

Appendix 22. Understanding Terrestrial Ecological Community Names

Plant species that are dominant (cover the greatest area) and diagnostic (found consistently in some vegetation types but not others) are the foundation of alliance and association names. At least one species from the dominant and/or uppermost stratum is included in each name. The following guidelines apply to alliance and association names:

- A hyphen ("-") separates species occurring in the same stratum.
- A slash ("/") separates species occurring in different strata.
- Species that occur in the uppermost stratum are listed first, followed successively by those in lower strata.
- Order of species names generally reflects decreasing levels of dominance, constancy, or indicator value.
- Parentheses around species name indicate species less consistently found either in all associations of an alliance, or in all occurrences of an association.

Alliance names include the class (e.g., "Forest," "Woodland," "Herbaceous") in which they are classified, followed by the word "alliance" to distinguish them from associations. The lowest possible number of species is used for an alliance name, up to a maximum of four.

Examples of alliance names:

- *Pseudotsuga menziesii* Forest Alliance
- *Fagus grandifolia* - *Magnolia grandiflora* Forest Alliance
- *Pinus palustris* / *Quercus* spp. Woodland Alliance
- *Andropogon gerardii* - (*Calamagrostis canadensis*, *Panicum virgatum*) Herbaceous Alliance

Association names include the class in which they are classified. The lowest possible number of species is used in an association name. Up to six species may be necessary to define types with very diverse vegetation, relatively even dominance, and variable total composition.

In cases where diagnostic species are unknown or in question, a more general term (such as "Prairie Forbs" is currently allowed as a "placeholder." An environmental or geographic term (for example, "Northern"), or one that is descriptive of the height of the vegetation ("Dwarf"), can also be used as a modifier when such a term is necessary to adequately characterize the association. When confidence in the circumscription of the association is low, the name is followed by the term "[Provisional]".

Examples of association names:

- *Abies lasiocarpa* / *Vaccinium scoparium* Forest
- *Metopium toxiferum* - *Eugenia foetida* - *Krugiodendron ferreum* - *Swietenia mahagoni* / *Capparis flexuosa* Forest
- *Rhododendron carolinianum* Shrubland
- *Quercus macrocarpa* - (*Quercus alba* - *Quercus velutina*) / *Andropogon gerardii* Wooded Herbaceous Vegetation