

Ecological site R041XB201AZ Breaks 8-12" p.z.

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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): 041X–Madrean Archipelago

AZ 41.2 - Chihuahuan - Sonoran Desert Shrubs

Elevations range from 2600 to 4000 feet and precipitation ranges from 8 to 12 inches per year. Vegetation includes mesquite, palo verde, catclaw acacia, soaptree yucca, creosotebush, whitethorn, staghorn cholla, desert saltbush, Mormon tea, burroweed, snakeweed, tobosa, black grama, threeawns, bush muhly, dropseed, and burrograss. The soil temperature regime is thermic and the soil moisture regime is typic aridic. This unit occurs within the Basin and Range Physiographic Province and is characterized by numerous mountain ranges that rise abruptly from broad, plain-like valleys and basins. Igneous and metamorphic rock classes dominate the mountain ranges and sediments filling the basins represent combinations of fluvial, lacustrine, colluvial and alluvial deposits.

Associated sites

F041XB221AZ	Loamy Bottom 8-12" p.z. woodland
F041XB222AZ	Saline Bottom 8-12" p.z. woodland
R041XB206AZ	Limy Fan 8-12" p.z.

Similar sites

R041XB219AZ	Gypsum Upland 8-12" p.z.
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Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	Not specified
Shrub	(1) larrea tridentata(2) atriplex confertifolia
Herbaceous	(1) Pleuraphis mutica (2) aristida

Physiographic features

This site occurs in the lowest elevations of the Madrean Basin and Range province in southeastern Arizona. It occurs on fan terraces, hill-slopes and ridge-tops formed in relict lacustrine (lake bed) sediments. The site is characterized by highly eroded, steep slopes and scarps intermingled with vegetated areas on more moderate slopes.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Hill (2) Fan remnant (3) Scarp slope
Flooding frequency	None
Ponding frequency	None
Elevation	792–1,219 m
Slope	3–75%
Aspect	N, E, S

Climatic features

Precipitation ranges from 8-12 inches annually. More than half falls during July-Sep in brief, but often heavy, thunderstorms. The rest of the moisture comes as light rain or snow that falls slowly for a day or more, but rarely lasts more than a day. May and June are normally the driest months. Humidity is generally very low.

Temperatures are mild throughout most of the year. Freezing temperatures are common at night Dec-Feb; brief 0 F may be observed some nights. During June, July & August some days may exceed 100 F.

In years of average or greater winter precipitation, annual grasses and forbs occur abundantly in the interspaces.

Table 3. Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (average)	240 days
Freeze-free period (average)	
Precipitation total (average)	

Influencing water features

There are no water features associated with this site.

Soil features

These soils are well drained, variable in texture, stratified and saline and/or sodic. They have formed in old

lacustrine deposits and may have strata of gypsum as well. Gypsum can be 5 to 20% by volume in the soil profile. They are not flooded.

Soil series mapped on this site include: SSA-662 Safford Area MU Ro Rough broken land; AZ-663 Gila-Duncan Area, Parts of Graham and Greenlee Counties MU's 6 torriorthents and calciorthids, 22 haplargids and torriorthents, and 26 orthents; SSA-664 San Simon Area, parts of Cochise, Graham, and Greenlee Counties MU 10 Calciorthids and torriorthents.

Table 4. Representative soil features

Surface texture	(1) Silt loam (2) Fine sandy loam (3) Clay loam
Family particle size	(1) Loamy
Drainage class	Moderately well drained to well drained
Permeability class	Moderate to slow
Soil depth	64–152 cm
Surface fragment cover <=3"	0–15%
Surface fragment cover >3"	0–5%
Available water capacity (0-101.6cm)	6.35–15.75 cm
Calcium carbonate equivalent (0-101.6cm)	1–15%
Electrical conductivity (0-101.6cm)	0–4 mmhos/cm
Sodium adsorption ratio (0-101.6cm)	0–6
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (0-101.6cm)	7.4–8.4
Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (Depth not specified)	0–15%
Subsurface fragment volume >3" (Depth not specified)	0–5%

Ecological dynamics

The plant communities found on an ecological site are naturally variable. Composition and production will vary with yearly conditions, location, aspect and the natural variability of the soils. The Historical Climax Plant Community represents the natural potential plant community found on relict or relatively undisturbed areas of this site. Other plant communities described here represent plant communities that are known to occur when the site is disturbed by factors such as fire, grazing and drought.

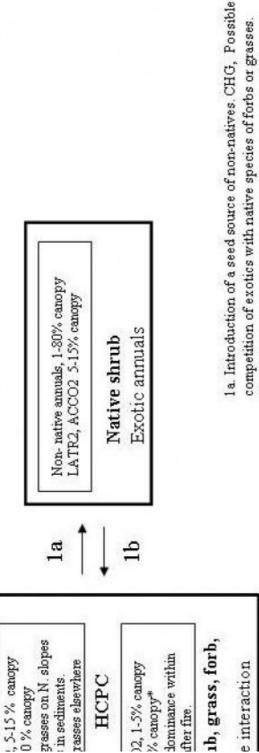
Production data provided in this site description is standardized to air dry weight at the end of the summer growing season. The plant communities described in this site description are based on near normal rainfall years. NRCS uses a Similarity Index to compare existing plant communities to the plant communities described here. Similarity index is determined by comparing the production and composition of a plant community to the production and composition described in the site description. To determine similarity index, compare the production (air dry weight) of each species to that shown in the plant community description. For each species, count no more than the maximum amount shown for the species, and for each group, count no more than the amount shown for that group. Divide the resulting total by the total, normal year, production shown in the plant community description. If the rainfall has been significantly above or below normal, use the total production shown for above or below normal years. If the field data is not collected at the end of the summer growing season, then the field data must be corrected to the end of year production before comparing it to the site description. The growth curve can be used as a guide for estimating production at the end of the summer growing season.

The historic native state includes the native plant communities that occur on the site, including the historic climax

plant community. This state includes other plant communities that naturally occupy the site following fire, drought, flooding, herbivores and other natural disturbances. The historic climax plant community represents the natural climax community that eventually reoccupies the site with proper management and a return to near normal conditions and/or equilibrium.

State and transition model

MLRA 41-2 (8-12"), Breaks



1b. Unknown

CHG – continuous heavy grazing
PG/NG – proper grazing, no grazing

PG/NG - proper grazing, no grazing LATR2 - creosote, ACCO2 - whitethom

*Native annuals dominant, may be patches of some non-natives

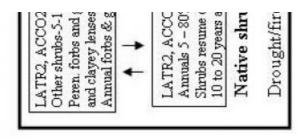


Figure 4. State and Transition, Breaks 8-12" p.z.

State 1 Historic Climax Plant Community

Community 1.1 Historic Climax Plant Community

This plant community is dominated by shrubs like creosote bush, shadscale, rayless goldenhead, white bursage, desert saltbush, fourwing saltbush and whitethorn acacia. Tobosa grass is a dominant plant in areas where clay lenses out-crop on the slopes. Annual grasses and forbs are an important part of the plant community. Cryptogams are common on this site, often completely colonizing outcrops of gypsum. The site is extremely susceptible to sheet, rill and gully erosion due to high concentrations of salts and soluble gypsum in the surface soil.

Table 5. Annual production by plant type

Plant Type	Low (Kg/Hectare)	Representative Value (Kg/Hectare)	High (Kg/Hectare)
Shrub/Vine	84	140	185
Grass/Grasslike	1	22	78
Forb	1	11	34
Total	86	173	297

Table 6. Soil surface cover

Tree basal cover	0%
Shrub/vine/liana basal cover	1-2%
Grass/grasslike basal cover	0-2%
Forb basal cover	0-1%
Non-vascular plants	0%
Biological crusts	10-25%
Litter	5-30%
Surface fragments >0.25" and <=3"	0-15%
Surface fragments >3"	0-5%
Bedrock	0%
Water	0%
Bare ground	25-85%

Table 7. Canopy structure (% cover)

Height Above Ground (M)	Tree	Shrub/Vine	Grass/ Grasslike	Forb
<0.15	_	0-2%	0-5%	0-5%
>0.15 <= 0.3	_	1-5%	0-5%	0-5%
>0.3 <= 0.6	_	1-5%	1-10%	1-5%
>0.6 <= 1.4	_	5-10%	0-2%	0-1%
>1.4 <= 4	_	-	-	_
>4 <= 12	_	-	-	_
>12 <= 24	_	-	-	_
>24 <= 37	_	-	-	_
>37	_	-	-	_

State 2
Native shrubs and non native annuals

Community 2.1 Native shrubs and non native annuals

This state occurs where perennial grasses have been eliminated by the interactions of fire, drought and continuous grazing. Native and non-native annual forbs and grasses dominate the herbaceous layer of the plant community.

Additional community tables

Table 8. Community 1.1 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production (Kg/Hectare)	Foliar Cover (%)
Grass	/Grasslike	•			
1	Dominant perennial gr	asses		1–39	
	tobosagrass	PLMU3	Pleuraphis mutica	1–28	_
	Parish's threeawn	ARPUP5	Aristida purpurea var. parishii	0–11	_
	bush muhly	MUPO2	Muhlenbergia porteri	0–11	-
	alkali sacaton	SPAI	Sporobolus airoides	0–6	-
	big sacaton	SPWR2	Sporobolus wrightii	0–6	_
2	Miscellaneous perenni	al grasses		0–11	
	purple threeawn	ARPU9	Aristida purpurea	0–6	_
	blue threeawn	ARPUN	Aristida purpurea var. nealleyi	0–6	_
	spidergrass	ARTE3	Aristida ternipes	0–6	_
	spidergrass	ARTEG	Aristida ternipes var. gentilis	0–6	_
	low woollygrass	DAPU7	Dasyochloa pulchella	0–2	_
	whiplash pappusgrass	PAVA2	Pappophorum vaginatum	0–2	_
	spike dropseed	SPCO4	Sporobolus contractus	0–2	_
	sand dropseed	SPCR	Sporobolus cryptandrus	0–2	_
	mesa dropseed	SPFL2	Sporobolus flexuosus	0–2	_
	false Rhodes grass	TRCR9	Trichloris crinita	0–2	_
	poverty threeawn	ARDI5	Aristida divaricata	0–2	_
	plains bristlegrass	SEVU2	Setaria vulpiseta	0–1	_
	Arizona cottontop	DICA8	Digitaria californica	0–1	_

	nineawn pappusgrass	ENDE	Enneapogon desvauxii	0–1	_
3	Annual grasses			0–28	
	needle grama	BOAR	Bouteloua aristidoides	0–11	_
	sixweeks grama	BOBA2	Bouteloua barbata	0–11	_
	sixweeks fescue	VUOC	Vulpia octoflora	0–11	_
	sixweeks threeawn	ARAD	Aristida adscensionis	0–6	
	prairie threeawn	AROL	Aristida oligantha	0–6	_
	mucronate sprangeltop	LEPAB	Leptochloa panicea ssp. brachiata	0–6	_
	Rothrock's grama	BORO2	Bouteloua rothrockii	0–6	_
	Arizona brome	BRAR4	Bromus arizonicus	0–2	_
	canyon cupgrass	ERLE7	Eriochloa lemmonii	0–2	_
	desert lovegrass	ERPEM	Eragrostis pectinacea var. miserrima	0–2	_
	tufted lovegrass	ERPEP2	Eragrostis pectinacea var. pectinacea	0–2	_
	delicate muhly	MUFR	Muhlenbergia fragilis	0–2	_
	littleseed muhly	MUMI	Muhlenbergia microsperma	0–2	_
	Bigelow's bluegrass	POBI	Poa bigelovii	0–2	_
	Arizona signalgrass	URAR	Urochloa arizonica	0–2	_
	Mexican sprangletop	LEFUU	Leptochloa fusca ssp. uninervia	0–1	_
Forb					
4	Perennial forbs			1–6	
	dwarf desertpeony	ACNA2	Acourtia nana	0–6	-
	weakleaf bur ragweed	AMCO3	Ambrosia confertiflora	0–2	-
	hairyseed bahia	BAAB	Bahia absinthifolia	0–1	-
	desert marigold	BAMU	Baileya multiradiata	0–1	_
	stinging serpent	CESI	Cevallia sinuata	0–1	_
	whitemargin sandmat	CHAL11	Chamaesyce albomarginata	0–1	_
	desert trumpet	ERIN4	Eriogonum inflatum	0–1	_
	San Pedro daisy	LAPO4	Lasianthaea podocephala	0–1	_
	lacy tansyaster	MAPIP4	Machaeranthera pinnatifida ssp. pinnatifida var. pinnatifida	0–1	-
	desert tobacco	NIOB	Nicotiana obtusifolia	0–1	_
	Coues' cassia	SECO10	Senna covesii	0–1	ı
	silverleaf nightshade	SOEL	Solanum elaeagnifolium	0–1	1
	desert globemallow	SPAM2	Sphaeralcea ambigua	0–1	ı
	brownplume wirelettuce	STPA4	Stephanomeria pauciflora	0–1	-
	pricklyleaf dogweed	THAC	Thymophylla acerosa	0–1	ı
	rue of the mountains	THTE2	Thamnosma texana	0–1	ı
	brownfoot	ACWR5	Acourtia wrightii	0–1	_
	trailing windmills	ALIN	Allionia incarnata	0–1	_
5	Annual forbs			0–28	
	flatcrown buckwheat	ERDE6	Eriogonum deflexum	0–11	
	cryptantha	CRYPT	Cryptantha	0–6	_
	wheelscale saltbush	ATEL	Atriplex elegans	0–6	_
	Coulter's spiderling	BOCO2	Boerhavia coulteri	0–6	

carelessweed	AMPA	Amaranthus palmeri	0-6	
bristly fiddleneck	AMTE3	Amsinckia tessellata	0–6	
desert Indianwheat	PLOV	Plantago ovata	0–6	
Gordon's bladderpod	LEGO	Lesquerella gordonii	0–6	
shaggyfruit pepperweed	LELA	Lepidium lasiocarpum	0–6	
intermediate pepperweed	LEVIM	Lepidium virginicum var. medium	0–6	
coastal bird's-foot trefoil	LOSAB	Lotus salsuginosus var. brevivexillus	0–6	
slender goldenweed	MAGR10	Machaeranthera gracilis	0–6	
Nuttall's povertyweed	MONU	Monolepis nuttalliana	0–6	
green carpetweed	MOVE	Mollugo verticillata	0–2	
tanseyleaf tansyaster	MATA2	Machaeranthera tanacetifolia	0–2	
hairy desertsunflower	GECA2	Geraea canescens	0–2	
star gilia	GIST	Gilia stellata	0–2	
Arizona poppy	KAGR	Kallstroemia grandiflora	0–2	
Coulter's lupine	LUSP2	Lupinus sparsiflorus	0–2	
sorrel buckwheat	ERPO4	Eriogonum polycladon	0–2	
Texas stork's bill	ERTE13	Erodium texanum	0–2	
California poppy	ESCAM	Eschscholzia californica ssp. mexicana	0–2	
desert evening primrose	OEPR	Oenothera primiveris	0–2	
Florida pellitory	PAFL3	Parietaria floridana	0–2	
combseed	PECTO	Pectocarya	0–2	
phacelia	PHACE	Phacelia	0–2	
woollyhead neststraw	STMI2	Stylocline micropoides	0–2	
woolly tidestromia	TILA2	Tidestromia lanuginosa	0–2	
white tackstem	CAWR	Calycoseris wrightii	0–2	
brittle spineflower	CHBR	Chorizanthe brevicornu	0–2	
hyssopleaf sandmat	CHHY3	Chamaesyce hyssopifolia	0–2	
Esteve's pincushion	CHST	Chaenactis stevioides	0–2	
hairy prairie clover	DAMO	Dalea mollis	0–2	
American wild carrot	DAPU3	Daucus pusillus	0–2	
western tansymustard	DEPI	Descurainia pinnata	0–2	
miniature woollystar	ERDI2	Eriastrum diffusum	0–2	
fringed redmaids	CACI2	Calandrinia ciliata	0–2	
exserted Indian paintbrush	CAEXE	Castilleja exserta ssp. exserta	0–1	
yellow tackstem	CAPA7	Calycoseris parryi	0–1	
common woolly sunflower	ERLA6	Eriophyllum lanatum	0–1	
hoary bowlesia	BOIN3	Bowlesia incana	0–1	_
milkvetch	ASTRA	Astragalus	0–1	
Arizona popcornflower	PLAR	Plagiobothrys arizonicus	0–1	
manybristle	PEPA2	Pectis papposa	0–1	

	doubleclaw	PRPA2	Proboscidea parviflora	0–1	_
	New Mexico	RANE	Rafinesquia neomexicana	0–1	_
	plumeseed				
	sleepy silene	SIAN2	Silene antirrhina	0–1	_
	Coulter's globemallow	SPCO2	Sphaeralcea coulteri	0–1	_
	Mexican fireplant	EUHE4	Euphorbia heterophylla	0–1	_
	bristly nama	NAHI	Nama hispidum	0–1	_
	glandular threadplant	NEGL	Nemacladus glanduliferus	0–1	_
Shrub	/Vine				
6	Dominant shrubs			84–168	
	creosote bush	LATR2	Larrea tridentata	28–84	-
	shadscale saltbush	ATCO	Atriplex confertifolia	1–28	-
	cattle saltbush	ATPO	Atriplex polycarpa	0–22	_
	mound saltbush	ATOB	Atriplex obovata	0–17	_
	fourwing saltbush	ATCA2	Atriplex canescens	0–11	
	whitethorn acacia	ACCO2	Acacia constricta	0–6	_
	catclaw acacia	ACGR	Acacia greggii	0–1	_
	longleaf jointfir	EPTR	Ephedra trifurca	0–1	_
	American tarwort	FLCE	Flourensia cernua	0–1	_
	crown of thorns	KOSP	Koeberlinia spinosa	0–1	_
	water jacket	LYAN	Lycium andersonii	0–1	_
	pale desert-thorn	LYPA	Lycium pallidum	0–1	_
	mariola	PAIN2	Parthenium incanum	0–1	_
	western honey mesquite	PRGLT	Prosopis glandulosa var. torreyana	0–1	-
	soaptree yucca	YUEL	Yucca elata	0–1	-
	lotebush	ZIOB	Ziziphus obtusifolia	0–1	-
7	Half shrubs	•		0–34	
	rayless goldenhead	ACSP	Acamptopappus sphaerocephalus	0–11	_
	burrobush	AMDU2	Ambrosia dumosa	0–11	_
	littleleaf ratany	KRER	Krameria erecta	0–6	_
	broom snakeweed	GUSA2	Gutierrezia sarothrae	0–2	_
	rough menodora	MESC	Menodora scabra	0–2	_
	whitestem paperflower	PSCO2	Psilostrophe cooperi	0–2	_
	desert zinnia	ZIAC	Zinnia acerosa	0–2	_
	threadleaf snakeweed	GUMI	Gutierrezia microcephala	0–1	_
	winterfat	KRLA2	Krascheninnikovia lanata	0–1	_
8	Succulents			0–6	
	tulip pricklypear	ОРРН	Opuntia phaeacantha	0–2	_
	buck-horn cholla	CYAC8	Cylindropuntia acanthocarpa	0–1	_
	Christmas cactus	CYLE8	Cylindropuntia leptocaulis	0–1	_
	walkingstick cactus	CYSP8	Cylindropuntia spinosior	0–1	_
	Engelmann's hedgehog cactus	ECEN	Echinocereus engelmannii	0–1	_
	candy barrelcactus	FEWI	Ferocactus wislizeni	0–1	

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	devil's cholla	GRKU	Grusonia kunzei	0–1	_
	cactus apple	OPEN3	Opuntia engelmannii	0–1	_

Animal community

This site offers little in the way for livestock grazing. Occasional use will be made of slopes less than 45% which have tobosa and shadscale.

Wildlife on the site is limited to small mammals and birds and their associated predators. Areas adjacent to major streams like the Gila River, may offer limited forage for mule deer.

Hydrological functions

These soils are variable in texture from loams to clays, and can produce considerable amounts of runoff and sediment.

Recreational uses

Hunting, horseback riding, hiking, photography and bird-watching

Type locality

Location 1: Graham Coun	ity, AZ
Township/Range/Section	T8S R28E S36
General legal description	Gila River valley near Safford

Contributors

Dan Robinett Larry D. Ellicott

Approval

Curtis Talbot, 4/09/2021

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	05/03/2024
Approved by	Curtis Talbot
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):
0.	Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:
1.	Presence and thickness of compaction layer (usually none; describe soil profile features which may be mistaken for compaction on this site):
2.	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

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: