Ecological site DX035X03E005
Salt Flats

Accessed: 05/17/2024

General information

Provisional. A provisional ecological site description has undergone quality control and quality assurance review. It contains a working state and transition model and enough information to identify the ecological site.

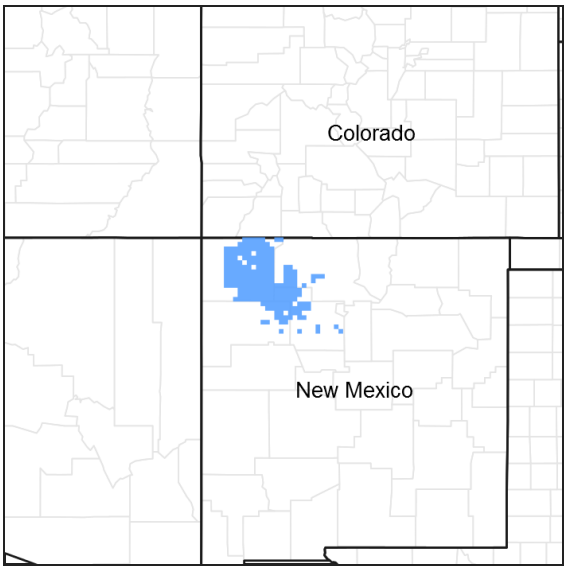


Figure 1. Mapped extent

Areas shown in blue indicate the maximum mapped extent of this ecological site. Other ecological sites likely occur within the highlighted areas. It is also possible for this ecological site to occur outside of highlighted areas if detailed soil survey has not been completed or recently updated.

Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	Not specified
Shrub	Not specified
Herbaceous	Not specified

Legacy ID

R035XB005NM

Physiographic features

This site occurs on plateaus, mesas, and upland valley bottoms. It usually receives additional moisture from adjacent uplands. The site is usually dissected by drainageways which often erode quite readily when the vegetation has deteriorated, leaving a relatively deep arroyo with almost vertical banks. Slopes are level to moderately sloping, ranging from 0 to 8 percent. Elevations are from 5,000 to 6,400 feet above sea level.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Mesa (2) Valley floor

Flooding duration	Very brief (4 to 48 hours) to brief (2 to 7 days)
Flooding frequency	Rare to frequent
Ponding duration	Very brief (4 to 48 hours) to brief (2 to 7 days)
Ponding frequency	Rare to frequent
Elevation	1,524–1,951 m
Slope	0–8%
Aspect	Aspect is not a significant factor

Climatic features

This site has an arid, mild, dry climate with distinct seasonal temperature variations and large annual and diurnal temperature changes.

Mean annual precipitation varies from 7 to 10 inches. Deviations of 4 inches or more are quite common. Distribution is 65% during the native-plant growth period, which is from April through September. May and June are the dry months. During July, August, and September, 3.5 inches of precipitation influences the presence and production of warm-season plants. Late-fall and winter moisture is conducive to the production of cool-season plants, which usually begin growth in March and end with plant maturity and seed dissemination. This usually takes place in the early part of June when the moisture deficiency and warmer temperatures occur. The Gulf of Mexico is the principal source of moisture for summer precipitation, which is characterized by brief afternoon thunderstorms. Winter moisture occurs as light rain or snow.

Temperatures vary from a monthly mean of 75 degrees F in July to 27 degrees F in January, and from an annual maximum of 106 degrees F to an annual minimum of -35 degrees F. The average last killing frost in the spring is May 8, and the average first killing frost in the fall is October 10. The frost-free season is approximately 160 days. Temperatures are conducive for native grass and forb growth from April through September. Maximum shrub growth occurs in the spring months.

The wind blows most frequently from an easterly direction; however, a majority of the stronger winds (10 to 25 miles per hour) are from a westerly quadrant. Spring is the windiest season. Average hourly wind velocities are near 6 miles per hour. Spring and summer winds increase transpiration rates of native plants and rapidly dry the surface soil. Small soil particles are often displaced by the wind near the soil surface and often results in structural damage to native plants, especially young seedlings.

Climate data were obtained from http://www.wrcc.sage.dri.edu/summary/climsmnm.html web site using 50% probability for freeze-free and frost-free seasons using 28.5 degrees F and 32.5 degrees F, respectively.

Table 3. Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (average)	151 days
Freeze-free period (average)	177 days
Precipitation total (average)	254 mm

Influencing water features

Soil features

The soils on this site are generally deep, except for Huerfano, which is shallow. They are well-drained and sodium-affected. They have thin, light-colored surfaces with texture ranging from very fine sandy loam to silty clay loam about 2 inches thick. The subsoil is clay loam and clay. The substratum textures are sandy clay loam, clay loam, and clay. Depth to sedimentary rock ranges from 10 to 60 inches or more.

The soils formed in material weathered from shale and sandstone. Water intake rate is slow to very slow.

Permeability is moderately slow to very slow. Root penetration is restricted by the sodium content. Available water-holding capacity is 1.2 to 7.65 inches in a 5-foot profile. Potential wind and water erosion is high.

Table 4. Representative soil features

Surface texture	(1) Clay loam (2) Fine sandy loam (3) Silty clay
Family particle size	(1) Clayey
Drainage class	Well drained
Permeability class	Slow
Soil depth	25–183 cm
Available water capacity (0-101.6cm)	0–22.86 cm
Electrical conductivity (0-101.6cm)	0–16 mmhos/cm
Sodium adsorption ratio (0-101.6cm)	0–30
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (0-101.6cm)	7.4–9.7
Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (Depth not specified)	0–25%

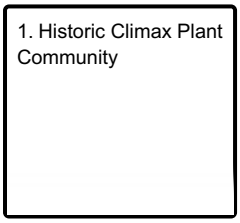
Ecological dynamics

The aspect of vegetation on this site is a shrub/grass mixture characterized by short- and mid-grasses. Shrubs are quite noticeable. Perennial forbs are a minor component of the plant community. Annual forbs and grasses occur in relative abundance during spring months in years of above-average growing conditions.

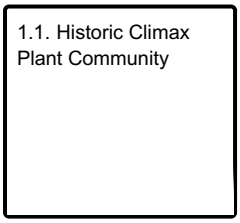
Additional plants which usually grow on this site in varying amounts dependent on current growing season conditions are: fluffgrass, annual bromes, Rocky Mountain beeplant, verbena, sunflowers, cocklebur, pricklypear cacti, saltcedar, mat muhly, Russian thistle, and sixweeks fescue.

State and transition model

Ecosystem states



State 1 submodel, plant communities



State 1
Historic Climax Plant Community

Community 1.1
Historic Climax Plant Community

The aspect of vegetation on this site is a shrub/grass mixture characterized by short- and mid-grasses. Shrubs are quite noticeable. Perennial forbs are a minor component of the plant community. Annual forbs and grasses occur in relative abundance during spring months in years of above-average growing conditions. Additional plants which usually grow on this site in varying amounts dependent on current growing season conditions are: fluffgrass, annual bromes, Rocky Mountain beeplant, verbena, sunflowers, cocklebur, pricklypear cacti, saltcedar, mat muhly, Russian thistle, and sixweeks fescue.

Table 5. Annual production by plant type

Plant Type	Low (Kg/Hectare)	Representative Value (Kg/Hectare)	High (Kg/Hectare)
Grass/Grasslike	269	471	673
Forb	45	78	112
Total	**314**	**549**	**785**

Table 6. Ground cover

Tree foliar cover	0%
Shrub/vine/liana foliar cover	0%
Grass/grasslike foliar cover	0%
Forb foliar cover	0%
Non-vascular plants	0%
Biological crusts	0%
Litter	10%
Surface fragments >0.25" and <=3"	0%
Surface fragments >3"	0%
Bedrock	0%
Water	0%
Bare ground	60%

Figure 5. Plant community growth curve (percent production by month). NM0905, R035XB005NM-Salt Flats-HCPC. A mixed short/mid-grass and shrub land with a minor forb component..

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
0	0	5	7	10	10	25	30	10	3	0	0

Additional community tables

Table 7. Community 1.1 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production (Kg/Hectare)	Foliar Cover (%)
Grass/Grasslike					
1				157–196	
	alkali sacaton	SPAI	*Sporobolus airoides*	157–196	–
2				39–78	
	western wheatgrass	PASM	*Pascopyrum smithii*	39–78	–
3				24–39	
	spike dropseed	SPCO4	*Sporobolus contractus*	24–39	–

	sand dropseed	SPCR	*Sporobolus cryptandrus*	24–39	–
4				24–39	
	threeawn	ARIST	*Aristida*	24–39	–
5				118–157	
	James' galleta	PLJA	*Pleuraphis jamesii*	118–157	–
6				24–78	
	needle and thread	HECO26	*Hesperostipa comata*	24–78	–
7				39–78	
	Indian ricegrass	ACHY	*Achnatherum hymenoides*	39–78	–
8				39–78	
	blue grama	BOGR2	*Bouteloua gracilis*	39–78	–
9				78–118	
	saltgrass	DISP	*Distichlis spicata*	78–118	–
Forb					
10				24–39	
	iodinebush	ALOC2	*Allenrolfea occidentalis*	24–39	–
	herb sophia	DESO2	*Descurainia sophia*	24–39	–
	ragwort	SENEC	*Senecio*	24–39	–
11				24–39	
	Cuman ragweed	AMPS	*Ambrosia psilostachya*	24–39	–
	woolly plantain	PLPA2	*Plantago patagonica*	24–39	–
Shrub/Vine					
12				39–78	
	greasewood	SAVE4	*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*	39–78	–
13				78–118	
	fourwing saltbush	ATCA2	*Atriplex canescens*	78–118	–
14				39–78	
	shadscale saltbush	ATCO	*Atriplex confertifolia*	39–78	–
15				24–39	
	winterfat	KRLA2	*Krascheninnikovia lanata*	24–39	–
16				24–39	
	big sagebrush	ARTR2	*Artemisia tridentata*	24–39	–
17				24–39	
	yellow rabbitbrush	CHVI8	*Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus*	24–39	–
18				24–39	
	black sagebrush	ARNO4	*Artemisia nova*	24–39	–
19				24–39	
	broom snakeweed	GUSA2	*Gutierrezia sarothrae*	24–39	–
20	**succulent**			24–39	

Animal community

Habitat for Wildlife:
This ecological site provides habitats which support a resident animal community that is characterized by pronghorn antelope, coyote, desert cottontail, Botta’s pocket gopher, deer mouse, raven, scaled quail, house finch,

western spadefoot toad, and prairie rattlesnake. The loggerhead shrike and mockingbird are summer residents of this site.

Hydrological functions

The runoff curve numbers are determined by field investigations using hydrologic cover conditions and hydrologic soil groups.

Hydrologic Interpretations
Soil Series----------Hydrologic Group
Canyada----------?
Elias----------?
Huerfano----------?
Lybrook----------?
Muff----------?
Notal----------?
Sparank----------?
Tasaya----------?
Tsosie----------?
Uffens----------?

Recreational uses

No Data

Wood products

No Data

Other products

Grazing:
This site is well suited for grazing use, when grazed within its capabilities, by cattle, sheep, horses, antelope, deer, and burros.

Under the pressure of uncontrolled grazing, the potential plant community deteriorates, and there is a marked increase in relative abundance of shrubs, cacti, and perennial and annual forbs. In severe deterioration, the site will consist predominantly of shrubs, annual forbs, and annual grasses, with lesser amounts of perennial grasses and large areas of unprotected soils.

Other information

Guide to Suggested Initial Stocking Rate Acres per Animal Unit Month

Similarity Index----------Ac/AUM
100 - 76----------5.0 – 9.0
75 – 51----------6.0 – 11.0
50 – 26----------9.0 – 18.0
25 – 0----------18.0+

Type locality

Location 1: San Juan County, NM	
Township/Range/Section	T31 N R13 W S12
General legal description	A typical pedon of Uffens fine sandy loam, in San Juan County, New Mexico, 1,587 feet south, 1,670 feet west of the northeast corner of Section 12, T31N, R13W.

Other references

Data collection for this site was done in conjunction with the progressive soil surveys within the San Juan River Valley, Mesas and Plateaus, Major Land Resource Area 35 of New Mexico. This site has been mapped and correlated with soils in the following soil surveys: San Juan, McKinley.

Characteristic soils are:
Huerfano, Notal, Tasaya, Uffens

Other soils included are:
Canyada, Elias, Lybrook, Muff, Sparank, Tsosie, Wet Spots

Contributors

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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)	
Contact for lead author	
Date	
Approved by	
Approval date	
Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on	Annual Production

Indicators

1. **Number and extent of rills:**

   _____

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

   _____

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

   _____

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

   _____

5. **Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies:**

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

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

8. **Soil surface (top few mm) resistance to erosion (stability values are averages - most sites will show a range of values):**

9. **Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness):**

10. **Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:**

11. **Presence and thickness of compaction layer (usually none; describe soil profile features which may be mistaken for compaction on this site):**

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:

13. **Amount of plant mortality and decadence (include which functional groups are expected to show mortality or decadence):**

14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth (in):**

15. **Expected annual annual-production (this is TOTAL above-ground annual-production, not just forage annual-production):**

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:

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17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:**
