

**FESTUCA ROEMERI – (CERASTIUM ARVENSE –
KOELERIA MACRANTHA)**

Roemer's fescue – (field chickweed – prairie Junegrass)

Abbreviated Name: FERO-(CEAR-KOMA)

Synonym: *Festuca idahoensis* var. *roemerii* – (*Cerastium arvense* –
Koeleria cristata)

Sample size = 29 plots

DISTRIBUTION: The most frequent of the native grassy bald associations in the Puget Trough occurs in the San Juan Islands, Fidalgo Island, northern Whidbey Island, foothills of the northern and eastern Olympic Mountains, and southeastern Thurston County. County distribution includes San Juan, Skagit, Island, Clallam, Mason, and Thurston. It also occurs in the adjacent Georgia Basin of British Columbia and in the western Columbia Gorge, Skamania County.

GLOBAL/STATE STATUS: G2S1. There are 12 known occurrences with fair or better integrity in Washington and they are highly threatened by invasion and increase of non-native species. Some occurrences face other threats including effects of fire suppression, development, road-building, timber harvest, and recreational impacts.

ID TIPS: Dominated or co-dominated by Roemer's fescue. Slopes with shallow soils (rock outcrops usually present or adjacent). Red fescue, great camas, and rosy plectritis absent or less than 5 percent cover. Field chickweed, prairie Junegrass, Wallace's selaginella, Indian's dream, or blue wildrye usually present.

ENVIRONMENT: These sites are very dry. Occurs primarily on moderate to steep mid- to upper slopes, with southern to western aspects. Soils are shallow over sedimentary, igneous, or metamorphic bedrock. Rock outcrops (often covered with mosses) are typically present within or directly adjacent to the association. Soils are loam in texture (also sandy loam), with variable amounts of coarse fragments. Can occur on serpentine soils. Rarely occurs directly adjacent to saltwater shorelines. More frequent in dry climatic areas (Olympic Mountain rainshadow), but can occur in wet areas under the appropriate site conditions.

Precipitation: 28-80 inches (mean 41)

Elevation: sea level to 1870 feet

Aspect/slope: E to W/16-80% slope (mean 45)

Slope position: mid, upper, short

Soil series: rock outcrop, lithic haploxerolls, rough stony land, rock land, Guemes variant?

DISTURBANCE/SUCCESSION: Historically, some of the balds where this association occurs were more extensive due to indigenous human burning practices. Other sites may not be much different in size than in the past (especially those in more montane areas). Most sites where

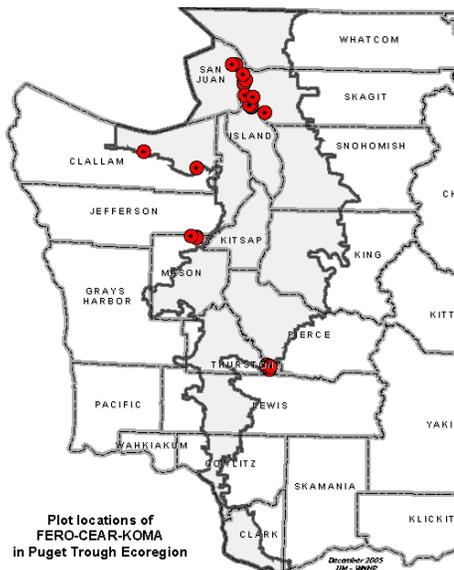
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Vegetation Composition Table (selected species):

Con = constancy, the percent of plots within which each species was found;
Cov = cover, the mean crown cover of the species in plots where it was found;
+ = trace (< 0.5% cover).

Trees	Kartesz 2005 Name	Con	Cov
Douglas-fir	Pseudotsuga menziesii var. menziesii	38	1
Shrubs and Dwarf-shrubs			
tall Oregongrape	Mahonia aquifolium	52	5
kinnikinnick	Arctostaphylos uva-ursi	21	12
Graminoids			
Roemer's fescue	Festuca roemerii	100	49
prairie Junegrass	Koeleria macrantha	76	4
silver hairgrass	Aira caryophylla	76	3
wood-rush	Luzula (comosa, multiflora ssp. multiflora)	66	2
early hairgrass	Aira praecox	52	7
soft brome	Bromus hordeaceus	52	4
California danthonia	Danthonia californica	48	11
blue wildrye	Elymus glaucus	48	3
California brome	Bromus carinatus	31	11
thin bentgrass	Agrostis pallens	24	10
Forbs and Ferns			
yarrow	Achillea millefolium var. occidentalis	90	6
woolly sunflower	Eriophyllum lanatum var. lanatum	86	6
field chickweed	Cerastium arvense ssp. strictum	69	3
meadow death camas	Zigadenus venenosus var. venenosus	59	6
chocolate lily	Fritillaria affinis var affinis	59	1
Wallace's selaginella	Selaginella wallacei	55	8
small-flowered deervetch	Lotus micranthus	55	1
spring-gold	Lomatium utriculatum	52	5
Hooker's onion	Allium acuminatum	45	2
common camas	Camassia quamash	41	6
common strawberry	Fragaria virginiana ssp. platypetala	41	5
self-heal	Prunella vulgaris ssp. lanceolata	38	3
rattlesnake weed	Daucus pusillus	38	1
small-flowered willow-herb	Epilobium minutum	38	+
sheep sorrel	Rumex acetosella	34	3
cleavers	Galium aparine	34	2
farewell-to-spring	Clarkia amoena	31	3
harsh paintbrush	Castilleja hispida ssp. hispida	31	1
Indian's dream	Aspidotis densa	24	5

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this association currently exists appear to be marginal for Douglas-fir establishment and growth to maturity due to extreme summer drought conditions, except at edges or moist microsites. Overall there is a possibility that some of these sites, in the absence of fire, could be eventually converted to coniferous woodlands or forest, especially small ones or ones with more abundant moist microsites.

VEGETATION: This is grassland, dominated or co-dominated by the bunchgrass Roemer's fescue. The evergreen shrub tall Oregongrape (is <0.5 m tall in this association) occurs in about half the plots with a maximum of 20 percent cover. The dwarf-shrub kinnikinnick is occasionally prominent. Frequent native herbaceous species include prairie Junegrass, wood-rush, yarrow, woolly sunflower, field chickweed, meadow death-camas, chocolate lily, small-flowered deervetch, and spring-gold. Wallace's selaginella (habit similar to a moss) is usually present on small rock outcrops within the association. The native grasses California danthonia, California brome, and thin bentgrass sometimes contribute substantial cover. Mosses and lichens typically cover the space between grasses and forbs. Common non-native species are silver hairgrass, early hairgrass, soft brome, and sheep sorrel.

CLASSIFICATION NOTES: This association has not been previously described in the literature. The NatureServe (2005) description of the type includes what are herein referred to as FERU-FERO-ASDE and DACA-ERLA.

MANAGEMENT NOTES: Monitoring of Douglas-fir establishment and the removal of Douglas-fir saplings is recommended in order to prevent gradual forest encroachment. Scot's broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), a nitrogen fixing non-native shrub, is a potential severe threat that should be monitored and controlled. Native species composition is at least locally threatened by increase and expansion of non-native grasses. Recreational projects such as new trails, as well as timber harvest activities and road-building, should avoid high-quality examples of this association because of the potential for spread of non-native species and relatively fragile soils.

BIODIVERSITY NOTES: Rare species found in this association include a butterfly, Taylor's checkerspot (*Euphydryas editha taylori*), federal/state candidate, and two plants, white meconella (*Meconella oregana*), state threatened, and common bluecup (*Githopsis specularoides*), state sensitive. Grassy balds are important habitat for many butterflies. Many probably declining plant species are found in this plant association.

Chappell, C.B. 2006. Upland plant associations of the Puget Trough ecoregion, Washington. Washington Department of Natural Resources, Natural Heritage Program, Olympia, WA. <http://www.dnr.wa.gov/nhp/refdesk/communities/pdf/intro.pdf>.