

COASTAL BEAKSEEDGE

Rhynchospora pleiantha (Kukenth.) Gale

Synonyms: none

Family: Cyperaceae (sedge)

FNAI Ranks: G2G3/S2S3

Legal Status: US-none FL-none

Wetland Status: US-none+ FL-FACW



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Field Description: Strongly clonal, perennial sedge with abundant basal leaves 10-20 cm long and less than 1 mm wide. Many very slender flowering stems reach up to 0.4 m tall, each with 1-3 groups of spikelets (flowering/fruitlet structures) near the tips of stems. Achenes smooth, dark brown, with a triangular tubercle and 6 bristles as long as the tubercle.

Similar Species: *Rhynchospora pleiantha* may be distinguished from similar *Rhynchospora* species by the specific characteristics of the spikelets and achenes.

Related Rare Species: The state-threatened coastalplain beaksedge (*Rhynchospora stenophylla*) occurs in deep bogs and sphagnum seeps of the Florida Panhandle. The state-endangered large-plumed beaksedge (*R. megaplumosa*) is endemic to the central peninsula of Florida, occurring in scrubby flatwoods.

Habitat: Sandy pond margins.

Best Survey Season: Summer.

Range-wide Distribution: Found throughout the southeast from North Carolina to Texas and South into Florida, where it is mostly found in the panhandle with some disjunct occurrences from central Fla.

Conservation Status: Few occurrences are known to be protected. The species status in Florida is unknown, although it is believed more than 50% of extant populations should occur in Florida.

Protection and Management: Highly threatened by land-use conversion, habitat fragmentation, forest management practices, and succession. Major threats are development of pond margins for housing, raking or removal of pondshore vegetation for aesthetic purposes, ORV/ATV traffic, lowered water table from industrial or domestic withdrawal, and grazing by cattle. In the Florida Panhandle, development of sinkhole ponds is rapidly jeopardizing the existence of *R. pleiantha*. Florida and southeastern North Carolina support 85% of all known occurrences. Despite seemingly abundant habitat in Florida, *R. pleiantha* is surprisingly scarce, which could be due to it being easy to overlook in the field.

References: Wunderlin and Hansen 2011, Weakley 2015