USDA Natural Resources
Conservation Service

Ecological site R081BY325TX
Clay Loam 19-23 PZ

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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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Date	12/01/2005
Approved by	Bryan Christensen
Approval date	
Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on	Annual Production

Indicators

1. **Number and extent of rills:** None.

2. **Presence of water flow patterns:** None to slight. Site may receive runoff from adjacent sites.

3. **Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:** None to slight. Minimal pedestals or terracettes due to erosion.

4. **Bare ground from Ecological Site Description or other studies (rock, litter, lichen, moss, plant canopy are not bare ground):** Less than 10 percent bare ground. Small and non-connected areas.

5. **Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies:** None.

6. **Extent of wind scoured, blowouts and/or depositional areas:** None to slight. Wind erosion hazard of soil is slight.

7. **Amount of litter movement (describe size and distance expected to travel):** Minimal movement of fine litter for short

distances.

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8. **Soil surface (top few mm) resistance to erosion (stability values are averages - most sites will show a range of values):** Erosion stability values estimated at 5 to 6. Water erosion hazard of soil is slight.

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9. **Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness):** Angelo soil is grayish brown silty clay loam to 8 inches and brown clay loam in 8 to 14 inches depth. The surface layer is weak fine granular and subangular blocky. Many fine roots and worm casts. SOM is high.

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10. **Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:** The reference state provides good plant distribution and soil over so provides excellent infiltration. Under normal rainfall runoff is essentially nil but when rainfall exceeds site's ability to hold water, the runoff is free of erosive action.

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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.

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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: Warm-season midgrases

    Sub-dominant: Warm-season tallgrasses Warm-season shortgrasses Forbs

    Other: Cool-season grasses Shrubs/Vines Trees

    Additional:

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13. **Amount of plant mortality and decadence (include which functional groups are expected to show mortality or decadence):** Minimal. Grasses will almost always show some mortality and decadence, especially under drought conditions.

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14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth (in):** Interspaces between plant canopies essentially covered with various sizes of litter and mulch.

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15. **Expected annual annual-production (this is TOTAL above-ground annual-production, not just forage annual-production):** 2,000 pounds per acre in years with below average moisture, 3,800 pounds per acre in average moisture, and 4,400 pounds per acre in above average moisture years. Site may receive extra moisture from upslope sites and be highly productive in wet years.

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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: Mesquite, pricklypear, broom snakeweed, agarito, acacia, condalia and annual broomweed.

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17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:** Good. All species should be capable of reproducing except during periods of prolonged drought, heavy natural herbivory or intense fire. Recovery from these disturbances will take 2 to 5 years.
