USDA Natural Resources
Conservation Service

Ecological site R027XY014NV
COARSE SILTY 4-8 P.Z.

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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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Date	07/12/2012
Approved by	Kendra Moseley
Approval date	
Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on	Annual Production

Indicators

1. **Number and extent of rills:** None

2. **Presence of water flow patterns:** Water flow patterns are rare to common depending on site location relative to major inflow areas.

3. **Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:** None

4. **Bare ground from Ecological Site Description or other studies (rock, litter, lichen, moss, plant canopy are not bare ground):** Bare Ground ± 60%

5. **Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies:** None

6. **Extent of wind scoured, blowouts and/or depositional areas:** None

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

annual & perennial forbs) expected to move distance of slope length during periods of intense summer convection storms or run in of early spring snow melt flows. Persistent litter (large woody material) will remain in place except during unusual flooding (ponding) events.

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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):** Soil stability values will range from 1 to 4. (To be field tested.)

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9. **Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness):** Structure of soil surface is thin to medium platy. Soil surface colors are light grays or pale browns and soils are typified by an ochric epipedon. Organic matter is typically < 1 percent.

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10. **Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:** Shrubs and deep-rooted perennial herbaceous bunchgrasses aid in infiltration. Shrub canopy and associated litter break raindrop impact and provide opportunity for snow catch and accumulation on site.

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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):** Compacted layers are none. Subangular blocky or massive subsurface layers are normal for this site and are not to be interpreted as compaction.

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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: deep-rooted, cool season, perennial bunchgrasses > salt-desert shrubs (winterfat & budsage)

    Sub-dominant: shallow-rooted cool season, perennial bunchgrasses > deep-rooted, cool season, perennial forbs = fibrous, shallow-rooted, cool season, perennial and annual forbs >warm season rhizomatous perennial grasses =shallow-rooted, warm season perennial bunchgrasses

    Other:

    Additional:

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13. **Amount of plant mortality and decadence (include which functional groups are expected to show mortality or decadence):** Dead branches within individual shrubs common and standing dead shrub canopy material may be as much as 30% of total woody canopy.

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14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth (in):** Under canopy and between plant interspaces (10-20%) and depth (± ¼ in.).

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15. **Expected annual annual-production (this is TOTAL above-ground annual-production, not just forage annual-production):** For normal or average growing season (March thru May) ± 500 lbs/ac. Favorable years ± 700 lbs/ac;

unfavorable years ± 350 lbs/ac

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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:** Potential invaders include cheatgrass, annual mustards, annual kochia, Russian thistle, and halogeton.

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17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:** All functional groups should reproduce in average (or normal) and above average growing season years.
