

Ecological site F043AP907MT

Subirrigated Cool Moist Woodland Group

Last updated: 9/09/2023

Accessed: 04/14/2026

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.

MLRA notes

Major Land Resource Area (MLRA): 043A–Northern Rocky Mountains

This MLRA is located in Montana (43 percent), Idaho (34 percent), and Washington (23 percent). It makes up about 31,435 square miles (81,460 square kilometers). It has no large cities or towns. It has many national forests, including the Okanogan, Colville, Kootenai, Lolo, Flathead, Coeur d’Alene, St. Joe, Clearwater, and Kaniksu National Forests.

This MLRA is in the Northern Rocky Mountains Province of the Rocky Mountain System. It is characterized by rugged, glaciated mountains; thrust- and block-faulted mountains; and hills and valleys. Steep-gradient rivers have cut deep canyons. Natural and manmade lakes are common.

The major Hydrologic Unit Areas (identified by four-digit numbers) that make up this MLRA are: Kootenai-Pend Oreille-Spokane (1701), 67 percent; Upper Columbia (1702), 18 percent; and Lower Snake (1706), 15 percent. Numerous rivers originate in or flow through this area, including, the Sanpoil, Columbia, Pend Oreille, Kootenai, St. Joe, Thompson, and Flathead Rivers.

This area is underlain primarily by stacked slabs of layered sedimentary or metasedimentary bedrock. The bedrock formations range from Precambrian to Cretaceous in age. The rocks consist of shale, sandstone, siltstone, limestone, argillite, quartzite, gneiss, schist, dolomite, basalt, and granite. The formations have been faulted and stacked into a series of imbricate slabs by regional tectonic activity. Pleistocene glaciers carved a rugged landscape that includes sculpted hills and narrow valleys filled with till and outwash. Continental glaciation over road the landscape in the northern half of

the MLRA while glaciation in the southern half was confined to montane settings.

The average annual precipitation is 25 to 60 inches (635 to 1,525 millimeters) in most of this area, but it is as much as 113 inches (2,870 millimeters) in the mountains and is 10 to 15 inches (255 to 380 millimeters) in the western part of the area. Summers are dry. Most of the precipitation during fall, winter, and spring is snow. The average annual temperature is 32 to 51 degrees F (0 to 11 degrees C) in most of the area, decreasing with elevation. In most of the area, the freeze-free period averages 140 days and ranges from 65 to 215 days. It is longest in the low valleys of Washington, and it decreases in length with elevation. Freezing temperatures occur every month of the year on high mountains, and some peaks have a continuous cover of snow and ice.

The dominant soil orders in this MLRA are Andisols, Inceptisols, and Alfisols. Many of the soils are influenced by Mount Mazama ash deposits. The soils in the area have a frigid or cryic soil temperature regime; have an ustic, xeric, or udic soil moisture regime; and dominantly have mixed mineralogy. They are shallow to very deep, are very poorly drained to well drained, and have most of the soil texture classes. The soils at the lower elevations include Udivitrands, Vitrixerands and Haplustalfs. The soils at the higher elevations include Dystrocryepts, Eutrocryepts, Vitricryands , and Haplocryalfs. Cryorthents, Cryepts, and areas of rock outcrop are on ridges and peaks above timberline

This area is in the northern part of the Northern Rocky Mountains. Grand fir, Douglas-fir, western red cedar, western hemlock, western larch, lodgepole pine, subalpine fir, ponderosa pine, whitebark pine, and western white pine are the dominant overstory species, depending on precipitation, temperature, elevation, and landform aspect. The understory vegetation varies, also depending on climatic and landform factors. Some of the major wildlife species in this area are whitetailed deer, mule deer, elk, moose, black bear, grizzly bear, coyote, fox, and grouse. Fish, mostly in the trout and salmon families, are abundant in streams, rivers, and lakes.

More than one-half of this area is federally owned and administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. Much of the privately-owned land is controlled by large commercial timber companies. The forested areas are used for wildlife habitat, recreation, watershed, livestock grazing, and timber production. Meadows provide summer grazing for livestock and big game animals. Less than 3 percent of the area is cropland.

Classification relationships

ASSOCIATED HABITAT TYPES:

spruce/queencup beadlily

spruce/redosier dogwood h.t.

Ecological site concept

- Site is not in a floodplain
- Seasonal high water table < 100 cm from the ground surface
- Dominant Cover: Coniferous Forest

Reference vegetation community is an overstory dominated by Englemann spruce with an understory that is diverse and include at wetter sites: *Cornus canadensis*, *Cornus sericea*, *fragaria* species, *galium triflorum*, *linnaea borealis*, *maianthemum stellatum*, and at drier sites: *dasiphora floribunda*, *poa* species, *rosa woodsia* and *symphoricarpos albus*. The understory production averages 600 dry pounds per acre.

- Soils are:
 - o Generally not limy (limited extent)
 - o Moderately deep, deep, or very deep
 - o Not ashy or medial textural family
 - o Typically less than 5% stone and boulder surface cover (<15% max)
- Soil surface texture silt loam in surface mineral 4"
- Parent material is alluvium and/or outwash derived from calcareous siltstone
- Drainage class is poorly drained; no flooding frequency
- Site Landform: stream terraces, outwash terraces
- Moisture Regime: aquic
- Temperature Regime: frigid
- Elevation Range: 3000-4400 ft
- Slope: 0-4%

Associated sites

F043AP902MT	<p>Ashy Cool Moist Woodland Group</p> <p>These sites are associated because they both reside in cool moist site conditions that include landforms of stream terraces and outwash terrace, at elevations ranging 3200 to 4600 feet. The F043AP907MT site resides only on very low slopes in contrast to this associated site.</p>
F043AP910MT	<p>Upland Cool Moist Woodland Group</p> <p>These sites are associated because they both reside in cool moist site conditions that include landforms of stream terraces and outwash terrace, at elevations ranging 3200 to 4600 feet. The F043AP907MT site resides only on very low slopes in contrast to this associated site.</p>

Similar sites

F043AP902MT	<p>Ashy Cool Moist Woodland Group</p> <p>These sites are similar in their site conditions of cool-moist areas including:landforms of stream terraces and outwash terrace, at elevations ranging 3200 to 4600 feet. The F043AP907MT site resides only on very low slopes in contrast to this associated site. They differ in that FO43AP907MT has a reference community of Engelmann spruce and has subirrigated soils, while F043AP902MT has western redcedar and does not have subirrigated soils.</p>
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F043AP910MT	<p>Upland Cool Moist Woodland Group</p> <p>These sites are similar in their site conditions of cool-moist areas including:landforms of stream terraces and outwash terrace, at elevations ranging 3200 to 4600 feet. The F043AP907MT site resides only on very low slopes in contrast to this associated site. They differ in that FO43AP907MT has a reference community of Engelmann spruce and has subirrigated soils, while F043AP910MT has western redcedar and does not have subirrigated soils.</p>
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Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	(1) <i>Picea engelmannii</i>
Shrub	(1) <i>Cornus sericea ssp. sericea</i> (2) <i>Rubus parviflorus</i>
Herbaceous	(1) <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> (2) <i>Clintonia uniflora</i>

Physiographic features

- Site Landform: stream terraces, outwash terraces
- Elevation Range: 3000-4400 ft
- Slope: 0-4%

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Mountains > Stream terrace (2) Mountains > Outwash terrace
Elevation	3,000–4,400 ft
Slope	0–4%
Aspect	W, NW, N, NE, E, SE, S, SW

Climatic features

- Moisture Regime: aquatic
- Temperature Regime: frigid
- Representative Value (RV) of range of Mean Annual Precipitation: 19-24 inches
- Representative Value (RV) of range of Mean Average Annual Temperature: 38-42 degrees
- Representative Value (RV) of range of Frost Free Days: 70-90 days

SUMMARY TABLES ARE FOR AVAILABLE CLIMATE STATIONS WHICH ARE ALL LOCATED IN VALLEYS.

Table 3. Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (characteristic range)	70-85 days
Freeze-free period (characteristic range)	123-130 days
Precipitation total (characteristic range)	21-28 in
Frost-free period (actual range)	18-87 days
Freeze-free period (actual range)	60-132 days
Precipitation total (actual range)	19-32 in
Frost-free period (average)	67 days
Freeze-free period (average)	113 days
Precipitation total (average)	24 in

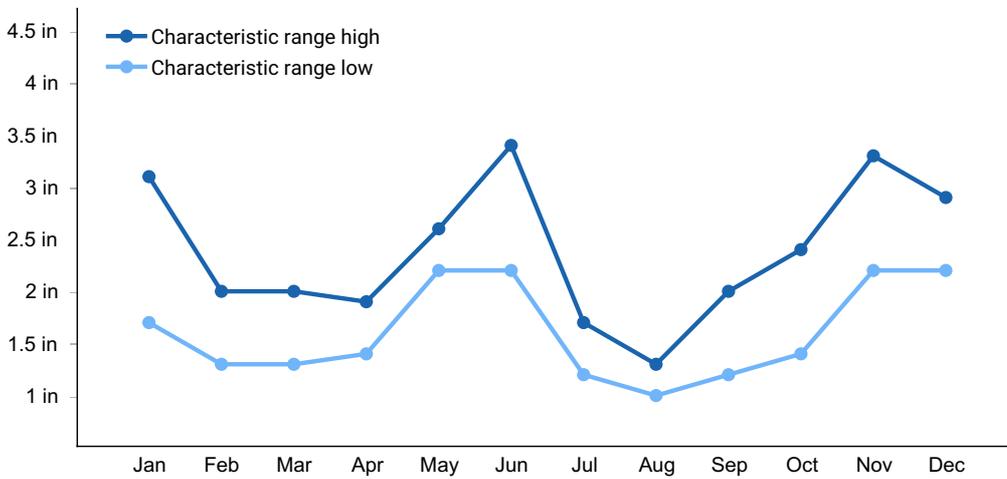


Figure 1. Monthly precipitation range

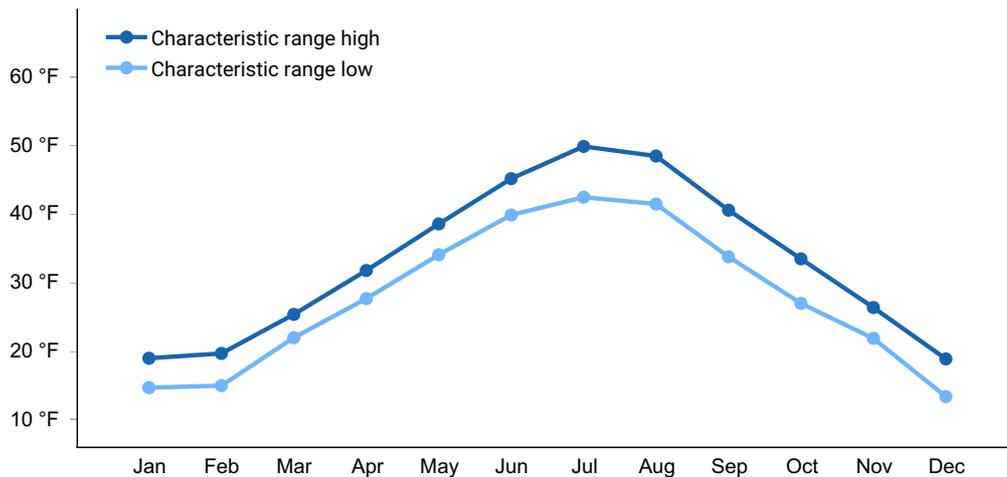


Figure 2. Monthly minimum temperature range

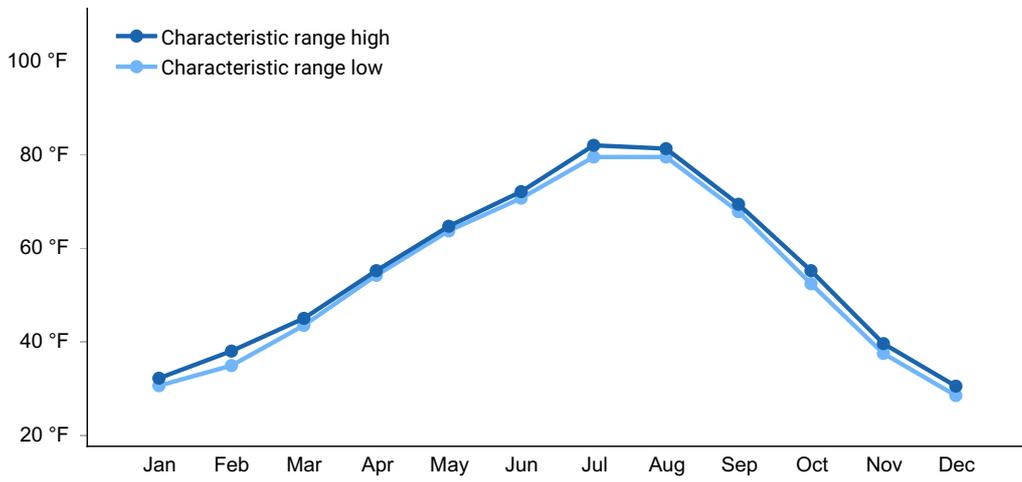


Figure 3. Monthly maximum temperature range

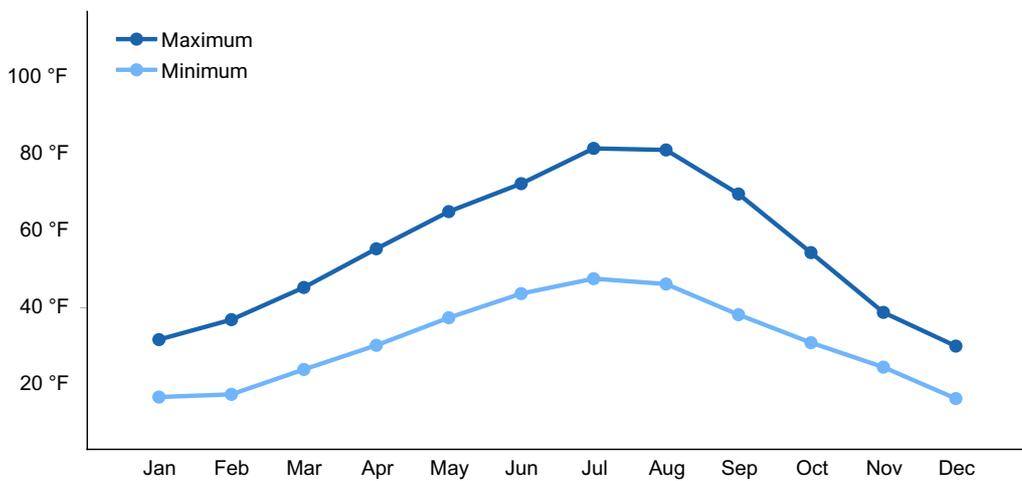


Figure 4. Monthly average minimum and maximum temperature

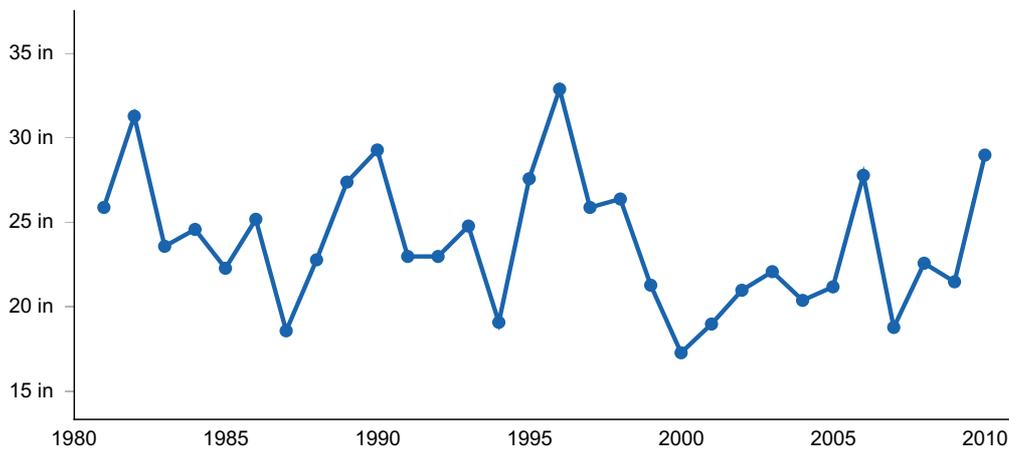


Figure 5. Annual precipitation pattern

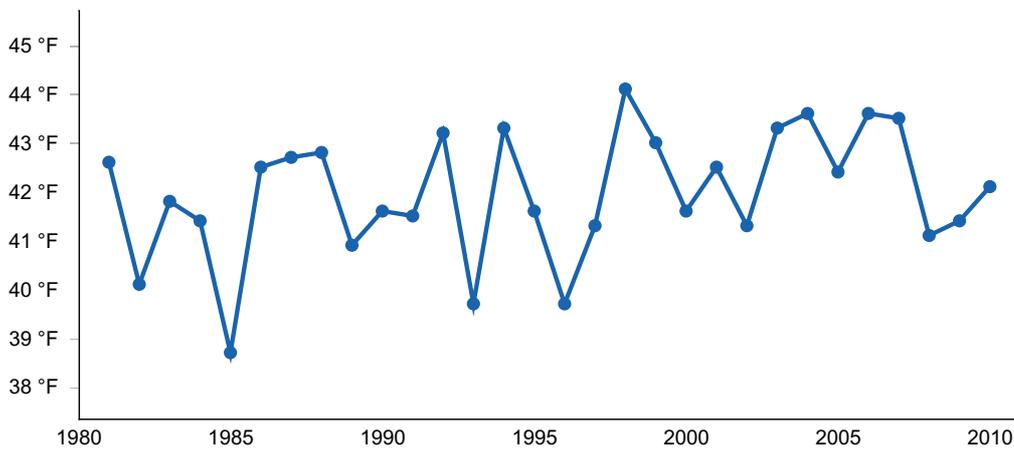


Figure 6. Annual average temperature pattern

Climate stations used

- (1) POLEBRIDGE 1 N [USC00246618], Essex, MT
- (2) WEST GLACIER [USC00248809], Kalispell, MT
- (3) WHITEFISH [USC00248902], Whitefish, MT
- (4) HUNGRY HORSE DAM [USC00244328], Kalispell, MT
- (5) LINDBERGH LAKE [USC00245043], Seeley Lake, MT
- (6) LIBBY 1 NE RS [USC00245015], Libby, MT
- (7) LIBBY 32 SSE [USC00245020], Libby, MT

Influencing water features

- Seasonal high water table < 100 cm from the ground surface
- Site is not in a floodplain

Wetland description

USDI FWS Wetland Classification

System=palustrine; Class= forest wetland; Subclass= needle-leaved evergreen; Water Regime (nontidal)= temporarily flooded

Soil features

- Soils are
 - o Generally not limy (limited extent)
 - o Moderately deep, deep, or very deep
 - o Not ashy or medial textural family
 - o Typically less than 5% stone and boulder surface cover (<15% max)
- Soil surface texture silt loam in surface mineral 4"
- Parent material is alluvium and/or outwash derived from calcareous siltstone
- Drainage class is poorly drained; no flooding frequency

Table 4. Representative soil features

Parent material	(1) Alluvium–calcareous siltstone (2) Outwash–calcareous siltstone
Surface texture	(1) Silt loam
Drainage class	Poorly drained
Soil depth	20–60 in

Ecological dynamics

STATE 1: Current reference state with minor or none presence of western white pine as a seral tree species. Very wet sites with water table from 60-100 cm found along streams and associated with wetlands.

Due to this very wet condition, the fire free interval can be very long.

SFR occurs in patches 200-2000 HA patch

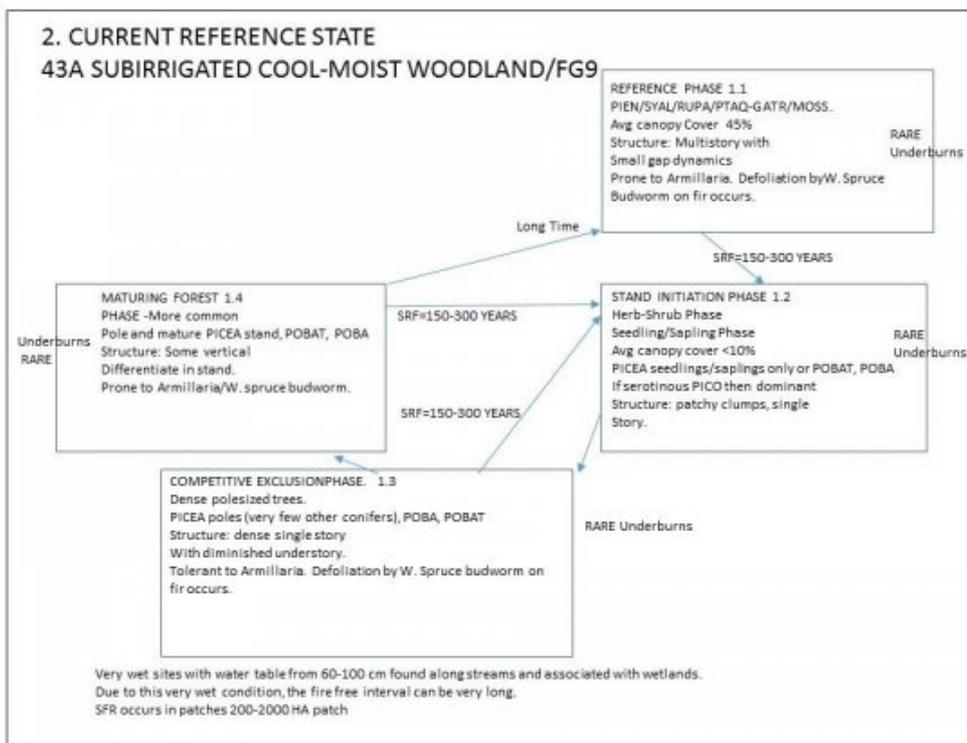
Community Phase 1.1: Reference phase of multi-storied forest canopy dominated by subalpine fir and Engelmann spruce.

Community Phase 1.2: Post fire disturbance community of herb and shrub species.

Community Phase 1.3: Intermediate aged forest, dense thick pole sized trees.

Community Phase 1.4: Maturing forest phase of seral tree species and subalpine fir and Engelmann spruce.

State and transition model



Animal community

Livestock use is low to moderate since the dense overstory limits forage production. Deer and elk may use this site as a winter range; moose use is substantial. Red osier dogwood is used by both wildlife and livestock.

Hydrological functions

- Site is not in a floodplain
- Seasonal high water table < 100 cm from the ground surface

If there is a disruption to the seasonal high water table, then moist-site plant species will be stressed and potentially go in decline.

Recreational uses

Due to high water tables, limit use of trails and campgrounds available at this site.

Wood products

Timber productivity is high at this site, but high water table may restrict harvest. As well, these site are located streamside and keep soil intact and have high visual value, thereby limiting harvest use.

Other references

Hansen, Paul L. Classification and management of Montana's riparian and wetland sites. No. 54. Montana Forest and Conservation Experiment Station, School of Forestry, The University of Montana, 1995.

Pfister, Robert D., et al. "Forest habitat types of Montana." Gen. Tech. Rep. INT-GTR-34. Ogden, UT: US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Intermountain Forest & Range Experiment Station. 174 p. 34 (1977).

Contributors

jay skovlin
stephanie shoemaker

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	12/18/2020
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:**
