass, poverty oatgrass, Pennsylvania sedge, hoary mountain mint, elmleaf goldenrod, woodland sunflower

### Characteristic Species Table

(Tag by season, common/occasional/invasive & non-native, and canopy/understory/ shrubs,saplings&vines/ herbs & ground layer)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Layer | Common Species |
| Trees – Canopy | White ash, pignut hickory, mockernut hickory, |
| Trees – Understory | Virginia pine, chestnut oak, common serviceberry, hackberry |
| Shrubs, Saplings & Vines | Coral-berry/buckbrush (increaser from further west), shrubby St. John’s-wort, blackhaw |
| Low Plants (Field Layer) | Elmleaf goldenrod, woodland sunflower, hoary mountain mint, Pennsylvania sedge, rock muhly |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Layer | Occasional Species |
| Trees – Canopy | Virginia pine, chestnut oak, post oak, eastern red-cedar, black walnut |
| Trees – Understory | Slippery elm |
| Shrubs, Saplings & Vines | Hillside/Blue Ridge blueberry |
| Low Plants (Field Layer) | Bosc’s witchgrass, eastern bottlebrush grass, little bluestem, late purple aster |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Layer | Invasive & Non-native Species |
| Trees – Canopy | Tree-of-heaven |
| Trees – Understory |  |
| Shrubs, Saplings & Vines | Japanese honeysuckle |
| Herbs/Ground layer | Garlic mustard, common motherwort, common mullein, common yarrow |

### Non-native invasive plants:

(see [**http://www.fs.fed.us/invasivespecies/speciesprofiles/documents/garlic\_mustard.pdf**](http://www.fs.fed.us/invasivespecies/speciesprofiles/documents/garlic_mustard.pdf) for more info).

### In brief:

Despite its harsh-looking environment, the Basic Woodland is beautiful at all seasons of the year. The trees are shorter and more widely spaced than in a closed-canopy forest. The spacing of the trees allows more light to reach the field layer, and this helps a great variety of grasses, sedges, and wildflowers flourish here. Look for patches of waist-high goldenrod, sunflower, and mountain mint, with low ferns in the summer. The site where this community is easily accessible provides outstanding views of the rivers and the lower town at all seasons of the year.

### Plant Life

### Animal Life

## Physical Setting: Basic Woodland at Harpers Ferry

### Indicator Plants

White ash, pignut hickory, Goldenrods, sunflowers, hoary mountain mint, Pennsylvania sedge

### Stand Size

Stands are small, mostly about 0.25 ha. (ca. 0.6 ac.), but some are as large as 1.7 ha. (ca. 4.2 ac.)

### Landscape Position

Dry, exposed, sometimes steep, middle and upper south-facing slopes.

### Soils

Soils are thin, dry, and rocky, with exposures of bedrock and bouldery debris. Soils are mostly very stony clay loams that are strongly acidic but have relatively high levels of calcium and magnesium.

### Geology

The most accessible stands of the **Basic Woodland** are mapped on the large bands of Weverton material at the Maryland Heights overlook. Some other stands are mapped to the west of this, on alternating wide and narrow bands of Harpers phyllitic meta-siltstone and Harpers quartzite, respectively. Exposed outcrops of metabasalt, metasiltstone, or phyllite are present. Stands of the Xeric Chestnut Oak – Virginia Pine Woodland are mapped nearby to stands of Basic Woodland, and it is not clear what factors lead to the different canopy types, as the underlying geologies of them are apparently the same.

### Physical Setting Full Description

### Natural Processes

Stands of this community are mostly maintained as open by the dryness of the soils, but occasional fire may play a role.

### Large-Scale Natural Processes and Ecological Systems

Leave this section for Mary or someone else.

### Explore this Ecological System

Leave this section for Mary or someone else.

### List of Threats

Generated list?

### List of Non-native invasive plant species

Generated list?

### Stewardship