

Ecological site R070BC007NM

Loamy

Accessed: 05/01/2024

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.

Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	Not specified
Shrub	Not specified
Herbaceous	Not specified

Physiographic features

This site occurs on uplands landforms, mainly on hill slopes, ridges, plains, terraces and some fan remnants. Slopes range from 1 to 5 percent and average about 3 percent. Average annual precipitation is about 8 to 14 inches. Elevations range from 2,842 to 5,000 feet.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Plain (2) Terrace (3) Fan piedmont
Flooding frequency	None
Ponding frequency	None
Elevation	866–1,524 m
Slope	0–5%
Aspect	E, S, W

Climatic features

The average annual precipitation ranges from 8 to 13 inches. Variations of 5 inches, more or less, are common. Over 80 percent of the precipitation falls from April through October. Most of the summer precipitation comes in the form of high intensity short duration thunderstorms.

Temperatures are characterized by distinct seasonal changes and large annual and diurnal temperature changes. The average annual temperature is 61 degrees with extremes of 25 degrees below zero in the winter to 112 degrees in the summer.

The average frost-free season is 207 to 220 days. The last killing frost is in late March or early April, and the first killing frost is in late October or early November.

Temperature and rainfall both favor warm season perennial plant growth. In years of abundant spring moisture, annual forbs and cool season grasses can make up an important component of this site. Strong winds blow from the southwest in January through June rapidly drying out the soil during a critical time for cool season plant growth.

Climate data was obtained from <http://www.wrcc.sage.dri.edu/summary/climsmnm.html> web site using 50% probability for freeze-free and frost-free seasons using 28.5 degrees F and 32.5 degrees F respectively.

Table 3. Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (average)	221 days
Freeze-free period (average)	240 days
Precipitation total (average)	330 mm

Influencing water features

This site is not influenced by wetland or streams.

Soil features

The soils of this site are deep to moderately deep. The moderately deep soils have either a petrocalcic, petrogypsic or gypsum horizon between 30 and 40 inches.

Surface textures are loam, silt loam, very fine sandy loam, or clay loam. Substratum textures are loam, silty clay loam, clay loam, or silt loams. Subsoil textures are silt loam, clay loam, silty clay loam, gravelly loam, gravelly clay loam or very gravelly loam. Permeability is moderate to slow and the available water holding capacity is high to moderate. The Atoka, Reeves, Russler, Milner soils may have high amounts of CaCO₃, ranging as high as 40 percent in the subsoil. Rock fragments range from 5 to 50 percent in the subsoil. Reeves, Russler, Milner, Holloman soils will have 40 to 80 percent gypsum in the underlying material.

Maximum and minimum values listed below represent the characteristic soils for this site.

Characteristic Soils:

Atoka (petrocalcic)
 Bigetty
 Reagan
 Reakor
 Reeves (gypsum)
 Russler (gypsum)
 Largo
 Russler (gypsum)
 Largo
 Berino
 Tinney
 Midessa
 Ratliff
 Holloman (gypsum)
 Milner (gypsum)

Table 4. Representative soil features

Surface texture	(1) Loam (2) Very fine sandy loam (3) Silt loam
Family particle size	(1) Loamy
Drainage class	Well drained to somewhat excessively drained
Permeability class	Moderate to slow
Soil depth	76–183 cm

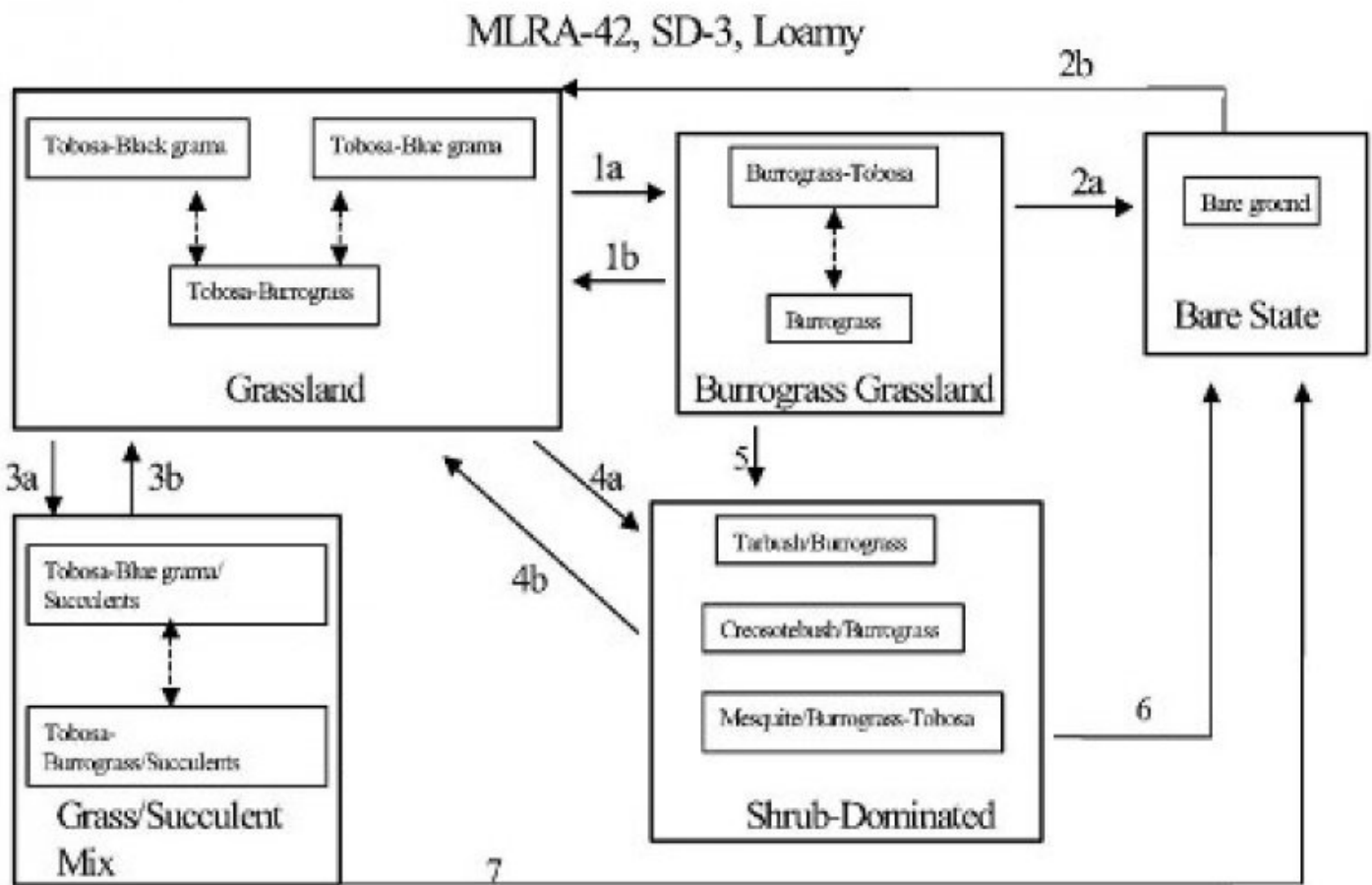
Surface fragment cover <=3"	0–5%
Surface fragment cover >3"	0%
Available water capacity (0-101.6cm)	12.7–30.48 cm
Calcium carbonate equivalent (0-101.6cm)	0–10%
Electrical conductivity (0-101.6cm)	0–8 mmhos/cm
Sodium adsorption ratio (0-101.6cm)	0–6
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (0-101.6cm)	6.6–8.4
Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (Depth not specified)	0–5%
Subsurface fragment volume >3" (Depth not specified)	0%

Ecological dynamics

Overview: The Loamy site is associated with the Gyp Upland ecological site with which it intergrades. There is a pronounced increase in alkali sacaton along this interface. The loamy site is also associated with the Gravelly and Shallow ecological sites from which it receives run-on water. The Draw site often dissects Loamy sites and is distinguished from the Loamy site by increased production or greater densities of woody species. The historic plant community has a grassland aspect, dominated by grasses with shrubs and half-shrubs sparse and evenly distributed. Tobosa, black grama and blue grama are the dominant species. Retrogression within this state is characterized by a decrease in black and blue grama and an increase in burrograss. Continuous overgrazing and drought can initiate a transition to a Burrograss- Grassland state. Continued reduction in grass cover and resulting infiltration problems may eventually effect a change to a Bare State, with very little or no remaining grass cover. Alternatively, creosotebush, tarbush or mesquite may expand or invade. Transitions back to a Grassland State from a Bare or Shrub-Dominated state are costly and may not be economically feasible. Decreased fire frequency may play a part in the transition to the Grass/Succulent Mix state with increased amounts of cholla and prickly pear.

State and transition model

Plant Communities and Transitional Pathways (diagram)



- 1a. Soil drying, overgrazing, drought, soil surface sealing. 1b. Restore natural overland flow, increase infiltration, prescribed grazing.
- 2a. Severe reduction in cover, soil surface sealing, decreased infiltration, erosion. 2b. Restore hydrology, break up physical crust, range seeding, prescribed grazing.
- 3a. Lack of fire, overgrazing, hail storms or other physical disturbance, drought. 3b. Prescribed fire, brush control, prescribed grazing.
- 4a. Seed dispersal of shrubs, persistent loss of grass cover, competition by shrubs, lack of fire. 4b. Brush control, range seeding -dependent on amount of grass (seed bank) remaining.
- 5. Loss of grass cover, seed dispersal of shrubs, competition by shrubs.
- 6. & 7. Brush control with continued loss of grass cover, soil sealing, erosion.

**State 1
Historic Climax Plant Community**

**Community 1.1
Historic Climax Plant Community**

State Containing Historic Climax Plant Community Grassland: The historic plant community has a grassland aspect, dominated by grasses with shrubs and half-shrubs sparse and evenly distributed. Black grama, blue grama, and tobosa are the dominant grass species. There are a variety of perennial forbs and their production varies widely by season and year. Globemallow, verbena, groundsels, croton and filaree are forbs commonly found on this site. Fourwing saltbush and winterfat are two of the more palatable shrubs. The Loamy ecological site encompasses a

wide variety of soils, with surface textures ranging from sandy loams to clay loams. Soil depths range from shallow to very deep and can include sub surface features such as calcic, petrocalcic, and gypsic horizons. These variations cause differences in plant community composition and dynamics. Black grama is found at highest densities on coarser textured sandy loams, with blue grama preferring finer textured loam and silt loam, and tobosa favoring lower landscape positions and loam to clay loam surface textures. Burrograss may often be the dominant grass species on silty soils, perhaps in part due to the seedlings ability to auger into and establish on physically crusted soils. Gypsum influenced soils typically have greater amounts of tobosa, burrograss, and ephedra. There is greater representation of sideoats and vine mesquite within the tobosa-blue grama community. Retrogression under continuous heavy grazing results in a decrease of black grama, blue grama, sideoats grama, plains bristlegrass, bush muhly, cane bluestem, vine mesquite, winterfat, and fourwing saltbush. Species such as burrograss, threeawns, sand dropseed, sand muhly, and broom snakeweed increase under continuous heavy grazing or prolonged periods of drought. Under continued retrogression burrograss can completely dominate the site. Creosotebush, tarbush, and mesquite, can also dominate. Cholla and prickly pear can increase on areas that are disturbed or overgrazed. Diagnosis: Tobosa, black grama, and blue grama are the dominant species. Grass cover is uniformly distributed with few large bare areas. Shrubs are sparse and evenly distributed. Slopes range from level to gently sloping and usually display limited evidence of active rills and gully formation if plant cover remains intact. Litter movement associated with overland flow is limited to smaller size class litter and short distances. Other shrubs include: yucca, mesquite, tarbush, cholla and creosote bush. Other forbs include: desert holly, scorpionweed, bladderpod, flax, nama, fleabane, Indianwheat, Indian blanket flower, groundcherry, deerstongue, and rayless goldenrod.

Table 5. Annual production by plant type

Plant Type	Low (Kg/Hectare)	Representative Value (Kg/Hectare)	High (Kg/Hectare)
Grass/Grasslike	656	934	1211
Forb	44	62	81
Shrub/Vine	29	41	54
Total	729	1037	1346

Table 6. Ground cover

Tree foliar cover	0%
Shrub/vine/liana foliar cover	0%
Grass/grasslike foliar cover	15-30%
Forb foliar cover	0%
Non-vascular plants	0%
Biological crusts	0%
Litter	25-30%
Surface fragments >0.25" and <=3"	0%
Surface fragments >3"	0%
Bedrock	0%
Water	0%
Bare ground	40-50%

Figure 5. Plant community growth curve (percent production by month). NM2807, R042XC007NM Loamy HCPC. R042XC007NM Loamy HCPC Warm Season Plant Community..

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
0	0	0	5	10	10	25	30	15	5	0	0

Burrograss-Grassland

Community 2.1

Burrograss-Grassland

Burrograss-Grassland: Changes in hydrology resulting in decreased available soil moisture, reduces grass cover and increases bare ground. Burrograss is the dominant grass. Tobosa cover is variable and can range from sizeable areas to small patches occupying only depressions or the lowest and wettest positions within the site. Threeawns, ear muhly, sand muhly, and fluffgrass occur at increased densities compared to the grassland state. Shrub densities may increase especially mesquite, creosotebush or tarbush. Retrogression within this state is characterized by a further decrease in grass cover and increased bare ground. Further deterioration of this site can result in the transition to a bare state or becoming shrub dominated. Diagnosis: Burrograss is the dominant species. Grass cover is no longer uniformly distributed, instead tending to be patchy with large areas of bare ground present. Physical crusts are present in bare areas reducing infiltration and suppressing seedling establishment by any grass species other than burrograss. Transition to Burrograss-Grassland (1a): Transitions from grassland to a burrograss-grassland state may occur due to changes in hydrology. Gullies, roads or obstructions that alter natural water flow patterns may cause this transition. Changes in surface hydrology may also occur due to overgrazing or drought. The reduction in grass cover promotes increased soil physical crusts and reduces infiltration. 5 Key indicators of approach to transition: ? Diversion of overland flow resulting in decreased soil moisture. ? Increase in amount of burrograss cover ? Reduction in grass cover and increase in size and frequency of bare patches. ? Formation of physical crusts—indicating reduced infiltration. ? Evidence of litter movement—indicating loss or redistribution of organic matter. Transition back to Grassland (1b) The natural hydrology of the site must be returned. Culverts, turnouts, or rerouting roads may help re-establish natural overland flow, if roads or trails have altered the hydrology. Erosion control structures or shaping and filling gullies may help regain natural flow patterns and establish vegetation if the flow has been channeled. Breaking up physical crusts by soil disturbance may promote infiltration and seedling emergence. Allow natural revegetation to take place. Prescribed grazing will help ensure proper forage utilization and reduce grass loss due to grazing.

State 3

Bare State

Community 3.1

Bare State

Bare State: Extremely low ground cover, soil degradation and erosion characterize this state. Very little vegetation remains. Burrograss is the dominant grass and cover is extremely patchy. Physical soil crusts are extensive. Erosion and resource depletion increase as site degrades. Diagnosis: Very little cover remains. Erosion is evident by soil sealing, water flow patterns, pedestals or terracettes. Rills and gullies may be present and active. Transition to Bare State (2a): Extended drought, continuous heavy grazing, or other disturbance that severely depletes grass cover can effect this transition. As grass cover decreases, sheet flow and erosion increase, and physical soil crusts form, thereby further reducing infiltration. Key indicators of approach to transition: ? Continued reduction in grass cover. ? Increased soil surface sealing. ? Increased erosion. ? Reduced aggregate stability in bare areas. Transition back to Grassland (2b) Restore the hydrology, see (1a). With the extent of grass loss range seeding may be necessary. Utilizing livestock or mechanical means to break up the physical crusts may increase infiltration and aid seedling establishment. Prescribed grazing will help ensure adequate deferment period following seeding, and proper forage utilization once the grass stand is well established. The degree to which this site is capable of recovery depends on the restoration of hydrology, extent of degradation to soil resources, and adequate rainfall necessary to establish grasses.

State 4

Grass/Succulent Mix

Community 4.1

Grass/Succulent Mix

Grass / Succulent Mix: Increased representations of succulents characterize this site. Increased densities of cholla or pricklypear is recognized as a management concern, but their impact on grass production is unclear. Light to

medium cholla or prickly pear infestation doesn't seem to greatly reduce grass production, however it limits access to palatable grasses and interferes with livestock movement and handling. Tobosa and blue grama are the dominant species on this site. Retrogression within this site is characterized by a decrease in blue grama and an increase in succulents, tobosa and burrograss. Diagnosis: Cholla or prickly pear is found at increased densities. Grass cover is variable ranging from uniformly distributed to patchy with frequent areas of bare ground present. Tobosa or blue grama is the dominant grass species. Transition to Grass/Succulent Mix (3a): If fire was historically a part of desert grassland ecosystem and played a role in suppressing seedlings of shrubs and succulents, then fire suppression may favor the increase of succulents. 1 Heavy grazing by livestock or other physical disturbances may help disseminate seed and increase the establishment of succulents. Areas historically overgrazed by sheep are sometimes associated with higher densities of Succulents. Intense hailstorms can spread pricklypear by breaking off joints causing new plants to take root. 3 During severe drought perennial grass cover can decline significantly, leaving resources available for use by more drought tolerant succulents. Cholla and pricklypear are both adapted to and favored by drought due to the ability of their shallow, wide spreading root systems to absorb and store water. 4 Key indicators of approach to transition: ? Decrease or change in distribution of grass cover. ? Increase in amount of succulent seedlings. ? Increased cover of succulents. Transition back to Grassland (3b) Fire is an effective means of controlling cholla and prickly pear if adequate grass cover remains to carry fire. 2 Cholla greater than two feet tall or pricklypear with a large amount of pads (>15-20) are harder to kill. Chemical control is effective in controlling prickly pear and cholla; apply when growth starts in May. Hand grubbing is also effective if cholla or pricklypear is severed 2-4 inches below ground and care is taken not to let broken joints or pads take root. Stacking and burning piles and grubbing during winter or drought help keeps broken joints and pads from rooting. Prescribed grazing will help ensure proper forage utilization and sustain grass cover.

State 5 Shrub Dominated

Community 5.1 Shrub Dominated

Shrub Dominated: Increased shrub cover characterizes this state. Mesquite, creosotebush, and/or tarbush are the dominant shrub species. Burrograss or tobosa is the dominant grass species. Grass cover is decreased, typically patchy with large bare areas present; however, sometimes grass cover can remain relatively high for extended periods when associated with light to moderate infestations of mesquite. Variations in soil characteristics play a part in determining which shrub species increase. Mesquite is well adapted to a wide range of soil types, but increases more often on deep soils low in carbonates, that have a sandy surface overlying finer textured soils. Tarbush prefers finer textured, calcareous soils, usually in lower positions that receive some extra water. Creosotebush is less tolerant of fine textured soils, preferring sandy, calcareous soils that have some gravel. Creosotebush also does well on soils that are shallow over caliche. Retrogression within this state is characterized by a decrease in tobosa, and an increase in burrograss. As the site continues to degrade shrub cover continues to increase and grass cover is severely reduced. Diagnosis: Mesquite, Creosotebush, and/or tarbush are the dominant shrubs. Blue grama and black grama cover is low or absent. Burrograss or tobosa are the dominant grasses. Typically grass cover is patchy with large interconnected bare areas present. Physical soil crusts are present, especially on silt loam surface soils. Transition to Shrub Dominated (4a): Wildlife and livestock consume and disperse mesquite seeds. Flood events may wash creosote or tarbush seeds off adjacent gravelly sites onto the loamy site and supply adequate moisture for germination. Persistent loss of grass cover due to overgrazing or drought can cause large bare patches, providing competition free areas for shrub seedling establishment. As shrub cover increases, competition for soil resources, especially water, becomes a major factor in further reducing grass cover. Reduction of fire, due to either fire suppression policy or loss of adequate fine fuels may increase the probability of shrub encroachment. Increased soil surface physical crusts and associated decreased infiltration, may prevent the establishment of grass seedlings. Transition to Shrub Dominated (5): The dispersal of creosotebush, tarbush or mesquite seed, combined with loss of grass cover and resource competition by shrubs may cause this transition. Key indicators of approach to transition: ? Decreased grass and litter cover. ? Increased bare patch size. ? Increased physical soil crusts. ? Increased amount of mesquite, creosotebush, or tarbush seedlings. ? Increased shrub cover. Transition back to Grassland (4b) Brush control will be necessary to remove shrubs and eliminate competition for resources necessary for grass establishment or reproduction. Seeding may be necessary on those sites where desired grass species are absent or very limited. Pitting and seeding may increase the chances of successful grass establishment. Prescribed grazing will help ensure adequate time is elapsed before grazing seeded area is allowed and proper forage utilization following seeding establishment. Transition to Bare State (6): If grass cover on the shrub-dominated state is

severely limited and shrubs are removed a bare state may result. This transition will depend on amount of grasses or seed remaining, whether site is seeded, or if seeding is successful. Transition to Bare State (7): Removal of succulents and continued overgrazing or drought may cause loss of remaining grasses and erosion. Soil surface physical crusting may also be an important factor in inhibiting grass seedling establishment

Additional community tables

Table 7. Community 1.1 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production (Kg/Hectare)	Foliar Cover (%)
Grass/Grasslike					
1	Warm Season			312–363	
	tobosagrass	PLMU3	<i>Pleuraphis mutica</i>	312–363	–
2	Warm Season			10–52	
	burrograss	SCBR2	<i>Scleropogon brevifolius</i>	10–52	–
3	Warm Season			259–312	
	black grama	BOER4	<i>Bouteloua eriopoda</i>	259–312	–
	blue grama	BOGR2	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>	259–312	–
4	Warm Season			31–52	
	sideoats grama	BOCU	<i>Bouteloua curtipendula</i>	31–52	–
5	Warm Season			52–104	
	bush muhly	MUPO2	<i>Muhlenbergia porteri</i>	52–104	–
	plains bristlegrass	SEVU2	<i>Setaria vulpiseta</i>	52–104	–
6	Warm Season			10–31	
	Arizona cottontop	DICA8	<i>Digitaria californica</i>	10–31	–
7	Warm Season			52–104	
	threeawn	ARIST	<i>Aristida</i>	52–104	–
	muhly	MUHLE	<i>Muhlenbergia</i>	52–104	–
	sand dropseed	SPCR	<i>Sporobolus cryptandrus</i>	52–104	–
8	Warm Season			31–52	
	Graminoid (grass or grass-like)	2GRAM	<i>Graminoid (grass or grass-like)</i>	31–52	–
Shrub/Vine					
9	Shrub			10–31	
	fourwing saltbush	ATCA2	<i>Atriplex canescens</i>	10–31	–
	jointfir	EPHED	<i>Ephedra</i>	10–31	–
	winterfat	KRLA2	<i>Krascheninnikovia lanata</i>	10–31	–
	cane bluestem	BOBA3	<i>Bothriochloa barbinodis</i>	6–27	–
	Arizona cottontop	DICA8	<i>Digitaria californica</i>	6–27	–
	plains bristlegrass	SEVU2	<i>Setaria vulpiseta</i>	6–27	–
10	Shrub			10–31	
	javelina bush	COER5	<i>Condalia ericoides</i>	10–31	–
	broom snakeweed	GUSA2	<i>Gutierrezia sarothrae</i>	10–31	–
	Grass, annual	2GA	<i>Grass, annual</i>	6–17	–
11	Shrubs			10–31	
	Shrub (>.5m)	2SHRUB	<i>Shrub (>.5m)</i>	10–31	–

Forb					
12	Forb			10-52	
	threadleaf ragwort	SEFLF	<i>Senecio flaccidus var. flaccidus</i>	10-52	-
	globemallow	SPHAE	<i>Sphaeralcea</i>	10-52	-
	verbena	VEPO4	<i>Verbena polystachya</i>	10-52	-
	broom snakeweed	GUSA2	<i>Gutierrezia sarothrae</i>	6-17	-
	pricklypear	OPUNT	<i>Opuntia</i>	6-17	-
13	Forb			10-31	
	croton	CROTO	<i>Croton</i>	10-31	-
	woolly groundsel	PACA15	<i>Packera cana</i>	10-31	-
14	Forb			10-31	
	Goodding's tansyaster	MAPIG2	<i>Machaeranthera pinnatifida ssp. gooddingii var. gooddingii</i>	10-31	-
	woolly paperflower	PSTA	<i>Psilostrophe tagetina</i>	10-31	-
15	Forb			10-31	
	redstem stork's bill	ERCI6	<i>Erodium cicutarium</i>	10-31	-
	Texas stork's bill	ERTE13	<i>Erodium texanum</i>	10-31	-
16	Forb			10-31	
	Forb (herbaceous, not grass nor grass-like)	2FORB	<i>Forb (herbaceous, not grass nor grass-like)</i>	10-31	-

Animal community

This site provides habitats which support a resident animal community that is characterized by pronghorn antelope, black-tailed jackrabbit, black tailed prairie dog, yellow-faced pocket gopher, banner-tailed kangaroo rat, hispid cotton rat, swift fox, burrowing owl, horned lark, mockingbird, meadowlark, mourning dove, scaled quail, Great Plains toad, plains spadefoot toad, prairie rattlesnake and western coachwhip snake.

Hydrological functions

The runoff curve numbers are determined by field investigations using hydraulic cover conditions and hydrologic soil groups.

Hydrologic Interpretations

Soil Series Hydrologic Group

Atoka C

Bigetty B

Ratliff B

Reyab B

Holloman B

Largo B

Holloman B

Bigetty B

Berino B

Reagan B

Reakor B

Reeves B

Russler C

Recreational uses

This site offers limited potential for hiking, horseback riding, nature observation and photography. Game bird, antelope and predator hunting are also limited.

Wood products

This site has no potential for wood products

Other products

This site is suitable for grazing by all kinds and classes of livestock, during all seasons of the year. Under retrogression, such plants as black grama, blue grama, sideoats grama, bush muhly, plains bristlegrass, Arizona cottontop, fourwing saltbush and winterfat decrease and there is an increase in burrograss, threeawns, sand dropseed, muhlys, broom snakeweed and javilinabush. Under continued retrogression, burrograss can completely dominate the site. Creosotebush, mesquite, and tarbush can also dominate. Grazing management alone will not improve the site in the above situation. This site is well suited to a system of management that rotates the season of use.

Other information

Guide to Suggested Initial Stocking Rate Acres per Animal Unit Month

Similarity Index Ac/AUM

100 - 76 3.0 – 4.2

75 – 51 4.1 – 5.5

50 – 26 5.3 – 7.0

25 – 0 7.1 +

Inventory data references

Other References:

Data collection for this site was done in conjunction with the progressive soil surveys within the Southern Desertic Basins, Plains and Mountains, Major Land Resource Areas of New Mexico. This site has been mapped and correlated with soils in the following soil surveys. Eddy County Lea County and Chavez County.

Other references

Literature References:

1. Brooks, M.L., AND D.A. Pyke. 2001. Invasive plants and fire in the deserts of North America. Pages 1–14 in K.E.M. Galley and T.P. Wilson (eds.). Proceedings of the Invasive Species Workshop: the Role of Fire in the Control and Spread of Invasive Species.
2. Bunting, S.C., H.A. Wright, and L.F. Neuenschwander. 1980. Long-term effects of fire on cactus in the Southern Mixed Prairie of Texas. *J. Range. Manage.* 33: 85-88.
3. Laycock, W.A. 1982. Hail as an ecological factor in the increase of prickly pear cactus. p. 359-361. In: J.A. Smith and V.W. Hays (eds.) Proc. XIV Int. Grassland Congr. Westview Press, Boulder, Colo.
4. Vallentine, J.F. 1989. Range Developments and Improvements. 3rd Edition. Academic Press. San Diego, California.
5. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service. 2001. Soil Quality Information Sheet. Rangeland Soil Quality—Physical and Biological Soil Crusts. Rangeland Sheet 6, [Online]. Available: <http://www.statlab.iastate.edu/survey/SQI/range.html>

Contributors

David Trujillo

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:**
