

Ecological site FX052X01X131 Shallow Clay (Swc) Dry Grassland

Last updated: 7/11/2019
Accessed: 04/23/2024

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.

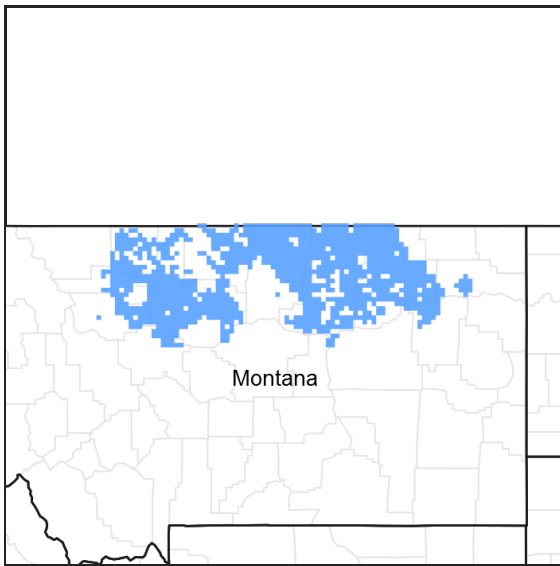


Figure 1. Mapped extent

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.

MLRA notes

Major Land Resource Area (MLRA): 052X–Brown Glaciated Plains

The Brown Glaciated Plains, MLRA 52, is an expansive and agriculturally and ecologically significant area. It consists of around 14.5 million acres and stretches across 350 miles from east to west, encompassing portions of 15 counties in north-central Montana. This region represents the southwestern limit of the Laurentide Ice Sheet and is considered to be the driest and westernmost area within the vast network of glacially-derived prairie pothole landforms of the northern Great Plains. Elevation ranges from 2,000 feet (610 meters) to 4,600 feet (1,400 meters).

Soils are primarily Mollisols but Entisols, Inceptisols, Alfisols and Vertisols are also common. Till from continental glaciation is the predominant parent material, but alluvium and bedrock are also common. Till deposits are typically less than 50 feet thick, and in some areas glacially deformed bedrock occurs at or near the soil surface (Soller, 2001). Underlying the till is sedimentary bedrock largely consisting of Cretaceous shale, sandstone and mudstone (Vuke et al. 2007). It is commonly exposed on hillslopes, particularly along drainage ways. Significant alluvial deposits occur along glacial outwash channels and major drainages, including portions of the Missouri, Teton, Marias, Milk, and Frenchman Rivers. Large glacial lakes, particularly in the western half of the MLRA, deposited clayey and silty lacustrine sediments (Fullerton et al. 2013).

Much of the western portion of this MLRA was glaciated towards the end of the Wisconsin age, and the maximum glacial extent occurred approximately 20,000 years ago (Fullerton et al., 2004). The result is a geologically young

landscape that is predominantly a level till plain interspersed with lake plains and dominated by soils in the Mollisol and Vertisol orders. These soils are very productive and generally are well-suited to dryland farming. Much of this area is aridic-ustic. Crop-fallow dryland wheat farming is the predominant land use. Areas of rangeland typically are on steep hillslopes along drainages.

The rangeland, much of which is native mixed grass prairie, increases in abundance in the eastern half of the MLRA. The Wisconsin-age till in the north-central part of this area typically formed large disintegration moraines with steep slopes and numerous poorly-drained potholes. A large portion of Wisconsin-age till occurring on the type of the level terrain that would typically be optimal for farming has large amounts of less-suitable sodium-affected Natrustalfs. Significant portions of Blaine, Phillips, and Valley Counties were glaciated approximately 150,000 years ago during the Illinoian age. Due to erosion and dissection of the landscape, many of these areas have steeper slopes and more exposed bedrock than areas glaciated during the Wisconsin age (Fullerton and Colton, 1986).

While much of the rangeland in the aridic-ustic portion of MLRA 52 is classified as belonging to the - "dry grassland" - climatic zone, sites in portions of southern MLRA 52 may belong to the -"dry shrubland" - climatic zone. The dry shrubland zone represents the northernmost extent of the big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*) steppe on the Great Plains. Because similar soils occur in both southern and northern portions of the MLRA, it is currently hypothesized that climate is the primary driving factor affecting big sagebrush distribution in this area. However the precise factors are not fully understood at this time.

Sizeable tracts of largely unbroken rangeland in the eastern half of the MLRA and adjacent southern Saskatchewan are home to the Northern Montana population of greater sage grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*), and large portions of this area are considered to be a Priority Area for Conservation (PAC) by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2013). This population is unique among sage grouse populations because many individuals overwinter in the big sagebrush steppe (dry shrubland) in the southern portion of the MLRA and then migrate to the northern portion of the MLRA, which lacks big sagebrush (dry grassland), to live the rest of the year (Smith, 2013).

Areas of the till plain near the Bearpaw and Highwood Mountains as well as the Sweetgrass Hills and Rocky Mountain foothills are at higher elevations, receive higher amounts of precipitation, and have a typic-ustic moisture regime. These areas have significantly more rangeland production than the drier aridic-ustic portions of the MLRA and have enough moisture to produce crops annually rather than just bi-annually, as in the drier areas. Ecological sites in this higher precipitation area are classified as the moist grassland climatic zone.

Classification relationships

NRCS Soil Geography Hierarchy

- Land Resource Region: Northern Great Plains
- Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) 052 Brown Glaciated Plains
- Climate Zone: Dry Grassland

National Hierarchical Framework of Ecological Units (Cleland et al. 1997, McNab et al. 2007)

- Domain: Dry
- Division: Temperate Steppe
- Province: Great Plains-Palouse Dry Steppe Province 331
- Section: Northwestern Glaciated Plains 331D
- Subsection: Montana Glaciated Plains 331Dh
- Landtype association/Landtype phase: N/A

National Vegetation Classification Standard (Federal Geographic Data Committee 2008)

- Class: Mesomorphic Shrub and Herb Vegetation Class (2)
- Subclass: Temperate and Boreal Grassland and Shrubland Subclass (2.B)
- Formation: Temperate Grassland, Meadow, and Shrubland Formation (2.B.2)
- Division: Great Plains Grassland and Shrubland Division (2.b.2.Nb)
- Macrogroup: *Hesperostipa comata* – *Pascopyrum smithii* – *Festuca hallii* Grassland Macrogroup (2.B.2.Nb.2)
- Group: *Pascopyrum smithii* - *Hesperostipa comata* - *Schizachyrium scoparium* - *Bouteloua* spp. Mixedgrass Prairie Group (2.B.2.Nb.2.c)
- Alliance: *Pascopyrum smithii* – *Nassella viridula* Northwestern Great Plains Herbaceous Alliance
- Association: None identified

EPA Ecoregions

- Level 1: Great Plains (9)
- Level 2: West-Central Semi-Arid Prairies (9.3)
- Level 3: Northwestern Glaciated Plains (42)
- Level 4: North Central Brown Glaciated Plains (42o) & Glaciated Northern Grasslands (42j)

Ecological site concept

This provisional ecological site occurs in the Dry Grassland climatic zone of MLRA 52. Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of this ecological site based on current data. This map is approximate, is not intended to be definitive, and may be subject to change. Shallow Clay Dry Grassland is a moderately extensive ecological site occurring on most landscapes in MLRA 52. This ecological site occurs on hillslopes, badlands, and bluffs where soils are less than 20 inches deep and have a clay content greater than 35 percent. Slopes vary from 0 to 60 percent, but are typically greater than 15 percent.

The distinguishing characteristics of this site are lithic or paralithic bedrock less than 20 inches from the soil surface and a clay content of greater than 35 percent. Soils are derived from clayey residuum, or clayey alluvium over shale. Soil surface textures (upper 4 inches) contain more than 35 percent clay. Underlying horizons are typically weakly developed and commonly contain shale fragments. Calcium carbonate equivalent is typically less than 5 percent, but may be up to 15 percent in some cases. This site is nonacid, with pH values greater than 5.6 throughout the soil profile. Vegetation is typically sparse and soil exposure relatively high. Characteristic vegetation is western wheatgrass (*Pascopyrum smithii*), prairie clover (*Dalea* spp.), and green needlegrass (*Nassella viridula*).

Preliminary studies indicate that there may also be an acid variant of this site. This variant appears to exhibit retarded shrub growth, reduced cover of cool season bunchgrasses, and increased cover of creeping juniper and prairie sandreed. At this time, this variant cannot be consistently identified as a separate ecological site concept and further investigation is required.

Associated sites

| | |
|--------------|---|
| FX052X01X001 | Clayey (Cy) Dry Grassland This site is generally up or downslope from the Shallow Clay Dry Grassland site. It is most commonly on summits and footslopes where the slope is less than 15 percent and soil depth is 20 inches deep or greater. |
| FX052X01X005 | Clayey-Steep (Cystp) Dry Grassland This site occurs on moderate to steeply sloping hillslopes adjacent to the Shallow Clay Dry Grassland site. It is generally in backslope positions where bedrock is at a depth of 20 inches or more. |
| FX052X01X030 | Limy (Ly) Dry Grassland This site occurs on moderate to steeply sloping hillslopes adjacent to the Shallow Clay Dry Grassland site. It is frequently in the same landscape positions but has different soil structure and plant community. |

Similar sites

| | |
|--------------|---|
| FX052X03X131 | Shallow Clay (Swc) Dry Shrubland This site differs from Shallow Clay Dry Grassland in that annual temperatures are slightly warmer and it supports big sagebrush rather than silver sagebrush. |
| FX052X01X005 | Clayey-Steep (Cystp) Dry Grassland This site differs from Shallow Clay Dry Grassland in that depth to bedrock is 20 inches or more. |
| FX052X01X007 | Coarse Clay (Coc) Dry Grassland This site differs from Shallow Clay Dry Grassland in that the soil surface structure is coarse granular rather than fine. Plant community dominated by plants generally associated with coarser-textured soils. |

Table 1. Dominant plant species

| | |
|-------|---------------|
| Tree | Not specified |
| Shrub | Not specified |

Legacy ID

R052XY131MT

Physiographic features

Shallow Clay Dry Grassland is a moderately extensive ecological site occurring across the till plains and moraines of MLRA 52. The majority of MLRA 52 is covered by a broad till plain and this ecological site largely occurs where the till plain has been dissected by streams or rivers and underlying bedrock has been exposed. This site is typically in backslope positions on hillslopes, badlands, and bluffs. Slopes vary but are typically 15 to 60 percent.

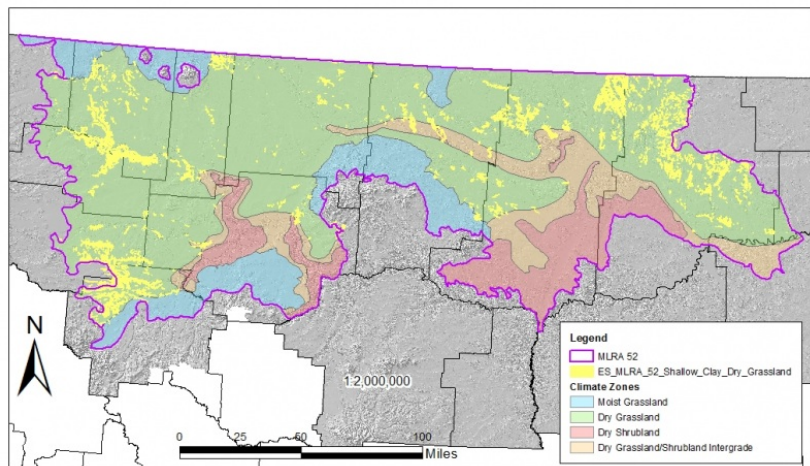


Figure 2. Figure 1 General distribution of the Shallow Clay Dry Grassland ecological site by mapunit extent

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Hillslope profile | (1) Backslope |
| Landforms | (1) Till plain > Hillslope (2) Badlands (3) Till plain > Bluff |
| Elevation | 2,000–3,870 ft |
| Slope | 0–60% |
| Aspect | Aspect is not a significant factor |

Climatic features

The Brown Glaciated Plains is a semi-arid region with a temperate continental climate that is characterized by frigid winters and warm to hot summers (Cooper et al., 2001). The average frost-free period for this ecological site is 120 days. The majority of precipitation occurs as steady, soaking, frontal system rains in late spring to early summer. Summer rainfall comes mainly from convection thunderstorms that typically deliver scattered amounts of rain in intense bursts. These storms may be accompanied by damaging winds and large-diameter hail and result in flash flooding along low-order streams. Severe drought occurs on average in 2 out of 10 ten years. Annual precipitation ranges from 10 to 14 inches, and 70 to 80 percent of this occurs during the growing season (Cooper et al., 2001). Extreme climatic variations, especially droughts, have the greatest influence on species cover and production (Coupland, 1958, 1961; Biondini et al., 1998).

During the winter months, the western half of MLRA 52 commonly experiences chinook winds, which are strong west to southwest surface winds accompanied by abrupt increases in temperature. The chinook winds are strongest on the western boundary of the MLRA near the Rocky Mountain foothills and decrease eastward. In addition to producing damaging winds, prolonged chinook episodes can result in drought or vegetation kills due to

the reaction of plants to a “false spring” (Oard, 1993).

Table 3. Representative climatic features

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------|
| Frost-free period (average) | 120 days |
| Freeze-free period (average) | 140 days |
| Precipitation total (average) | 12 in |

Climate stations used

- (1) CARTER 14 W [USC00241525], Floweree, MT
- (2) CHESTER [USC00241692], Chester, MT
- (3) TIBER DAM [USC00248233], Chester, MT
- (4) HARLEM [USC00243929], Harlem, MT
- (5) MALTA 7 E [USC00245338], Malta, MT
- (6) TURNER 11N [USC00248415], Turner, MT
- (7) CONRAD [USC00241974], Conrad, MT
- (8) SHELBY [USC00247500], Shelby, MT
- (9) GLASGOW [USW00094008], Glasgow, MT
- (10) HAVRE CITY CO AP [USW00094012], Havre, MT

Influencing water features

This is a dry upland site and the water budget is normally contained within the soil profile. Steep slopes combined with high clay content result in very high runoff potential. Intense precipitation events deliver large amounts of surface runoff downslope. Moisture loss through evapotranspiration exceeds precipitation for the majority of the growing season. Soil moisture levels are greatest in May and June, but rarely reach field capacity. Soil moisture is the primary limiting factor for plant production on this ecological site.

Soil features

Soils that best represent the central concept of this ecological site are the Yawdim and Neldore series. These soils are in the Ustorthents great group. They are characterized by a surface horizon that lacks enough organic matter to have a mollic epipedon and by contact with paralithic bedrock within 20 inches of the soil surface. Both are clayey and have smectitic mineralogy. The soil moisture regime for these and all soils in this ecological site concept is ustic bordering on aridic, which means that the soils are moist in some or all parts for either 180 cumulative days or 90 consecutive days during the growing season but are dry in some or all parts for over 90 cumulative days. These soils have a frigid soil temperature regime (Soil Survey Staff, 2014).

Surface textures found in this site are typically clay, silty clay, clay loam, or silty clay loam and contain greater than 35 percent clay. Underlying horizons are weakly developed and frequently contain soft shale chips. Organic matter in the surface horizon typically ranges from 1 to 2 percent, and moist colors vary from grayish brown (2.5Y 4/2) to very dark grayish brown (2.5Y 3/2). Darker colors are typically inherited from the parent material and are not a result of an accumulation of organic matter. Soil pH class is moderately acid to slightly alkaline in the surface horizon and moderately acid to strongly alkaline in the subsurface horizons. The soil depth class for this site is shallow or very shallow (bedrock is less than 20 inches below the soil surface). Content of coarse fragments is typically between 15 and 60 percent by volume in the subsurface horizons. These fragments are typically soft parafragments that are weakly cemented and can be crushed between the fingers.

Table 4. Representative soil features

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Parent material | (1) Residuum |
| Surface texture | (1) Clay (2) Silty clay (3) Clay loam (4) Silty clay loam |

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Drainage class | Well drained |
| Soil depth | 0–20 in |
| Available water capacity (0-40in) | 1.9–2.8 in |
| Calcium carbonate equivalent (0-5in) | 0–14% |
| Electrical conductivity (0-20in) | 0–3 mmhos/cm |
| Sodium adsorption ratio (0-20in) | 0–12 |
| Soil reaction (1:1 water) (0-40in) | 5.6–9 |
| Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (0-20in) | 0–34% |
| Subsurface fragment volume >3" (0-20in) | 0–34% |

Ecological dynamics

The information in this ecological site description, including the state-and-transition model (STM), was developed based on historical data, current field data, professional experience, and a review of the scientific literature. As a result, all possible scenarios or plant species may not be included. Key indicator plant species, disturbances, and ecological processes are described to inform land management decisions.

The Shallow Clay provisional ecological site in MLRA 52 Dry Grassland consists of two states: The Reference State (1.0), and the Altered State (2.0). Plant communities associated with the Shallow Clay ecological site evolved under the combined influences of climate, grazing, and fire. Extreme climatic variability results in frequent droughts, which have the greatest influence on the relative contribution of species cover and production (Coupland, 1958, 1961; Biondini et al., 1998). Due to the dominance of cool season graminoids, annual production is highly dependent upon mid to late-spring precipitation (Heitschmidt and Vermeire, 2005; Anderson, 2006).

Native grazers also shaped these plant communities. American bison (*Bison bison*) were the dominant historic grazer, but pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*), elk (*Cervus canadensis*), and deer (*Odocoileus* spp.) were also common. Additionally, small mammals such as prairie dogs (*Cynomys* spp.), and ground squirrels (*Urocitellus* spp.) also influenced this plant community (Salo et al., 2004). Grasshoppers and periodic outbreaks of Rocky Mountain locusts (*Melanoplus spretus*; Lockwood, 2004) also played an important role in the ecology of these communities.

The historic ecosystem also experienced relatively frequent lightning-caused fires with estimated fire return intervals of 6 to 25 years (Bragg 1995). Historically, Native Americans also set frequent fires. The majority of lightning-caused fires occurred in July and August, whereas Native Americans typically set fires during spring and fall to correspond with the movement of bison (Higgins 1986). It is not known how significant fire was on the Shallow Clay Dry Grassland ecological site. However, due to the sparse vegetation and rough, broken topography, its effects were most likely minimal. Further investigation of fire dynamics is needed to better assess this.

Drought or improper grazing of this site can result in a reduction in the cover of the mid-statured grasses and an increase in shortgrasses and broom snakeweed. Improper grazing practices include any practices that do not allow sufficient opportunity for plants to physiologically recover from a grazing event or multiple grazing events within a given year and/or that do not provide adequate cover to prevent soil erosion over time. These practices may include, but are not limited to, overstocking, continuous grazing, and/or inadequate seasonal rotation moves over multiple years. Further degradation of the site due to improper grazing can result in a community dominated by broom snakeweed and unpalatable forbs such as curlycup gumweed (*Grindelia squarrosa*). Periods of extended drought (approximately 3 years or more) may have similar effects. Non-native annual bromes have become naturalized in relatively undisturbed grasslands (Ogle et al., 2003; Harmony, 2007) and can be present in any state within the scope of this ecological site. Their abundance varies depending on precipitation and germination

conditions. Under normal conditions they typically do not have a significant ecological impact on this ecological site. However, it is hypothesized that prolonged improper grazing combined with favorable germination conditions may allow annual bromes to proliferate and dominate the ecological dynamics of this site and so result in an invaded state. This phenomenon has not been sufficiently documented, and the ecological mechanisms are unclear. Further investigation of invasive species dynamics is needed prior to incorporating an invaded state into the state-and-transition model.

Because of the shallow soil and generally steep slopes, this ecological site is unsuitable for cropland. Therefore, this ecological site has remained in native vegetation.

The STM diagram suggests possible pathways that plant communities on this site may follow as a result of a given set of ecological processes and management. The site may also support states not displayed in the STM diagram. Land owners and land managers should seek guidance from local professionals before prescribing a particular management or treatment scenario. Plant community responses vary across this MLRA due to variability in weather, soils, and aspect. The reference community phase may not necessarily be the management goal. The lists of plant species and species composition values are provisional and are not intended to cover the full range of conditions, species, and responses for the site. Species composition by dry weight is provided when available and is considered provisional based on the sources identified in the narratives associated with each community phase.

The Reference State contains two community phases characterized by rhizomatous wheatgrasses, green needlegrass, and prairie clover. This state evolved under the combined influences of climate, grazing, and fire with climatic variation having the greatest influence on cover and production. In general, this site is believed to have been protected from fire by topography and low fuel loads, but fire dynamics are not well understood on this site. This site has a relatively high occurrence of bare ground and the difficult growing conditions make the site sensitive to disturbances.

Community Phase 1.1: Mixedgrass Phase

The reference plant community on this site is characterized by rhizomatous wheatgrasses, green needlegrass, and prairie clover. By far the most common grass is the cool season western wheatgrass, which may constitute up to 40 percent of the total annual production. In the northern extent of this site, thickspike wheatgrass (*Elymus lanceolatus*) becomes more common. Green needlegrass (*Nassella viridula*) is also common, although its foliar cover is typically around 10 percent. Other grasses include plains muhly, prairie Junegrass, and blue grama. Shortgrasses rarely comprise more than 5 percent of the plant community. Common forbs are prairie clover, both purple and white, American vetch (*Vicia americana*), and fewflower buckwheat (*Eriogonum pauciflorum*). Common shrubs are Gardner's saltbush (*Atriplex gardneri*) and winterfat (*Krascheninnikovia lanata*). The approximate species composition of the reference plant community is as follows:

Percent composition by weight*

Rhizomatous Wheatgrasses 40%

Green Needlegrass 15%

Plains Muhly 10%

Blue Grama 5%

Other Native Grasses 10%

Prairie Clover spp. 1-5%

American Vetch 1-5%

Other Perennial Forbs 5-10%

Shrubs/Subshrubs 5%

Estimated Total Annual Production (lbs/ac)*

Low - 200

Representative Value - 350

High - 500

*Estimated based on current data – subject to revision

Community Phase 1.2: At Risk Community Phase

The At-Risk Community Phase is characterized by a dominance of shortgrasses and a significant reduction of mid-statured grasses. Shortgrasses such as blue grama and prairie Junegrass are increasing in this phase while rhizomatous wheatgrasses are decreasing. Green needlegrass and palatable forbs such as prairie clover are rare or

absent.

Community Phase Pathway 1.1a

Drought, improper grazing management, or a combination of these factors can shift the reference community phase (1.1) to the At Risk Community Phase (1.2).

Community Phase Pathway 1.2a

The At Risk Community Phase (1.2) can return to the reference community phase (1.1) with normal or above-normal spring precipitation and proper grazing management.

Transition T1A

Prolonged drought, improper grazing practices, or a combination of these factors weaken the resilience of the Reference State (1) and drive its transition to the Altered State (2). The Reference State (1) transitions to the Altered State (2) when perennial grasses become rare and contribute little to production. Broom snakeweed and unpalatable forbs dominate the plant community.

State 2: Altered State

The Altered State consists of one community phase. The dynamics of this state are driven by long-term drought, improper grazing management, or a combination of these factors. The Altered State is dominated by broom snakeweed and unpalatable forbs such as curlycup gumweed. Perennial grasses have been eliminated or nearly so, and their vigor and production is low. Once in the Altered State, the site may become unstable and is subject to erosion and solar heating. Broom snakeweed is known to be highly competitive in some habitats and may resist displacement by other species (USDA-NRCS, 2016), but further research is needed.

Community Phase 2.1: Broom Snakeweed/Forb Community Phase

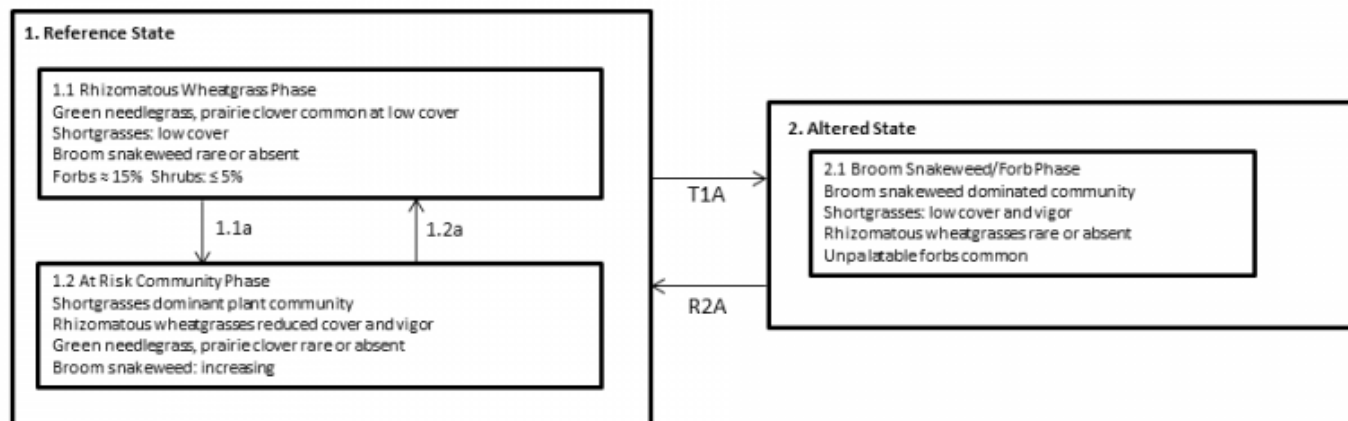
Broom snakeweed and unpalatable forbs such as curlycup gumweed dominate the plant community. There is a high amount of bare ground, and soils are unstable and subject to erosion.

Restoration Pathway R2A

A change in management alone may not be sufficient to restore the Altered State to the Reference State. Intensive restoration methods may be necessary to reestablish desirable species. Reseeding via conventional methods may not be possible due to the steep topography of this site. Specialized reseeded techniques (hydroseeding, straw wattles, etc.) may be necessary. These restoration methods are labor intensive and costly and may not be a practical in all situations.

State and transition model

Shallow Clay Dry Grassland R52XY131MT



Legend

1.1a drought, improper grazing management

1.2a normal or above-normal spring moisture, proper grazing management

T1A prolonged drought, improper grazing, or a combination of these factors

R2A specialized reseedling, normal or above-normal moisture, proper grazing management (management intensive and costly)

Figure 2: State-and-transition diagram

Inventory data references

No specific field data was available for this site. One low intensity plot and 2 historical (417) plots were available for the Shallow Clay Dry Shrubland site and were used in conjunction with available literature to approximate the reference plant community for this provisional ecological site. Information for alternate states was obtained from professional experience and a review of the scientific literature. All community phases are considered provisional based on these plots and the sources identified in the narratives associated with each community phase.

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Approval

Scott Brady, 7/11/2019

Acknowledgments

This provisional ecological site description could not have been completed without the contributions of Karen Newlon. She conducted an extensive literature review, which provided most of the background information for this project as well as many of the references. She also co-authored the Loamy and Thin Claypan Dry Grassland ecological sites previously prepared in MLRA 52.

A number of USDA-NRCS and USDI-BLM staff supported this project. Staff contributions are as follows:

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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:**

17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:**
