TAMAULIPAN SALINE THORNSCRUB

Nature Serve ID: *Previously undescribed system.*

Geology: Frequently associated with the Yegua Formation or the Jackson Group.

Landform: Gently rolling to low flats, sometimes dissected by minor drainages.

Soils: Most saline sites within the Saline Clay and Saline Clay Loam Ecological Site.

Parent Description: This system is an open shrubland on sites where soil salinity is particularly high on saline clays such as Montell saline clays, Maverick, and Catarina soils. Soils mapped as saline clay or saline clay loam, but where soil salinity is not extreme, will be occupied by Tamaulipan Mixed Deciduous Shrubland. Often, Tamaulipan Calcareous Shrubland occurs upslope of this system. This system is often on level flats to gently rolling landscapes, and soils may have a veneer of gravel over the clay. *Prosopis glandulosa* (honey mesquite) usually forms a scattered emergent canopy less than 5 m in height, creating an overstory canopy cover of around 10%. Shrubs and subshrubs, such as *Varilla texana* (saladillo), *Castela erecta* (amargosa), *Acacia rigidula* (blackbrush), *Atriplex canescens* (four-wing saltbush), *Isocoma coronopifolia* (goldenweed), *Condalia spathulata* (knifeleaf condalia), *Jatropha dioica* (leatherstem), *Suaeda* spp. (seepweeds), *Opuntia engelmannii* var. *lindheimeri* (Lindheimer prickly pear), *Cylindropuntia leptocaulis* (tasajillo), *Xylothamia palmeri* (South Texas ericameria), *Tiquilia canescens* (oreja de perro), and *Prosopis reptans* (tornillo), are conspicuous elements of the relatively open shrubland (20 to 70% canopy cover). Patchy grasses typify the herbaceous layer, with such species as *Hilaria belangeri* (curly mesquite), *Sporobolus pyramidatus* (whorled dropseed), *Pappophorum bicolor* (pink pappusgrass), *Bouteloua dactyloides* (buffalograss), *Bouteloua trifida* (red grama), and occasionally *Monanthochloe littoralis* (shoregrass). Forbs such as *Billieturnera helleri* (Billieweed), *Chamaesyce albomarginata* (white-lip matspurge), *Heliotropium curassavicum* (seaside heliotrope), and *Thymophylla pentachaeta* (parralena), may be present and conspicuous. Cacti are sometimes well-represented in the ground layer, including species such as *Echinocereus reichenbachii* var. *fitchii* (Fitch's hedgehog cactus), *Escobaria emskoetteriana* (Robert's foxtail-cactus), *Mammillaria heyderi* (Heyder's nipple-cactus), *Sclerocactus scheeri* (fishhook cactus), *Echinocactus texensis* (horse crippler), and *Thelocactus setispinus* (twisted rib cactus).

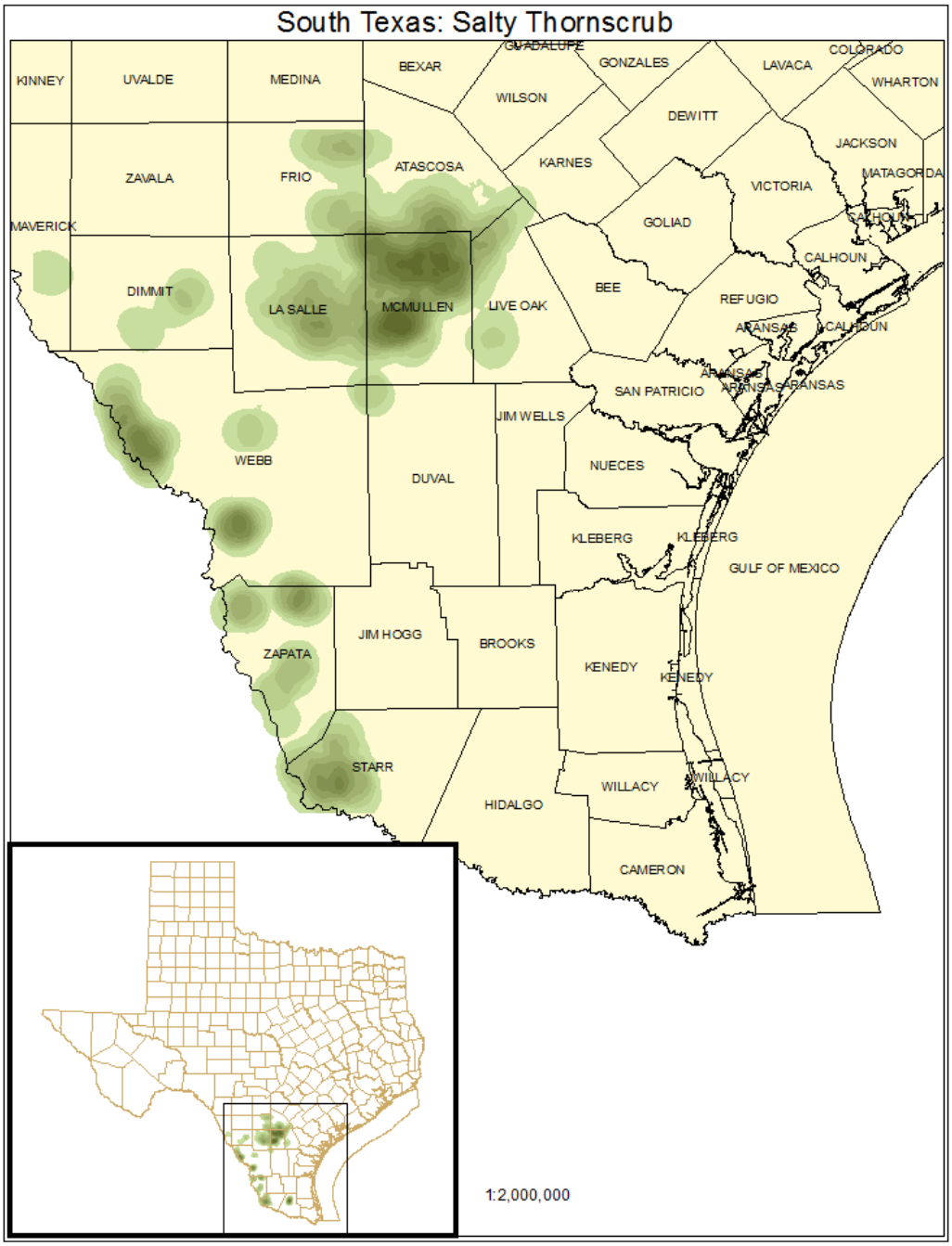
ECOLOGICAL MAPPING SYSTEMS:

SOUTH TEXAS: SALTY THORNSCRUB

Mapping System ID: 6806

EMS Description: As described for system.

Distribution Map:



Example:

Public Land Occurrence:

Choke Canyon State Park: Texas Parks & Wildlife Department
James E. Daughtrey Wildlife Management Area: Texas Parks & Wildlife Department
Falcon State Park: Texas Parks & Wildlife Department
Lake Casa Blanca State Park: Texas Parks & Wildlife Department
Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge-Arroyo Morteros Unit: US Fish and Wildlife Service
Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge-Chapeno Unit: US Fish and Wildlife Service
Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge-Cuellar Unit: US Fish and Wildlife Service
Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge-Las Ruinas Unit: US Fish and Wildlife Service
Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge-Los Negros Creek Unit: US Fish and Wildlife Service