

Ecological site R011XY008ID South Slope 10-12 PZ

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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.

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Approval date	
Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on	Annual Production

Indicators

- Number and extent of rills:** rills rarely occur on this site. They are most likely to occur immediately following a wildfire. Gravels and stones on the surface reduce erosion.
- Presence of water flow patterns:** water-flow patterns can occur on this site. When they do occur, they are short, disrupted by cool season perennial grasses, tall shrubs, and stones and are not extensive.
- Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:** both can occur on the site. They are not extensive.
- Bare ground from Ecological Site Description or other studies (rock, litter, lichen, moss, plant canopy are not bare ground):** ranges from 40-50 percent.
- Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies:** do not occur on this site.
- Extent of wind scoured, blowouts and/or depositional areas:** usually not present. Immediately following wildfire

some soil movement may occur on lighter textured soils.

7. **Amount of litter movement (describe size and distance expected to travel):** fine litter in the interspaces may move up to 3-5 feet or further following a significant run-off event. Coarse litter generally does not move.
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):** structure ranges from weak or moderate, very fine, fine or moderate granular to moderate or weak very thin or thin platy. Soil organic matter (SOM) ranges from 0.5 to 4 percent. The A or A1 horizon is typically 3 to 12 inches thick.
10. **Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:** bunchgrasses, especially deep-rooted perennials, slow run-off and increase infiltration. Shrubs catch snow in the interspaces. Terracettes provide a favorable micro-site for vegetation establishment, which further increases infiltration.
11. **Presence and thickness of compaction layer (usually none; describe soil profile features which may be mistaken for compaction on this site):** not present
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: cool season deep-rooted perennial bunchgrasses

Sub-dominant: tall shrubs

Other: perennial forbs

Additional: shallow rooted grasses
13. **Amount of plant mortality and decadence (include which functional groups are expected to show mortality or decadence):** Wyoming big sagebrush will become decadent in the absence of fire and ungulate grazing. Grass and forb mortality will occur as tall shrubs increase.
14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth (in):** annual litter cover in the interspaces will be 5-10 percent to a depth of <0.1. Under the mature shrubs litter is greater than 0.5 inches. Fine litter can accumulate on the terracettes.
15. **Expected annual annual-production (this is TOTAL above-ground annual-production, not just forage annual-production):** is 400 lbs. per acre in a year with normal precipitation and temperatures. Perennial grasses produce 60-70 percent of the total, forbs 10-15 percent, and shrubs 15-20 percent.

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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 cheatgrass, bulbous bluegrass, rush skeletonweed, scotch thistle, spotted and diffuse knapweed, Russian thistle, halogeton, and kochia.
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17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:** all functional groups have the potential to reproduce in normal years.
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