

Ecological site R019XI108CA  
Convex slopes 13-24" p.z.

Accessed: 05/18/2024

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.

Figure 1. Mapped extent

Areas shown in blue indicate the maximum mapped extent of this ecological site. Other ecological sites likely occur within the highlighted areas. It is also possible for this ecological site to occur outside of highlighted areas if detailed soil survey has not been completed or recently updated.

Associated sites

R019XI110CA	<b>Concave slopes 13-24" p.z.</b> This site is similar, but has higher cover and more diversity. It is found in the draws and swales inbetween the ridges dominated by the drier chaparral.
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Similar sites

R019XI106CA	<b>Shallow slopes 13-31" p.z.</b> This is a prostrate chamise chaparral type, found on wind blown ridges.
R019XI112CA	<b>Moderately deep volcanic slopes 13-31" p.z.</b> This is an oak woodland-chaparral ecological site found on volcanic soils.
R019XI105CA	<b>Deep slopes 13-24" p.z.</b> This is a chaparral ecological site generally found on south slopes with coastal sage.
R019XI109CA	<b>Shaly slopes 13-24" p.z.</b> This is a chaparral community dominated primarily by <i>Quercus pacifica</i> .

Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	Not specified
Shrub	(1) <i>Quercus pacifica</i> (2) <i>Arctostaphylos insularis</i>
Herbaceous	Not specified

Physiographic features

This ecological site is found on northeast and northwest aspects of the shoulders and backslopes of hills. Slopes range from 15 to 75 percent. Elevations range from sea level to 2470 feet.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Hill
Flooding frequency	None
Ponding frequency	None
Elevation	0–753 m

Slope	15–75%
Aspect	N, NE, NW

## Climatic features

This ecological site is found only on Santa Cruz Island, and due to its size, temperature and precipitation ranges have been grouped together to capture the entire island's variance.

The average annual precipitation is 19 inches with a range between 13 to 24 inches, mostly in the form of rain in the winter months (November through April). The average annual air temperature is approximately 56 to 73 degrees Fahrenheit, and the frost-free (>32F) season is 320 to 365 days.

**Table 3. Representative climatic features**

Frost-free period (average)	365 days
Freeze-free period (average)	365 days
Precipitation total (average)	610 mm

## Influencing water features

This site is not influenced by wetland or riparian water features.

## Soil features

The soils are derived from residuum weathered from schist bedrock. They are shallow, with most reaching paralithic contact at 15 to 21 inches and bedrock at 21 inches. Available water capacity is very low at about 1.4 inches. The soils are well-drained, with loamy surface textures. Mean annual soil temperatures (MAST) range from 54 to 59 degrees F, which are classified as isomesic.

This ecological site is found in the following map units and soil components:

SSA MU SYM Component

CA688 120 Miasotus

CA688 240 Miasotus

CA688 241 Miasotus

**Table 4. Representative soil features**

Surface texture	(1) Gravelly sandy loam (2) Very gravelly silt loam (3) Extremely gravelly silty clay loam
Family particle size	(1) Clayey
Drainage class	Well drained
Permeability class	Moderately slow to slow
Soil depth	25–99 cm
Available water capacity (0-101.6cm)	3.56–4.57 cm
Electrical conductivity (0-101.6cm)	0 mmhos/cm
Sodium adsorption ratio (0-101.6cm)	0
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (0-101.6cm)	5.6–6.5

Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (Depth not specified)	10–60%
Subsurface fragment volume >3" (Depth not specified)	10%

## Ecological dynamics

The reference state for this site is a Channel Island chaparral community. Common species include Santa Cruz Island manzanita (*Arctostaphylos insularis*), Channel Island scrub oak (*Quercus pacifica*), island ceanothus (*Ceanothus megacarpus*), island mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus montanus* var. *blancheae*), chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), and toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*). It is found on the southern region of the central valley on Santa Cruz Island, primarily on the north-facing slopes.

This community is very similar to the historic plant community in species composition, but severe grazing on the lower branches of the shrubs has altered their stature to appear more arborescent. Several non-native annual grass species have also been introduced to this area.

The historical fire regime for this community is unclear. The natural fire return interval for the chaparral in this area was probably greater than 70 years (Keeley and Fotheringham, 2001). Fire intervals may have been up to 200 years, but have generally increased to 40 to 50 year intervals with the increase in human caused fires. Lightning, the primary natural ignition source, is very uncommon on these islands (Keeley, 2000). Only three lightning-ignited fires have been documented on the Channel Islands in the last 140 years (Junak et al., 1995). Historical evidence from the nearby Santa Monica Mountains indicates that when chaparral burns, it is very intense and difficult to control (Keeley, 2002). When fires are ignited early in the season they tend to remain small in size. However, the Santa Ana winds in the fall can spread fires rapidly and cover large areas. Fire in this community almost always burns the entire canopy, so it is very unlikely it would remain a surface fire.

After a fire, native grasses and annual forbs dominate for a couple of years, but the chaparral shrubs quickly regain dominance by re-sprouting and establishing seedlings. Many of the shrubs are dependent on fire for regeneration, but if fire becomes too frequent (less than 10 year intervals) it can detrimentally affect chaparral species that rely on establishing seedlings rather than re-sprouting after a burn. These reseeding species do not reach maturity during short fire intervals, and cannot replenish their seedbanks in time. Frequent fires also tend to favor non-native annual grasses and forbs. (Haidinger and Keeley, 1993; Keeley 2003). The chaparral community can be replaced by the non-native annual grassland community if fires become too frequent or if heavy grazing causes soil loss or inhibits the shrubs from regenerating properly. The grasses can in-turn increase the frequency of fire due to the production of an easily ignited and continuous fuel cover.

Very little research can be found concerning the fire effects on the island's endemic chaparral species. This would be a good area for more research to see which shrubs tend to resprout and which are obligate seeders. Species lacking data include Santa Cruz Island manzanita (*Arctostaphylos insularis*), Channel Island scrub oak (*Quercus pacifica*), and island ceanothus (*Ceanothus megacarpus*). Similar species indicate that Santa Cruz Island manzanita and the Channel Island scrub oak probably resprout and reseed after fire. The ceanothus species may be more seedling-dependent. Species with data include island mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus montanus* var. *blancheae*), which resprouts vigorously in addition to producing seeds (Uchytel, 1991), toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*) an obligate re-sprouter (McMurray, 1990), and chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*) which can resprout, but tends to relies heavily on seeds (McMurray, 1990). The obligate seeders need the fires for seedling regeneration, while an extended absence of fire seems to favor the re-sprouting shrubs (Keeley 1992).

## State and transition model

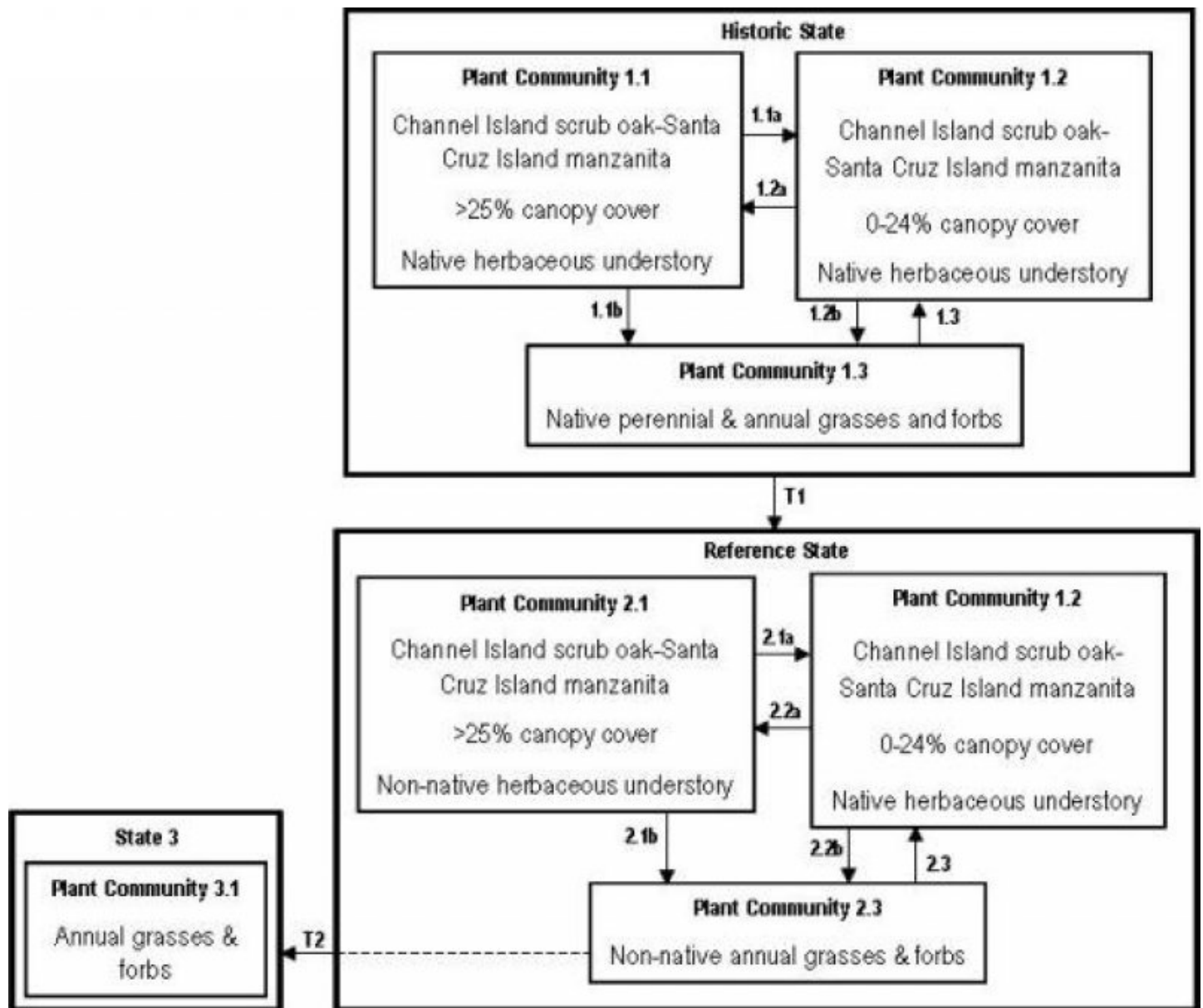


Figure 3. State Transition Model

## State 1

### Reference State - Plant Community 2.1

## Community 1.1

### Reference State - Plant Community 2.1



Figure 4. manzanita chaparral

This state is similar to the historic state, PC 1.1 and is still dominated by Channel Island scrub oak (*Quercus pacifica*) and Santa Cruz Island manzanita (*Arctostaphylos insularis*). However, it is now intermixed with a non-native annual grassland understory, which is common throughout California. The primary invading species are slender oat (*Avena barbata*), wild oat (*Avena fatua*), ripgut grass (*Bromus diandrus*), soft brome (*Bromus hordeaceus*), and Spanish brome (*Bromus madritensis*). Community Pathway 2.1a: The shift from PC 2.1 to PC 2.2 occurs under a fire regime of approximately 70 to 200 years, with lightning being the primary ignition source. Fires have generally increased to 40 to 50 years due to an increase in human-caused fires since the arrival of European settlers. Fires result in a decrease in shrub cover and an increase in the non-native understory dominated by invasive annual grasses. Community Pathway 2.1b: The shift from PC 2.1 to PC 2.3 occurs if fires become more frequent (less than 10 year intervals). Extensive grazing by livestock and non-native wildlife can also push PC 2.1 towards PC 2.3.

## **State 2**

### **Historic State - Plant Community 1.1**

## **Community 2.1**

### **Historic State - Plant Community 1.1**

This historic community is represented by Channel Island chaparral and is dominated mostly by Channel Island scrub oak (*Quercus pacifica*) and Santa Cruz Island manzanita (*Arctostaphylos insularis*). It is found on drier convex slopes and has a more open canopy than its neighboring chaparral community found on the concave positions which is dominated by Channel Island scrub oak and toyon (see R020X1110CA). Community Pathway 1.1a: The shift from PC 1.1 to PC 1.2 occurs under the natural fire regime of approximately 70 to 200 years. Fire results in a decrease in shrub cover and an increase in the native perennial and annual herbaceous understory community. Community Pathway 1.1b: The shift from PC 1.1 to PC 1.3 occurs if fires become more frequent (less than 10 year intervals). Non-natural grazing by livestock and non-native wildlife can also push PC 1.1 towards PC 1.3.

## **State 3**

### **Plant Community 1.2**

## **Community 3.1**

### **Plant Community 1.2**

This state is dominated by native grasses and annual forbs, which will grow well while the canopy is open during the first couple of years following a fire. Most of the dominant shrub species are able to rapidly recover and grow after a fire, which will eventually lead back to PC 1.1. Community Pathway 1.2a: The shift from PC 1.2 back to PC 1.1 generally occurs after an extended period of time without disturbance from fires or grazing. Island mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus montanus* var. *blancheae*), toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), Channel Island scrub oak (*Quercus pacifica*), and probably Santa Cruz Island manzanita (*Arctostaphylos insularis*) will all resprout from the root crown. Some species will produce abundant seedlings including the chamise, and possibly the ceonothus species. As the shrubs continue to increase in size and cover, they will eventually shade out the grasses and forbs in the understory and lead back to the pre-fire canopy cover of PC 1.1. Community Pathway 1.2b: The shift from PC 1.2 to PC 1.3 will take place under continued grazing or frequent fires (less than 10 year intervals). These disturbances will hinder the new growth of shrubs, leading to a state dominated by native perennial and annual herbaceous species.

## **State 4**

### **Plant Community 2.3**

## **Community 4.1**

### **Plant Community 2.3**

If frequent fire or heavy grazing continually impacts this site, the regeneration and growth of the shrubs will be greatly hindered. This will lead to a site dominated by non-native annual grasses and forbs. Community Pathway 2.3: The shift from PC 2.3 back to PC 2.2 could occur after an extended time without disturbance, and in conjunction with restoration efforts. Transition 2: Continual grazing as well as frequent fires occurring more often than the natural range could transition PC 2.3 into a long term state.

## **State 5**

### **Plant Community 1.3**

#### **Community 5.1**

##### **Plant Community 1.3**

If frequent fire or heavy grazing continually impacts this site, the regeneration and growth of the shrubs will be greatly hindered. This will lead to a site dominated by native perennial and annual herbaceous species. Community Pathway 1.3: The shift from PC 1.3 back to PC 1.2 can occur after an extended period of time without disturbance from fires or grazing. Restoration efforts can also help to expedite the return of PC 1.2. Transition 1: Continued frequent fires and extreme grazing by livestock and non-native wildlife can place a stress on PC 1.3. This pressure can give an advantage to encroaching non-native plant species and may lead to the invasion of non-native annual grasslands.

## **State 6**

### **Plant Community 2.2**

#### **Community 6.1**

##### **Plant Community 2.2**

This community is dominated by non-native annual grasslands, which will grow well while the canopy is open during the first couple of years following a fire. Most of the Channel Island scrub oak and Santa Cruz Island manzanita will recover and grow after a fire, which will eventually lead back to PC 2.1. Community Pathway 2.2a: The shift from PC 2.2 back to PC 2.1 generally occurs after an extended period of time without disturbance by fire or grazing. New Channel Island scrub oak and Santa Cruz Island manzanita will resprout and begin to increase in size and cover. Eventually, the non-native annual grasslands will start to diminish as they are shaded out by the shrubs. Community Pathway 2.2b: The shift from PC 2.2 to PC 2.3 will take place under continued grazing or frequent fires (less than 10 year intervals). These disturbances will hinder the new growth of shrubs, leading to a state dominated by non-native annual grasses and forbs.

## **State 7**

### **State 3 - Plant Community 3.1**

#### **Community 7.1**

##### **State 3 - Plant Community 3.1**

This state is dominated by non-native annual grasses and forbs with no Channel Island scrub oak or Santa Cruz Island manzanita present. Extensive restoration efforts could transition this state back to PC 2.2.

### **Additional community tables**

**Table 5. Community 1.1 plant community composition**

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production (Kg/Hectare)	Foliar Cover (%)
<b>Shrub/Vine</b>					
1	<b>shrubs</b>			168–1121	
	island manzanita	ARIN2	<i>Arctostaphylos insularis</i>	56–336	–
	Channel Island scrub oak	QUPA6	<i>Quercus pacifica</i>	56–336	–
	island ceanothus	CEMEI2	<i>Ceanothus megacarpus</i> var. <i>insularis</i>	22–112	–
	island mountain mahogany	CEMOB	<i>Cercocarpus montanus</i> var. <i>blancheae</i>	22–112	–
	toyon	HEAR5	<i>Heteromeles arbutifolia</i>	6–112	–
	chamise	ADFA	<i>Adenostoma fasciculatum</i>	22–112	–
	island broom	LODE2	<i>Lotus dendroideus</i>	6–56	–
<b>Grass/Grasslike</b>					
2	<b>grasses</b>			56–224	
	compact brome	BRMA3	<i>Bromus madritensis</i>	56–168	–
	soft brome	BRHOH	<i>Bromus hordeaceus</i> ssp. <i>hordeaceus</i>	11–56	–
<b>Forb</b>					
3	<b>forbs</b>			1–73	
	southern bush monkeyflower	DILO6	<i>Diplacus longiflorus</i>	1–34	–
	climbing bedstraw	GANU	<i>Galium nuttallii</i>	1–34	–
	smooth cat's ear	HYGL2	<i>Hypochaeris glabra</i>	1–6	–

## Inventory data references

The following NRCS plots were used to describe this ecological site.

SCV-106 %

SCV-101 %

## Type locality

Location 1: Santa Barbara County, CA	
UTM zone	N
UTM northing	3764639
UTM easting	246449
General legal description	The site location is on Santa Cruz Island, approximately 1000' north of the South Ridge Road, about a half mile east of the Islay Canyon Road junction.

## Other references

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Junak, Steve; Ayers, Tina; Scott, Randy; Wilken, Dieter; and Young, David (1995). A Flora of Santa Cruz Island. Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, Santa Barbara, CA.

Keeley, Jon E. (2004). Impact of Antecedent Climate on Fire Regimes in Coastal California. International Journal of Wildland Fire, 2004, 13, 173-182.

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Keeley, Jon E. and Fotheringham C.J. (2001). Historic Fire Regime in Southern California shrublands. Conservation Biology, Volume 15, No. 6, December 2001. pp. 1536-1548.

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Uchytel, Ronald J. 1991. *Cercocarpus betuloides*. In: Fire Effects Information System, [Online]. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station, Fire Sciences Laboratory (Producer). Available: <http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/> [ 2005, June 29].

## Contributors

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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.

Author(s)/participant(s)	
Contact for lead author	
Date	
Approved by	
Approval date	
Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on	Annual Production

## Indicators

### 1. Number and extent of rills:

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2. **Presence of water flow patterns:**

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3. **Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:**

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4. **Bare ground from Ecological Site Description or other studies (rock, litter, lichen, moss, plant canopy are not bare ground):**

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5. **Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies:**

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6. **Extent of wind scoured, blowouts and/or depositional areas:**

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7. **Amount of litter movement (describe size and distance expected to travel):**

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8. **Soil surface (top few mm) resistance to erosion (stability values are averages - most sites will show a range of values):**

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9. **Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness):**

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10. **Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:**

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11. **Presence and thickness of compaction layer (usually none; describe soil profile features which may be mistaken for compaction on this site):**

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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:

Sub-dominant:

Other:

Additional:

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13. **Amount of plant mortality and decadence (include which functional groups are expected to show mortality or decadence):**

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14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth ( in):**

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15. **Expected annual annual-production (this is TOTAL above-ground annual-production, not just forage annual-production):**

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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:**

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17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:**

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