

## Ecological site R009XY018ID Meadow

Last updated: 9/23/2020  
 Accessed: 03/22/2025

---

### General information

**Provisional.** A provisional ecological site description has undergone quality control and quality assurance review. It contains a working state and transition model and enough information to identify the ecological site.

### Classification relationships

No data.

### Associated sites

|             |                                    |
|-------------|------------------------------------|
| R009XY015ID | Dense Stony Clay 22+ PZ DACA3-JUBA |
| R009XY019ID | Dry Meadow                         |
| R009XY032ID | Riparian DECA5-CAREX               |

### Similar sites

|             |            |
|-------------|------------|
| R009XY019ID | Dry Meadow |
|-------------|------------|

**Table 1. Dominant plant species**

|            |               |
|------------|---------------|
| Tree       | Not specified |
| Shrub      | Not specified |
| Herbaceous | Not specified |

### Physiographic features

This site generally occurs on gently sloping to nearly level stream valleys and high mountain valleys on flood plains with slopes of 0 to 4 percent. It also occurs around localized seeps and springs. This site is frequently dissected by old stream courses, oxbows, and potholes. The surface is generally not flat, but slightly undulating with small depressions and high spots. Elevations range between 2500-6000 feet (750-1800 meters).

**Table 2. Representative physiographic features**

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Landforms          | (1) Plateau<br>(2) Valley floor                      |
| Flooding duration  | Brief (2 to 7 days) to very long (more than 30 days) |
| Flooding frequency | Occasional to frequent                               |
| Ponding duration   | Very brief (4 to 48 hours) to long (7 to 30 days)    |
| Ponding frequency  | Occasional to frequent                               |
| Elevation          | 762–1,829 m  |
| Slope              | 0–4%   |

|                   |          |
|-------------------|----------|
| Ponding depth     | 5–15 cm  |
| Water table depth | 0–102 cm |

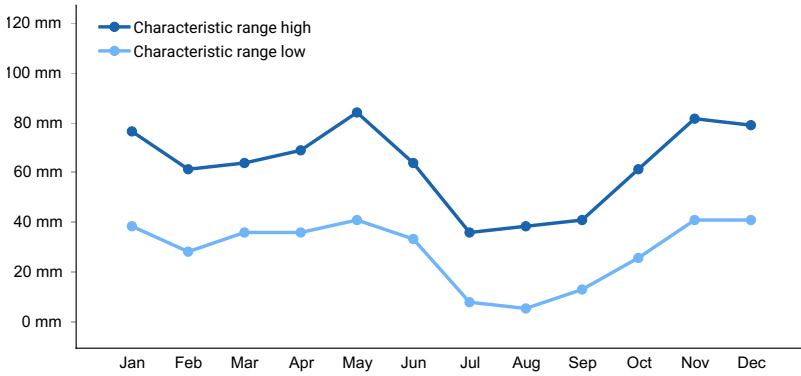
### Climatic features

The elevation of MLRA 9 ranges from 2000 to 4000 feet with an average elevation of 3000 feet. Elevation along major streams averages only 650 feet above sea level. Average annual precipitation ranges from 20 to 25 inches with an average of 23 based on 9 long term climate stations located throughout the MLRA. Summers are relatively dry while precipitation is evenly distributed between fall, winter, and spring.

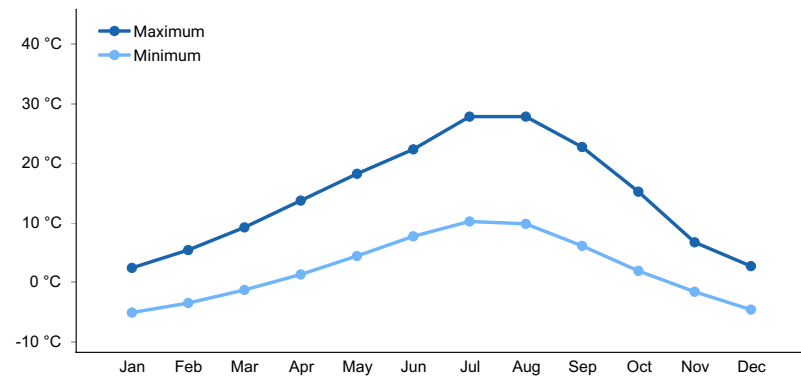
The maximum average annual temperature is 58 degrees Fahrenheit while the average minimum temperature is 35 degrees F. The average annual temperature is 46.8 degrees F. The frost free period ranges from 107 to 134 days and the freeze free period ranges from 143 to 173 days.

**Table 3. Representative climatic features**

|                               |          |
|-------------------------------|----------|
| Frost-free period (average)   | 134 days |
| Freeze-free period (average)  | 173 days |
| Precipitation total (average) | 660 mm   |



**Figure 1. Monthly precipitation range**



**Figure 2. Monthly average minimum and maximum temperature**

### Influencing water features

The meadow site is influenced by additional water from either adjacent streams through seasonal flooding, water table, seeps or springs, or from run-on from adjacent sites. The site may include the following wetlands and stream types.

Wetland Description: System Subsystem Class Sub-class  
 Palustrine NA Aquatic? Palustrine NA Scrub-Shrub Brd.-leav. Deci.  
 Riverine intermittent Streambed vegetated  
 Stream Type: ??

## Soil features

Soils on this site typically have ashy silt loam, silty clay loam or loam surface textures, silty clay loam to silty clay sub-soils and stratified silty clay loam to coarse sandy loam parent material of mixed alluvial origin and may be somewhat stony or gravelly. The soils range from very strongly acid to neutral in pH. Available water capacity is low to moderate and is supplemented by upward capillary movement from the shallow water table and the effective rooting depth is limited by the water table. These soils are characterized by an aquic moisture regime and the temperature regime is frigid.

Erosion hazard is slight, however, where peaty and high organic soils occur, they tend to hummock severely from trampling. These soils are susceptible to gully formation which intercepts normal overflow patterns and results in site degradation. The soils are poorly drained and have a water table at or near the surface at the beginning of the growing season and down to 20-40 inches at the end of the growing season. Flooding occurs occasionally during snowmelt and just after snowmelt. Ponding can occur in small depression areas during this time period. The water table is influenced by seasonal flooding, stream flows, seeps or springs or from run-on from adjacent sites.

Soil Series Correlated to this Ecological Site -

Teneb  
Lewhand  
Lebaron  
Grasshopper

**Table 4. Representative soil features**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Surface texture  | (1) Ashy silt loam<br>(2) Silty clay loam<br>(3) Loam |
| Family particle size                                     | (1) Loamy   |
| Drainage class   | Poorly drained  |
| Permeability class                                       | Moderate to very slow                                 |
| Soil depth   | 152 cm  |
| Surface fragment cover <=3"                              | 0%  |
| Surface fragment cover >3"                               | 0%  |
| Available water capacity<br>(0-101.6cm)                  | 11.94-17.78 cm  |
| Electrical conductivity<br>(0-101.6cm)                   | 0 mmhos/cm  |
| Sodium adsorption ratio<br>(0-101.6cm)                   | 0   |
| Soil reaction (1:1 water)<br>(0-101.6cm)                 | 4.5-6.9   |
| Subsurface fragment volume <=3"<br>(Depth not specified) | 0-6%  |
| Subsurface fragment volume >3"<br>(Depth not specified)  | 0-6%  |

## Ecological dynamics

The dominant visual aspect of this site is grass and sedges with scattered forbs and shrubs. The dominant plant community has tufted hairgrass, Nebraska sedge, and other Carex species as major components. The site usually occurs within a complex of wetland sites. The soil surface of the site is typically slightly undulating causing small depressions and high spots with variable soil moisture regimes. The plant communities found on these areas are

sites within the complex. The dominant species in these included plant communities are as follows:

1. Marsh Site. Deeper depressions with the water table at or near the surface or slightly above the surface for the entire growing season. This site is dominated by broadleaf cattail, hardstem bulrush, and common threesquare.
2. Wet Meadow Site. Shallow to depression areas with the water table at or near the surface for the entire growing season. This site is dominated by *Carex* spp. and *Juncus* spp.
3. Dry Meadow Site. Slightly higher areas that are drier during the growing season and the water table is > 40 inches deep by the end of the growing season. The plant community is dominated by Nevada bluegrass and alpine timothy.

Composition by weight is 80-90 percent grasses and grass-like, 5-15 percent forbs, and 0-10 percent shrubs. The depressional plant communities may have sedge and rush species making up nearly 100 percent of the community and are inclusions.

During the last few thousand years, this site has evolved in a semi-arid climate characterized by dry summers and cold, wet winters. The site has evolved on deep alluvial soils that are saturated to the surface at the beginning of the growing season and move down to about 20 – 40 inches by the end of the growing season. Herbivory has historically occurred on this site at low levels of utilization. Herbivores include pronghorn antelope, mule deer, moose, and Rocky Mountain elk.

Fire has had little influence on the development of the site. Rare wildfires can occur following consecutive drought years.

The conditions for the plant community of this site are highly variable due to a wide variation of soils, flooding frequency and duration, water table fluctuations, air and soil temperatures and competition between mostly rhizomatous plants. These conditions can vary within the site at a given location. At any one point within the site, one species can occupy nearly 100 percent of a small area. Another point nearby, may have another species fully occupying that area. Due to these situations, the plant community in this ESD is written broadly.

The soils within any complex of meadow sites are highly variable. Factors that affect the determination of the site include depth to water table at end of growing season, micro-topography, and drainage class. Depth to water table and micro-topography are measurable features. Determination of drainage class requires the use of soil interpretation tables. Other interpretive factors that may be used for site determination are frequency and duration of flooding and depth, frequency, and duration of ponding.

Micro-topography is a feature that has a dramatic effect on depth to water table and the resulting plant communities. A few inches of change in surface elevation changes species composition and/ or production. Slightly undulating topography is common in meadow complexes, therefore, more than one site should be expected.

An infinite number of combinations of factors that influence the ecology of potential plant communities exist. For practical purposes, four plant communities where the depth to the water table drives the vegetative composition have been described. They are:

Dry meadow Water table at >40" at end of growing season  
Meadow Water table at 20-40" at end of growing season  
Wet meadow Water table at 10-20" at end of growing season  
Marsh Water at surface to <10" at end of growing season

Most wetland species have a wide range of tolerance for variations in soil moisture. Most species occur in more than one site, although most are dominant on just one site.

The following table shows the amplitude of wetland species that occur on the four sites.

- Ecological Amplitude of Meadow/Marsh Plants.

Grass and Grass-like Species

Scientific name Dry Meadow Meadow Wet Meadow Marsh

*Leymus cinereus*

*Danthonia californica*

*Carex filifolia*

*Pascopyron smithii*

*Poa nevadensis*

*Juncus dudleyi*

*Muhlenbergia richardsonis*

*Hordeum brachyantherum*

*Phleum alpinum*

*Juncus balticus*

*Juncus torreyi*

*Alopecurus aequalis*

*Carex athrostachya*

*Calamagrostis canadensis*

*Deschampsia caespitosa*

*Carex nebrascensis*

*Glyceria striata*

*Carex lasiocarpa*

*Carex utriculata*

*Carex aquatilis*

*Eleocharis palustris*

*Carex rostrata*

*Carex hoodii*

*Carex exsiccata*

*Scirpus microcarpus*

*Juncus effusus*

*Beckmannia syzigachne*

*Typha latifolia*

*Schoenoplectus acutus*

*Schoenoplectus pungens*

*Sparganium erectum*

*Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani*

Forb Species

Scientific name Dry Meadow Meadow Wet Meadow Marsh

*Arnica fulgens*

*Pyrrocoma lanceolata*

*Arenaria congesta*

*Artemisia ludoviciana*

*Achillea millefolium*

*Wyethia amplexicaulis*

*Pyrrocoma uniflora*

Ranunculus spp.

Trifolium spp.

*Potentilla gracilis*

*Senecio integerrimus*

Aster spp.

*Cirsium scariosum*

*Symphotrichum ascendens*

*Iris missouriensis*

*Senecio serra*

*Helianthus nuttallii*

*Camassia quamash*

*Epilobium ciliatum*

*Montia chamissoi*

*Plantago major*

*Alisma triviale*

*Cicuta douglassii*

*Argentina anserina*

*Veronica anagallis-aquatica*

*Symphyotrichum frondosum*

*Polygonum bistortoides*

*Triglochin maritimum*

*Polygonum amphibium*

*Symphyotrichum foliaceum*

*Potamogeton natans*

*Lemna minor*

The Reference State (State 1), moves through many phases depending on the natural and man-made forces that impact the community over time. State 1, described later, indicates some of these phases. The Reference Plant Community Phase is Phase A. This plant community is dominated by tufted hairgrass and Nebraska sedge. There are a wide variety of grasses and grass-like species and forbs that may occur in minor amounts. Some of these species may be dominant in small areas due to soil and water variations as stated above. Willows and shrubby cinquefoil can occur in small amounts. The plant species composition of Phase A is listed later under "Reference Plant Community Phase Plant Species Composition".

The total annual production is 3600 pounds per acre (4032 kilograms per hectare) in a normal year. Production in a favorable year is 4500 pounds per acre (5040 kilograms per hectare). Production in an unfavorable year is 2500 pounds per acre (2800 kilograms per hectare). Structurally, cool season deep-rooted perennial grasses and sedges are very dominant, followed by perennial forbs being more dominant than shrubs.

This site is suitable for big game and livestock grazing in the late spring, summer, and fall. Wet soils can limit grazing opportunities, particularly early in the year.

This site can be used for hiking, access to fishing, hunting, viewing wildlife and plants, and horseback riding. The wet soils can limit access. Motorized vehicles can be very detrimental to the site especially when soils are saturated to the surface.

Due to the deep soils, fertility, inherent high productivity, rhizomatous plants, and relatively flat slopes, the site is fairly resistant to disturbances that can potentially degrade it. Site degradation is usually the result of lowering of the water table. This can occur with down cutting of adjacent stream channels or significant run-off following prolonged drought. This can result from on-site improper grazing or off-site conditions in the upper watershed. Once adjacent streams down-cut, concentrated flows lower the water table.

Impacts on the Plant Community:

#### Influence of fire:

This site usually does not burn from wildfire. If a fire occurs, it usually does not adversely affect the plant community. Most plants including shrubs sprout back with sufficient soil moisture and/or during the next growing season.

#### Influence of improper grazing management:

Season-long grazing and/or excessive utilization can be very detrimental to this site. The grasses in the plant community will decline in the stand and sedges, rushes, and forbs will increase. Continued improper grazing management will result in a stand of forbs and Kentucky bluegrass with sedges and rushes. The reduced ability of the community to withstand seasonal flooding is reduced and down cutting of adjacent streams can result or initiation of headcuts can occur. This down cutting will lower the water table and thereby reduce the potential of the site

Proper grazing management that addresses frequency, duration, and intensity of grazing can maintain the integrity of the plant community and the water table on which it is dependent.

#### Weather influences:

Because of the deep soils, the influence of the water table, seasonal flooding and run-on, the production of this site changes little during wet or dry precipitation years. The overall plant production can be adversely influenced with prolonged drought. Overall plant composition is normally not affected when perennials have good vigor.

Below normal temperatures in the spring can have an adverse impact on total production regardless of the precipitation. An early, hard freeze can occasionally kill some plants.

#### Insects and disease outbreaks:

Periodic disease and insect outbreaks can affect vegetation health. Mormon cricket and grasshopper outbreaks occur periodically. Outbreaks seldom cause plant mortality since defoliation of the plant occurs only once during the year of the outbreak. An outbreak of a particular insect is usually influenced by weather but no specific data for this site is available.

#### Influence of noxious and invasive plants:

Annual and perennial invasive species can compete with desirable plants for moisture and nutrients. The result is reduced production and change in composition of the plant community. The plants on this site are very competitive against potentially invasive species.

#### Influence of wildlife:

This site is important for many species of mammals for food and life cycles. The site is primarily used in the late spring, summer, and fall by big game. Many birds use the site for food, nesting, or brood raising in the late spring, summer, and fall. Sage grouse use the site for brood rearing and forage.

Total numbers are seldom high enough to adversely affect the plant community.

#### Watershed:

The largest threat to degradation of this site is the lowering of the water table. Off-site conditions can affect the gradient of adjacent stream channels that can affect the water table. If the perennial grass and sedge cover is depleted, down cutting can be accelerated within the site. High run-off events from the adjacent uplands can severely damage or change the normal stream channel on the site. As the water table is lowered, productive potential is lost. Eventually the water table is below the root zone of the adapted perennial grasses and grass-like sedges and rushes. These are ultimately replaced by perennial forbs and shallow rooted grasses. Extreme down cutting and lowering of the water table can move the site across the threshold to a new, less productive site. Severe down-cutting can result in a plant community that resembles an upland site.



Plant Community and Sequence:

Transition pathways between common vegetation states and phases:

State 1.

Phase A to B. Develops with improper grazing management.

Phase B to A. Results from prescribed grazing.

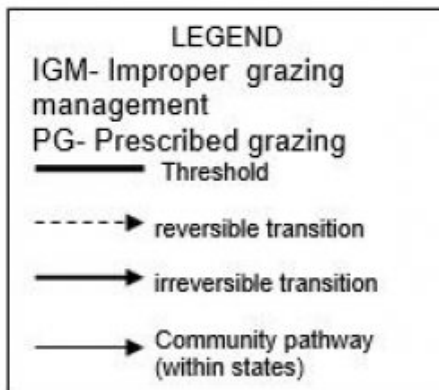
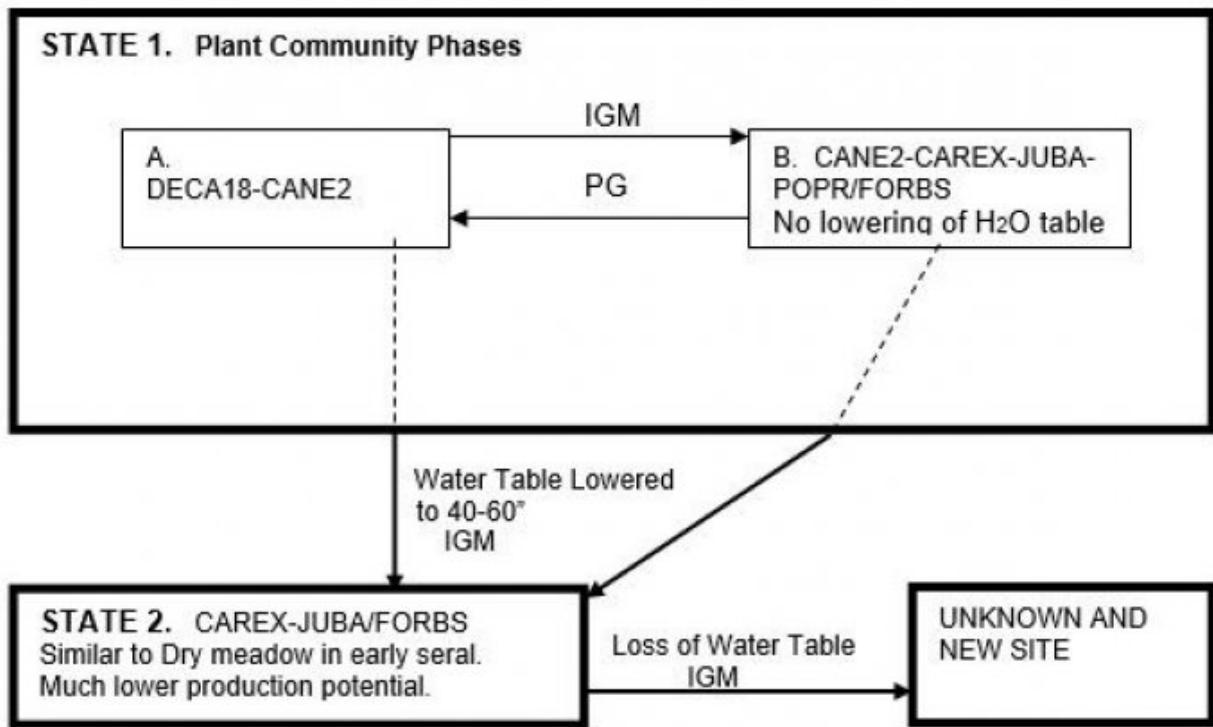
State 1 Phase A or B to State 2. Develops through permanently lowering the late growing season water table down to a depth of 40 to 60 inches. This can occur with continued improper grazing management. It may also occur with proper grazing on the site, but channel erosion may continue if poor off-site conditions cause frequent and/or severe flooding. The site has crossed the threshold. This state cannot be returned to State 1 without raising the water table. This might be done over time using structures or bio-engineering practices, but the plant community may take many years to approach the plant community in State 1.

State 2 to unknown site. Results from permanently losing the water table in the soil profile through down cutting of the stream channel. The site retrogresses to a new site with reduced potential due to significant loss of available soil moisture from the lowered water table. It occurs with continued improper grazing management or repeated significant run-off events. The site has crossed the threshold. This state cannot be returned to State 1 without raising the water table. This might be done over time using structures or bio-engineering practices, but the plant community may take many years to approach the plant community in State 1.

Practice Limitations:

There are moderate to severe seeding limitations on this site due to difficulty in preparing an adequate seedbed. Elimination of existing vegetation prior to planting is difficult in wet seasons and high water table periods. Grade stabilization structures may be needed to prevent further down-cutting of the channel. Other options for rehabilitation may include application of fertilizer, prescribed grazing, and off-site livestock water development. Fencing of the site for better livestock control might also be a consideration.

**State and transition model**



**PLANT LEGEND STATES 1 & 2**

DECA18 - Tufted Hairgrass  
CANE2 - Nebraska Sedge  
CAREX - Sedges  
JUBA - Baltic Rush  
POPR - Kentucky Bluegrass

**State 1**  
**State 1 Phase A**

**Community 1.1**  
**State 1 Phase A**

State 1, Phase A. Reference Plant Community Phase. This plant community has tufted hairgrass and Nebraska sedge as co-dominant in the herbaceous layer. There are a wide variety of grasses and grass-like species and forbs that may occur in minor amounts. Some of these species may be dominant in small areas due to soil and water variations as stated above. Willows and shrubby cinquefoil can occur in small amounts.

Table 5. Annual production by plant type

| Plant Type      | Low<br>(Kg/Hectare) | Representative Value<br>(Kg/Hectare) | High<br>(Kg/Hectare) |
|-----------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Grass/Grasslike | 2382                | 3335                                 | 4287                 |
| Forb            | 280                 | 392                                  | 504                  |
| Shrub/Vine      | 140                 | 196                                  | 252                  |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>2802</b>         | <b>3923</b>                          | <b>5043</b>          |

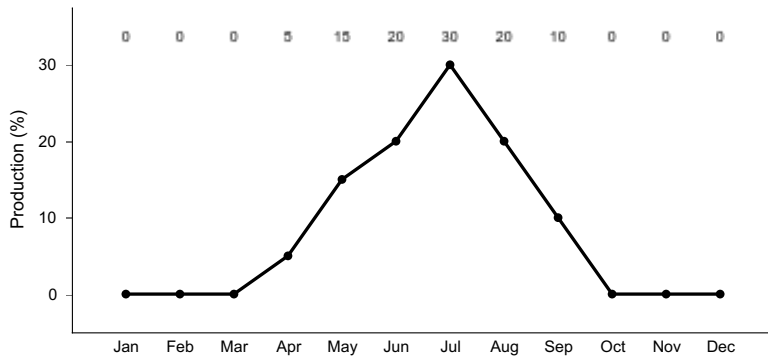


Figure 4. Plant community growth curve (percent production by month). ID0314, Wet Meadow. State 1, Reference Plant Community Phase.

**State 2**  
**State 1 Phase B**

**Community 2.1**  
**State 1 Phase B**

State 1, Phase B. The plant community is dominated by Nebraska sedge and other sedges and Baltic rush. Forbs have increased in the community and Kentucky bluegrass may have invaded. This phase has developed due to improper grazing management. The water table has not been lowered from that of Phase A.

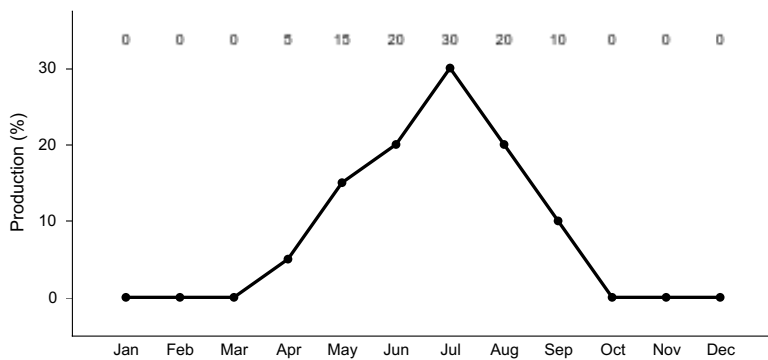


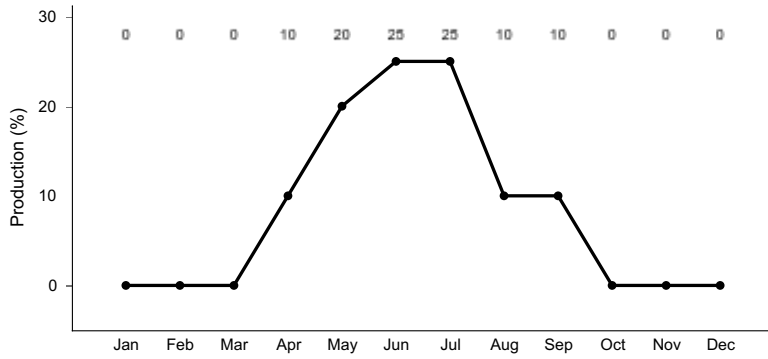
Figure 5. Plant community growth curve (percent production by month). ID0314, Wet Meadow. State 1, Reference Plant Community Phase.

**State 3**  
**State 2**

**Community 3.1**  
**State 2**

State 2. This plant community is dominated by Nebraska sedge and other sedges and Baltic rush but the overall production potential of the site is much lower than State 1. There is an increase in forbs and grasses that require less soil moisture. Kentucky bluegrass, bentgrass, and meadow foxtail may have invaded the community. This state developed due to continued improper grazing management and a permanent lowering of the water table from 20-40 inches to 40-60 inches below the surface. This state can be similar to Dry Meadow in early seral state. The site has crossed the threshold. This state cannot be returned to State 1 without raising the water table. This might be done

over time using structures or bio-engineering practices, but the plant community may take many years to approach the plant community in State 1.



**Figure 6. Plant community growth curve (percent production by month). ID0315, DRY MEADOW. State 1.**

**State 4**

**State 3**

**Community 4.1**

**State 3**

**Additional community tables**

**Table 6. Community 1.1 plant community composition**

| Group                  | Common Name                | Symbol | Scientific Name                        | Annual Production (Kg/Hectare) | Foliar Cover (%) |
|------------------------|----------------------------|--------|--|--------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Grass/Grasslike</b> |                            |        |  |                                |                  |
| 1                      | <b>Grass and Grasslike</b> |        |  | –                              |                  |
|                        | tufted hairgrass           | DECE   | <i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i>           | 420–757                        | –                |
|                        | Nebraska sedge             | CANE2  | <i>Carex nebrascensis</i>              | 420–757                        | –                |
|                        | alpine timothy             | PHAL2  | <i>Phleum alpinum</i>                  | 213–375                        | –                |
|                        | mountain rush              | JUARL  | <i>Juncus arcticus ssp. littoralis</i> | 0–252                          | –                |
|                        | meadow barley              | HOBR2  | <i>Hordeum brachyantherum</i>          | 0–129                          | –                |
|                        | slenderbeak sedge          | CAAT3  | <i>Carex athrostachya</i>              | 0–129                          | –                |
|                        | Torrey's rush              | JUTO   | <i>Juncus torreyi</i>                  | 0–129                          | –                |
|                        | fowl mannagrass            | GLST   | <i>Glyceria striata</i>                | 0–129                          | –                |
|                        | shortawn foxtail           | ALAE   | <i>Alopecurus aequalis</i>             | 0–50                           | –                |
|                        | bluejoint                  | CACA4  | <i>Calamagrostis canadensis</i>        | 0–50                           | –                |
| <b>Forb</b>            |                            |        |  |                                |                  |
| 2                      | <b>Forbs</b>               |        |  | –                              |                  |
|                        | clover                     | TRIFO  | <i>Trifolium</i>                       | 0–50                           | –                |
|                        | slender cinquefoil         | POGR9  | <i>Potentilla gracilis</i>             | 0–50                           | –                |
|                        | lambstongue ragwort        | SEIN2  | <i>Senecio integerrimus</i>            | 0–50                           | –                |
|                        | aster                      | ASTER  | <i>Aster</i>                           | 0–50                           | –                |
|                        | alkali buttercup           | RACY   | <i>Ranunculus cymbalaria</i>           | 0–50                           | –                |
|                        | Nuttall's sunflower        | HENU   | <i>Helianthus nuttallii</i>            | 0–50                           | –                |
|                        | water minerslettuce        | MOCH   | <i>Montia chamissoi</i>                | 0–50                           | –                |
|                        | common plantain            | PLMA2  | <i>Plantago major</i>                  | 0–50                           | –                |
|                        | Rocky Mountain iris        | IRMI   | <i>Iris missouriensis</i>              | 0–50                           | –                |
|                        | western aster              | SYAS3  | <i>Symphyotrichum ascendens</i>        | 0–50                           | –                |
|                        | small camas                | CAQU2  | <i>Camassia quamash</i>                | 0–50                           | –                |
|                        | northern water plantain    | ALTR7  | <i>Alisma triviale</i>                 | 0–50                           | –                |
|                        | tall ragwort               | SESE2  | <i>Senecio serra</i>                   | 0–50                           | –                |
|                        | curly dock                 | RUCR   | <i>Rumex crispus</i>                   | 0–50                           | –                |
|                        | meadow thistle             | CISC2  | <i>Cirsium scariosum</i>               | 0–28                           | –                |
|                        | fringed willowherb         | EPCI   | <i>Epilobium ciliatum</i>              | 0–28                           | –                |
| <b>Shrub/Vine</b>      |                            |        |  |                                |                  |
| 3                      | <b>Shrubs</b>              |        |  | –                              |                  |
|                        | willow                     | SALIX  | <i>Salix</i>                           | 0–129                          | –                |
|                        | shrubby cinquefoil         | DAFR6  | <i>Dasiphora fruticosa</i>             | 0–129                          | –                |

## Animal community

Wildlife Interpretations.

This site is poor to fair habitat for open land wildlife, fair habitat for woodland wildlife, and fair to good habitat for wetland wildlife. It is good habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, muskrat, and beaver whenever it is adjacent to stream and ponds. It provides some food for moose, Rocky mountain elk, mule and white-tailed deer, songbirds, and some upland game birds. It also provides brood rearing areas for sagegrouse.

Grazing Interpretations.

This site is best suited for livestock grazing in the late spring, summer, and fall. Wet soils can limit grazing opportunities, particularly in the late spring.

Estimated initial stocking rate will be determined with the landowner or decision-maker. They will be based on the inventory, past use history and type, condition of vegetation, production, season of use and seasonal preference. Calculations used to determine estimated initial stocking rate will be based on forage preference ratings.

## **Hydrological functions**

Soils in this site are generally grouped in hydrologic group D. When hydrologic condition of the vegetative cover is good, natural erosion hazard is slight.

## **Recreational uses**

This site presents an aesthetically pleasing view of lush vegetation consisting primarily of grasses and grass-like plants. When livestock or big game are grazing or browsing on the site it presents a pleasant pastoral panorama. Hikers and fisherman often traverse the edges of this site. Picnickers and campers frequent the site in late summer and early fall as sometime adjacent shaded wooded areas become less pleasant on cool days. Vehicular use can be very detrimental to this site, especially during wet weather and high water table conditions.

## **Wood products**

None.

## **Other products**

None.

## **Other information**

Field Offices

Grangeville, ID  
Craigmont, ID  
Orofino, ID  
Lewiston, ID  
Moscow, ID  
St. Maries, ID  
Coeur d'Alene, ID

## **Inventory data references**

Information presented here has been derived from NRCS clipping and other inventory data. Also, field knowledge of range-trained personnel was used. Those involved in developing this site description include:

Dave Franzen, co-owner, Intermountain Rangeland Consultants, LLC  
Jacy Gibbs, co-owner, Intermountain Rangeland Consultants, LLC  
Jim Cornwell, Range Management Specialist, IASCD  
Dan Ogle, Plant Materials Specialist, NRCS, Idaho  
Chris Hoag, Wetland Plant Ecologist, NRCS, Idaho  
Brendan Brazee, State Rangeland Management Specialist, NRCS, Idaho  
Bruce Knapp, Resource Soil Scientist, NRCS, Idaho  
Lee Brooks, Range Management Specialist, IASCD

## **Other references**

USDA, NRCS.2001. The PLANTS Database, Version 3.1 (<http://plants.usda.gov>.) National Plant Data Center, Baton Rouge, LA 70874-4490 USA.

USDA NRCS. 1992. Major Land Resource Area, Owyhee High Plateau, Range Site Descriptions. Reno, Nevada.

USDA NRCS. Major Land Resource Area, Owyhee High Plateau, Range Site Descriptions. Portland, Oregon.

USDA, Forest Service. 2004. ([www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants](http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants)).

USDI Bureau of Land Management, US Geological Survey; USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Agricultural Research Service; Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health. Technical Reference 1734-6; Version 4-2005.

## Contributors

JC

## Approval

Kendra Moseley, 9/23/2020

## Rangeland health reference sheet

Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health is a qualitative assessment protocol used to determine ecosystem condition based on benchmark characteristics described in the Reference Sheet. A suite of 17 (or more) indicators are typically considered in an assessment. The ecological site(s) representative of an assessment location must be known prior to applying the protocol and must be verified based on soils and climate. Current plant community cannot be used to identify the ecological site.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Author(s)/participant(s)                    | Dave Franzen and Jacy Gibbs Intermountain Range Consultants 17700 Fargo Rd. Wilder, ID 83676                   |
| Contact for lead author                     | Brendan Brazee, State Rangeland Management Specialist USDA-NRCS 9173 W. Barnes Drive, Suite C, Boise, ID 83709 |
| Date  | 04/16/2009   |
| Approved by                                 | Kendra Moseley   |
| Approval date                               |  |
| Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on | Annual Production  |

## Indicators

1. **Number and extent of rills:** Rills do not occur on this site.

---

2. **Presence of water flow patterns:** Water flows over and through the plant community. Rarely are flows detrimental to the plants. The plants have adapted or evolved with this occurrence.

---

3. **Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:** Neither occurs on this site. Some plants may be hummocked due to trampling damage.

---

4. **Bare ground from Ecological Site Description or other studies (rock, litter, lichen, moss, plant canopy are not bare ground):** Data is not available. On sites in mid-seral status bare ground may range from 2-10 percent.

- 
5. **Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies:** None.
- 
6. **Extent of wind scoured, blowouts and/or depositional areas:** Does not occur.
- 
7. **Amount of litter movement (describe size and distance expected to travel):** Fine litter in the interspaces may move 6 feet or more due to seasonal flooding. Litter accumulates on the surface. There is little or no coarse litter developed on the site, and it will be removed from the site following seasonal flooding.
- 
8. **Soil surface (top few mm) resistance to erosion (stability values are averages - most sites will show a range of values):** Values should range from 4 to 6 but needs to be tested.
- 
9. **Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness):** The A or A1 horizon is typically 2 to 8 inches thick. Structure ranges weak fine granular to strong fine subangular blocky. Soil organic matter (SOM) typically ranges from 1 to 9 percent.
- 
10. **Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:** Deep rooted perennial grasses and sedges slow run-off and increase infiltration. The total vegetation cover should be >60 percent to optimize infiltration. The plant community does not depend on water infiltration alone, but on the water table. The water table controls rooting depth.
- 
11. **Presence and thickness of compaction layer (usually none; describe soil profile features which may be mistaken for compaction on this site):** Is not present. Compaction layers can develop under stock trails made by livestock going to and from water or from long-term repetitive heavy grazing.
- 
12. **Functional/Structural Groups (list in order of descending dominance by above-ground annual-production or live foliar cover using symbols: >>, >, = to indicate much greater than, greater than, and equal to):**
- Dominant: deep rooted perennial grasses and sedges
- Sub-dominant: perennial forbs
- Other: shrubs
- Additional:
- 
13. **Amount of plant mortality and decadence (include which functional groups are expected to show mortality or decadence):** Normal mortality of grass and grass-likes is slow and occurs as aging plants. This will go unnoticed due to regeneration from roots, seeds, or other new plants filling the spaces.



- 
14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth ( in):** Additional litter cover data is needed but is expected to be 45-60 percent to a depth of 0.5-1.5 inches. Litter accumulates on the soil surface.
- 
15. **Expected annual annual-production (this is TOTAL above-ground annual-production, not just forage annual-production):** Is 3600 pounds per acre (4032 Kg/ha) in a year with normal precipitation and temperatures. Perennial grasses and sedges produce 80-90 percent of the total production, forbs 5-15 percent, and shrubs 0-10 percent.
- 
16. **Potential invasive (including noxious) species (native and non-native). List species which BOTH characterize degraded states and have the potential to become a dominant or co-dominant species on the ecological site if their future establishment and growth is not actively controlled by management interventions. Species that become dominant for only one to several years (e.g., short-term response to drought or wildfire) are not invasive plants. Note that unlike other indicators, we are describing what is NOT expected in the reference state for the ecological site:** Includes whitetop, Leafy spurge, Dock, Canadian thistle, reed canarygrass, foxtail barley, perennial pepperweed and teasel. Other invasive species may include meadow foxtail, bentgrass, and Kentucky bluegrass.
- 
17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:** All functional groups have the potential to reproduce in most years. Many of the plants reproduce vegetatively.
-