

Ecological site F090BY013WI

Sandy Upland

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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.

MLRA notes

Major Land Resource Area (MLRA): 090B—Central Wisconsin Thin Loess Dissected Till Plain

The Wisconsin and Minnesota Thin Loess MLRA, Northern and Southern Parts (90A and 90B) correspond closely to the North Central Forest and the Forest Transition Ecological Landscapes, respectively. Some of the following brief overview is borrowed from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources ecological landscape publications (2015).

The Wisconsin and Minnesota Thin Loess MLRA, Northern and Southern Parts (90A and 90B) is an extensive glacial landscape that comprised of over 11.1 million acres (17,370 sq mi) throughout central and northern Wisconsin – about 27% of the total land area in the state. This glacial landscape is comprised of a heterogeneous mix of loess-capped ground moraines, end moraines with eskers and ice-walled lake plains, and pitted, unpitted, and collapsed outwash plains sometimes interspersed with drumlins from the Illinoian and Pre-Illinoian glaciations. The entire area has been glaciated and nearly all of it is underlain by dense glacial till that impedes drainage. An extensive morainal system – the Perkinstown end moraine – spans most of the width of northern Wisconsin and divides the Northern and Southern Parts of this large landscape. This moraine, which has been sliced by outwash in many places, marks the southernmost extent of the Wisconsin glaciation (Wisconsin's most recent glacial advance).

North of the Perkinstown morainal system is a loess plain, with a loess mantle 6-24 inches thick. The northernmost edge of this landscape is an undulating till and outwash plain with materials deposited by the Chippewa Lobe. Drumlins are common in the northern and northeastern portions. The drumlins are oriented towards the southwest and formed during a glacial episode prior to the most recent glacial advance. Some are covered with glacial till. Pitted, unpitted, and collapsed outwash plains fill the spaces between drumlins. Detached from the major land mass to the northeast is the hummocky Hayward collapsed end moraines, where swamps, ice-walled lake plains, and eskers are common.

Most of the MLRA to the south of the Perkinstown morainal system is an extensive ground moraine with some proglacial stream features including pitted outwash plains, terraces, and fans. A layer of loess 6-47 inches thick covers much of the area. Like the Northern Part, all areas of the Southern Part of this MLRA were glaciated, although the southcentral portion is a relatively older till plain with materials from the Illinoian and pre-Illinoian glaciations, not the most recent Wisconsin glaciation. The landforms in the southcentral portion are highly variable. Much of the area topography is controlled by underlying bedrock. Sandstone outcrops and pediments can be found here. Some of the most southern portions of the MLRA are mixed glacial deposits and residuum.

The land surface of the southeastern portion was formed by many small glacial advances and retreats. Morainal ridges protrude through an erosional, pitted outwash-mantled surface. These parallel ridges run in a northeast to southwest orientation and are dissected by many streams.

The continental climate of this MLRA is typical of northcentral Wisconsin, with cold winters and warm summers. The southern boundary of this MLRA straddles Wisconsin's Tension Zone, a zone of transition between Wisconsin's northern and southern ecological landscapes. Historically, the mesic forests were dominated by eastern

hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*), sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), and yellow birch (*Betula alleghaniensis*).

Classification relationships

Major Land Resource Area (MLRA): Wisconsin and Minnesota Thin Loess and Till (Northern and Southern parts - 90A and 90B)

USFS Subregions: Hayward Stagnation Moraines (212Xf), Glidden Loamy Drift Plain (212Xa), Mille Lacs Uplands (212Kb), Perkinstown End Moraine (212Xe), Rib Mountain Rolling Ridges (212Qd)

Small sections occur in Rosemont Baldwin Plains and Moraines (222Md), Central-Northwest Wisconsin Loess Plains (212Xd), St. Croix Moraine (212Qa), Green Bay Lobe Stagnation Moraine (212Ta)

Wisconsin DNR Ecological Landscapes: Northwest Lowlands, North Central Forest, Forest Transition, Western Prairie

Ecological site concept

The Moist Sandy Upland ecological site is most abundant on the northern border of MRLAs 90A and 90B, located on outwash and lake plains, end moraines, stream terraces, and valley trains. These sites are characterized by very deep, moderately well to well drained soils formed in sandy deposits including alluvium, outwash, and till. The sandy deposits may have underlying loamy alluvium till, or residuum. Precipitation and runoff from adjacent uplands are the primary sources of water. Soils range from extremely acid to neutral.

Moist Sandy Upland is distinguished from other ecological sites based on the sandy materials and moderately well to well drainage. Other moderately well and well drained sites have loamy or clayey materials. Sandy materials often have lower pH and available water capacity, and often lack carbonates found in loamy and clayey materials. These conditions can limit vegetative growth. The moderately well to well drained soils differentiate this site from other sandy sites.

Associated sites

F090BY001WI	Poor Fen Poor fen sites consist of deep herbaceous organic materials. Some sites have mineral soil contact. They are very poorly drained and remain saturated throughout the year. They are strongly to extremely acidic. These sites are permanently saturated wetlands. They are wetter and occur lower on the drainage sequence than Moist Sandy Upland.
F090BY005WI	Wet Sandy Lowland Wet Sandy Lowland sites consist of deep sandy deposits derived from a mixture of outwash, alluvium, and lacustrine sources. They form in seasonally ponded depressions and are saturated long enough for hydric conditions to occur. Some sites are wetlands. They are wetter and occur lower on the drainage sequence than Moist Sandy Upland.
F090BY009WI	Moist Sandy Upland Moist Sandy Lowland sites consist of deep, sandy deposits from outwash, alluvium, lacustrine, and till. The sandy deposits may have a loamy mantle or be underlain by loamy deposits. The finer materials can cause episaturation and allow the site to remain moist for some of the growing season. They are wetter and occur lower on the drainage sequence than Moist Sandy Upland.
F090BY019WI	Dry Sandy Upland Dry Sandy Upland sites consist of primarily sandy deposits of various origin. Loamy deposits are also present in many soils. They may have a seasonally high water table within two meters of the surface, though they do not remain saturated for sustained periods. They are much drier and occur higher on the drainage sequence than Moist Sandy Upland.

Similar sites

F090BY016WI	Loamy Upland Loamy Upland sites consist of deep loamy till, alluvium, residuum, lacustrine, or eolian deposits. Sandy deposits of these parent materials, plus outwash, may also be present. The depth to the seasonally high water table ranges from as high as the surface to as low as almost two meters below the surface. A few sites are on floodplains and upland drainageways, where very brief flooding is rare but possible. These sites share their position on the landscape and drainage class with Moist Sandy Upland but have finer textures.
F090BY019WI	Dry Sandy Upland Dry Sandy Upland sites consist of primarily sandy deposits of various origin. Loamy deposits are also present in many soils. They may have a seasonally high water table within two meters of the surface, though they do not remain saturated for sustained periods. They share particle size with Moist Sandy Upland but are drier. The two sites sometimes support similar vegetative communities.

Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	(1) <i>Pinus strobus</i> (2) <i>Acer rubrum</i>
Shrub	(1) <i>Corylus cornuta</i>
Herbaceous	(1) <i>Maianthemum canadense</i> (2) <i>Pyrola</i>

Physiographic features

These sites formed on lake plains, outwash plains, valley trains, moraines, and stream terraces. Slopes range from 0 to 55 percent.

These sites are not subject to ponding or flooding. Soils have a seasonally high water table at depths of 24 to 72 inches. The water table may drop below 80 inches during dry conditions. Runoff is negligible to high.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Hillslope profile	(1) Summit (2) Backslope (3) Shoulder
Slope shape across	(1) Convex
Slope shape up-down	(1) Linear
Landforms	(1) Outwash plain (2) Lake plain (3) Valley train (4) Stream terrace (5) Moraine
Runoff class	Negligible to high
Flooding frequency	None
Ponding frequency	None
Elevation	591–902 ft
Slope	0–55%
Water table depth	24–72 in
Aspect	Aspect is not a significant factor

Climatic features

The climate of the expansive Wisconsin and Minnesota Thin Loess and Till Plain is highly variable. The eco-climatic zone (the “Tension Zone”) that runs southeast-northwest across the state splits the MLRA. In general, the MLRA

has cold winters and warm summers with an adequate amount of precipitation. Near Lake Superior, precipitation and temperature tend to increase. The far western section of the MLRA, known as the western prairie ecological landscape by the Wisconsin DNR, has warmer temperatures compared to the rest of the MLRA because it falls below the eco-climatic zone. The soil moisture regime of MLRA is udic (humid climate). The soil temperature regime is frigid and cryic.

The average annual precipitation for this ecological site is 32 inches. The average annual snowfall is 57 inches. The annual average maximum and minimum temperatures are 52°F and 31°F, respectively.

Table 3. Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (characteristic range)	69-107 days
Freeze-free period (characteristic range)	106-137 days
Precipitation total (characteristic range)	29-32 in
Frost-free period (actual range)	40-116 days
Freeze-free period (actual range)	86-146 days
Precipitation total (actual range)	27-35 in
Frost-free period (average)	87 days
Freeze-free period (average)	122 days
Precipitation total (average)	31 in

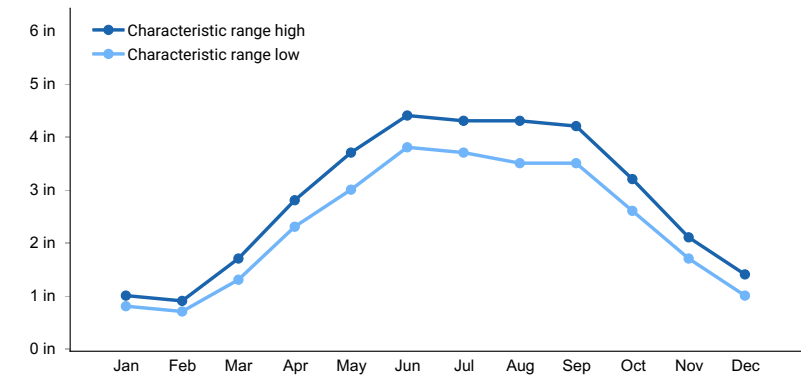


Figure 1. Monthly precipitation range

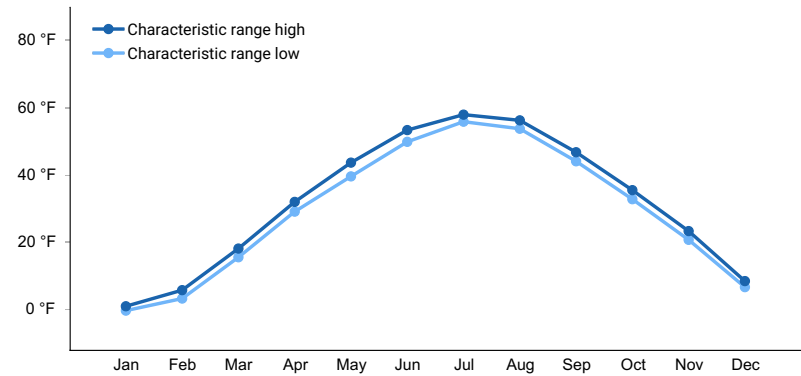


Figure 2. Monthly minimum temperature range

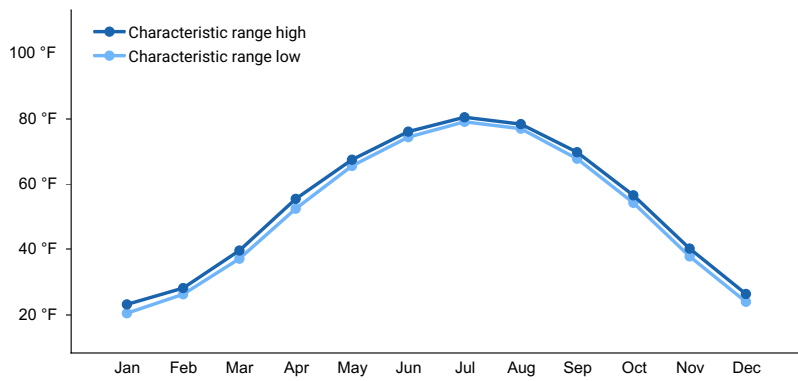


Figure 3. Monthly maximum temperature range

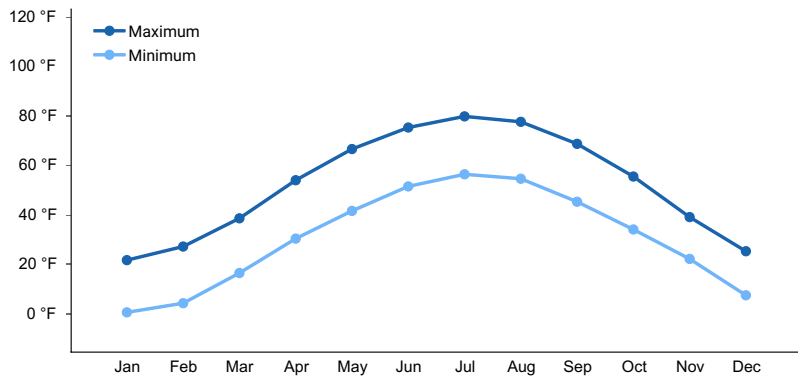


Figure 4. Monthly average minimum and maximum temperature

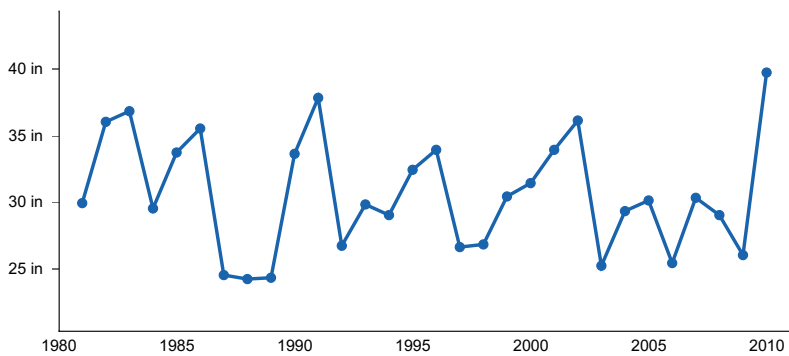


Figure 5. Annual precipitation pattern

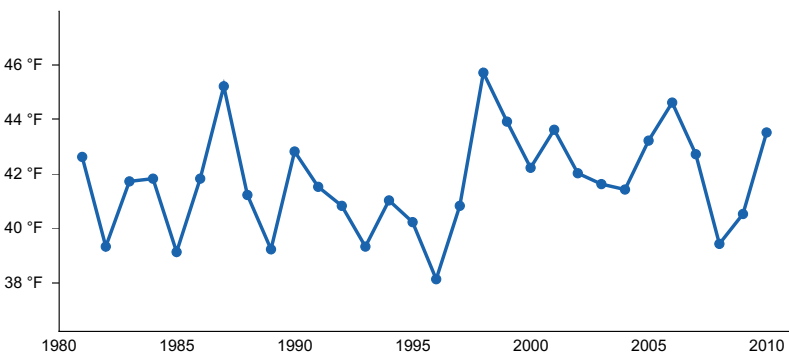


Figure 6. Annual average temperature pattern

Climate stations used

- (1) HOLCOMBE [USC00473698], Holcombe, WI
- (2) ROSHOLT 9 NNE [USC00477349], Wittenberg, WI
- (3) STAMBAUGH 2SSE [USC00207812], Iron River, MI

- (4) BIG FALLS HYDRO [USC00470773], Glen Flora, WI
- (5) COUDERAY 7 W [USC00471847], Stone Lake, WI
- (6) ISLE 12N [USC00214103], Isle, MN
- (7) MOOSE LAKE 1 SSE [USC00215598], Moose Lake, MN
- (8) MILACA [USC00215392], Milaca, MN

Influencing water features

Water is received through precipitation, runoff from adjacent uplands, and groundwater discharge. Water levels are greatly influenced by precipitation rates and runoff from upland sites. Water leaves the site primarily through runoff, evapotranspiration, and groundwater recharge.

Wetland description

Permeability of these sites range from very slow to rapid.

Hydrologic Group: A, B

Hydrogeomorphic Wetland Classification: None

Cowardin Wetland Classification: None

Soil features

These sites are represented by Chinwhisker, Croswell, Cublake, Dickman, Fremstadt, Gotham, Guenther, Keweenaw, Komro, Mahtomedi, Manitowish, Pence, Rousseau, Slimlake, Spoonerhill, Springstead, and Wurtsmith soil series. Some sites are represented by Udipsamments and Udorthents that are not classified to series. Chinwhisker is classified as a Lamellic Oxyaquic Haplorthod; Croswell, Cublake, Manitowich, and Springstead are Oxyaquic Haplorthods; Guenther and Keweenaw are Alfic Haplorthods; Fremstadt is an Arenic Hapludalf; Rousseau is an Entic Haplorthod; Komro is an Entic Hapludoll; Slimlake and Spoonerhill are Oxyaquic Dystrudepts; Wurtsmith is Oxyaquic Udipsamment; Gotham is a Psammentic Hapludalf; Pence is a Typic Haplorthod; Dickman is a Typic Hapludoll; Mahtomedi is a Typic Udipsamment.

These soils formed in various parent material including loamy or sandy alluvium, sandy outwash, sandy or loamy till, and loamy residuum. Soils are very deep and moderately well or well drained. They do not meet hydric requirements.

The surfaces of these sites are sandy loam, loam, loamy sand, and slightly to moderately decomposed plant material. Some sites have fine sands. Subsurface textures are sandy loam, silt loam, loamy sand, and sand. Many horizons have fine or very fine sand. Some horizons have gravelly and very gravelly modifiers. Soil pH ranges from extremely acid to neutral with values of 4.2 to 6.7. Carbonates are absent within 80 inches.

Table 4. Representative soil features

Parent material	(1) Alluvium (2) Outwash (3) Till (4) Igneous and metamorphic rock (5) Residuum
Surface texture	(1) Loamy sand (2) Sandy loam (3) Loam
Drainage class	Moderately well drained to well drained
Permeability class	Very slow to rapid
Soil depth	79–98 in
Surface fragment cover ≤3"	0–8%
Surface fragment cover >3"	0–7%
Available water capacity (0–61in)	1.46–2.68 in

Calcium carbonate equivalent (0-39.4in)	0%
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (0-39.4in)	4.2–6.7
Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (Depth not specified)	0–31%
Subsurface fragment volume >3" (Depth not specified)	0–6%

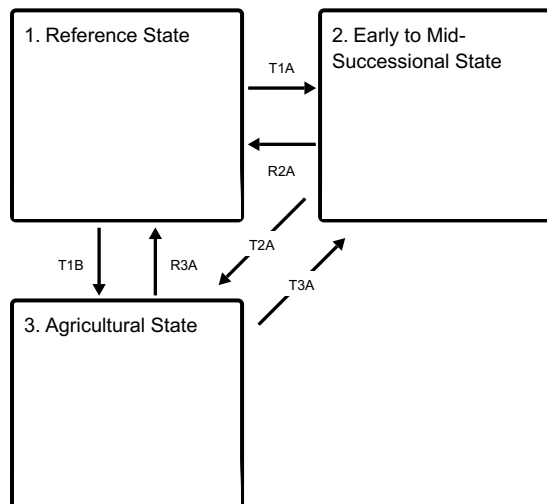
Ecological dynamics

In pre-European settlement time wildfire was the main controlling factor of forest community dynamics. Following a severe, stand-replacing fire, any of the species present on the landscape could become established, depending on seed source availability and specific conditions of post-fire seedbed. The newly established young stands of any species were easily eliminated by recurring fires, but differences in fire-resisting properties among the species began to play a role in any species' survival success. Many pine and oak species were dominant in the region because of their fire-resistant properties and successful regeneration post-fire. With clear cutting and continued fire suppression, many of these species adapted to fire and intolerant of shade are replaced by other species. Species such as white pine and red oak are still common on the landscape based on their tolerance to some shade; these species to establish under a canopy, and in time, may become a component of the canopy. Red maple is sensitive to fire, but in its absence, it has the ability to dominate sites based on its shade tolerance and prolific seed production.

Today, these forests most commonly include stands of red oak, red maple, and aspen and birch. Various species can be found as associates including sugar maple, and in many areas, white pine is successfully reinvading the landscape. As long as fire is continually suppressed, maples and other mesic hardwoods will continue to dominate the canopy.

State and transition model

Ecosystem states



T1A - Clear cutting or stand-replacing fire.

T1B - Removal of forest vegetation and tilling.

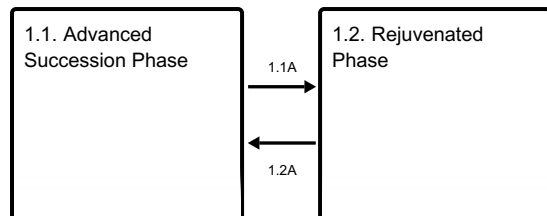
R2A - Disturbance-free period 70+ years.

T2A - Removal of forest cover and tilling for agricultural crop production.

R3A - Cessation of agricultural practices leads to natural reforestation, or site is replanted.

T3A - Removal of forest vegetation and tilling.

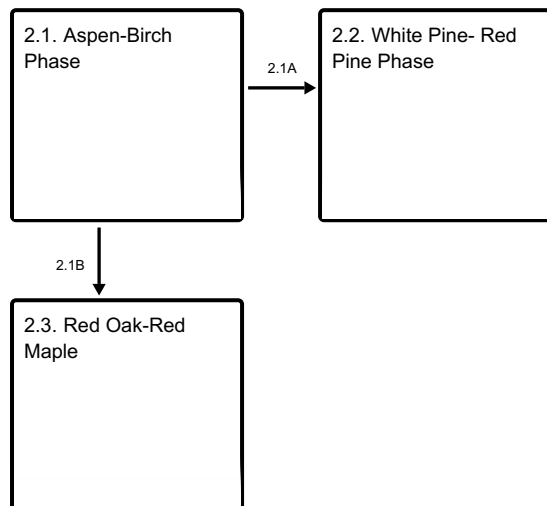
State 1 submodel, plant communities



1.1A - Light to moderate intensity fires, blow-downs, snow-ice breakage.

1.2A - Disturbance-free period for 30+ years.

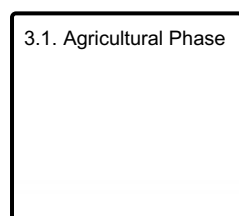
State 2 submodel, plant communities



2.1A - Immigration and establishment of red pine/white pine. Might include small, frequent fire disturbance.

2.1B - Immigration and establishment of red oak and red maple.

State 3 submodel, plant communities



State 1 Reference State

Reference state is a forest community dominated by Red maple (*Acer rubrum*) and sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*). Depending on history of disturbance, two community phases can be distinguished largely by differences in dominance of tree species and community age structure.

Community 1.1 Advanced Succession Phase

In the absence of major, stand-replacing disturbance this community is dominated by sugar maple, red maple, basswood, ashes, and yellow birch. The tree sapling and shrub layer in this community is not well developed due to dense shade created by multi-story tree canopy. Commonly the shrub layer may contain only gooseberries. The herb layer is likely to consist of ferns (lady fern, interrupted fern, maidenhair fern, and sensitive fern), jewelweed, hog peanut, wild geranium, virginia creeper, and sweet cicely.

Dominant plant species

- red maple (*Acer rubrum*), tree
- sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), tree
- beaked hazelnut (*Corylus cornuta*), shrub
- wild sarsaparilla (*Aralia nudicaulis*), other herbaceous
- Canada mayflower (*Maianthemum canadense*), other herbaceous

Community 1.2

Rejuvenated Phase

This community is often dominated by red oak and red maple. Associates likely include sugar maple invading the site, and white pine and red pine (*Pinus resinosa*) if they were established after a previous disturbance. The shrub and ground layers are similar to the advanced succession phase, but may include the establishment of new seedlings.

Dominant plant species

- northern red oak (*Quercus rubra*), tree
- red maple (*Acer rubrum*), tree
- sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), tree
- beaked hazelnut (*Corylus cornuta*), shrub
- wild sarsaparilla (*Aralia nudicaulis*), other herbaceous
- Canada mayflower (*Maianthemum canadense*), other herbaceous

Pathway 1.1A

Community 1.1 to 1.2

Light intensity fires, crown breakage from ice and snow, and small scale blow-downs create canopy openings, releasing advance regeneration and stimulating new seedling establishment. Some additional less shade tolerant species such as red oak and white pine may be able to enter the community.

Pathway 1.2A

Community 1.2 to 1.1

A long period without major canopy disturbance allows gradual replacement of oldest canopy trees by younger cohorts. Lacking a major disturbance, the canopy will likely be replaced with red and sugar maple. Small scale disturbances may still occur periodically, but once second or third canopies are established there is minimal new regeneration taking place and the forest gradually returns to mature state.

State 2

Early to Mid-Successional State

Following disturbances described in Transition T1A a wide range of forest community phases may come into temporary existence, the three most common ones are described here.

Community 2.1

Aspen-Birch Phase

These two species have a very narrow window of environmental and ecological conditions for successful establishment. The main requirements are exposed mineral soil and elimination—most effectively by fire—of on-site seed sources of potential competing vegetation. In addition, adequate soil moisture must be available for initial seedling development. Once seedlings are firmly established, height growth of both species is relatively rapid and able to outgrow most competitive species. Paper birch seedlings and saplings tolerate partial shade and often become members of mixed species communities. This is not true for aspen which requires continuous full-sun exposure for survival. Aspen stands are initially very dense due to sprouting from extensive lateral roots, but rapid natural thinning ensues as stems compete for available light.

Dominant plant species

- quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), tree
- paper birch (*Betula papyrifera*), tree

Community 2.2

White Pine- Red Pine Phase

This community phase occurs by invading and succeeding a pioneer aspen-birch community. Seed source of red and white pine is required, and some fire disturbance can increase chances of establishment. A continued fire regime will allow the growth of the pines while removing or slowing the growth of shade tolerant species in the understory. If fire disturbance does not occur, a sub-canopy of shade tolerant species such as red maple may establish and eventually become part of the canopy.

Dominant plant species

- eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*), tree
- red pine (*Pinus resinosa*), tree

Community 2.3

Red Oak-Red Maple

This community phase occurs by invading and succeeding a pioneer aspen-birch community. Stand structure consists of dominant red oak and red maple in combination with a modest, or strong presence of mature, or decaying, aspen and/or paper birch. The shrub layer, dominated by beaked hazelnut (*Corylus cornuta*), typically reaches its best development in this community phase.

Dominant plant species

- northern red oak (*Quercus rubra*), tree
- red maple (*Acer rubrum*), tree

Pathway 2.1A

Community 2.1 to 2.2

Time and the immigration, establishment, and growth of white and red pine seedlings. This pathway most likely includes small, but frequent fire disturbance that favors the shade intolerant, and fire adapted red pine, and moderately tolerant white pine.

Pathway 2.1B

Community 2.1 to 2.3

Time and the immigration, establishment, and growth of the moderately shade tolerant red oak and red maple seedlings.

State 3

Agricultural State

Indefinite period of applying agricultural practices. Agricultural practices are likely to include planted row crops, but some hay or pasture is possible

Community 3.1

Agricultural Phase

This community phase consists of planted row crops and possibly some hay or pasture in some locations.

Transition T1A

State 1 to 2

Clear cutting with initial control of competing vegetation, or stand-replacing fire, prepare the site for occupancy by

shade intolerant species. This may occur through natural regeneration or by planting.

Transition T1B

State 1 to 3

Removal of forest cover, tilling and application of other agricultural techniques to grow agricultural crops.

Restoration pathway R2A

State 2 to 1

A period of some 70-100 years without major stand disturbance, especially fire, leads to decreased presence, through natural mortality, of early successional species and the dominance of moderately shade tolerant red maple and red oak and a sub-canopy of shade tolerant sugar maple, returning the community to Reference State.

Transition T2A

State 2 to 3

Removal of forest cover, tilling and application of other agricultural techniques to grow agricultural crops.

Restoration pathway R3A

State 3 to 1

Abandonment of agricultural practices and allowing natural vegetation to colonize the site or apply artificial afforestation. The time required for forest community to reach the reference state conditions may exceed 100 years. This direct restoration pathway is likely slow and uncommon unless there has been drainage and adjacent seed sources exist.

Transition T3A

State 3 to 2

Abandonment of agricultural practices and allowing natural vegetation to colonize the site or apply artificial afforestation.

Additional community tables

Inventory data references

Plot and other supporting inventory data for site identification and community phases is located on a NRCS North Central Region shared and one drive folder. University Wisconsin-Stevens Point described soils, took photographs, and inventoried vegetation data at community phases within the reference state. The data sources include WI ESD Plot Data Collection Form - Tier 2, Releve Method, NASIS pedon description, NRCS SOI 036, photographs, and Kotar Habitat Types.

Habitat Types of N. Wisconsin (Kotar, 2002): The sites of this ES keyed out to five habitat types: *Acer saccharum*/Hydrophyllum (AH); *Acer saccharum*-Tsuga/Maianthemum (ATM); *Acer saccharum*/Viburnum (AVb); *Acer saccharum*/Vaccinium-Viburnum (AVVb); Pinus-*Acer rubrum*/Vaccinium (PARV)

Biophysical Settings (Landfire, 2014): This ES is largely mapped as Laurentian-Acadian Northern Hardwoods Forest, Boreal White Spruce-Fir Forest, Boreal White Spruce-Fir-Hardwood Forest, Boreal Hardwood Forest, and Eastern Cool Temperate Pasture and Hayland

WDNR Natural Communities (WDNR, 2015):

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Contributors

Bryant Scharenbroch, Assistant Professor at University of Wisconsin Stevens Point
Jacob Prater, Associate Professor at University of Wisconsin Stevens Point
John Kotar, Ecological Specialist, independent contractor

Approval

Suzanne Mayne-Kinney, 11/16/2023

Acknowledgments

NRCS contracted UWSP to write ecological sites in MLRA 90B, completed in 2021.

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	05/02/2024
Approved by	Suzanne Mayne-Kinney
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:**
