

Ecological site R028AY014NV GRAVELLY SANDY LOAM 5-8 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	05/20/2013
Approved by	
Approval date	
Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on	Annual Production

Indicators

- Number and extent of rills:** Rills are none to rare. A few short rills (<1m) may occur on steeper slopes after summer convection storms. These will begin to heal during the next growing season.

- Presence of water flow patterns:** Water flow patterns are none to rare, but can occur in areas subjected to summer convection storms. Flow patterns short (< 1m), meandering, and stable.

- Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:** Pedestals are none to rare with occurrence typically limited to areas within water flow patterns. Pedestalling of plants may also occur after extended drought periods with vegetation die-off and wind erosion becomes severe. Terracettes are typically non-existent.

- Bare ground from Ecological Site Description or other studies (rock, litter, lichen, moss, plant canopy are not bare ground):** Bare Ground 20-30% depending on amount of surface rock fragments.

- Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies:** None

- Extent of wind scoured, blowouts and/or depositional areas:** Wind scouring is typically rare, but is expected after an extended severe drought period.

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7. **Amount of litter movement (describe size and distance expected to travel):** Fine litter (foliage from grasses and annual & perennial forbs) expected to move distance of slope length during intense summer convection storms or rapid snowmelt events. Persistent litter (large woody material) will remain in place except during large rainfall 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 should be 1 to 4 on most soil textures found on this site (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):** Surface structure is very thin to thick platy or prismatic. Soil surface colors are grays and soils are typified by an ochric epipedon. Organic matter of the surface 2 to 3 inches is less than 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:** Sparse shrub canopy and associated litter provide some protection from raindrop impact and provide an opportunity for snow capture on this site. Deep-rooted perennial bunchgrasses (i.e. Indian ricegrass) enhance infiltration and reduce 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):** Compacted layers are none. Massive sub-surface horizons are not to be interpreted as compacted layers.
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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: Reference State: Salt-desert shrubs (shadscale & winterfat)
- Sub-dominant: deep-rooted, cool season, perennial bunchgrasses > warm-season, perennial grasses > associated shrubs > deep-rooted, cool season, perennial forbs > fibrous, shallow-rooted, cool season, annual and perennial forbs.
- Other: succulents
- 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 25% of total woody canopy; mature bunchgrasses commonly ($\pm 25\%$) have dead centers.
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14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth (in):** Between plant interspaces (15-25%) 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 (thru June) ± 400 lbs/ac; Favorable years ± 600 lbs/ac and

unfavorable years \pm 200 lbs/ac.

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 bur buttercup, halogeton, Russian thistle, annual mustards, and cheatgrass. Cheatgrass is most likely to invade after wildfire.
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17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:** All functional groups should reproduce in average and above average growing season years. Reduced growth and reproduction occurs in severe or extended drought periods.
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