

Riparian Mapping System

Aerial photographs are the primary data source for riparian mapping. Field reviews, soil surveys, topographic maps, and local inventories are used as collateral data. The riparian mapping system (Figure 3) is hierarchical, open ended, and uses System, Subsystem, Class, Subclass and Dominance Types.*

The level of mapping detail is determined by user needs. Special modifiers similar to those in the Service's wetland classification system may be appropriate in site-specific situations.

- **System** is a single unit category - riparian vegetation (Rp).
- **Subsystem** defines two categories reflecting the water source for the riparian area - lotic (1) and lentic (2).
- **Class** describes the dominant nonhydrophytic life form of riparian vegetation. For these conventions, classes are: forested (FO) woody vegetation usually greater than 6 m. in height; scrub/shrub (SS) woody vegetation usually less than 6 m. in height; and emergent (EM) erect, rooted vegetation with herbaceous stems.
- **Subclass** further describes the Class as either deciduous (6), evergreen (7), or mixed deciduous/evergreen (8).
- **Dominance Type** refers to vegetative species within the mapping unit, e.g. cottonwood (CW), alder (AL). Dominance types vary throughout the country. Therefore, the hierarchy in Figure 3 is open-ended and may be added to as needs arise. Necessary additions will be coordinated by the Cartographic Supervisor at the National Wetlands Inventory Center in St. Petersburg, Florida.

*For instance, **Rp1FO6CW** is interpreted as:

System:	Rp	- Riparian
Subsystem:	1	- Lotic
Class:	FO	- Forested
Subclass:	6	- Deciduous
Dominance Types:	CW	- Cottonwood

Although specific vegetation types are identified (Figure 3), these species are presented only as examples. A single dominant type (e.g., cottonwood) often infers or may be interpreted as representing a plant community of several species such as an indicator species does for a guild.

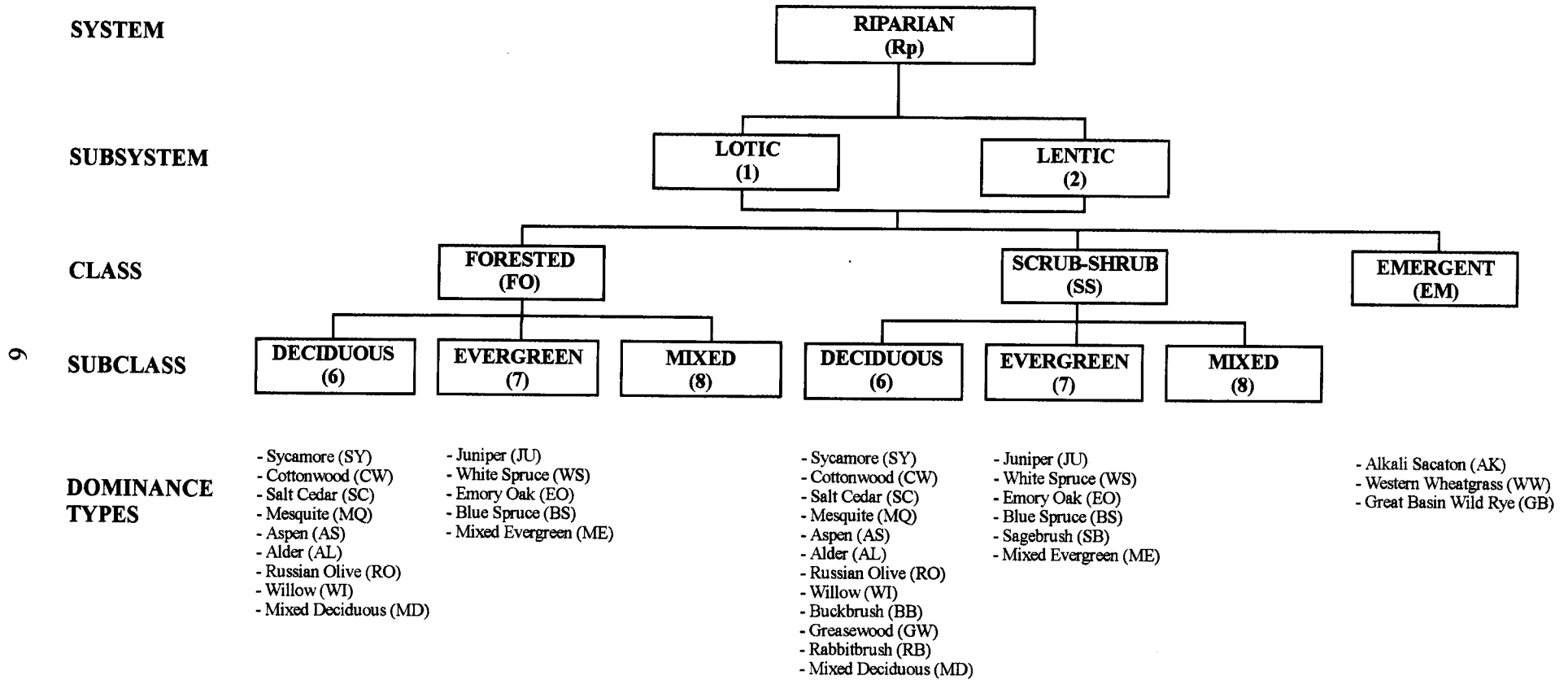


Figure 3. Hierarchical riparian mapping and classification system.