

Ecological site R034AY176WY Very Shallow Green River and Great Divide Basins (VS)

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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)	K. Clause, E. Bainter
Contact for lead author	karen.clause@wy.usda.gov or 307-367-2257
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Approved by	Kirt Walstad
Approval date	
Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on	Annual Production

Indicators

- Number and extent of rills:** Some rills to be expected on this site. Depending on slope, rills range from .5-2 inches (1-5 cm) wide and are found every 3-6 feet (1-2 m).

- Presence of water flow patterns:** Some observable.

- Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:** Slight pedestalling evident.

- Bare ground from Ecological Site Description or other studies (rock, litter, lichen, moss, plant canopy are not bare ground):** Bare ground can range from 50-75%.

- Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies:** Active gullies, where present, should be rare.

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

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

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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 1 (interspaces) to 5 (under plant canopy), but average values should be 2.0 or greater.
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9. **Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness):** Currently no soil series are correlated to this ecological site. Soil Organic Matter of less than .5% is expected.
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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 65-75% grasses, 10% forbs, and 15-25% shrubs. Minimal plant canopy (10-40%) and litter, steep slopes, plus moderate infiltration rates result in slight to moderate runoff. Basal cover is typically less than 5% 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):** No compaction layer exists, but shallow depth to and exposed bedrock may be mistaken for a compaction layer.
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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/trees>short, cool season bunchgrasses=perennial forbs
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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/tree component.
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14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth (in):** Litter ranges from 5-15% of total canopy measurement with total litter (including beneath the plant canopy) from 5-30% expected. Herbaceous litter depth is typically very shallow, ranging from 1-5mm. Woody litter can be up to several inches (>8 cm).
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15. **Expected annual annual-production (this is TOTAL above-ground annual-production, not just forage annual-production):** English: 200-400 lb/ac (300 lb/ac average); Metric: 224-448 kg/ha (336 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 85% and the presence of cheatgrass are the most common indicators of a threshold being crossed. Rabbitbrush, Sandberg bluegrass, and phlox are common increasers. Annual weeds such as cheatgrass, halogeton, kochia, and Russian thistle are common invasive species in disturbed sites.

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