

Ecological site R086AY004TX Southern Claypan Prairie

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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	Bryan Christensen
Approval date	
Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on	Annual Production

Indicators

- 1. Number and extent of rills:** Essentially none.

- 2. Presence of water flow patterns:** Water flow patterns are common and follow old stream meanders. Water flow patterns are very short (less than two feet) if visible. Deposition or erosion is uncommon for normal rainfall but may occur during intense rainfall events.

- 3. Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:** Pedestals or terracettes are uncommon for this site when occupied by the reference community.

- 4. Bare ground from Ecological Site Description or other studies (rock, litter, lichen, moss, plant canopy are not bare ground):** Bare ground is essentially nonexistent.

- 5. Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies:** No gullies should be present on side drains into perennial and intermittent streams. Drainageways should be vegetated and stable.

- 6. Extent of wind scoured, blowouts and/or depositional areas:** Essentially none.

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7. **Amount of litter movement (describe size and distance expected to travel):** This site has slowly permeable soils. On sloping sites, small to medium size-litter will move short distances during intense storms.
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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):** Soil surface is resistant to erosion. Stability class range is expected to be 5 to 6.
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9. **Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness):** Less than 10 inches thick with colors from dark brown loam to dark grayish brown loam and generally weak fine and fine subangular blocky structure. SOM is approximately 0.5 to 2 percent. See soil survey for specific soils.
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10. **Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:** This prairie site is dominated by tallgrasses and forbs and trees having adequate litter and little bare ground which can provide for maximum infiltration and little runoff under normal rainfall events.
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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 tallgrasses >>
- Sub-dominant: Warm-season midgrasses > Cool-season grasses > Forbs >
- Other: Trees > Shrubs/Vines
- Additional:
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13. **Amount of plant mortality and decadence (include which functional groups are expected to show mortality or decadence):** Grasses and forbs due to their growth habit will exhibit some mortality and decadence, though very slight. Open spaces from disturbance are quickly filled by new plants through seedlings and reproductive reproduction (tillering).
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14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth (in):** Litter is primarily herbaceous.
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15. **Expected annual annual-production (this is TOTAL above-ground annual-production, not just forage annual-production):** 3,000 pounds per acre for below average moisture years to 5,000 pounds per acre for above average moisture 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: Potential invasive species include yellow bluestem, Bermudagrass, mesquite, elm, huisache, eastern red cedar, osage orange and Chinese tallow.
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17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:** All perennial plants should be capable of reproducing except during periods of prolonged drought conditions, heavy natural herbivory, or intense wildfires.
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