

SCRUB BUCKWHEAT

Eriogonum longifolium
var. *gnaphalifolium*



Above: Photo of Scrub buckwheat in early growth. Photo courtesy Archbold Biological Station Plant Ecology Lab.

Left: Photo of Scrub buckwheat in full growth. Photo courtesy Archbold Biological Station Plant Ecology Lab.

FAMILY: Polygonaceae (Jointweed family)

STATUS: Threatened (*Federal Register*, April 27, 1993)

DESCRIPTION AND REPRODUCTION: Scrub buckwheat is a perennial herb with a single stem that grows from a stout, woody root. Most of the leaves are narrowly oblanceolate, entire, 15 to 20 centimeters (cm) long, are located at the base of the stem, and are green or bronze-green above and densely white-wooly beneath. Leaves on the stem are smaller and arranged alternately. The stem is erect, up to 1 meter tall, and terminates in an open panicle. Each branch of the panicle ends in a cup-shaped involucre with five to eight teeth about 5 millimeters long. Inside each involucre, 15 to 20 flowers form a cluster. The stalk of each flower starts out erect and then relaxes so that the flowers hang down below the involucre. Each flower is 6 to 8 millimeters long and has six linear sepals. The involucre and flowers are silvery, silky-pubescent (Ward 1979, Wunderlin 1982).

RANGE AND POPULATION LEVEL: The northern range limit for scrub buckwheat is in Ocala National Forest and in areas of mixed scrub and high pine south of Ocala in Marion County. It historically occurred near Eustis in Lake County and still occurs near Clermont in remnants of high pine with *Polygala lewtonii*. It also occurs at other scattered localities, including Putnam County (Wunderlin and Hansen 2004), Pasco County (Service 1996), southwest Orange County (University of Florida herbarium catalog), Seminole County

(Wunderlin and Hansen 2004), the northwest corner of Osceola County (University of Florida herbarium specimen catalog), and on the Lake Wales Ridge in Polk and Highlands Counties as far south as the Archbold Biological Station south of Lake Placid.

HABITAT: Scrub buckwheat occurs in habitats intermediate between scrub and sandhills (high pine) and in turkey oak barrens from Putnam County to Highlands County (Wunderlin and Hansen 2004). Other plants that occur in the same areas include *Polygala lewtonii*, *Chionanthus pygmaeus*, and *Prunus geniculata*.

REASONS FOR CURRENT STATUS: Loss of habitat to agricultural and residential development. This plant's habitat is also vulnerable to degradation due to inadequate or wrongly-timed fire.

MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION: Scrub buckwheat resprouts repeatedly after fire, which is the primary agent of disturbance in its sandhill and Florida scrub habitats (McConnell and Menges 2002). Over the long term, a population viability analysis by Satterthwaite *et al.* (2002) shows that scrub buckwheat populations require fire at intervals of 5 to 20 years to remain viable. Scrub buckwheat is protected in the Ocala National Forest in Marion County. On the Lake Wales Ridge it is protected on 7 sites (Schultz *et al.* 1999); additional land acquisition efforts are ongoing. Sites purchased for preservation may require extensive restoration, involving partial removal of oaks and planting/encouragement of reproduction of longleaf pine. Demographic monitoring of scrub buckwheat at some sites will be desirable or necessary. Some may require ensuring that use of herbicides in forestry or road right-of-way maintenance does not jeopardize this plant.

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