

# Ecological site F142XB001NY

## Mucky Depression

Last updated: 5/22/2020  
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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): 142X–St. Lawrence-Champlain Plain

This MLRA is a glaciated area of low relief dominated by broad expanses of nearly level, sandy deltas and shallow lacustrine basins or plains punctuated by low hills of glacial till. Rivers and streams have cut relatively deep but narrow valleys across the plain. Elevation ranges from 80 to 1,000 feet, increasing gradually from the St. Lawrence River southward and from Lake Champlain to the east and west. Local relief generally is less than 30 feet, but glacial till ridges, till plains, and some outwash terraces rise 15 to 80 feet above the adjacent plains.

This area has been glaciated, and a thin mantle of till covers most of the bedrock. Extensive areas of sandy glacial outwash and eolian deposits also occur. Some glacial lake sediments have been deposited above glacial moraines. These deposits are thickest in the valleys and thinnest on the ridges and highlands. During the later stages of the Wisconsin glacial period, seawater entered the Champlain Valley and deposited marine sediments that were later covered by freshwater sediments. The marine deposits are unique to the area.

This area supports hardwoods. The beech-birch-sugar maple forest type is the dominant climax forest type on uplands. Associated with this type are basswood, American elm, maple species, white ash, black cherry, and white pine. The aspen-birch type, earlier in succession, is economically important. Such species as eastern hemlock, red maple, American elm, and spruce are on wet soils.

Some of the major wildlife species in this area are white-tailed deer, red fox, raccoon, beaver, woodchuck, muskrat, cottontail, ruffed grouse, and woodcock.

### LRU notes

Land Resource Unit (LRU): Mesic Soil Temperature Regime

The lower St. Lawrence and Champlain Valleys are characterized with soils in the mesic soil temperature regime (mean annual soil temperature between 46°F and 59°F) at 20 inches below the surface or at a densic, lithic, or paralithic contact, whichever is shallower.

The Mesic Soil Temperature Regime (STR) will have a longer growing season than the upper St. Lawrence and Champlain Valleys which are characterized with soils in the frigid STR. Species more tolerant of milder year round temperatures would also be evident in the mesic LRU.

### Classification relationships

NRCS:

Land Resource Region: R - Northeastern Forage and Forest Region

MLRA: 142X–St. Lawrence-Champlain Plain

LRU: B - Mesic Mean Annual Soil Temperature

## Ecological site concept

### Landform/Landscape Position:

The site occurs in depressions on till plains, lake plains and outwash plains. Slopes range from 0 to 2 percent.

### Soils:

The site consists of very deep, very poorly drained soils that have formed in highly decomposed woody and herbaceous organic materials. Thickness of organic material is  $\geq 16$  inches (40 cm).

### Vegetation

The reference community coincides with NY natural heritage communities: Rich hemlock-hardwood peat swamp, red maple-tamarack peat swamp, rich graminoid fen, and rich shrub fen depending on varying site properties. The reference also coincides with Vermont's red maple-black ash swamp, alder swamp, calcareous red maple-tamarack swamp, red maple black gum swamp, red maple-northern white cedar swamp, intermediate fen, and rich fen depending on varying site properties.

**Table 1. Dominant plant species**

Tree	(1) <i>Acer rubrum</i> (2) <i>Tsuga canadensis</i>
Shrub	(1) <i>Alnus incana ssp. rugosa</i> (2) <i>Cornus sericea</i>
Herbaceous	(1) <i>Symplocarpus foetidus</i> (2) <i>Carex</i>

## Physiographic features

The site occurs in depressions on till plains, lake plains and outwash plains. Slopes range from 0 to 2 percent.

**Table 2. Representative physiographic features**

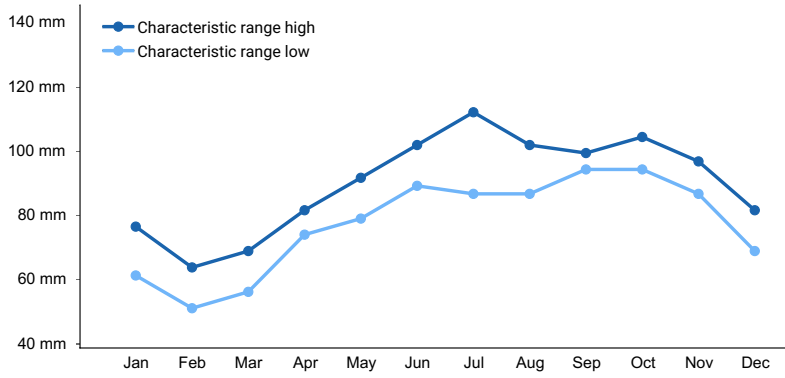
Landforms	(1) Depression (2) Swamp
Ponding frequency	None to frequent
Slope	0–2%

## Climatic features

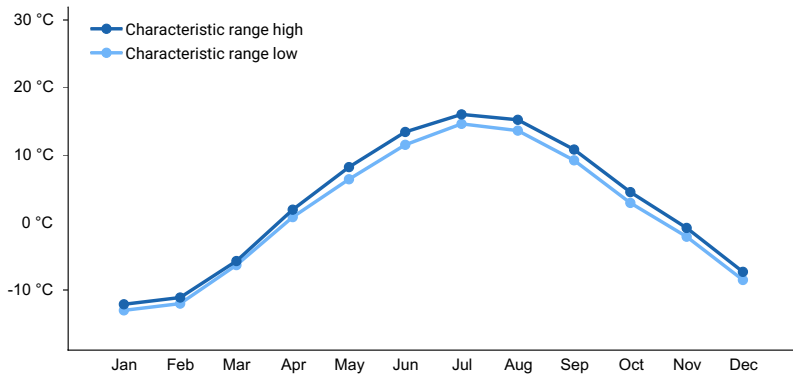
Mean annual precipitation is 39 inches. Frost free and freeze free days are 117 and 149, respectively.

**Table 3. Representative climatic features**

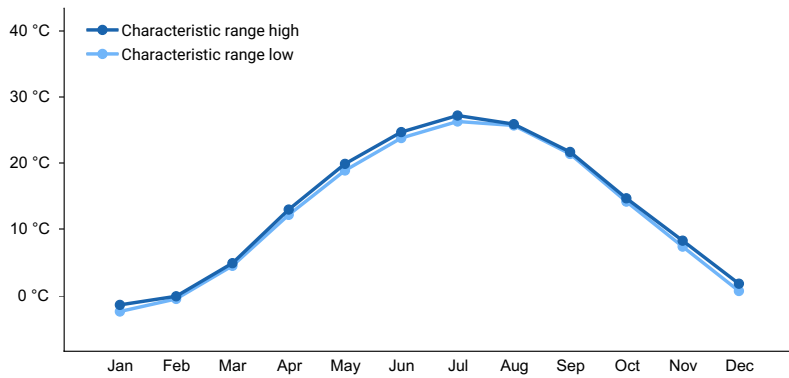
Frost-free period (characteristic range)	105-126 days
Freeze-free period (characteristic range)	138-158 days
Precipitation total (characteristic range)	914-1,067 mm
Frost-free period (actual range)	103-132 days
Freeze-free period (actual range)	133-164 days
Precipitation total (actual range)	813-1,092 mm
Frost-free period (average)	117 days
Freeze-free period (average)	149 days
Precipitation total (average)	991 mm



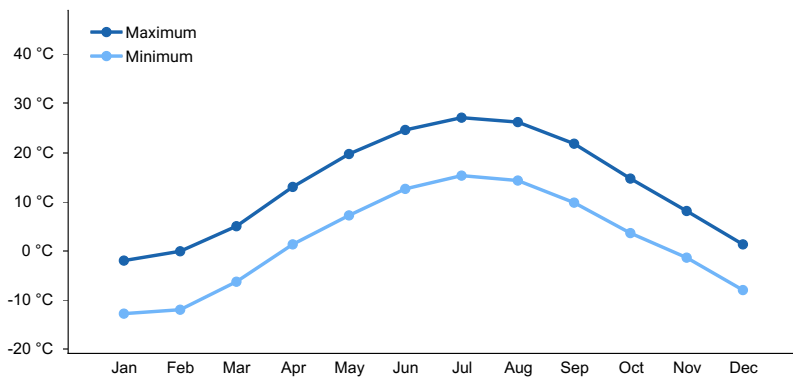
**Figure 1. Monthly precipitation range**



**Figure 2. Monthly minimum temperature range**



**Figure 3. Monthly maximum temperature range**



**Figure 4. Monthly average minimum and maximum temperature**

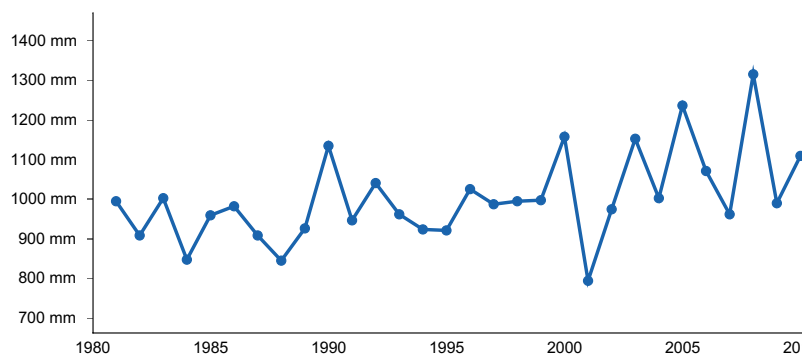


Figure 5. Annual precipitation pattern

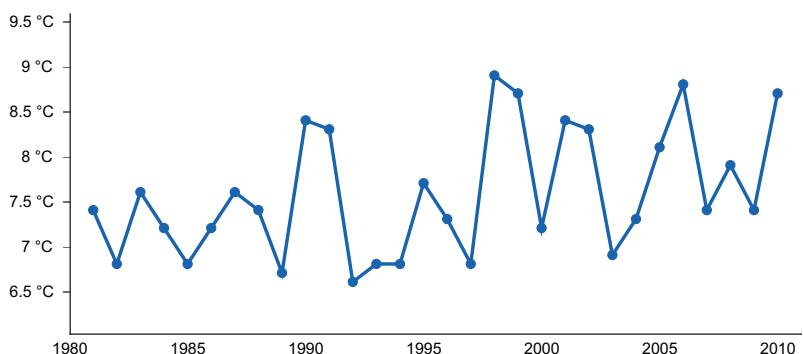


Figure 6. Annual average temperature pattern

### Climate stations used

- (1) WHITEHALL [USC00309389], Whitehall, NY
- (2) CORNWALL [USC00431580], Middlebury, VT
- (3) WILLSBORO 1 N [USC00309495], Willsboro, NY
- (4) WATERTOWN INTL AP [USW00094790], Dexter, NY
- (5) GOUVERNEUR 3 NW [USC00303346], Gouverneur, NY
- (6) WATERTOWN [USC00309000], Watertown, NY

### Influencing water features

Very poorly drained

Water is removed from the soil so slowly that free water remains at or very near the surface during much of the growing season. Internal free water occurrence is very shallow and persistent or permanent. Unless the soil is artificially drained, most mesophytic crops cannot be grown. The soils are commonly level or depressed and frequently ponded. In areas where rainfall is high or nearly continuous, slope gradients may be greater.

### Wetland description

Cowardin System of Wetland Classification:

Palustrine, Forested, Broad-Leaved Deciduous, Seasonally Saturated, Fresh, Circumneutral to Alkaline  
 or  
 Palustrine, Forested, Needle-Leaved Deciduous, Seasonally Saturated, Fresh, Circumneutral to Alkaline  
 or  
 Palustrine, Scrub-Shrub, Broad-Leaved Deciduous, Seasonally Saturated, Fresh, Circumneutral to Alkaline  
 or  
 Palustrine, Emergent, Persistent, Seasonally Saturated, Fresh, Circumneutral to Alkaline

### Soil features

The site consists of very deep, very poorly drained soils that have formed in highly decomposed woody and

herbaceous organic materials. Thickness of organic material is  $\geq 16$  inches (40 cm). Representative soils are Willette, Whallonsburg, Carlisle, Catden, Boots, Balch, and Adrian.

**Table 4. Representative soil features**

Parent material	(1) Organic material
Surface texture	(1) Muck (2) Peat
Drainage class	Very poorly drained

## Ecological dynamics

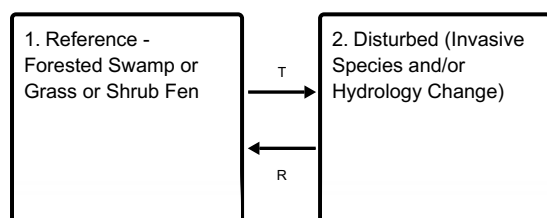
The site occurs within basins, depressions, swamps, seepage wetlands, and fens occurring within mineral rich soils. These various hydro-geologic settings are the primary determinant of water regimes, water chemistry, plant community structure and floristics, and groundwater recharge and discharge relationships (Golet et al. 1993). Consequently, the reference plant community of the site is variable.

The reference community coincides with NY natural heritage communities: Rich hemlock-hardwood peat swamp, red maple-tamarack peat swamp, rich graminoid fen, and rich shrub fen depending on varying site properties (Edinger et al. 2014). The reference also coincides with Vermont's red maple-black ash swamp, alder swamp, calcareous red maple-tamarack swamp, red maple black gum swamp, red maple-northern white cedar swamp, intermediate fen, and rich fen depending on varying site properties (Thompson and Sorenson 2000).

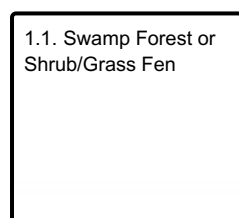
Natural disturbances affecting the balance of species include wind, ice damage, and beaver activity. Anthropogenic disturbances such as the construction of drainage ditches, roads, diversions, and dams can have significant effects on the plant communities.

## State and transition model

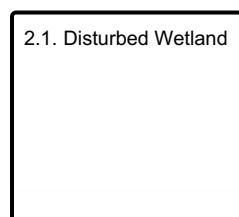
### Ecosystem states



### State 1 submodel, plant communities



### State 2 submodel, plant communities



## State 1

### Reference - Forested Swamp or Grass or Shrub Fen

Reference state. Minimally managed.

## Community 1.1

### Swamp Forest or Shrub/Grass Fen

Swamps typically found in depressions, seepage zones, with organic soils, predominately mucks that are influenced by higher pH and considered rich. These swamps range from nearly closed to mostly open (50 to 70%), with scattered shrubs, and a diverse ground layer of sedges, mosses, ferns, and forbs. Characteristic canopy trees include red maple (*Acer rubrum*) and black ash (*Fraxinus nigra*) and eastern hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*), which usually has at least 20% cover, and various hardwood and conifer associates. Characteristic understory species include sedges (*Carex* spp.), ferns, and a number of species intolerant to acidic conditions, such as skunk cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*) and alder-leaved buckthorn (*Rhamnus alnifolia*). (New York Natural Heritage Program. 2018. Online Conservation Guide for Rich Hemlock-Hardwood Peat Swamp. Available from: <http://guides.nynhp.org/guide.php?id=9911>. Accessed September 13th, 2018.) Other reference plant communities exist based on site variability. Examples include Red Maple – Tamarack Peat Swamp, Rich Graminoid Fen, Rich Hemlock-Hardwood Peat Swamp, and Rich Shrub Fen (Edinger et al 2014). The reference also coincides with Vermont's red maple-black ash swamp, alder swamp, calcareous red maple-tamarack swamp, red maple black gum swamp, red maple-northern white cedar swamp, intermediate fen, and rich fen depending on varying site properties (Thompson and Sorenson 2000). Some other characteristic species within the various plant communities recognized in Thompson and Sorenson 2000 include northern white cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*), tamarack (*Larix laricina*), swamp white oak (*Quercus bicolor*), speckled alder (*Alnus incana*), red-osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*), shrubby cinquefoil (*Potentilla fruticosa*), sweet gale (*Myrica gale*), inland sedge (*Carex interior*), horehound (*Equisetum arvense*), bog golden rod (*Solidago uliginosa*) and numerous species of moss (Thompson and Sorenson 2000).

## State 2

### Disturbed (Invasive Species and/or Hydrology Change)

Highly disturbed resulting from changes in hydrology and/or presence of invasive species.

## Community 2.1

### Disturbed Wetland

Structure and function impacted. Invasive species may be present.

## Transition T

### State 1 to 2

Establishment of invasive plants. Changes to hydrology (drainage, diversions, roads,) may also be a driver of change.

## Restoration pathway R

### State 2 to 1

Restoration of hydrology and/or invasive species control.

## Conservation practices

Invasive Plant Species Control
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## Additional community tables

## Inventory data references

Site Development and Testing Plan:

Future work to validate the vegetation information in this provisional ecological site description is needed. This will include field activities to collect low and medium intensity sampling and analysis of that data. Field reviews should be done by soil scientists and vegetation specialists. A final field review, peer review, quality control, and quality assurance reviews of the ESD will be needed to produce the final approved level document. Reviews of the project

plan are to be conducted by the Ecological Site Technical Team.

## Other references

Cowardin L. M., Carter V., Golet F. C., and LaRoe E.T. 1979. Classification of Wetlands and Deepwater Habitats of the United States. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 20402.

Edinger, G.J., Evans, D.J., Gebauer, S., Howard, T.G., Hunt, D.M., and A.M. Olivero, A.M. (eds.). 2014. Ecological Communities of New York State, Second Edition: A revised and expanded edition of Carol Reschke's Ecological Communities of New York State. New York Natural Heritage Program, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Albany, NY.

Golet, F.C., Calhoun, A.J.K., DeRagon, W.R., Lowry, D.J., and Gold, A.J. 1993. Ecology of red maple swamps in the glaciated northeast: A community profile. United States. Biological Report 12. US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Thompson E. H., Sorenson E. R. 2000. Wetland, Woodland, Wildland: A Guide to the Natural Communities of Vermont. Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife and The Nature Conservancy. University Press of New England, Hanover and London.

## Approval

Nels Barrett, 5/22/2020

## 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	12/08/2023
Approved by	Nels Barrett
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:**
- 
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:
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17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:**
-