

15. Post-fire Riparian Mixed Herbaceous Association (PS)

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This variable vegetation type is characterized by dense herbaceous cover between 35% and 70%, primarily composed of sand dropseed (*Sporobolus cryptandrus*), Fendler's globemallow (*Sphaeralcea fendleri*), and annual forbs. Dominance switches between these species/lifeforms across the different examples of this type and can also have the common associates, golden crownbeard (*Verbesina encelioides*), blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), and/or tarragon (*Artemisia dracunculus*), in abundances of 7–12%. Fendler's globemallow (*S. fendleri*) appears to be responding positively to the effects of the Miller Fire. It has consistent cover of 10% when estimated over large areas, but may start to decline over time. Sand dropseed (*S. cryptandrus*) usually averages around 11% but can provide upwards of 40% cover or be nearly absent. Shrubs are uncommon and subcanopy vegetation is not more than 5% in total. Riparian trees, such as narrowleaf cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia*), boxelder (*Acer negundo*), and Arizona walnut (*Juglans major*), as well as the more upland species, ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) and gray oak (*Quercus grisea*), are sometimes present as scattered individuals but are not indicative of this type, occurring in isolated inclusions, on old terrace surfaces, or the edges of mapped polygons.

This community was mapped in very low-gradient floodplains and alluvial terraces associated with the Gila River. Bare ground and small-sized gravel are prolific and indicate the active nature of this floodplain, with scouring and deposition events. Litter and downed wood are rare. This community is associated more with the substrate and processes of the floodplain than with elevation and aspect (which is slight). Overall, this association covers 3.56% (37.25 ha/92.06 ac) of the project area and 2.00% (4.24 ha/10.50 ac) of the monument, predominately in the main unit.

Common species

- Annual forbs
- *Sporobolus cryptandrus*
- *Sphaeralcea fendleri*
- *Bouteloua gracilis*
- *Artemisia dracunculus*

