

Ecological site R023XY420OR

Shallow Granular Clayey 10-12 PZ

Last updated: 4/10/2025
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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.

Ecological site concept

Currently there is only a draft of the initial concept for this ecological site. The initial concept for this site places it within the Clayey Mesic Plateaus 8-14 PZ Wyoming Big Sagebrush and Thurber's Needlegrass Ecological Site Group. To view the General STM and other information available for this ESG please go to <https://edit.jornada.nmsu.edu/catalogs/esg/023X/R023XY909OR>

This site had a limited distribution on Lookout soils. The documented plant community conforms well to the group's modal site with a higher annual production.

Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	Not specified
Shrub	(1) <i>Artemisia tridentata ssp. wyomingensis</i>
Herbaceous	(1) <i>Pseudoroegneria spicata ssp. spicata</i>

Physiographic features

This site occurs on terraces, rolling uplands, and mountain foothills. Slopes range from 2 to 15%. Elevation varies from 4200 to 5,300 feet.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Terrace
Elevation	1,280–1,615 m
Slope	2–15%

Aspect	Aspect is not a significant factor
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Climatic features

The annual precipitation ranges from 10 to 12 inches, most of which occurs in the form of snow during the months of December through March. Localized convection storms occasionally occur during the summer. The soil temperature regime is frigid with a mean air temperature of 44 degrees F. Temperature extremes range from 100 to -30 degrees F. The frost free period ranges from less than 50 to 90 days. The optimum growth period for native plants is from April through June.

Table 3. Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (average)	70 days
Freeze-free period (average)	
Precipitation total (average)	279 mm

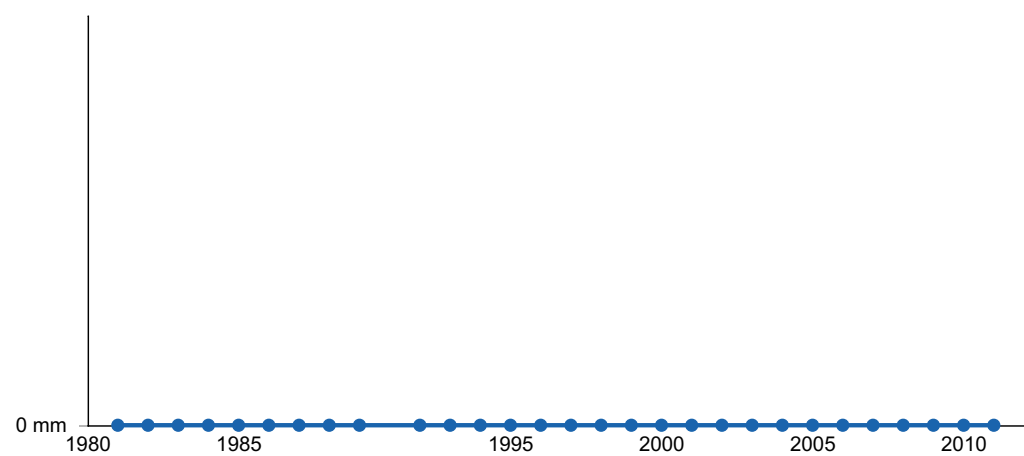


Figure 1. Annual precipitation pattern

Influencing water features

Soil features

The soils have a very thin, loamy surface layer over an abrupt textural change to a clayey subsoil. Typically the surface layer is 1 to 4 inches thick and has an ashy loam texture. The upper subsoil has strong very fine blocky or medium granular structure and a clay texture. Permeability is slow. Drainage class is moderately well. The surface layer is commonly saturated in late winter or spring. Available water holding capacity is about 2 inches in the surface and upper subsoil layers.

Table 4. Representative soil features

Surface texture	(1) Loam
Family particle size	(1) Clayey

Ecological dynamics

The potential native plant community is dominated by Wyoming sagebrush and bluebunch wheatgrass. Sandberg bluegrass, Cusick bluegrass, and spiny hopsage are present. Vegetative composition of the community is approximately 50 percent grasses, 10 percent forbs, and 40 percent shrubs.

5. Range in Characteristics

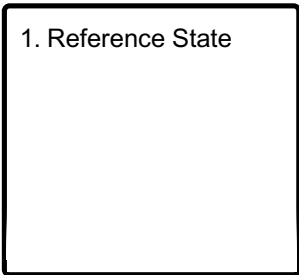
Sandberg bluegrass and bottlebrush squirreltail increase and bluebunch wheatgrass decrease as depth to an abruptic clay layer decreases . Deep to the abruptic clay layer will effect production totals. If significant soil loss occurs or the site experiences prolonged wet periods the site may grade into a Claypan 10-12 PZ site

6. Response to Disturbance

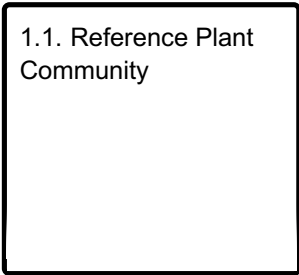
Disturbances, such as overgrazing, will only cause slight deterioration of the site. Sandberg bluegrass, bottlebrush squirreltail , broom snakeweed and green rabbitbrush will increase in dominance while bluebunch wheatgrass will decline.

State and transition model

Ecosystem states



State 1 submodel, plant communities



State 1
Reference State

Community 1.1

Reference Plant Community

Table 5. Annual production by plant type

Plant Type	Low (Kg/Hectare)	Representative Value (Kg/Hectare)	High (Kg/Hectare)
Grass/Grasslike	168	224	280
Shrub/Vine	135	179	224
Forb	34	45	56
Total	337	448	560

Additional community tables

Table 6. Community 1.1 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production (Kg/Hectare)	Foliar Cover (%)
Grass/Grasslike					
1	Moderately deep-rooted, perennial bunchgrass			45–135	
	bluebunch wheatgrass	PSSP6	<i>Pseudoroegneria spicata</i>	45–135	—
2	Moderately deep-rooted, perennial bunchgrass			9–45	
	squirreldail	ELEL5	<i>Elymus elymoides</i>	9–45	—
3	Shallow rooted, perennial bunchgrass			9–45	
	Sandberg bluegrass	POSE	<i>Poa secunda</i>	9–45	—
4	Other perennial grasses			9–27	
	Thurber's needlegrass	ACTH7	<i>Achnatherum thurberianum</i>	0–9	—
	Cusick's bluegrass	POCU3	<i>Poa cusickii</i>	0–9	—
Forb					
7	Perennial Forbs			18–36	
	tapertip hawksbeard	CRAC2	<i>Crepis acuminata</i>	4–9	—
	fleabane	ERIGE2	<i>Erigeron</i>	4–9	—
	buckwheat	ERIOG	<i>Eriogonum</i>	4–9	—
	phlox	PHLOX	<i>Phlox</i>	4–9	—
8	Other perennial forbs			4–22	

	onion	ALLIU	<i>Allium</i>	0–4	–
	low pussytoes	ANDI2	<i>Antennaria dimorpha</i>	0–4	–
	milkvetch	ASTRA	<i>Astragalus</i>	0–4	–
	Douglas' dustymaiden	CHDO	<i>Chaenactis douglasii</i>	0–4	–
	desertparsley	LOMAT	<i>Lomatium</i>	0–4	–
	lupine	LUPIN	<i>Lupinus</i>	0–4	–
	beardtongue	PENST	<i>Penstemon</i>	0–4	–
Shrub/Vine					
11	Non-sprouting Shrub			90–135	
	Wyoming big sagebrush	ARTRW8	<i>Artemisia tridentata ssp. wyomingensis</i>	90–135	–
12	Shrub			9–22	
	spiny hopsage	GRSP	<i>Grayia spinosa</i>	9–22	–
13	Other Shrubs			9–22	
	yellow rabbitbrush	CHVI8	<i>Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus</i>	0–9	–
	broom snakeweed	GUSA2	<i>Gutierrezia sarothrae</i>	0–9	–
	littleleaf horsebrush	TEGL	<i>Tetradymia glabrata</i>	0–9	–

Animal community

Wildlife:

Antelope
Deer
Rodents
Coyotes
Songbirds

Hydrological functions

The soils are in hydrologic group C. The soils of this site have slow permeability and a restrictive layer.

Type locality

Location 1: Malheur County, OR

Township/Range/Section	T29 S R38 E S28
General legal description	About 2 miles NW of Ryegrass Creek Ranch.

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	01/22/2026
Approved by	Kendra Moseley
Approval date	
Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on	Annual Production

Indicators

1. Number and extent of rills:

2. Presence of water flow patterns:

3. Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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:

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

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

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

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:**

17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:**
