

Ecological site R036XB001NM Breaks

Last updated: 12/23/2024
Accessed: 04/11/2026

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.

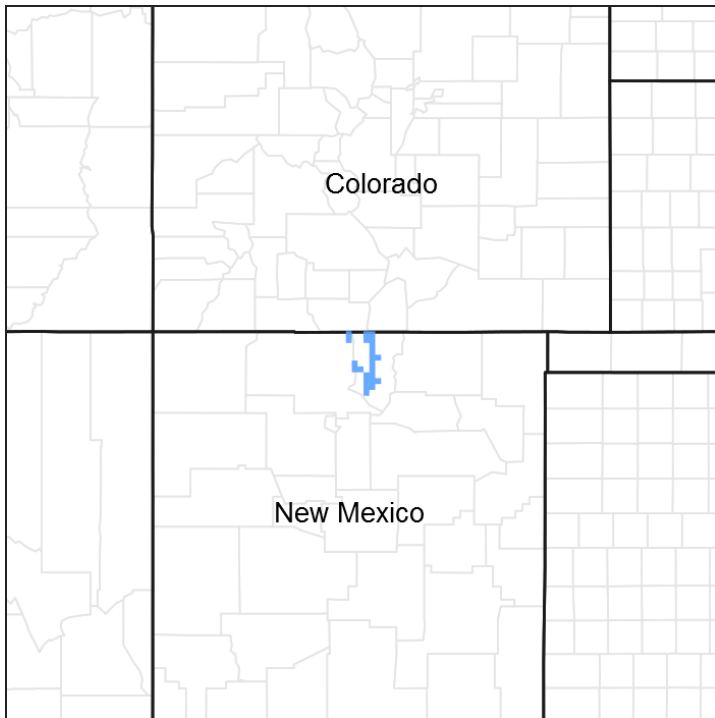


Figure 1. Mapped extent

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.

MLRA notes

Major Land Resource Area (MLRA): 036X–Southwestern Plateaus, Mesas, and Foothills

Breaks is an ecological site that is found on hills, ridges and knolls in MLRA 36 (Southwestern Plateaus Mesas and Foothills). The southern portion MLRA 36 is illustrated

yellow color on the map where this site occurs. The site concept was established in the Southwestern Plateaus, Mesas, and Foothills – Warm Semiarid Mesas and Plateaus LRU (Land Resource Area). This LRU has 10 to 16 inches of precipitation and has a mesic temperature regime. This site has summer precipitation. Lower part of MLRA 36 is dominated by summer precipitation for monsoons, unlike the upper part of MLRA 36 which is almost an equal split.

Classification relationships

NRCS & BLM:

Major Land Resource Area 36, Southwestern Plateaus Mesas and Foothills (United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, 2006).

USFS:

313Bd Chaco Basin High Desert Shrubland and 313Be San Juan Basin North subsections < 313B Navaho Canyonlands Section < 313 Colorado Plateau Semi-Desert (Cleland, et al., 2007).

315Ha Central Rio Grande Intermontane, and 315Hb North Central Rio Grande Intermontane subsections < 315H Central Rio Grande Intermontane Section < 315 Southwest Plateau and Plains Dry Steppe and Shrub (Cleland, et al., 2007).

315Ad Chupadera High Plains Grassland subsections < 315A Pecos Valley Section < 315 Southwest Plateau and Plains Dry Steppe and Shrub (Cleland, et al., 2007).

331Jb San Luis Hills and 331Jd Southern San Luis Grasslands subsections < 331J Northern Rio Grande Basin Section < 331 Great Plains- Palouse Dry Steppe (Cleland, et al., 2007).

M313Bd Manzano Mountains Woodland subsection < Sacramento-Manzano Mountains Section < M313 Arizona-New Mexico Mountains Semi-Desert - Open Woodland - Coniferous Forest - Alpine Meadow

M331Fg Sangre de Cristo Mountains Woodland and M331Fh Sangre de Cristo Mountains Coniferous Forest subsection < M331F Southern Parks and Rocky Mountain Range Section < M331 Southern Rocky Mountain Steppe - Open Woodland - Coniferous Forest - Alpine Meadow

M331Gk Brazos Uplift and M331Gm Jemez and San Pedro Mountains Coniferous Forest subsections < M331G South Central Highlands Section < M331 Southern Rocky Mountain Steppe - Open Woodland - Coniferous Forest - Alpine Meadow

EPA:

21d Foothill Shrublands and 21f Sedimentary Mid-Elevation Forests < 21 Southern Rockies < 6.2 Western Cordillera < 6 Northwestern Forested Mountains (Griffith, 2006).

20c Semiarid Benchlands and Canyonlands < 20 Colorado Plateaus < 10.1 Cold Deserts < 10 North American Deserts (Griffith, 2006).

22m Albuquerque Basin, 22i San Juan/Chaco Tablelands and Mesas, 22h North Central New Mexico Valleys and Mesas, 22f Taos Plateau, and 22g Rio Grande Floodplain, < 22 Arizona/New Mexico Plateau < 10.1 Cold Deserts < 10 North American Deserts (Griffith, 2006).

USGS:

Colorado Plateau Province (Navajo and Datil Section) Southern Rocky Mountains Basin and Range (Mexican Highland and Sacramento Section)

Ecological site concept

The 36XB Breaks ecological site was drafted from the existing Breaks (R036XB001NM) range site MLRA 36XB (NRCS, 2003). This site occurs on canyon edges, side slopes, ridges, and benches. Surface textures range from loams to clay loams. It has an aridic ustic/ustic arid moisture regime and mesic temperature regime. The effective precipitation ranges from 10 to 16 inches.

Similar sites

| | |
|-------------|---|
| R036XB132NM | <p>Gravelly Hills Gravelly Hills - Slopes are (10-65%); Soils are very deep and skeletal and non-skeletal. Surface texture of gravelly to very gravelly fine sandy loam, very gravelly sandy loam, very cobbly loam, or gravelly loam with a sandy subsoil. Landforms are escarpments, fan piedmonts, mesas, hills, ridges and knolls.</p> |
|-------------|---|

Table 1. Dominant plant species

| | |
|------------|--|
| Tree | (1) <i>Pinus edulis</i> (2) <i>Juniperus</i> |
| Shrub | (1) <i>Artemisia tridentata</i> (2) <i>Atriplex canescens</i> |
| Herbaceous | (1) <i>Castilla</i> (2) <i>Eriogonum</i> |

Physiographic features

This site generally occurs along canyon edges, side slopes, ridges, and benches. It typically consists of a wide diversity in exposures, slopes, and soil textures. Rock outcrops are common along canyon edges. Slopes range from 10 to 55 percent. Elevation ranges from 6,000 to 7,500 feet above sea level. This site is common along the Rio Grande Gorge and its tributaries and on side slopes of basalt-topped mesas.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

| | |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| Landforms | (1) Scarp slope |
| Flooding frequency | None |
| Ponding frequency | None |
| Elevation | 1,829–2,286 m |
| Slope | 10–55% |
| Aspect | Aspect is not a significant factor |

Climatic features

This site has a semi-arid continental climate. There are distinct seasonal temperature variations. Mean annual precipitation varies from 10 to 16 inches. The overall climate is characterized by cold dry winters in which winter moisture is less than summer. Wide yearly and seasonal fluctuations are common for this climatic zone which can range from 5 to 25 inches. Of this, approximately 25-35% falls as snow, and 65-75% falls as rain between April 1 and November 1. The growing season is April through September. As much as half or more of the annual precipitation can be expected to come during the period of July through September. August is typically the wettest month of the year. The driest period is usually from November to April; and February is normally the driest month. During July, August, and September, 4 to 6 inches of precipitation influence the presence and production of warm-season plants. Fall and spring moisture is conducive to the growth of cool-season herbaceous plants and maximum shrub growth. Growth usually begins in March and ends with plant maturity and seed dissemination when the moisture deficiency and warmer temperatures occur in early June. There is also a period of growth in the fall. Summer precipitation is characterized by brief thunderstorms, normally occurring in the afternoon and evening. Winter moisture usually occurs as snow, which seldom lies on the ground for more than a few days. The average annual total snowfall is 29.1 inches. The snow depth usually ranges from 0 to 1 inches during the winter months. The highest snowfall record is 57.1 inches during the 1993-1994 winter. The frost-free period typically ranges from 110 to 145 days and the freeze free period is from 140 to 170 days. The last spring freeze is the middle of April to the first week of May. The first fall freeze is the middle of October to the first week of November. Mean daily annual air temperature is about 29°F to 69°F, averaging about 37°F for the winter and 67°F in the summer. The coldest winter temperature recorded was -20°F on January 6, 1971 and the warmest winter temperature recorded was 70°F on February 28, 1965. The coldest summer temperature recorded was 26°F on June 1, 1980. The hottest day on record is 100°F on July 9, 2003 and June 21, 1968. Data taken from Western Regional Climate Center (2017) for El Rito, New Mexico Climate Station.

Table 3. Representative climatic features

| | |
|-----------------------------|----------|
| Frost-free period (average) | 126 days |
|-----------------------------|----------|

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------|
| Freeze-free period (average) | 145 days |
| Precipitation total (average) | 330 mm |

Climate stations used

- (1) CUBA [USC00292241], Cuba, NM
- (2) SANTA FE 2 [USC00298085], Santa Fe, NM
- (3) EL RITO [USC00292820], El Rito, NM
- (4) LYBROOK [USC00295290], Dulce, NM
- (5) NAVAJO DAM [USC00296061], Navajo Dam, NM
- (6) ABIQUIU DAM [USC00290041], Gallina, NM
- (7) COCHITI DAM [USC00291982], Pena Blanca, NM

Influencing water features

This site is not influenced by water from wetlands or streams.

Soil features

The soils range from very shallow to moderately deep. Typically, they are high in coarse fragments throughout the soil profile. Surface textures range from loams to clay loams. Permeability is moderately slow. Runoff is medium to rapid depending on slope, surface coarse fragments, and vegetation. Available water-holding capacity is low to very low.

This ecological site is currently correlated to only miscellaneous map unit (RcG) of rock outcrop in NM670.

Table 4. Representative soil features

| | |
|---|---|
| Surface texture | (1) Very gravelly loam (2) Stony clay loam (3) Cobbly |
| Family particle size | (1) Loamy |
| Drainage class | Well drained |
| Permeability class | Slow to moderately slow |
| Soil depth | 51–127 cm |
| Surface fragment cover ≤3" | 15–35% |
| Surface fragment cover >3" | 15–35% |
| Available water capacity (0-101.6cm) | 0–15.24 cm |

| | |
|---|--------|
| Subsurface fragment volume ≤3" (Depth not specified) | 15–35% |
| Subsurface fragment volume >3" (Depth not specified) | 15–35% |

Ecological dynamics

MLRA 36 occurs on the higher elevation portion of the Colorado Plateau. The Colorado Plateau is a physiographic province which exists throughout eastern Utah, western Colorado, western New Mexico and northern Arizona. It is characterized by uplifted plateaus, canyons and eroded features. The Colorado Plateau lies south of the Uintah Mountains, north of the Mogollon transition area, west of the Rocky Mountains, and east of the central Utah highlands. The higher elevation portion of the Colorado Plateau which is represented by MLRA 36 is characterized by broken topography, and lack of perennial water sources. This area has a long history of past prehistoric human use for years. MLRA 36 shows archaeological evidence indicating that pinyon-juniper woodlands were modified by prehistoric humans and not pristine and thus were altered at the time of European settlement (Cartledge & Propper, 1993). This area also included natural influences of herbivory, fire, and climate. This area rarely served as habitat for large herds of native herbivores or large frequent historic fires due to the broken topography. This site is extremely variable and plant community composition will vary with the water fluctuations on this site.

The lower part MLRA 36 developed under climatic conditions that include hot, dry summers with summer rains showers and little to no snow with the mild winter temperatures. This area has climatic fluctuations and prolonged droughts are common occurrences. Between an above average year and a drought year. Forbs are the most dynamic component of this community and can vary up to 4 fold (Passey et.al. 1982). The precipitation and climate of MLRA 36 are conducive to producing Pinyon/juniper, and sagebrush complexes with high productive sites in the bottoms of the canyons. Predominant species on the Colorado Plateau are Wyoming big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata* var. *wyomingensis*), mountain big sagebrush (*A. tridentata* var. *vaseyana*), and black sagebrush (*A. nova*), basin big sagebrush (*A. tridentata* var. *tridentata*), Utah juniper (*Juniperus utahensis*), one-seed juniper (*Juniperus monosperma*), and two-needle pinyon (*Pinus edulis*). One-seed juniper has the capability to discontinue active growth when moisture is limited but can resume growth when moisture availability improves. This growth pattern may represent an important adaptation allowing them to survive on very arid sites. It is possible that small trees may be killed by drought; mature one-seed junipers are resilient to drought, especially in comparison to two-needle pinyon (Johnsen, 1962).

The ability for an ecological site to carry fire depends primarily on the present fuel load and plant moisture content—sites with small fuel loads will burn more slowly and less intensely than sites with large fuel loads. Fire is an important aspect of grassland dominated ecological sites. According to the Fire Effects System literature review of one seed juniper

fire intervals are historically 5-100 years on desert grassland sites and 10 to 50 years on woodland sites with juniper and pinyon (Johnson, 2002). Modeling done with LANDFIRE successional modeling for southwestern pinyon-juniper communities which includes pinyon-juniper shrubland and pinyon-juniper woodland on the Colorado Plateau. The fire return interval is 10 to 203 years (USFS, 2012). Pinyon-Juniper woodland fires were both surface and crown fires. Periodic fire is believed to have played an important role in maintaining juniper savannas (Johnsen, 1962, Paysen, et. al., 2000) Mueggler (1976) stated that a fire-free period of 85 to 90 years was necessary for development of a mature juniper woodland. Recent decades of fire suppression have probably contributed to encroachment of juniper into grasslands (Lanner and Van Devender, 1998). Fires varied in intensity and frequency depending on the site's productivity. Fires were typically patchy, and formed mosaics on productive sites (Johnson, 2002, Gottgried, 1999, and Paysen, et.al, 2000). The time necessary for post-fire recovery of one-seed juniper has not been well documented. Data suggests that factors such as soil type and pre-burn community plant composition may influence the length of time required for recovery. Once established, one-seed juniper can bear seed as early as 10 years of age on some sites (Schott and Pieper, 1987). Shrub vegetation is able to reestablish from seed dispersal from the adjacent non burned sagebrush stands; however the process is relatively slow. Fire also decreases the extent of juniper/pinyon pine invasions, which allows the historic plant community to maintain integrity. When the plant community is burned shrubs decrease, while perennial and annual grasses increase. The perennial shrubs associated with this site are able to recover at a faster rate than the invading trees. When the site is degraded by the presence of invasive annuals, the fire return interval is shortened due to increased fuels. The shortened fire return interval is often sufficient to suppress the native plant community. Cheatgrass invaded one seed juniper stand has a fire return interval of < 10 years (Johnson, 2002).

Variability in climate, soils, aspect and complex biological processes will cause the plant communities to differ. These factors contributing to annual production variability include wildlife use, drought, and insects. Factors contributing to special variability include soil texture, depth, rock fragments, slope, aspect, and micro-topography. The species lists are representative and not a complete list of all occurring or potentially occurring species on this site. The species lists are not intended to cover the full range of conditions, species and responses of the site. The State & Transition model depicted for this site is based on available research, field observations and interpretations by experts and could change as knowledge increases. As more data is collected, some of these plant communities may be revised or removed, and new ones may be added. The following diagram does not necessarily depict all the transitions and states that this site may exhibit, but it does show some of the most common plant communities.

State and transition model

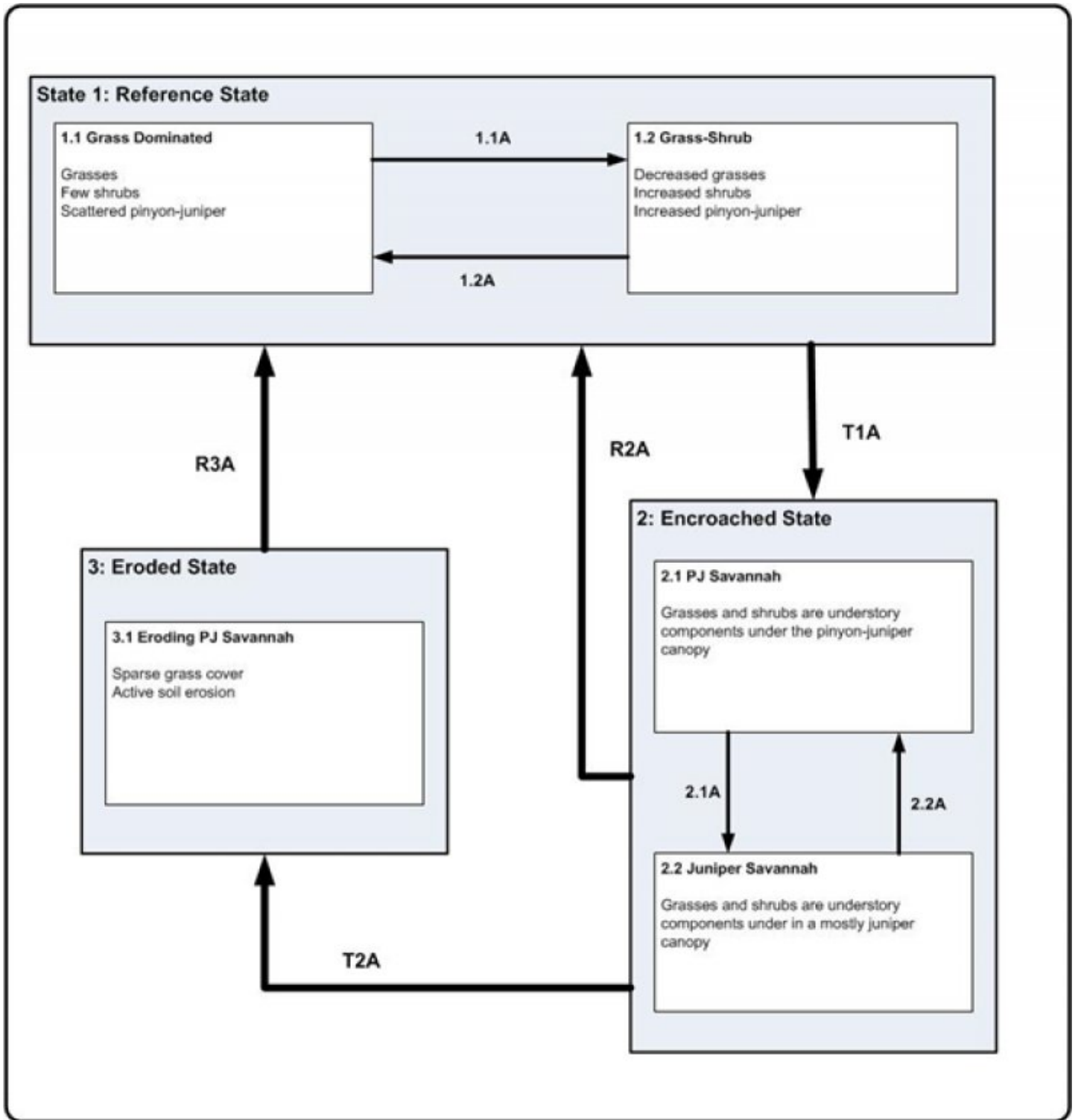


Figure 6. STM

Legend

T1A, T2A – repeated warm-season drought; excessive, low winter and spring precipitation; repeated improper grazing; fire suppression; erosion

R2A – tree/shrub control; fire, prescribed grazing

R3A – cut down PJ, lop and scatter limbs; erosion control, seeding

1.1A – repeated improper grazing; dry winter/spring; lack of fire

1.2A – dry winter and/or spring; wet climate cycle during the late spring/summer; fire

2.1A – drought, beetle kill, mortality, fire

2.2A – extended wet period, lack of fire

Figure 7. Legend

State 1 Reference

The reference state represents the plant communities and ecological dynamics of this ecological site. This state includes the biotic communities that become established on the ecological site under the natural disturbance regime prior to pre-European settlement. The main pathways on this site are fire and climate (drought/wet cycles). Drought is frequent on this site. The reference state is self-sustaining and resistant to change due to high resistance to natural disturbances and high resilience following natural disturbances. When natural disturbances occur, the rate of recovery is variable due to disturbance intensity. Once invasive plants establish, return to the reference state may not be possible. The potential plant community on this site is a mixture of grasses, forbs, and shrubs. Scrubby one-seed juniper and/or pinyon pine does occur on cooler exposures, but they make up a minor part of the plant community. *On south and west exposures, black grama may be the dominant grass species, but on cooler exposures it is a minor component. **At higher elevations and on northern exposures, these species are abundant components of the herbaceous community.

Community 1.1 Grass Dominated

Grass cover is fairly uniform with few large bare areas present. Rock fragments account for a considerable amount of ground cover. Shrubs and trees constitute a minor component of this site. Species composition varies with aspect and elevation. Evidence of erosion such as rills, gullies, and pedestalled grasses is infrequent.

Table 5. Annual production by plant type

| Plant Type | Low (Kg/Hectare) | Representative Value (Kg/Hectare) | High (Kg/Hectare) |
|-----------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Grass/Grasslike | 297 | 416 | 535 |
| Forb | 56 | 78 | 101 |
| Total | 353 | 494 | 636 |

Table 6. Ground cover

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--------|
| Tree foliar cover | 1-10% |
| Shrub/vine/liana foliar cover | 20-30% |
| Grass/grasslike foliar cover | 10-20% |
| Forb foliar cover | 1-5% |
| Non-vascular plants | 0% |
| Biological crusts | 0% |
| Litter | 1-10% |
| Surface fragments >0.25" and <=3" | 25-35% |
| Surface fragments >3" | 25-35% |
| Bedrock | 0% |
| Water | 0% |
| Bare ground | 25-35% |

Figure 9. Plant community growth curve (percent production by month). NM0001, R036XB001NM Breaks HCPC. R036XB001NM Breaks HCPC Mixed grass, forb, and shrubland with a minor pinyon/juniper component. Other species include: bottlebrush squirreltail, plains bristlegrass, dropseed spp., pingue, rabbitbrush, yucca spp., and broom snakeweed..

| Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 0 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 10 | 10 | 25 | 30 | 12 | 5 | 0 | 0 |

Community 1.2 Grass and Shrub

This community consists of shrubs with sparse understory. Scattered juniper and two-needle pinyon might be present. Biological crusts are typically well developed in the interspaces. Improper grazing use can aid the establishment of pinyon and juniper seedlings through reduced competition from grass loss, exposure of mineral soil which will result in accelerated erosion, and reduction of fuel to carry fires. Two-needle pinyon and juniper are natural invaders if stands are found adjacent to this site.

Pathway 1.1A

Community 1.1 to 1.2

Community phase 1.1 transitions to community phase 1.2 to a state that is dominated by unpalatable and/or drought resistant shrubs and grasses. This pathway happens when fire does not occur within the historical fire regime interval for the site. Continuous heavy grazing, drought and/or insects can reduce grasses, and palatable shrubs. This will lead to an old decadent stand of shrubs with little to no understory. This allows the possibility of juniper and/or two-needle pinyon to become established on the site.

Pathway 1.2A

Community 1.2 to 1.1

This transition is caused by naturally occurring fires, dry winter and/or spring will help in decreasing shrub establishment; and/or wetter climate during late spring and summer will aid in grass and forb establishment. With a mature shrub community, this pathway can be caused by high intensity fire that burns hot enough to remove shrubs. Low-intensity fire after shrubs has had a chance to set seed, proper grazing and or browsing by native ungulates.

State 2

Encroached

This state (Encroached State) is characterized by a noticeable increase in P-J and decreased grass cover and production compared to the Reference State. Other species that may increase include pingue and broom snakeweed. Grass cover is patchy, large bare areas may be present under P-J canopies. Evidence of erosion such as small rills and pedestalled plants may be present. 10 to 15% tree species canopy cover is usually characterized of this state.

Community 2.1

Pinyon-Juniper Savanna

Proportion of pinyon pine in the Encroached State varies with cycles of drought (reduces the ability of pinyon pine to manufacture pitch which is used to expel boring beetles), insect damage, and subsequent mortality and possible fire. Following fire, there may be a brief (4 to 5 years) flush of forbs and grasses. This increase in fine fuels sets the stage for fire to return the site to the reference state. Without fire, juniper increases in subsequent dry years, pinyon increases in subsequent wet years. Succulents replace grasses in the Encroached State under repeated, continuous grazing.

Community 2.2

Juniper Savanna

The overall aspect of this community phase is grasses and shrubs with sparse pinyon and Utah juniper. The herbaceous understory has a mix of grasses and forbs.

Pathway 2.2A

Community 2.2 to 2.2

This pathway occurs when events create a wetter climate cycle, favor pinyon and perennial bunch grass establishment. Following several favorable precipitation years and lack of surface disturbances, native perennial plants will reestablish.

State 3

Eroded

This state is characterized by reduced cover and production of grasses and accelerated erosion. P-J and shrubs dominate. About 25% tree canopy cover is thought to be the threshold for the transition from the Encroached State to the Eroded State. Arnold (1964) analysis of possible explanations of these threshold include allelopathy, shade, precipitation interception by the canopy, and litter cover forming a physical barrier to germinating plants. Other explanations offered to explain the reduced under-canopy vegetation include root competition for soil moisture, and possible chemical properties of one-seed juniper litter (Arnold, 1964). Broom snakeweed and pingue are often found at increased densities. This state is characterized by soil loss from large, interconnected bare areas and hydrologic events carrying sediment off-site. Evidence of erosion such as rills, gullies, and pedestalled plants is common. The Eroded State is characterized by competition for nutrients, water, and light in the interstitial spaces; multiple age classes of P-J; and sparse understory. Fire return interval in Eroded State may exceed 100 years.

Community 3.1

Eroding Pinyon-Juniper Savanna

Grass cover may decline due to heavy grazing, drought, and increased competition by P-J for available soil moisture. As grass cover is reduced, infiltration, organic matter, and soil aggregate stability decrease, increasing susceptibility to erosion. Bareground increases in size and frequency. Erosion rates are site-specific and are influenced by such factors as watershed size, degree and length of slope, soil profile textures, soil structure, and amount of rock fragments. Loss of herbaceous cover may cause the site to cross a threshold resulting in increased erosion rates, but the amount of cover loss required to cross the threshold varies both within and among areas. Erosion may vary substantially from site to site, or even within areas of a single site. Plants may show pedestalling which indicates an increase in length of water flow patterns and an increase in amount and size of rills.

Transition T1A

State 1 to 2

This transition is from the native shrub and perennial grass state (reference state), to a state that is dominated by pinyon and juniper (PJ Encroached State). The resulting decreased competition by perennial grasses and forbs facilitates the encroachment of pinyon and juniper. Events include time without disturbance, drought, insect herbivory, continuous season long grazing of perennial grasses, and tree invasion. As tree canopy density increase, perennial grass and forb cover is reduced and composition has changed, bare ground will increase in size and frequency, accelerating erosion, increasing run-off and further affecting the watershed functionality. This transition also favors the establishment of invasive annual species such as cheatgrass. In wet years, high grass cover may suppress P-J seedlings by competing directly for available soil moisture; lower grass cover may facilitate P-J establishment.

Restoration pathway R2A

State 2 to 1

Restoration Pathway from Encroached State to Reference State (R2A). Removal of P-J will be necessary to reduce competition for resources. PJ removal could be from fire; treatments; drought; and/or insect/pathogen outbreaks. Prescribed grazing with adequate rest following PJ control will assist in the establishment and maintenance of grass cover. Seeding may be necessary depending on herbaceous cover present on the specific site. This pathway requires lots of energy input into the system.

Transition T2A

State 2 to 3

When this transition to state 3 (Eroded State) occurs the site has lost much of its expected resistance and resilience. At this point natural and/or management actions have decreased the understory to a point where erosion increases. Lack of from fire, insects, and drought could cause the tree canopy to close, effectively reducing the herbaceous understory and facilitating the transition. Improper grazing and or increase surface disturbance combined with periods of drought can facilitate this transition since soil stability is lost and susceptibility to soil loss increases.

Restoration pathway R3A

State 3 to 1

Restoration Pathway from Eroded State to Reference State (R3A). Removal of P-J will be necessary to reduce competition for resources. Erosion control structures in conjunction with seeding will be necessary to reestablish hydrology and grass dominance. Prescribed grazing will help ensure adequate rest following seeding and P-J removal and will assist in the establishment and maintenance of grass cover. The degree to which this site is capable of recovery is dependent on the extent of soil degradation.

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 | | | | 39–157 | |
| | black grama | BOER4 | <i>Bouteloua eriopoda</i> | 39–157 | – |
| 2 | | | | 39–78 | |
| | sideoats grama | BOCU | <i>Bouteloua curtipendula</i> | 39–78 | – |
| 3 | | | | 39–78 | |
| | Indian ricegrass | ACHY | <i>Achnatherum hymenoides</i> | 39–78 | – |
| | needle and thread | HECO26 | <i>Hesperostipa comata</i> | 39–78 | – |
| | New Mexico feathergrass | HENE5 | <i>Hesperostipa neomexicana</i> | 39–78 | – |
| | western wheatgrass | PASM | <i>Pascopyrum smithii</i> | 39–78 | – |
| 4 | | | | 24–78 | |
| | prairie Junegrass | KOMA | <i>Koeleria macrantha</i> | 24–78 | – |
| | muttongrass | POFE | <i>Poa fendleriana</i> | 24–78 | – |
| 5 | | | | 24–63 | |
| | blue grama | BOGR2 | <i>Bouteloua gracilis</i> | 24–63 | – |
| | hairy grama | BOHI2 | <i>Bouteloua hirsuta</i> | 24–63 | – |
| | James' galleta | PLJA | <i>Pleuraphis jamesii</i> | 24–63 | – |
| | oneseed juniper | JUMO | <i>Juniperus monosperma</i> | 8–55 | – |
| | twoneedle pinyon | PIED | <i>Pinus edulis</i> | 8–55 | – |
| 6 | | | | 24–39 | |
| | cane bluestem | BOBA3 | <i>Bothriochloa barbinodis</i> | 24–39 | – |
| | little bluestem | SCSC | <i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i> | 24–39 | – |
| 7 | | | | 24–39 | |
| | pine dropseed | BLTR | <i>Blepharoneuron tricholepis</i> | 24–39 | – |
| | mountain muhly | MUMO | <i>Muhlenbergia montana</i> | 24–39 | – |
| | New Mexico muhly | MUPA2 | <i>Muhlenbergia pauciflora</i> | 24–39 | – |
| | spike muhly | MUWR | <i>Muhlenbergia wrightii</i> | 24–39 | – |
| o | | | | 24–39 | |

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|--------|--|--------|---|
| 0 | | | | 24-39 | |
| | common wolfstail | LYPH | <i>Lycurus phleoides</i> | 24-39 | - |
| Forb | | | | | |
| 9 | | | | 39-118 | |
| | aster | ASTER | <i>Aster</i> | 39-118 | - |
| | scarlet Indian paintbrush | CACO17 | <i>Castilleja coccinea</i> | 39-118 | - |
| | fleabane | ERIGE2 | <i>Erigeron</i> | 39-118 | - |
| | buckwheat | ERIOG | <i>Eriogonum</i> | 39-118 | - |
| Shrub/Vine | | | | | |
| 10 | | | | 39-118 | |
| | big sagebrush | ARTR2 | <i>Artemisia tridentata</i> | 39-118 | - |
| 11 | | | | 24-55 | |
| | fourwing saltbush | ATCA2 | <i>Atriplex canescens</i> | 24-55 | - |
| | winterfat | KRLA2 | <i>Krascheninnikovia lanata</i> | 24-55 | - |
| 12 | | | | 24-55 | |
| | oak | QUERC | <i>Quercus</i> | 24-55 | - |
| | skunkbush sumac | RHTR | <i>Rhus trilobata</i> | 24-55 | - |
| | gooseberry currant | RIMO2 | <i>Ribes montigenum</i> | 24-55 | - |
| 13 | | | | 8-39 | |
| | Apache plume | FAPA | <i>Fallugia paradoxa</i> | 8-39 | - |
| | stretchberry | FOPUP | <i>Forestiera pubescens</i> <i>var. pubescens</i> | 8-39 | - |
| Tree | | | | | |
| 14 | | | | 8-39 | |
| | Shrub, deciduous | 2SD | <i>Shrub, deciduous</i> | 8-39 | - |
| | juniper | JUNIP | <i>Juniperus</i> | 8-39 | - |
| | twoneedle pinyon | PIED | <i>Pinus edulis</i> | 8-39 | - |

Animal community

Habitat for Wildlife:

This site provides habitats which support a resident animal community that is characterized by bobcat, mountain lion, rock squirrel, rock mouse, least chipmunk, deer mouse, golden eagle, prairie falcon, raven, canyon wren, Say's phoebe, cliff swallow, and western diamondback rattlesnake. The rock outcrops and talus slopes provide nesting sites for many species of summer breeding birds.

Hydrological functions

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

Recreational uses

This site is well suited to nature observation, hiking, and hunting. The canyonland setting enhances the natural beauty of this site.

Wood products

Due to the physiography of this site, this site should not be considered as a major source for wood products.

Other products

Grazing:

Approximately 75 percent of the vegetation produced on this site is suitable for grazing or browsing by domestic livestock and wildlife. Grazing distribution is a problem due to this site being in association with steep and rocky landscapes. Herding and trail construction may be necessary to achieve proper distribution on these sites when in complex with rock outcrop and other miscellaneous land types.

Deterioration of the potential plant community is indicated by a decrease in such species as western wheatgrass, spike muhly, sideoats grama, fourwing saltbush, and winterfat. Species that increase include blue grama, galleta, hairy grama, threeawns, and undesirable woody species. A planned grazing system with periodic deferment is best to maintain the desirable balance between plant species and to maintain high productivity.

In addition to domestic livestock, this site is well suited to deer, small mammals, and birds.

Other information

Guide to Suggested Initial Stocking Rate Acres per Animal Unit Month

Similarity Index -----Ac/AUM

100 - 76 ----- 6.0 – 9.5

75 – 51 ----- 9.0 – 11.9

50 – 26 ----- 11.5 – 23.5

25 – 0 ----- 23.5+

Inventory data references

There are currently no associated sites for this ecological site

Data collection for this site was done in conjunction with the progressive soil surveys within the New Mexico and Arizona Plateaus and Mesas, Major Land Resource Area 36, of New Mexico. This site has been mapped and correlated with soils in the following soil surveys: McKinley & Sandoval.

Type locality

| |
|---------------------------------|
| Location 1: Santa Fe County, NM |
| Location 2: Taos County, NM |

Other references

Arnold, J. F. 1964. Zonation of understory vegetation around a juniper tree. *Journal of Range Management*. 17: 41-42.

Cartledge, T. R., and J. G. Propper. 1993. Pinon-Juniper Ecosystems through Time: Information and Insights from the Past. In Gen. Tech. RM-236 - Managing Pinon-Juniper Ecosystems for Sustainability and Social Needs.

Cleland, D.T.; Freeouf, J.A.; Keys, J.E., Jr.; Nowacki, G.J.; Carpenter, C; McNab, W.H. 2007. Ecological Subregions: Sections and Subsections of the Conterminous United States.[1:3,500,000], Sloan, A.M., cartog. Gen. Tech. Report WO-76. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service.

Griffith, G.E.; Omernik, J.M.; McGraw, M.M.; Jacobi, G.Z.; Canavan, C.M.; Schrader, T.S.; Mercer, D.; Hill, R.; and Moran, B.C., 2006. Ecoregions of New Mexico (color poster with map, descriptive text, summary tables, and photographs): Reston, Virginia, U.S. Geological Survey (map scale 1:1,400,000).

Gottfried, G. J. 1999. Pinyon-juniper woodlands in the southwestern United States. In: Folliott, Peter F.; Ortega-Rubio, Alfredo, eds. Ecology and management of forests, woodlands, and shrublands in the dryland regions of the United States and Mexico: perspectives for the 21st century. Co-edition No. 1. Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona; La Paz, Mexico: Centro de Investigaciones Biologicas del Noroeste, SC; Flagstaff, AZ: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station: 53-67.

Johnsen, T. N., Jr. 1962. One-seeded juniper invasion of northern Arizona grasslands. *Ecological Monographs*. 32(3): 187-207.

Johnson, Kathleen A. 2002. *Juniperus monosperma*. In: Fire Effects Information System,

[Online]. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station, Fire Sciences Laboratory (Producer). Available: <http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/> [2017, December 20].

Lanner, R.M. and T. R. Van Devender. 1998. The recent history of pinyon pines in the American Southwest. In: Richardson, David M., ed. *Ecology and biogeography of Pinus*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: The Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge: 171-182.

Mueggler, W. F. 1976. Ecological role of fire in western woodland and range ecosystems. In: *Use of prescribed burning in western woodland and range ecosystems: Proceedings of the symposium; 1976 March 18-19; Logan, UT*. Logan, UT: Utah State University, Utah Agricultural Experiment Station: 1-9.

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). 2003. *Ecological Site Description for Breaks R036XB001NM*: USDA, Albuquerque. New Mexico.

Passey, H. B., W. K. Hugie, E. W. Williams, and D. E. Ball. 1982. Relationships between soil, plant community, and climate on rangelands of the Intermountain west. USDA, Soil Conservation Service, Tech. Bull. No. 1669.

Paysen, Timothy E.; A. R. James, Brown, J. K.; [and others]. 2000. Fire in western shrubland, woodland, and grassland ecosystems. In: Brown, James K.; Smith, Jane Kapler, eds. *Wildland fire in ecosystems: Effects of fire on flora*. Gen. Tech. Rep. RMRS-GTR-42-volume 2. Ogden, UT: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station: 121-159.

Schott, M. R.; Pieper, R. D. 1987. Succession in tree pits following cabling in pinyon-juniper communities. *The Southwestern Naturalist*. 32(3): 399-402.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Missoula Fire Sciences Laboratory (USFS). 2012. Information from LANDFIRE on fire regimes of southwestern pinyon-juniper communities. In: *Fire Effects Information System*, [Online]. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station, Missoula Fire Sciences Laboratory (Producer). Available: https://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/fire_regimes/SW_pinyon_juniper/all.html [2017, December 28].

United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service. 2006. *Land Resource Regions and Major Land Resource Areas of the United States, the Caribbean, and the Pacific Basin*. U.S. Department of Agriculture Handbook 296.

Western Regional Climate Center. Retrieved from <http://www.wrcc.dri.edu/summary/Climsmco.html> on December 27, 2017

Contributors

Don Sylvester
Elizabeth Wright
John Tunberg
Michael Carpinelli
Suzanne Mayne Kinney

Acknowledgments

Project Staff:

Suzanne Mayne-Kinney, Ecological Site Specialist, NRCS MLRA, Grand Junction Colorado SSO

Chuck Peacock, MLRA Soil Survey Leader, NRCS MLRA Grand Junction Colorado SSO

Alan Stuebe, MLRA Soil Survey Leader, NRCS MLRA Alamosa Colorado SSO Program Support:

Brenda Simpson, NRCS NM State Rangeland Management Specialist, Albuquerque, NM

Scott Woodhall, NRCS MLRA Ecological Site Specialist-QA Phoenix, AZ

Eva Muller, Regional Director, Rocky Mountain Regional Soil Survey Office, Bozeman, MT

Rick Strait, NM State Soil Scientist, Albuquerque, NM

Steve Kadas, CO State Resource Conservationist, Albuquerque, NM

--Site Development and Testing Plan--:

Future work to validate and further refine the information in this Provisional Ecological Site Description is necessary. This will include field activities to collect low-, medium-, and high-intensity sampling, soil correlations, and analysis of that data.

Additional information and data is required to refine the Plant Production and Annual Production tables for this ecological site. The extent of MLRA 36 must be further investigated.

Field testing of the information contained in this Provisional ESD is required. As this ESD is moved to the Approved ESD level, reviews from the technical team, quality control, quality assurance, and peers will be conducted.

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 | 04/11/2026 |
| Approved by | Kirt Walstad |
| 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:

17. Perennial plant reproductive capability:
