

Ecological site R063AY016SD Very Shallow

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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 on slopes of about 15% or less, slight to none and discontinuous on slopes greater than 15%.

- Presence of water flow patterns:** None on slopes of about 15% or less; barely visible and discontinuous with numerous debris dams on slopes greater than 15%.

- Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:** Few pedestalled plants typically on steeper slopes.

- Bare ground from Ecological Site Description or other studies (rock, litter, lichen, moss, plant canopy are not bare ground):** 5 to 25 percent is typical.

- 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. Soil surface fragments will typically retain structure for 1 minute or longer when dipped in distilled water.
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9. **Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness):** A-horizon should be 3 to 6 inches thick with light to dark brownish gray colors, but not typically mollic. Structure should typically be weak fine granular at least in the upper A-horizon.
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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 rhizomatous and tufted perennial cool- and warm-season grasses) with fine and coarse roots positively influences infiltration. Infiltration is typically high due to gravelly nature of soils.
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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 – very shallow to gravel, but no platy structure will be present.
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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: Short warm-season grasses >> Cool-season bunchgrasses >

Sub-dominant: Grass-likes = Forbs >

Other: Mid warm-season grasses = Shrubs > Mid cool-season rhizomatous grasses

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 700-1,400 lbs./acre (air-dry weight). Reference value production is 1,000 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

17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:** Species exhibit somewhat lower vigor than what would normally be expected for these species on other ecological sites. The droughty nature of the soils of this site causes plant stress even in typical precipitation patterns. Do not rate based solely on seed production.
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