

87. *Pteridium aquilinum* Herbaceous Association (P)

Western brackenfern Herbaceous Association (P)

This herbaceous community is characterized by a canopy (>5 m) of snags and a variably dense (30–60% cover) subcanopy (0.5–2 m) stratum dominated by western brackenfern (*Pteridium aquilinum*). Pre-fire, this community was dominated by large conifers, mainly Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), white fir (*Abies concolor*), ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*), and southwestern white pine (*Pinus strobiformis*), in the upper canopy (>5 m). Currently, living canopy trees are extremely rare. The lower canopy (2–5 m) is quite sparse (<5% cover), without any consistent dominants or common associates. The subcanopy stratum is consistently dominated by a dense (25–50+% cover) layer of western brackenfern (*P. aquilinum*). The field stratum is a low-cover (<10%), diverse mix of forbs, subshrubs, and graminoids, with no consistent dominants or common associates.

This community covers 0.2% (50 ha/124 ac) of the Rincon Mountain District and is present in areas of historic fire disturbance around the Mica Mountain summit. It is restricted to variably steep (23–70%), north-facing backslopes above 2,482 meters (8,149 ft). This community is a result of historic fire disturbance, specifically the Helen's 2 Fire that occurred in June 2003. The surface cover is dominated by dense fern litter with downed wood throughout.

Common species

- *Pteridium aquilinum*



Rincon Mountain District, Saguaro National Park

