

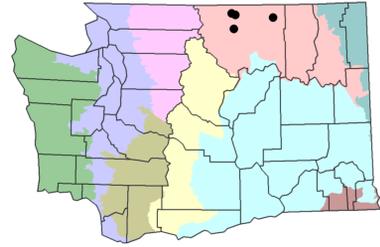
Carex tenuiflora Wahlenb.

sparse-flowered sedge

Cyperaceae - sedge family

status: State Threatened, BLM sensitive, USFS sensitive

rank: G5 / S1



General Description: Loosely tufted from long, slender, yellowish brown rhizomes; stems somewhat erect, weak, 1-5 dm tall. Leaf blades pale grayish green, flat or channeled, 5-15 cm x 0.5-2 mm.

Floral Characteristics: Spikes 2-4, aggregated, 4-9 x 3-6 mm, gynaeandrous, each containing 3-15 perigynia. Female scales white to translucent with a green, 3-veined center, ovate, shorter or nearly equal to the perigynia. Perigynia grayish green, obscurely few-veined, obovate-elliptic, 3-3.5 x 1.5-1.75 mm, almost leathery, hairless. Beak absent or nearly so. Stigmas 2.

Fruits: Achenes lenticular, pale brown, 1.5-2 x 1.25 mm, glossy. Fruits by mid-August.

Identification Tips: This taxon is not in Hitchcock & Cronquist (1973). Distinctive features include the (usually) 3 small spikes bunched at the tip of the slender stem; beakless, almost leathery perigynia; and white to translucent female scales. *Carex canescens* has 4-8 spikes and beaked, membranous perigynia. *C. praeceptorum* has smaller, membranous perigynia (1.5-2 x 1 mm) with short beaks.

Range: Circumboreal: AK to Newfoundland, south to WA, CO, MN, MI, OH, and NY.

Habitat/Ecology: Wetland obligate of bogs, fens, swamps, wet grassy areas, and occasionally seepage areas in forests. In WA *C. tenuiflora* has been reported in association with sphagnum moss (*Sphagnum* spp.), lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*), Engelmann spruce (*Picea engelmannii*), and numerous other sedges (including *C. utriculata*, *C. canescens*, *C. limosa*, and *C. arcta*).

Comments: Threats include changes to the hydrologic regime, timber harvest, road construction, peat mining, and livestock grazing. This plant may have been extirpated from OH and NH; it is rare in several states and Canadian provinces.

References: Britton & Brown 1970; Flora of North America 1993+. vol. 23; Hulten 1968; Taylor 1983; Wilson et al. 2008.



photo by Joe Rocchio



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