

Ecological site F108XC518IA Wet Loess Upland Flatwood

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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.

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.

MLRA notes

Major Land Resource Area (MLRA): 108X–Illinois and Iowa Deep Loess and Drift

The Illinois and Iowa Deep Loess and Drift, West-Central Part (MLRA 108C) encompasses the eastern portion of the Southern Iowa Drift Plain and the Lake Calvin basin of the Mississippi Alluvial Plain landforms (Prior 1991). It lies entirely in one state (Iowa), containing approximately 9,805 square miles (Figure 1). The elevation ranges from approximately 1,110 feet above sea level (ASL) on the highest ridges to about 505 feet ASL in the lowest valleys. Local elevation difference is mainly 10 to 20 feet. However, some valley floors can range from 80 to 200 feet, while some upland flats and valley floors only range between 3 and 6 feet. The MLRA is underlain by Pre-Illinoian glacial till, deposited more than 500,000 years ago and since undergone extensive erosion and dissection. In the northern half of the area the till thickness ranges from 150 to 350 feet and grades to less than 150 feet thick in the southern half. The till is covered by a mantle of Peoria Loess on the hillslopes and Holocene alluvium in the drainageways. Paleozoic bedrock, comprised of limestone, shale, and mudstones, lies beneath the glacial material (USDA-NRCS 2006).

The vegetation in the MLRA has undergone drastic changes over time. Spruce forests dominated the landscape 30,000 to 21,500 years ago. As the last glacial maximum peaked 21,500 to 16,000 years ago, they were replaced with open tundras and parklands. The end of the Pleistocene Epoch saw a warming climate that initially prompted the return of spruce forests, but as the warming continued, spruce trees were replaced by deciduous trees (Baker et al. 1990). Not until approximately 9,000 years ago did the vegetation transition to prairies as climatic conditions continued to warm and subsequently dry. Between 4,000 and 3,000 years ago, oak savannas began intermingling within the prairie landscape, while the more wooded and forested areas maintained a foothold in sheltered areas. This prairie-forest transition ecosystem formed the dominant landscapes until the arrival of European settlers (Baker et al. 1992).

Classification relationships

USFS Subregions: Central Dissected Till Plains (251C) Section, Central Dissected Till and Loess Plain (251Cc), Mississippi River and Illinois Alluvial Plains (51Cf), Southeast Iowa Rolling Loess Hills (251Ch) Subsections (Cleland et al. 2007)

U.S. EPA Level IV Ecoregion: Rolling Loess Prairies (47f), Upper Mississippi Alluvial Plain (72d) (USEPA 2013)

National Vegetation Classification – Ecological Systems: North-Central Interior Wet Flatwoods (CES202.700) (NatureServe 2015)

National Vegetation Classification - Plant Associations: Quercus palustris – Quercus bicolor – (Liquidambar styraciflua) Swamp Forest (CEGL002432) (Nature Serve 2015)

Biophysical Settings: North-Central Interior Wet Flatwoods (BpS 4215180) (LANDFIRE 2009)

Natural Resources Conservation Service – Iowa Plant Community Species List: Forest, Pin Oak Mixed Hardwood (USDA-NRCS 2007)

Iowa Department of Natural Resources: Upland Forest (INAI 1984)

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: Hardwood Swamps, Vernal Pools Subtype (Eggers and Reed 2015)

Ecological site concept

Wet Loess Upland Flatwoods are located within the green areas on the map (Figure 1). They occur on upland flats and high stream terraces. The soils are Alfisols that are very poorly to somewhat poorly-drained and deep, formed in loess. Low hydraulic gradients create a shallow depth to an apparent water table during the growing season.

The historic pre-European settlement vegetation on this ecological site was dominated by upland and hydrophytic woody and herbaceous vegetation as the hydric/non-hydric boundary is greatly intermixed. Pin oak (*Quercus palustris* Müncch.) and bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpa* Michx.) are the dominant tree species on Wet Loess Upland Flatwoods, while eastern woodland sedge (*Carex blanda* Dewey) and fowl managrass (*Glyceria striata* (Lam.) Hitchc.) are the dominant grasses. Other tree canopy associates can include swamp white oak (*Quercus bicolor* Willd.), northern red oak (*Quercus rubra* L.), white oak (*Quercus alba* L.), and shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata* (Mill.) K. Koch) (LANDFIRE 2009; NatureServe 2015). Herbaceous species typical of an undisturbed plant community associated with this ecological site may include fringed sedge (*Carex crinita* Lam.), spreading sedge (*Carex laxiculmis* Schwein.), and royal fern (*Osmunda regalis* L.) (Drobney et al. 2001; NatureServe 2015). Shrubs are infrequent to sparse and may include American black elderberry (*Sambucus nigra* L. ssp. *canadensis* (L.) R. Bolli) (NatureServe 2015). Seasonal high-water tables, windthrow, periodic fires, and drought are important disturbances that maintain this ecological site (LANDFIRE 2009).

Associated sites

F108XC505IA	Loess Upland Woodland Loess parent material on upland summits, shoulders, and upper to mid backslopes including Clinton, Exette, Hayette, Mula, Rozetta, Seaton, and Timula
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Similar sites

F108XC513IA	Till Backslope Forest Till Backslope Seep Forests are lower on the landscape and are a SLOPE:stratigraphic, discharge wetland
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Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	(1) <i>Quercus palustris</i> (2) <i>Quercus macrocarpa</i>
Shrub	(1) <i>Sambucus nigra</i> ssp. <i>canadensis</i>
Herbaceous	(1) <i>Carex blanda</i> (2) <i>Glyceria striata</i>

Physiographic features

Wet Loess Upland Flatwoods occur on upland flats and high stream terraces (Figure 2). They are situated on elevations ranging from approximately 449 to 1401 feet ASL. The site does not experience flooding, but rather allows for groundwater recharge due to low hydraulic gradients.

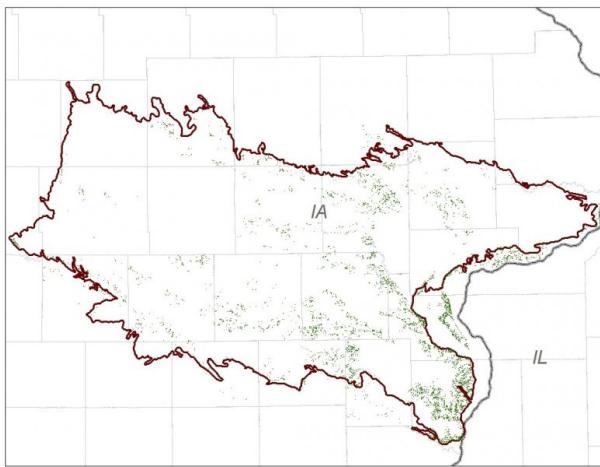


Figure 2. Figure 1. Location of Wet Loess Upland Flatwood ecological site within MLRA 108C.

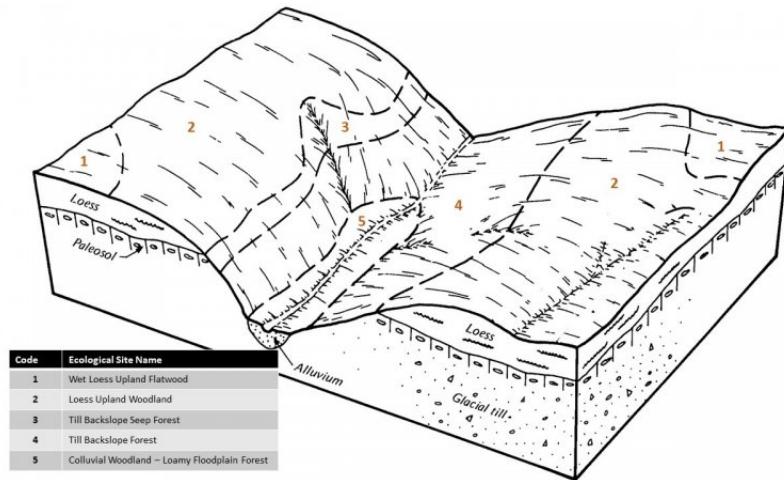


Figure 3. Figure 2. Representative block diagram of Wet Loess Upland Flatwood and associated ecological sites.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Slope shape across	(1) Concave (2) Linear
Slope shape up-down	(1) Concave (2) Linear
Landforms	(1) Upland > Flat
Runoff class	Low to medium
Elevation	449–1,401 ft
Slope	0–5%
Water table depth	0–12 in
Aspect	Aspect is not a significant factor

Climatic features

The Illinois and Iowa Deep Loess and Drift, West-Central Part falls into the hot humid continental climate (Dfa) Köppen-Geiger climate classification (Peel et al. 2007). In winter, dry, cold air masses periodically shift south from Canada. As these air masses collide with humid air, snowfall and rainfall result. In summer, moist, warm air masses from the Gulf of Mexico migrate north, producing significant frontal or convective rains. Occasionally, hot, dry winds originating from the Desert Southwest will stagnate over the region, creating extended droughty periods in the summer from unusually high temperatures. Air masses from the Pacific Ocean can also spread into the region and dominate producing mild, dry weather in the autumn known as Indian Summers (NCDC 2006).

The soil temperature regime of MLRA 108C is classified as mesic, where the mean annual soil temperature is between 46 and 59°F (USDA-NRCS 2006). Temperature and precipitation occur along a north-south gradient, where temperature and precipitation increase the further south one travels. The average freeze-free period of this ecological site is about 188 days, while the frost-free period is about 164 days (Table 2). The majority of the precipitation occurs as rainfall in the form of convective thunderstorms during the growing season. Average annual precipitation is approximately 40 inches, which includes rainfall plus the water equivalent from snowfall (Table 3). The average annual low and high temperatures are 40 and 61°F, respectively.

Climate data and analyses are derived from 30-year averages gathered from four National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather stations contained within the range of this ecological site (Table 4).

Table 3. Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (characteristic range)	140-152 days
Freeze-free period (characteristic range)	170-183 days
Precipitation total (characteristic range)	37-39 in
Frost-free period (actual range)	139-156 days
Freeze-free period (actual range)	166-185 days
Precipitation total (actual range)	37-40 in
Frost-free period (average)	146 days
Freeze-free period (average)	177 days
Precipitation total (average)	38 in

Climate stations used

- (1) COLUMBUS JUNCT 1 N [USC00131731], Columbus Junction, IA
- (2) BURLINGTON 2S [USC00131060], Burlington, IA
- (3) IOWA CITY [USC00134101], Iowa City, IA
- (4) WASHINGTON [USC00138688], Washington, IA

Influencing water features

Wet Loess Upland Flatwoods may be classified as a MINERAL SOIL FLATS: saturated, recharge, forested wetland under the Hydrogeomorphic (HGM) classification system (Smith et al. 1995; USDA-NRCS 2008) and as a Palustrine, Forested, Broad-leaved Deciduous, Seasonally Saturated wetland under the National Wetlands Inventory (FGDC 2013). Precipitation is the main source of water for this ecological site (Smith et al. 1995). Infiltration is very slow to slow (Hydrologic Group C and D) for undrained soils, and surface runoff is low to medium (Figure 5).

Primary wetland hydrology indicators for an intact Wet Loess Upland Flatwood may include: A2 High water table and A3 Saturation. Secondary wetland hydrology indicators may include: C2 Dry-season water table and D5 FAC-neutral test (USACE 2010).

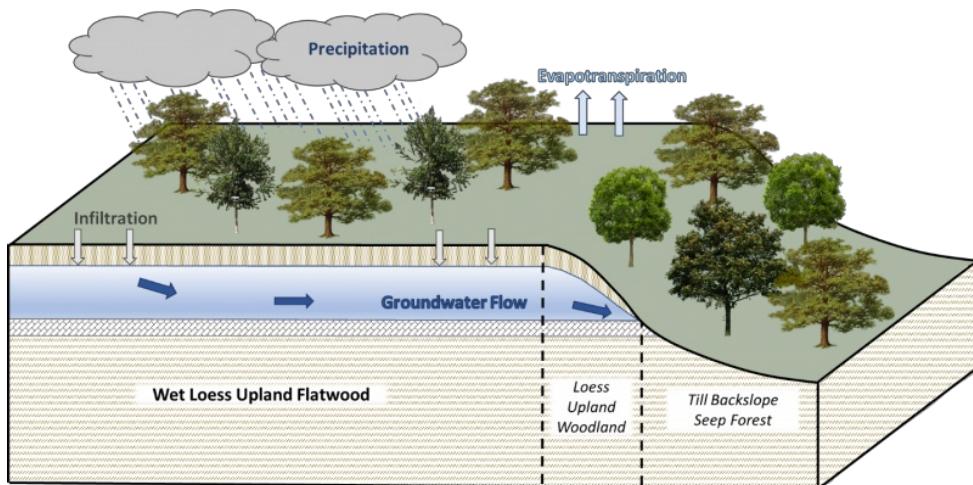


Figure 8. Figure 5. Hydrologic cycling in Wet Loess Upland Flatwood ecological site.

Soil features

Soils of Wet Loess Upland Flatwoods are in the Alfisols order, further classified as Aeric Endoaqualfs and Typic Endoaqualfs with very slow to slow infiltration and low to medium runoff potential. The soil series associated with this site includes Keomah, Stronghurst, and Traer (Figure 6). The parent material is loess, and the soils are very poorly to somewhat poorly-drained and deep with seasonal high-water tables. Soil pH classes are very strongly acid to moderately alkaline. No rooting restrictions are noted for the soils of this ecological site (Table 5).

Some soil map units in this ecological site, if not drained, may meet the definition of hydric soils and are listed as meeting criteria 2 of the hydric soils list (77 FR 12234).

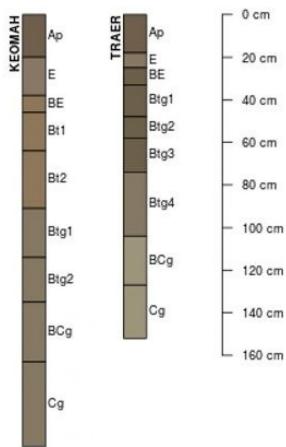


Figure 9. Figure 6. Profile sketches of soil series associated with Wet Loess Upland Flatwood.

Table 4. Representative soil features

Parent material	(1) Loess
Family particle size	(1) Fine (2) Fine-silty
Drainage class	Very poorly drained to somewhat poorly drained
Permeability class	Slow
Soil depth	80 in

Ecological dynamics

The information in this Ecological Site Description, including the state-and-transition model (STM), was developed based on historical data, current field data, professional experience, and a review of the scientific literature. As a result, all possible scenarios or plant species may not be included. Key indicator plant species, disturbances, and ecological processes are described to inform land management decisions.

Ecological Dynamics

The MLRA lies within the transition zone between the eastern deciduous forests and the tallgrass prairies. The heterogeneous topography of the area results in variable microclimates and fuel matrices that in turn are able to support prairies, savannas, woodlands, and forests. Wet Loess Upland Flatwoods form an aspect of this vegetative continuum. This ecological site occurs on broad upland flats and high stream terraces on very poorly to somewhat poorly-drained soils, spanning the hydric/non-hydric boundary. As a result, species characteristic of this ecological site consist of both upland and hydrophytic woody and herbaceous vegetation.

Seasonal high-water tables, windthrow, and periodic fire are critical factors that maintain Wet Loess Upland Flatwoods. Saturated soil conditions play an important role in woody and herbaceous species diversity by limiting seed germination. Damage to trees from storms can vary from minor, patchy effects of individual trees to stand effects that temporarily affect community structure and species richness and diversity (Irland 2000; Peterson 2000). Fire typically consisted of high-intensity, low-frequency fires projected to occur every 700-1000 years and generally followed large wind events or extended periods of drought (LANDFIRE 2009).

Drought has also played a role in shaping this ecological site. The periodic episodes of reduced soil moisture in conjunction with the very poorly to somewhat poorly-drained soils have favored the proliferation of plant species tolerant of such conditions. Drought can also slow the growth of plants and result in dieback of certain species. When coupled with fire, periods of drought events can greatly delay the establishment and maturation of woody vegetation (Pyne et al. 1996).

Today, Wet Loess Upland Flatwoods have been greatly reduced, if not extirpated, as lands have been cleared and type-converted for agricultural production. The state-and-transition model that follows provides a detailed description of each state, community phase, pathway, and transition. A return to the historic plant community may not be possible following extensive land modification, but long-term conservation agriculture or woodland reconstruction efforts can help to restore some biotic diversity and ecological function. This model is based on available experimental research, field observations, literature reviews, professional consensus, and interpretations.

STATE 1 – REFERENCE STATE

The reference plant community is categorized as an upland flatwood community, dominated by both upland and hydrophytic woody and herbaceous vegetation. The two community phases within the reference state are dependent on seasonal high-water tables, fire, or storm damage. These disturbances alter species composition, cover, and extent. Drought has more localized impacts in the reference phases, but does contribute to overall species composition, diversity, and productivity.

Community Phase 1.1 Pin Oak – Bur Oak/American Black Elderberry/Eastern Woodland Sedge – Fowl Mannagrass – Sites in this reference community phase are an open canopy woodland. Pin oak and bur oak are the dominant tree species, but swamp white oak, northern red oak, white oak, shagbark hickory, and American elm (*Ulmus americana* L.) are common canopy associates. Trees are very large (>33-inch DBH) and cover is over 60 percent. The herbaceous layer varies from sparse to patchy due to seasonal high saturation. Characteristic species include eastern woodland sedge, fowl mannagrass, Jack in the pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum* (L.) Schott), and calico aster (*Symphyotrichum lateriflorum* (L.) Á. Löve & D. Löve). Shrubs are infrequent to sparse. Frequent windthrow of single trees to small patches maintained this phase, but replacement fire or major windthrow event would shift the community to phase 1.2 (LANDFIRE 2009).

Pathway 1.1A – Stand replacing fire or major windstorm.

Community Phase 1.2 Pin Oak – American Black Elderberry/Eastern Woodland Sedge – Fowl Mannagrass – This reference community phase represents the site following a replacement fire or a major wind event. Community structure has been significantly altered, with tree size class having been reduced to pole-sized (5

to 9-inch DBH) and canopy cover not exceeding 30 percent (LANDFIRE 2009). The shrub layer is most prominent during this phase, including American black elderberry, common pricklyash (*Zanthoxylum americanum* Mill.), and dogwoods (*Cornus* L.), taking advantage of the lack of tree cover (LANDFIRE 2009; NatureServe 2015). Lack of disturbances in excess of 30 years will allow the community to shift to phase 1.3 (LANDFIRE 2009).

Pathway 1.2A – Natural succession following 30+ years of no disturbances.

Community Phase 1.3 Pin Oak – Bur Oak/American Black Elderberry – Common Pricklyash/Eastern Woodland Sedge – Fowl Mannagrass – This community reference phase represents natural succession as a result of over 30 years of no disturbance events. The lack of disturbances allows the trees to mature. Tree size class increases to medium (9 to 21-inch DBH) and cover ranges from 31 to 60 percent. The open and patchy tree cover allows shrub diversity and cover to remain prominent during this phase. A replacement fire or major windstorm will shift the community back to phase 1.2, but lack of disturbances in excess of 50 years will allow the community to shift to phase 1.1 (LANDFIRE 2009).

Pathway 1.3A – Stand replacing fire or major windstorm.

Pathway 1.3B – Natural successional following 50+ years of no disturbances.

Transition 1A – Cultural treatments to enhance forage quality and yield transitions the site to the forage state (2).

Transition 1B – Tillage, seeding of agricultural crops, and non-selective herbicide transition this site to the cropland state (3).

STATE 2 – FORAGE STATE

The forage state occurs when the site is converted to a farming system that emphasizes domestic livestock production known as grassland agriculture. Fire suppression, periodic cultural treatments (e.g., clipping, drainage, soil amendment applications, planting new species and/or cultivars, mechanical harvesting) and grazing by domesticated livestock transition and maintain this state (USDA-NRCS 2003). Early settlers seeded non-native species, such as smooth brome (*Bromus inermis* Leyss.) and Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis* L.), to help extend the grazing season (Smith 1998). Over time, as lands were continuously harvested or grazed by herds of cattle, the non-native species were able to spread and expand across the landscape, reducing the native species diversity and ecological function.

Community Phase 2.1 Hayfield – Sites in this community phase consist of forage plants that are planted and mechanically harvested. Mechanical harvesting removes much of the aboveground biomass and nutrients that feed the soil microorganisms (Franzluebbers et al. 2000; USDA-NRCS 2003). As a result, soil biology is reduced leading to decreases in nutrient uptake by plants, soil organic matter, and soil aggregation. Frequent biomass removal can also reduce the site's carbon sequestration capacity (Skinner 2008).

Pathway 2.1A – Mechanical harvesting is replaced with domestic livestock utilizing continuous grazing.

Pathway 2.1B – Mechanical harvesting is replaced with domestic livestock utilizing rotational grazing.

Community Phase 2.2 Continuous Pastured Grazing System – This community phase is characterized by continuous grazing where domestic livestock graze a pasture for the entire season. Depending on stocking density, this can result in lower forage quality and productivity, weed invasions, and uneven pasture use. Continuous grazing can also increase the amount of bare ground and erosion and reduce soil organic matter, cation exchange capacity, water-holding capacity, and nutrient availability and retention (Bharati et al. 2002; Leake et al. 2004; Teague et al. 2011). Smooth brome, Kentucky bluegrass, and white clover (*Trifolium repens* L.) are common pasture species used in this phase. Their tolerance to continuous grazing has allowed these species to dominate, sometimes completely excluding the native vegetation.

Pathway 2.2A – Domestic livestock are removed, and mechanical harvesting is implemented.

Pathway 2.2B – Rotational grazing replaces continuous grazing.

Community Phase 2.3 Rest-Rotation Pastured Grazing System – This community phase is characterized by rotational grazing where the pasture has been subdivided into several smaller paddocks. Through the development of a grazing plan, livestock utilize one or a few paddocks, while the remaining area is rested allowing plants to restore vigor and energy reserves, deepen root systems, develop seeds, as well as allow seedling establishment (Undersander et al. 2002; USDA-NRCS 2003). Rest-rotation pastured grazing systems include deferred rotation, rest rotation, high intensity – low frequency, and short duration methods. Vegetation is generally more diverse and can include orchardgrass (*Dactylis glomerata* L.), timothy (*Phleum pretense* L.), red clover (*Trifolium pratense* L.), and alfalfa (*Medicago sativa* L.). The addition of native prairie species can further bolster plant diversity and, in turn, soil function. This community phase promotes numerous ecosystem benefits including increasing biodiversity, preventing soil erosion, maintaining and enhancing soil quality, sequestering atmospheric carbon, and improving water yield and quality (USDA-NRCS 2003).

Pathway 2.3A – Continuous grazing replaces rotational grazing.

Pathway 2.3B – Domestic livestock are removed, and mechanical harvesting is implemented.

Transition 2A – Tillage, seeding of agricultural crops, and non-selective herbicide transition this site to the cropland state (3).

Restoration 2A – Site preparation, tree planting, invasive species control, and seeding native species transition this site to the reconstructed flatwood state (4).

STATE 3 – CROPLAND STATE

The low topographic relief across the MLRA has resulted in nearly the entire area being converted to agriculture (Eilers and Roosa 1994). Subsurface drainage and the continuous use of tillage, row-crop planting, and chemicals (i.e., herbicides, fertilizers, etc.) have effectively eliminated the reference community and many of its natural ecological functions in favor of crop production. Corn and soybeans are the dominant crops for the site, and oats (*Avena* L.) and alfalfa (*Medicago sativa* L.) may be rotated periodically. These areas are likely to remain in crop production for the foreseeable future.

Community Phase 3.1 Conventional Tillage Field – Sites in this community phase typically consist of monoculture row-cropping maintained by conventional tillage practices. They are cropped in either continuous corn or corn-soybean rotations. The frequent use of deep tillage, low crop diversity, and bare soil conditions during the non-growing season negatively impacts soil health. Under these practices, soil aggregation is reduced or destroyed, soil organic matter is reduced, erosion and runoff are increased, and infiltration is decreased, which can ultimately lead to undesirable changes in the hydrology of the watershed (Tomer et al. 2005).

Pathway 3.1A – Tillage operations are greatly reduced, crop rotation occurs on a regular interval, and crop residue remains on the soil surface.

Pathway 3.1B – Tillage operations are greatly reduced or eliminated, crop rotation occurs on a regular interval, crop residue remains on the soil surface, and cover crops are planted following crop harvest.

Community Phase 3.2 Conservation Tillage Field – This community phase is characterized by rotational crop production that utilizes various conservation tillage methods to promote soil health and reduce erosion. Conservation tillage methods include strip-till, ridge-till, vertical-till, or no-till planting systems. Strip-till keeps seedbed preparation to narrow bands less than one-third the width of the row where crop residue and soil consolidation are left undisturbed in-between seedbed areas. Strip-till planting may be completed in the fall and nutrient application either occurs simultaneously or at the time of planting. Ridge-till uses specialized equipment to create ridges in the seedbed and vegetative residue is left on the surface in between the ridges. Weeds are controlled with herbicides and/or cultivation, seedbed ridges are rebuilt during cultivation, and soils are left undisturbed from harvest to planting. Vertical-till systems employ machinery that lightly tills the soil and cuts up crop residue, mixing some of the residue into the top few inches of the soil while leaving a large portion on the surface. No-till management is the most conservative, disturbing soils only at the time of planting and fertilizer application. Compared to conventional tillage systems, conservation tillage methods can improve soil ecosystem function by

reducing soil erosion, increasing organic matter and water availability, improving water quality, and reducing soil compaction.

Pathway 3.2A – Intensive tillage is utilized, and monoculture row-cropping is established.

Pathway 3.2B – Cover crops are implemented to minimize soil erosion.

Community Phase 3.3 Conservation Tillage with Cover Crop Field – This community phase applies conservation tillage methods as described above as well as adds cover crop practices. Cover crops typically include nitrogen-fixing species (e.g., legumes), small grains (e.g., rye, wheat, oats), or forage covers (e.g., turnips, radishes, rapeseed). The addition of cover crops not only adds plant diversity but also promotes soil health by reducing soil erosion, limiting nitrogen leaching, suppressing weeds, increasing soil organic matter, and improving the overall soil ecosystem. In the case of small grain cover crops, surface cover and water infiltration are increased, while forage covers can be used to graze livestock or support local wildlife. Of the three community phases for this state, this phase promotes the greatest soil sustainability and improves ecological functioning within a cropland system.

Pathway 3.3A – Cover crop practices are abandoned.

Pathway 3.3B – Intensive tillage is utilized, cover crops practices are abandoned, monoculture row-cropping is established, and crop rotation is reduced or eliminated.

Transition 3A – Cultural treatments to enhance forage quality and yield transitions the site to the forage state (2).

Restoration 3A – Site preparation, tree planting, invasive species control, and seeding native species transition this site to the reconstructed flatwood state (4).

STATE 4 – RECONSTRUCTED FLATWOOD STATE

The combination of natural and anthropogenic disturbances occurring today has resulted in numerous forest health issues, and restoration back to the historic reference condition may not be possible. Woodlands are being stressed by non-native diseases and pests, habitat fragmentation, permanent changes in soil hydrology, and overabundant deer populations on top of naturally-occurring disturbances (severe weather and native pests) (Flickinger 2010). However, these habitats provide multiple ecosystem services including carbon sequestration; clean air and water; soil conservation; biodiversity support; wildlife habitat; timber, fiber, and fuel products; as well as a variety of cultural activities (e.g., hiking, camping, hunting) (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2005; Flickinger 2010). Therefore, conservation of forests and woodlands should still be pursued. Woodland reconstructions are an important tool for repairing natural ecological functioning and providing habitat protection for numerous species associated with Wet Loess Upland Flatwoods. Therefore, ecological restoration should aim to aid the recovery of degraded, damaged, or destroyed ecosystems. A successful restoration will have the ability to structurally and functionally sustain itself, demonstrate resilience to the ranges of stress and disturbance, and create and maintain positive biotic and abiotic interactions (SER 2002). The reconstructed flatwood state is the result of a long-term commitment involving a multi-step, adaptive management process.

Community Phase 4.1 Early Successional Reconstructed Flatwood – This community phase represents the early community assembly from woodland reconstruction. It is highly dependent on the current condition of the woodland based on past and current land management actions, invasive species, and proximity to land populated with non-native pests and diseases. Therefore, no two sites will have the same early successional composition. Technical forestry assistance should be sought to develop suitable conservation management plans.

Pathway 4.1A – Application of stand improvement practices in line with a developed management plan.

Community Phase 4.2 Late Successional Reconstructed Flatwood – Appropriately timed management practices (e.g., prescribed fire, hazardous fuels management, forest stand improvement, continuing integrated pest management) applied to the early successional community phase can help increase the stand maturity, pushing the site into a late successional community phase over time. A late successional reconstructed woodland will have an uneven-aged canopy and a well-developed shrub layer and understory.

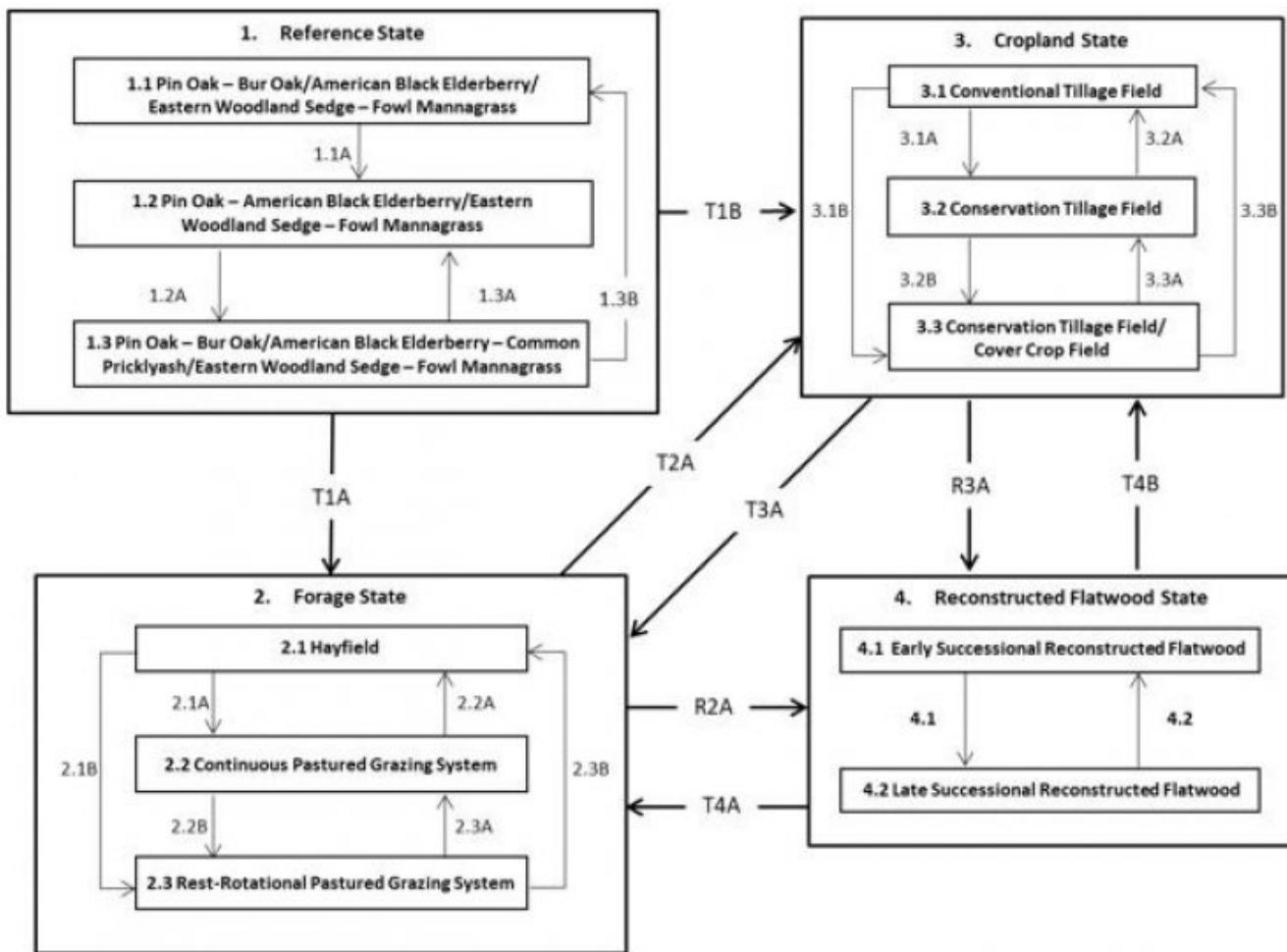
Pathway 4.2A – Reconstruction experiences a setback from extreme weather event or improper timing of management actions.

Transition 4A – Cultural treatments to enhance forage quality and yield transition the site to the forage state (2).

Transition 4B – Tillage, seeding of agricultural crops, and non-selective herbicide transition this site to the cropland state (3).

State and transition model

F108CY518IA WET LOESS UPLAND FLATWOOD



Code	Process
1.1A, 1.3A	Stand replacing fire or major wind event
1.2A, 1.3B	Natural succession following no disturbances for 30 – 50+ years
T1A, T3A, T4A	Cultural treatments are implemented to increase forage quality and yield
2.1A	Mechanical harvesting is replaced with domestic livestock and continuous grazing
2.1B	Mechanical harvesting is replaced with domestic livestock and rest-rotational grazing
2.2A, 2.3B	Domestic livestock grazing is replaced by mechanical harvesting
2.2B	Implementation of rest-rotational grazing
2.3A	Implementation of continuous grazing
T1B, T2A, T4B	Agricultural conversion via tillage, seeding, and non-selective herbicide
3.1A	Less tillage, residue management
3.1B	Less tillage, residue management, and implementation of cover cropping
3.2B	Implementation of cover cropping
3.2A, 3.3B	Intensive tillage, remove residue, and reinitiate monoculture row cropping
3.3A	Remove cover cropping
R2A, R3A	Site preparation, tree planting, non-native species control, and native seeding
5.1A	Invasive species control and implementation of disturbance regimes
5.2A	Drought or improper timing/use of management actions

Inventory data references

No field plots were available for this site. A review of the scientific literature and professional experience were used to approximate the plant communities for this provisional ecological site. Information for the state-and-transition model was obtained from the same sources. All community phases are considered provisional based on these plots and the sources identified in ecological site description.

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Contributors

Lisa Kluesner
Ryan Dermody

Approval

lisa kluesner, 7/01/2019

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Organization Name Title Location

Drake University:

Dr. Tom Rosburg Professor of Ecology and Botany Des Moines, IA

Iowa Department of Natural Resources:

Kevin Andersen Private Lands Biologist Fairfield, IA

John Pearson Ecologist Des Moines, IA

LANDFIRE (The Nature Conservancy):

Randy Swaty Ecologist Evanston, IL

Natural Resources Conservation Service:

Rick Bednarek Iowa State Soil Scientist Des Moines, IA

Leland Camp Soil Scientist Waverly, IA

Stacey Clark Regional Ecological Site Specialist St. Paul, MN

Ryan Dermody Soil Survey Leader Waverly, IA

Tonie Endres Senior Regional Soil Scientist Indianapolis, IN

John Hammerly Soil Data Quality Specialist Indianapolis, IN

Lisa Kluesner Ecological Site Specialist Waverly, IA

Sean Kluesner Earth Team Volunteer Waverly, IA

Jeff Matthias State Grassland Specialist Des Moines, IA

Kevin Norwood Soil Survey Regional Director Indianapolis, IN

Doug Oelmann Soil Scientist Des Moines, IA

James Phillips GIS Specialist Des Moines, IA

Jason Steele Area Resource Soil Scientist Fairfield, IA

Doug Wallace Ecologist ACES Program Columbia, MO

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:
