

MARITIME FOREST

WHAT IS A MARITIME FOREST?

Maritime forests are found along the coastal areas of North Carolina either on barrier islands or adjacent to estuarine waters. They develop as a result of salt spray, winds and the harsh effects of sand striking the leaves and branches. Maritime forests consist of oak, red cedar, holly and pine trees and evergreen shrubs. Collectively, the forest forms a canopy of a finely woven network of interlocking branches that protects the underbrush from the forces of the wind and salt spray.



WHY ARE MARITIME FORESTS IMPORTANT TO THE BARRIER ISLAND?

Maritime forests serve an important part in the barrier island ecosystem by:

1. Stabilizing soil on the barrier island which reduces erosion.
2. Providing hurricane protection.
3. Providing important habitats for wildlife.
4. Protecting and recharging freshwater for wildlife.
5. Conserving ground water by reducing evaporation.
6. Utilizing and recycling scarce nutrients in a relatively sterile environment.
7. Serving a major part in the overall barrier island ecosystem.



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

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NC Forest Service:
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WHAT PROTECTION DOES THE MARITIME FOREST PROVIDE FOR YOU?

Maritime forests provide protection for homes and other buildings on a barrier island. The advantage associated with the forest is its ability to withstand the strong wind of hurricanes due to the forest's physical characteristics. An example of this are the trees in the forest, in particular the live oak with its established root system making uprooting close to impossible, its low center of gravity and its resilient wood. Maritime forests not only protect dwellings, but the barrier island as a whole by stabilizing soils and reducing the effects of erosion. For these reasons, residents should do their part in maintaining the maritime forest since it is an irreplaceable asset.

TIPS ON REHABILITATION OF A MARITIME FOREST:

When maritime forests are affected by construction activities, the below listed tips should be followed to provide rehabilitation:

1. Place fences in front of newly exposed sections of forests that receive high levels of salt spray.
2. If you live ocean side, it is recommended that you plant native shrubs such as sea grapes, live oak, wax myrtle and pear cactus. If you reside on the sound side, we recommend loblolly pine, red maple and sweet gum. These trees and shrubs will help to protect the forest and encourage re-establishment of the canopy.
3. It is suggested that you plant native grasses such as sea oats, seloia pampas grass, and American Beach grass to stabilize the area and to prevent encroachment of shifting sand at the base of the remaining trees.
4. Other steps to save individual trees and shrubs are to remove damaged branches, mend trunk scars, fertilize and water.

DEVELOPING A LOT IN A MARITIME FOREST:

1. Only clear the minimum forest vegetation area needed when constructing a roadway or a building.
2. If at all possible, do not clear the underbrush of the remaining forest. It is a habitat for animals, a source for young trees for forest regeneration and it also reduces salt penetration beneath the canopy.



3. By leaving the oceanfront intact, dune migration will stop and the chances of flooding are reduced. The frontal edge is the most important part of the forest's canopy.
4. Site buildings behind dunes and below the forest canopy.
5. Avoid clearing the forest during spring and summer. Parking below structures will also minimize lot clearing.
6. Try to keep remaining forest in tree clusters of 50-75 square feet.

7. Specific lot development and associated forest clearing should be limited in order to minimize damage to Maritime forests. It is recommended that the below noted maximum lot clearing percentages based on lot size be followed:

Individual Lot Size Square Foot	Recommended Max. Forest Clearing
59,999 or less	35%
60,000 to 79,999	30%
80,000 or more	25%

PLEASE REMEMBER:

Any level of development in a Maritime forest results in a change in the natural ecosystem and the loss of important components in that system.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SITE DEVELOPMENT

