

**FESTUCA RUBRA – (GRINDELIA STRICTA –
CAMASSIA LEICHTLINII)**

Red fescue – (Oregon gumweed – great camas)

Abbreviated Name: FERU-(GRST-CALE)

Synonym: *Festuca rubra* – (*Grindelia integrifolia* var. *macrophylla*
– *Camassia leichtlinii*)

Sample size = 18 plots

DISTRIBUTION: This association occurs in San Juan County, on western Whidbey Island (Island Co.), and islands of western Skagit and western Whatcom counties. It probably occurred historically, and could still occur rarely, in northeastern Clallam and northeastern Jefferson counties. It also occurs in the adjacent Georgia Basin of British Columbia.

GLOBAL/STATE STATUS: G1S1. There are nine known occurrences in Washington of fair to good integrity. It was probably more extensive historically. Threats include invasion and increase of non-native species, invasion of trees and shrubs with lack of fire, development, and recreational impacts.

ID TIPS: Dominated or co-dominated by native varieties of red fescue. Roemer's fescue absent or rare. Located on bluffs or shallow soils near saltwater. Oregon gumweed or great camas present. Indian's dream absent.

ENVIRONMENT: These sites are very dry. Found only near saltwater shorelines on shallow soils over bedrock or on steep glacial bluffs. Soils on the glacial bluffs are very sandy and/or gravelly in texture. Slopes can be nearly flat to very steep. Aspect is most often south to west but is variable. Found in only relatively dry climatic areas (Olympic Mountains rainshadow).

Precipitation: 21-33 inches

Elevation: sea level to 100 feet

Aspect/slope: variable, mostly S to W/ 3-92% (mean 35%)

Slope position: short, lower, plain, mid, ridgetop

Soil series: rock land, rock outcrop, rough broken land, San Juan

Special: near saltwater (saltspray)

DISTURBANCE/SUCCESSION: Historically, some of the balds where this association occurs were more extensive than currently due to indigenous human burning. Other sites may not be much different in size than in the past. Many sites where this association currently exists appear to be marginal for Douglas-fir establishment and growth to maturity due to extreme summer drought

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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	33	1
Shrubs and Dwarf-shrubs			
Nootka rose	Rosa nutkana	56	2
Graminoids			
red fescue	Festuca rubra	100	37
soft brome	Bromus hordeaceus	78	5
silver hairgrass	Aira caryophyllea	67	2
common velvet grass	Holcus lanatus	61	6
early hairgrass	Aira praecox	61	3
wood-rush	Luzula (comosa, multiflora ssp. multiflora)	56	1
rip-gut brome	Bromus rigidus	50	8
Kentucky bluegrass	Poa pratensis	44	6
barren fescue	Vulpia bromoides	39	6
rat-tail fescue	Vulpia myuros	39	2
blue wildrye	Elymus glaucus	33	7
Forbs and Ferns			
field chickweed	Cerastium arvense ssp. strictum	89	4
hairy cat's-ear	Hypochaeris radicata	89	3
yarrow	Achillea millefolium var. occidentalis	83	4
Oregon gumweed	Grindelia stricta var. stricta	83	4
sheep sorrel	Rumex acetosella	67	3
English plantain	Plantago lanceolata	61	5
great camas	Camassia leichtlinii ssp. suksdorfii	56	11
Hooker's onion	Allium acuminatum	56	2
American vetch	Vicia americana ssp. americana	39	6
tomcat clover	Trifolium willdenowii	39	1
bare-stem lomatium	Lomatium nudicaule	33	9
Wallace's selaginella	Selaginella wallacei	33	3
meadow death camas	Zigadenus venenosus var. venenosus	33	1

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conditions, except at edges or moist microsites. The shrubs common snowberry and Nootka rose can occur and sometimes increase over time in the absence of fire. Overall there is considerable likelihood that, in the absence of fire, some of these sites will eventually convert to shrublands, coniferous woodlands or forest.

VEGETATION: This is a grassland or mixed grass-forb community. It is dominated or co-dominated by native red fescue (*Festuca rubra* var. *littoralis* Vasey ex Beal). The forb great camas is often present and can be prominent to co-dominant. Other frequent herbaceous species include Oregon gumweed, field chickweed, yarrow, Hooker's onion, and wood-rush. Frequent non-native species include hairy cat's-ear, soft brome, common velvetgrass, silver hairgrass, early hairgrass, rip-gut brome, sheep sorrel, and English plantain.

CLASSIFICATION NOTES: This association has not been described in the literature. Nature Serve (2005) calls it FERU-(CALE-GRST) and includes what is herein referred to as FERU-CALE.

MANAGEMENT NOTES: Monitoring and control of Douglas-fir, Nootka rose, and common snowberry encroachment is recommended in order to prevent loss of the association through successional processes. 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 threatened by increase and expansion of non-native grasses. Recreational projects should avoid high-quality examples of this association because of the potential for spread of non-native species and other impacts.

BIODIVERSITY NOTES: Golden paintbrush (*Castilleja levisecta*), federal threatened/state endangered, state threatened California buttercup (*Ranunculus californicus*), state sensitive slender crazyweed (*Oxytropis campestris* var. *gracilis*), and state candidate brittle prickly-pear (*Opuntia fragilis*) occur in this plant association. Many probably declining plant species are found in this plant association.

