

Ecological site R063AY015SD Thin Claypan

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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.

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Approved by	Stan Boltz
Approval date	
Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on	Annual Production

Indicators

- Number and extent of rills:** None.

- Presence of water flow patterns:** Broken or irregular in appearance or discontinuous with numerous debris dams.

- Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:** Pedestals are somewhat common, but few exposed roots would occur.

- Bare ground from Ecological Site Description or other studies (rock, litter, lichen, moss, plant canopy are not bare ground):** 5 to 20 percent is typical; this does not include associated slickspots that are not a soil/ecological site.

- Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies:** None should be present.

- Extent of wind scoured, blowouts and/or depositional areas:** None.

- Amount of litter movement (describe size and distance expected to travel):** Small size litter classes will generally move short distances, some medium size class litter will move very short distances. Litter debris dams are occasionally

present.

8. **Soil surface (top few mm) resistance to erosion (stability values are averages - most sites will show a range of values):** Soil aggregate stability ratings should typically be 3 or greater. Surface organic matter adheres to the soil surface in most cases. Soil surface fragments will typically retain structure for short periods when dipped in distilled water. Some fragments will dissolve in less than 1 minute.
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9. **Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness):** A-horizon not present at the surface, but has light colored E-horizon 1 to 4 inches thick. Structure is thin platy parting to fine granular.
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10. **Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:** Combination of shallow and deep rooted species (mid & tall rhizomatous and tufted perennial cool-season grasses) with fine and coarse roots positively influences infiltration.
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11. **Presence and thickness of compaction layer (usually none; describe soil profile features which may be mistaken for compaction on this site):** None – natural pan appears at roughly 1 to 4 inches with “biscuit-top” appearance at top of pan.
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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: Mid cool-season rhizomatous grasses = Short warm-season grasses >

Sub-dominant: Cool-season bunchgrasses >

Other: Forbs = Shrubs > Mid warm-season grasses = Grass-likes

Additional:

13. **Amount of plant mortality and decadence (include which functional groups are expected to show mortality or decadence):** Very little evidence of decadence or mortality. Bunch grasses have strong, healthy centers and shrubs are vigorous.
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14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth (in):**
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15. **Expected annual annual-production (this is TOTAL above-ground annual-production, not just forage annual-production):** Production ranges from 600-1,600 lbs./acre (air-dry weight). Reference value production is 1,100 lbs./acre (air-dry weight).
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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: State and local noxious weeds, cactus

17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:** All species exhibit high vigor relative to climatic conditions. Do not rate based solely on seed production. Perennial grasses should have vigorous rhizomes or tillers.
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