

## Ecological site R028BY027NV SHALLOW CALCAREOUS SLOPE 14+ P.Z.

Accessed: 05/03/2024

### 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	11/18/2009
Approved by	PNovak-Echenique
Approval date	
Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on	Annual Production

### Indicators

- Number and extent of rills:** Rills are none to rare. A few may occur on steeper slopes after summer convection storms or rapid snowmelt. These will begin to heal during the following growing season.
- Presence of water flow patterns:** Water flow patterns are none to rare. Water flow patterns will be short (<1m) and disconnected. They are meandering and interrupted by plants and exposed rocks.
- Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:** Pedestals are rare to few. Occurrence is usually limited to areas of water flow patterns. Frost heaving of shallow rooted plants should not be considered an indicator of soil erosion. Terracettes are none to rare and are short and stable.
- Bare ground from Ecological Site Description or other studies (rock, litter, lichen, moss, plant canopy are not bare ground):** Bare Ground  $\pm$  10-25% 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:** None - rock fragments and vegetation protect the surface.

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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 4 to 6 on most soil textures found on this site.
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9. **Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness):** Surface structure is thick platy, subangular blocky, or fine granular. Soil surface colors are light grays and soils are typified by a mollic epipedon. Organic carbon of the surface 2 to 3 inches is typically 2 to 4 percent dropping off quickly below. Organic matter content can be more or less depending on micro-topography.
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10. **Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:** Perennial herbaceous plants (especially deep-rooted bunchgrasses) slow runoff and increase infiltration. Shrubs 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 structure or subsoil calcic horizons should 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: Deep-rooted, cool season, perennial bunchgrasses > low shrubs (black sagebrush)
- Sub-dominant: Shallow-rooted, cool season, perennial grasses > associated shrubs > deep-rooted, cool season, perennial forbs = fibrous, shallow-rooted, cool season, perennial forbs = annual forbs.
- Other:
- Additional: With an extended fire return interval, the shrub component will increase at the expense of the herbaceous component.
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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 shrubs are common and standing dead shrub canopy material may be as much as 35% of total shrub canopy; mature bunchgrasses (<25%) may have dead centers.
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14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth ( in):** Herbaceous litter within interspaces 10-20% and litter depth is  $\pm \frac{1}{4}$  inch.
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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 (through May)  $\pm 450$  lbs/ac. Favorable years  $\pm 600$  lbs/ac and unfavorable years  $\pm 300$  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 Russian thistle, annual mustards, cheatgrass, singleleaf pinyon and Utah juniper. Singleleaf pinyon and Utah juniper may increase and eventually dominate this site.
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17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:** All functional groups should reproduce in average (or normal) and above average growing season years. Reduced growth and reproduction occurs during extreme or extended drought conditions.
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