Ecological site R034AY122WY
Loamy Green River and Great Divide Basins (Ly)

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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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Approval date	
Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on	Annual Production

Indicators

1. **Number and extent of rills:** Rare to nonexistent. Where present, short and widely spaced.

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

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

4. **Bare ground from Ecological Site Description or other studies (rock, litter, lichen, moss, plant canopy are not bare ground):** Bare ground can range from 20-50%.

5. **Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies:** Active gullies should not be present.

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

7. **Amount of litter movement (describe size and distance expected to travel):** Herbaceous litter expected to move only in small amounts (to leeward side of shrubs) due to wind. Large woody debris from sagebrush will show no

movement.

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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 Index ratings range from 3 (interspaces) to 6 (under plant canopy), but average values should be 3.0 or greater.

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9. **Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness):** Typically an A-horizon of 3-12 inches (7-30 cm) with weak to medium sub-angular blocky or sometimes granular or platy structure that is brown to grayish brown (i.e. 10YR 5/3 or 5/2) in color with OM of .5 to 1%.

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10. **Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:** Plant community consists of 55-70% grasses, 15% forbs, and 15-30% shrubs. Evenly distributed plant canopy (30-50%) and litter plus moderate to moderately rapid infiltration rates result in minimal runoff. Basal cover is typically less than 5% for this site and does very little to effect runoff on this 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):** None. A coarse, dry subsurface will often refuse a probe, causing misidentification of a compaction layer. Most soil profiles must be described by hand dug holes.

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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: Mid-size, cool season bunchgrasses>> cool season rhizomatous grasses=perennial shrubs>perennial forbs>short, cool season bunchgrasses

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13. **Amount of plant mortality and decadence (include which functional groups are expected to show mortality or decadence):** Minimal decadence, typically associated with shrub component.

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14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth (in):** Litter ranges from 5-35% of total canopy measurement with total litter (including beneath the plant canopy) from 10-60% expected. Herbaceous litter depth is typically very shallow, ranging from 1-5mm. Woody litter can be up to a couple inches (4-6cm).

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15. **Expected annual annual-production (this is TOTAL above-ground annual-production, not just forage annual-production):** English: 300-700 lb/ac (500 lb/ac average); Metric: 336-784 kg/ha (560 kg/ha average).

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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:** Bare ground greater than 60% is the most common indicator of a threshold being crossed. Rabbitbrush, Sandberg bluegrass, and phlox are common increasers. Annual weeds such as halogeton, kochia, and Russian thistle are common invasive species in disturbed sites.

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17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:** All species are capable of reproducing, except in drought years.