

## Ecological site F133BY002TX Seasonally Wet Upland

Last updated: 9/21/2023  
Accessed: 05/18/2024

### 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.

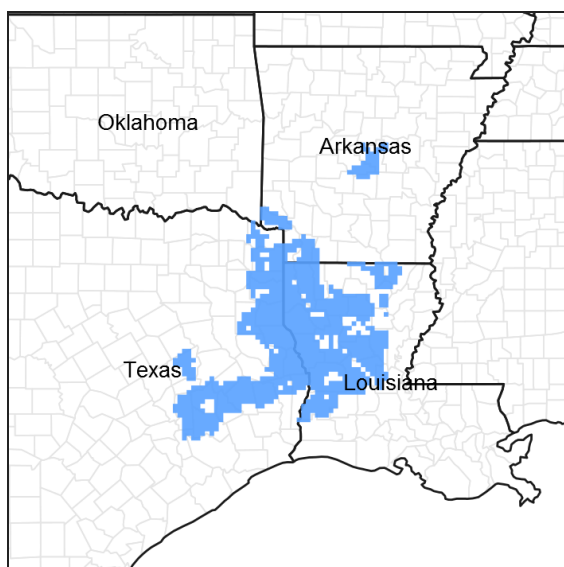


Figure 1. Mapped extent

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.

### MLRA notes

Major Land Resource Area (MLRA): 133B–Western Coastal Plain

Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) 133B, Western Coastal Plain is in eastern Texas, western Louisiana, and the southwest corner of Arkansas. The area is dominated by coniferous forest covering 45,450 square miles (29,088,000 acres). The region is a hugely diverse transition zone between the eastern deciduous forests and the central grasslands to the west.

### Classification relationships

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, 2006.  
-Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) 133B

### Ecological site concept

The Seasonally Wet Upland site is unique by its upland position on the landscape, while also having a seasonally high water table. Clay soils in the subhorizons cause water to stay in the profile for long periods of time, especially from November to May. Not only does the water table affect the plants, but many of the soils are shallow with their depth to bedrock as low as 16 inches.

## Associated sites

F133BY005TX	<b>Loamy Upland</b> Soils have a loamy texture throughout and a better drainage system.
F133BY001TX	<b>Depression</b> Landform is lower and sites are wetter.
F133BY003TX	<b>Loamy Over Clayey Upland</b> Landform is higher and sites have better drainage patterns.
F133BY004TX	<b>Loamy Claypan Upland</b> Sites are very similar. Soils have a slightly better drainage system, typically moderately well or well drained as opposed to poorly drained.
F133BY012TX	<b>Wet Terrace</b> Landform is lower, in the terrace position.
F133BY013TX	<b>Terrace</b> Landform is lower, in the terrace position and sites have better drainage.

## Similar sites

F133BY012TX	<b>Wet Terrace</b> Sites are on a lower landform in the terrace position.
F133BY004TX	<b>Loamy Claypan Upland</b> Sites are very similar, but have better drainage patterns. Sites are moderately well to well drained.

Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	(1) <i>Pinus taeda</i>
Shrub	Not specified
Herbaceous	Not specified

## Physiographic features

The ecological site includes areas on uplands, also called interfluves. Slopes are dominantly 1 to 15 percent, but can range from 0 to 35 percent. Runoff is low to very high and increases with steeper slope. Elevation ranges from 100 to 1,000 feet. Water table depth fluctuates throughout the year. From November to May, the depth to the top of the water table will be from 6 to 36 inches. The water table will deepen during the warmer months of the year.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Coastal plain > Interfluve
Runoff class	Low to high
Flooding frequency	None
Ponding frequency	None
Elevation	30–305 m
Slope	1–15%
Water table depth	15–91 cm
Aspect	Aspect is not a significant factor

Table 3. Representative physiographic features (actual ranges)

Runoff class	Not specified
Flooding frequency	Not specified
Ponding frequency	Not specified

Elevation	Not specified
Slope	0–35%
Water table depth	Not specified

## Climatic features

The climate of the Western Coastal Plain (MLRA 133B) is humid subtropical with hot summers and mild winters. Canadian air masses that move southward across Texas and Louisiana over the Gulf of Mexico in winter produce cool, cloudy, rainy weather with only rare cold waves that moderate in one or two days. Precipitation is distributed fairly even throughout the year and is most often in the form of slow and gentle rains.

Spring weather can be variable. March is relatively dry while thunderstorm activities increase in April and May. Occasional slow-moving thunderstorms or other weather disturbances may dump excessive amounts of precipitation on the area. Fall has moderate temperatures. Fall experiences an increase of precipitation and frequently has periods of mild, dry, sunny weather. Heavy rain may occur early in the fall because of tropical disturbances, which move westward from the gulf. Tropical storms are a threat to the area in the summer and fall but severe storms are rare. Prolonged droughts and snowfall are rare.

The total annual precipitation ranges from 39 inches in the western part of the region to 60 inches in the eastern part of the region. Approximately 50 percent of the rainfall occurs between April and September, which includes the growing season for most crops. Thunderstorms occur on about 50 days each year and most occur during the summer.

The average relative humidity in mid-afternoon is about 60 percent. Humidity is higher at night and the average at dawn is about 90 percent. The sun shines 70 percent of the time in summer and 50 percent in winter. The prevailing wind is from the south-southeast. Average wind-speed is highest at 11 miles per hour in spring.

**Table 4. Representative climatic features**

Frost-free period (average)	219 days
Freeze-free period (average)	252 days
Precipitation total (average)	1,397 mm

## Climate stations used

- (1) CARTHAGE [USC00411500], Carthage, TX
- (2) RUSK [USC00417841], Rusk, TX
- (3) TOLEDO BEND DAM [USC00419068], Anacoco, TX
- (4) SHERIDAN [USC00036562], Sheridan, AR
- (5) HUNTSVILLE [USC00414382], Huntsville, TX
- (6) CALION L&D [USC00031140], El Dorado, AR
- (7) JENA 4 WSW [USC00164696], Trout, LA
- (8) DEKALB [USC00412352], Simms, TX
- (9) GILMER 4 WNW [USC00413546], Gilmer, TX
- (10) MAGNOLIA [USC00034548], Magnolia, AR
- (11) CALHOUN RSCH STN [USC00161411], Calhoun, LA
- (12) MINDEN [USC00166244], Minden, LA

## Influencing water features

This ecological site is influenced by a seasonally high water table. From November to May the water table may be as high as 6 inches on some sites.

## Wetland description

Some of the soils correlated to the site are classified as hydric. Onsite field determinations using water, soil, and plant indicators should be used to verify if the sites are classified as wetlands.

## Soil features

The soils consist of shallow to very deep, somewhat poorly to poorly drained soils formed from mudstone residuum. The representative soils are: Alusa, Anacoco, Browndell, Colita, Corrigan, Elmina, Felker, Fetzer, Gomery, Kolin, Libuse, Lummus, Metcalf, Tiak, and Wiergate. They are widely varying taxonomically, from alfisols to ultisols to vertisols. Their unifying factor is their upland position with a fluctuating water table. Many of the soils have restrictions to bedrock, classifying them as shallow.

**Table 5. Representative soil features**

Parent material	(1) Residuum–mudstone
Surface texture	(1) Fine sandy loam (2) Loam (3) Silt loam
Family particle size	(1) Clayey
Drainage class	Poorly drained to somewhat poorly drained
Permeability class	Moderately slow
Soil depth	41–203 cm
Surface fragment cover ≤3"	0%
Surface fragment cover >3"	0%
Available water capacity (0-101.6cm)	5.08–25.4 cm
Calcium carbonate equivalent (0-101.6cm)	0–2%
Electrical conductivity (0-101.6cm)	0–4 mmhos/cm
Sodium adsorption ratio (0-101.6cm)	0–8
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (0-101.6cm)	4.5–7.5
Subsurface fragment volume ≤3" (Depth not specified)	0–5%
Subsurface fragment volume >3" (Depth not specified)	0–5%

## Ecological dynamics

The information in this ecological site description (ESD), including the state-and-transition model (STM), was developed using archeological and historical data, professional experience, and scientific studies. The information is representative of a complex set of plant communities. Not all scenarios or plants are included. Key indicator plants, animals, and ecological processes are described to inform land management decisions.

**Introduction** – Southern Arkansas, western Louisiana, and eastern Texas have been deemed the Pineywoods because of the vast expanse of pine trees. The region represents the western edge of the southern coniferous belt. Historically, the area was covered by pines with mixed hardwoods, sparse shrubs, and a diverse understory of grasses and forbs. Fire played a significant role in reducing the woody competition that generally out-competes the herbaceous understory layer. Fire suppression and land conversion have reduced the amount of historical communities in existence today.

**Background** – Prior to settlement by the Europeans, the reference state for the Seasonally Wet Uplands ecological

site was a Loblolly Pine (*Pinus taeda*) Woodland. Remnants of this presumed historic plant community still exist where natural conditions are replicated through conservation management techniques. Evidence of the reference state is found in accounts of early historic explorers to the area, historic forest and biological survey teams, as well as recent ecological studies in the last 30 years. The age of this woodland community varies, and has a diverse understory of grasses and forbs.

**Settlement Management** – As human settlement increased throughout the area, so did the increase in logging and grazing by domestic livestock. The logging became so extensive that by the 1930's most of the region had been cut-over. Replanting trees to historic communities was not common and early foresters began planting loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda*) for its quick growth. As more people colonized they began suppressing fire, which allowed dense thickets of shrubs to replace the herbaceous understory.

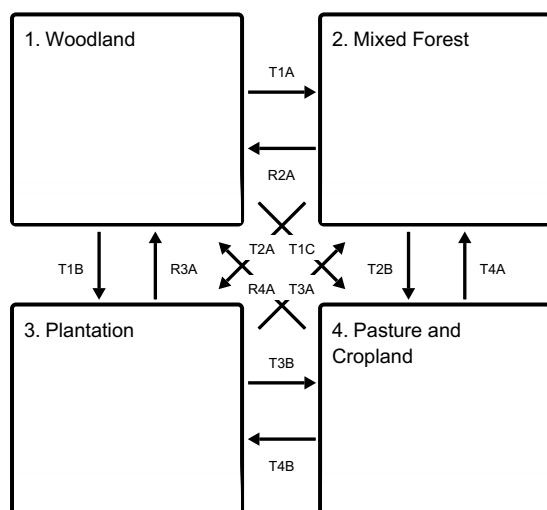
**Current Management and State** – Today much of the remnant forest is gone, replaced by pine plantations, crops, and pastures. The areas that were not converted have been fire-suppressed so long that loblolly pine and fire intolerant hardwoods populate the overstory structure. Currently, U.S. Forest Service properties are the best place to view the remnant sites. Some private individuals have begun restoring communities through selective tree planting and retention of communities that remain. Other restoration efforts include mimicking natural-disturbance regimes through gap-phase regeneration on plantation sites.

**Fire Regimes** – Fire was a natural and important disturbance throughout the Western Gulf Plain. Fire occurred naturally from lightning strikes and by Native Americans for game movement. The reference community developed with a frequency of fire every 5 to 10 years. Fires usually occurred in early spring, removing senescent vegetation, recycling nutrients and minerals, and spurring new plant growth. Late summer fires occurred as well, but with a different community effect. Summer fires burned hotter and with more intensity, greatly suppressing the shrub canopy layer. The summer fires also shifted the ecological site transitional state by decreasing grass densities and increasing forb densities. The topography, fuel loads, and other conditions caused patchy burns throughout the region resulting in mosaic patterns of plant communities and a heterogeneous landscape.

**Disturbance Regimes** – Extreme weather events occur occasionally throughout the region. Tornados uproot trees and open canopies in the spring months. In the late summer and early fall, hurricanes or tropical depressions often make landfall, dumping excessive amounts of rain and toppling trees with high winds. Another cause of large canopy openings is the effects of the southern pine beetle (*Dendroctonus frontalis*). Starting in the late 1950's, beetle outbreaks have occurred every 6 to 9 years (although a major attack has not occurred in some time) usually when the trees are stressed due to multiple environmental factors.

## State and transition model

### Ecosystem states



**T1A** - Fire suppression, no management

**T1B** - Clearcut, site preparation, tree planting

**T1C** - Clearcut, grass/crop planting

**R2A** - Selective timber harvest, prescribed burns

- T2A** - Clearcut, site preparation, tree planting
- T2B** - Clearcut, grass/crop planting
- R3A** - Gap-phase regeneration or clearcut with tree planting
- T3A** - Clearcut, no management
- T3B** - Clearcut, grass/crop planting
- R4A** - Tree planting, mid-story shrub control, prescribed burns
- T4A** - Fire suppression, no management
- T4B** - Clearcut, site preparation, tree planting

#### State 1 submodel, plant communities

1.1. Loblolly Pine  
Woodland

#### State 2 submodel, plant communities

2.1. Pine/Hardwood  
Forest

#### State 3 submodel, plant communities

3.1. Pine/Hardwood  
Plantation

#### State 4 submodel, plant communities

4.1. Planted Pasture  
and Row Crop

## State 1 Woodland

State 1 has an overstory of loblolly pine and shortleaf pine ( *Pinus echinata*). Longleaf pine ( *Pinus palustris*) may be found in the southernmost areas of the MLRA mixed in with the other pine species. The understory is diversely vegetated with grasses and forbs. The vegetation has to be able to grow in sometimes shallow soil conditions (depth to bedrock restrictions), as well as the fluctuating water table. The added available water can help plants, but can be a detriment to vegetation that are not adapted to wetter conditions. Natural disturbances of fires, lightning strikes, hurricanes (wind throw), ice events (rare), and beetle infestations aid in maintaining the uneven-age structure. The natural canopy spacing is kept intact by periodic fires ranging from 5 to 10 years.

## Community 1.1 Loblolly Pine Woodland

The varying degree of water availability and root restriction cause the understory sites to be highly variable. Common understory species include: longleaf woodoats ( *Chasmanthium sessiliflorum*), sedges ( *Carex* sp.),

partridgeberry (*Mitchella repens*), and Texas ironweed (*Vernonia texana*). Common shrub species include: American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*), parsley hawthorn (*Crataegus marshallii*), and yaupon (*Ilex vomitoria*).

## **State 2**

### **Mixed Forest**

The Mixed Forest community represents a steady-state for the ecological site. Without fire or management, the site begins to lose the vegetative indicators that make the ecological site unique. The plant communities will stay constant without disturbance or intervention.

### **Community 2.1**

#### **Pine/Hardwood Forest**

The understory dominance state has crossed a threshold in which normal environmental events cannot transition the community back to the reference state (State 1). The crossing of this threshold represents a closure in the overstory canopy, which limits the productivity of the ground layer. The limited ground layer does not provide enough fuel to harbor a burn with the intensity found in State 1. The understory plant layer only contains remnants of the reference community and possibly no reference community indicator species. Shade tolerant grasses, such as longleaf woodoats (*Chasmanthium sessiliflorum*), forbs, and greenbriers (*Smilax* sp.) may be the only ground-layer species. The canopy closure is usually filled in by sweetgums (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), red maples (*Acer rubrum*), and oak species (*Quercus* sp.). Because the site lacks the diversity of the reference state, the wildlife diversity will be limited to generalist species, species required a closed canopy, and those seeking refuge. This ecological state requires management to restore the reference community. Selective timber harvest to reduce the basal area is the first step to allow the understory to return. More frequent than natural prescribed burns (3 to 5 years) will help suppress the hardwood regeneration, but only after understory fuel levels are adequate. Intense summer fires may also be required. The suppression of overstory seedlings will allow the reference plant community to establish.

## **State 3**

### **Plantation**

The Plantation State is a result of conversion activities. The landowner has maximized silviculture production by planting a monoculture of tree species.

### **Community 3.1**

#### **Pine/Hardwood Plantation**

In the immediate years following the initial plantation tree planting, the understory community will resemble State 1. During this early growth period, the landowner will typically remove unwanted hardwoods and herbaceous plants to reduce competition with the planted pine trees. As the overstory canopy closes, less understory management is required due to sunlight restrictions to the ground layer.

## **State 4**

### **Pasture and Cropland**

The Pasture and Cropland State is a result of conversion activities. The landowner has maximized agriculture production by planting a monoculture of introduced grass species or agricultural row crops.

### **Community 4.1**

#### **Planted Pasture and Row Crop**

Typical introduced pasture grass species include bahiagrass (*Paspalum notatum*) and different varieties of bermudagrass (*Cynodon dactylon*). The grasses are grown for livestock production through direct grazing or baling hay for later use. Agricultural row crops are grown for food and fiber production. Many farmers use herbicides to reduce unwanted plant competition which yields a plant community unrepresentative of State 1 or subsequent vegetative states.

## **Transition T1A**

### **State 1 to 2**

The transition from State 1 to State 2 is a result of time and long periods (greater than 10 years) of no fire and/or forest management practices. Without fire to suppress tree seedlings, biomass and diversity is lost from the grass and forb layers of the system.

## **Transition T1B**

### **State 1 to 3**

The transition is due to the land manager maximizing silviculture potential. Merchantable timber is harvested by clearcut, then the site is prepared and planted to a monoculture of trees.

## **Transition T1C**

### **State 1 to 4**

The transition is due to the land manager maximizing agricultural production. Merchantable timber is harvested by clearcut, then the site is prepared and planted to either an improved grass or row crops.

## **Restoration pathway R2A**

### **State 2 to 1**

Restoration of this community to State 1 begins with a selective timber harvest. Removing unwanted trees opens up the canopy, allowing sunlight penetration to the ground. Years of overstory growth have limited the fuel necessary to have an effective fire. Time will be needed to encourage understory growth. Once the herbaceous layer has established, more frequent than natural burns (3 to 5 years) may be required to suppress the woody vegetation.

## **Transition T2A**

### **State 2 to 3**

The transition is due to the land manager maximizing silviculture potential. Merchantable timber is harvested by clearcut, then the site is prepared and planted to a monoculture of trees.

## **Transition T2B**

### **State 2 to 4**

The transition is due to the land manager maximizing agricultural production. Merchantable timber is harvested by clearcut, then the site is prepared and planted to either an improved grass or row crops.

## **Restoration pathway R3A**

### **State 3 to 1**

When restoring a plantation, the land manager can either clearcut the timber, prepare the site, and plant trees. Otherwise, gap-phase regeneration is possible through selective timber harvests. This involves replanting the desired overstory species in small openings within the current structure of the woodland. The benefit is a slow progression of restoration instead of starting from primary succession.

## **Transition T3A**

### **State 3 to 2**

This community transition is caused by neglecting the plantation understory. Without fire, mowing, or herbicides, unwanted understory saplings can begin to grow into the overstory.

## **Transition T3B**

### **State 3 to 4**

The transition is due to the land manager maximizing agricultural production. Merchantable timber is harvested by clearcut, then the site is prepared and planted to either an improved grass or row crops.

## **Restoration pathway R4A**

### **State 4 to 1**

This restoration path can be accomplished by planting a mix of species to their natural frequencies trying to attain a mature overstory canopy. Management will be required to control unwanted species by burning, mowing, and/or herbicides. Controlling introduced pasture grasses is difficult, with complete control likely not attainable. The herbaceous understory will take time to develop, but this process can be expedited if adapted plant material is available.

## **Transition T4A**

### **State 4 to 2**

This community transition is caused by neglecting the saplings and shrubs. Without fire, mowing, or herbicides, the brush canopy becomes a dense thicket.

## **Transition T4B**

### **State 4 to 3**

The transition is due to the land manager maximizing silviculture production. The site is prepared and planted to a monoculture of pine or hardwood trees.

## **Additional community tables**

### **Inventory data references**

These site descriptions were developed as part a Provisional Ecological Site project using historic soil survey manuscripts, available site descriptions, and low intensity field traverse sampling. Future work to validate the information is needed. This will include field activities to collect low, medium, and high-intensity sampling, soil correlations, and analysis of that data. A final field review, peer review, quality control, and quality assurance review of the will be needed to produce the final document.

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## Contributors

Tyson Hart

## Approval

Bryan Christensen, 9/21/2023

## 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	09/03/2021

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

## Indicators

1. **Number and extent of rills:**

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2. **Presence of water flow patterns:**

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3. **Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:**

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

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5. **Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies:**

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6. **Extent of wind scoured, blowouts and/or depositional areas:**

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

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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):**

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9. **Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness):**

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10. **Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:**

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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):**

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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:

Sub-dominant:

Other:

Additional:

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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):**
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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:**
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17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:**
-