86. *Muhlenbergia virescens - Pteridium aquilinum - Ceanothus fendleri* Herbaceous Association (P)

Screwleaf muhly - Western brackenfern - Fendler's ceanothus Herbaceous Association (P)

Common species

- *Muhlenbergia virescens*
- *Pteridium aquilinum*
- *Ceanothus fendleri*

This herbaceous community is characterized by a variably dense (30–50+% cover) field stratum (<0.5 m) of perennial grasses, subshrubs, and ferns most commonly dominated by western brackenfern (*Pteridium aquilinum*), screwleaf muhly (*Muhlenbergia virescens*), and Fendler's ceanothus (*Ceanothus fendleri*). The subcanopy stratum (0.5–2 m) is characterized by a low-cover (5%) mix of shrubs and regenerating trees without any consistent dominants or common associates. This community is defined by the dense (30–50+% cover) field stratum dominated by a suite of species that include western brackenfern (*P. aquilinum*), screwleaf muhly (*M. virescens*), and Fendler's ceanothus (*C. fendleri*). Of these, screwleaf muhly (*M. virescens*) is the most consistent (1.0) species, providing cover of 15–40% when dominant (0.6). Western brackenfern (*P. aquilinum*) is a slightly less-consistent (0.86) species, providing cover of 10–30% when dominant (0.6). Fendler's ceanothus (*C. fendleri*) is a consistent (0.86), but less-dominant (0.43) species, with average cover of less than 10%. Local dominance of these species is quite variable, with any combination—from a single species to all three—contributing dominant cover.

This community covers 0.2% (55 ha/137 ac) of the Rincon Mountain District, often in areas of historic fire disturbance around the Mica Mountain summit. It is restricted to variably steep (15–50%), generally north-trending backslopes above 2,482 meters (8,149 ft). The surface cover is predominantly bare soil and gravel, with consistent downed wood and inclusions of thick fern litter throughout. The underlying soil layer is a mix of well-drained skeletal loam ranging from very shallow to moderately deep, with parent material composed of a mix of mica schist and gneissic quartz monzonite. All examples of this type contained evidence of historic fire disturbance, resulting from a number of events, spanning the Manning Camp Fire in 1943 to the Helen's 2 Fire in 2003.

Rincon Mountain District, Saguaro National Park