

Ecological site F146XY033ME

Wet Loamy Flat

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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.

Ecological site concept

The site occurs on deep, loamy soils that are poorly- to very poorly-drained. They formed in relatively flat glacial outwash or lakebed sediments with slopes generally less than 8 percent. This site has a seasonally-high water table which affects plant species composition and community dynamics.

Balsam fir and red spruce dominate the overstory, with a productive understory of diverse wetland herbs, shrubs, and mosses. Logging, wind and insects, particularly the spruce budworm, drive plant community dynamics on this site. As overstory tree canopy is reduced, herbs and shrubs increase, followed by the re-establishment of thick stands of spruce and fir saplings. About twenty to sixty years following disturbance, a young mature spruce-fir forest emerges and understory species begin to re-establish in the community. After about sixty years without tree removal disturbance, many mature fir trees die out, resulting in a spruce-dominated forest. These mature stands include patches of younger stands resulting from small areas of blowdown or other disturbances.

Hurricane force winds and fire are rare on this site, but may result in entire stands reverting to the early herb/shrub phase.

When this site is cleared, drained, and cultivated, it transitions to a new state that produces mostly pasture, hay, or sometimes cropland.

The soil temperature regime is frigid and the soil moisture regime is aquic.

Associated sites

F146XY021ME	Marsh This site may grade into the Marsh site as soils become too wet for tree persistence.
F146XY034ME	Wet Sandy Bog This site may grade into the Wet Sandy Bog site as the soils become wetter and more acidic.

Similar sites

F146XY034ME	Wet Sandy Bog The Wet Sandy Bog site is similar in the understory, but has lower overall tree cover and black spruce as the dominant tree. It occurs on wetter, more acidic soils.
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Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	(1) <i>Abies balsamea</i> (2) <i>Picea rubens</i>
Shrub	Not specified
Herbaceous	Not specified

Physiographic features

This site occurs on relatively flat glacial outwash or lakebed sediments. Elevations range from nearly sea level up to 1750 feet. This site has a seasonally-high water table within 18 inches of the soil surface from about October to May in normal precipitation years.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Outwash plain (2) Lake plain (3) Outwash terrace
Flooding frequency	None
Ponding frequency	None
Elevation	3–533 m
Slope	0–8%
Water table depth	0–46 cm
Aspect	Aspect is not a significant factor

Climatic features

The climate of this site is characterized by cold, snowy winters, and cool summers. Annual precipitation ranges from 34 to 51 inches. Precipitation is nearly equally distributed throughout the year, with slightly more moisture falling in June-October. During winter months, and sometimes fall and spring, cold winds from the north bring severe weather events. The effects of a relatively short growing season are somewhat mitigated by long summer days associated with the high latitudes of the region. Occasionally high winds, microburst, or freezing rain events damage vegetation over small portions of the landscape.

Table 3. Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (average)	100 days
Freeze-free period (average)	129 days
Precipitation total (average)	1,016 mm

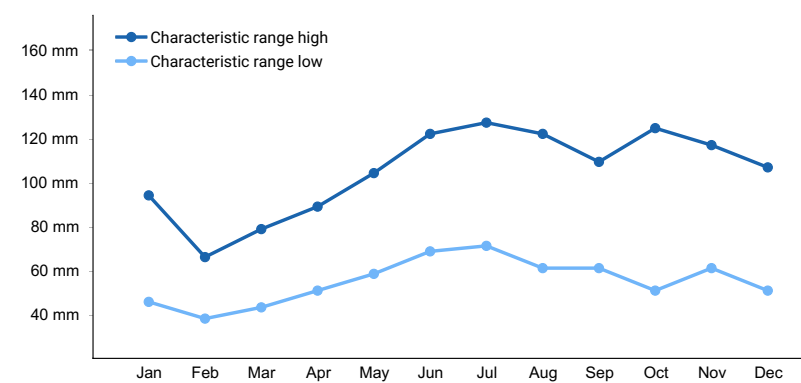


Figure 1. Monthly precipitation range

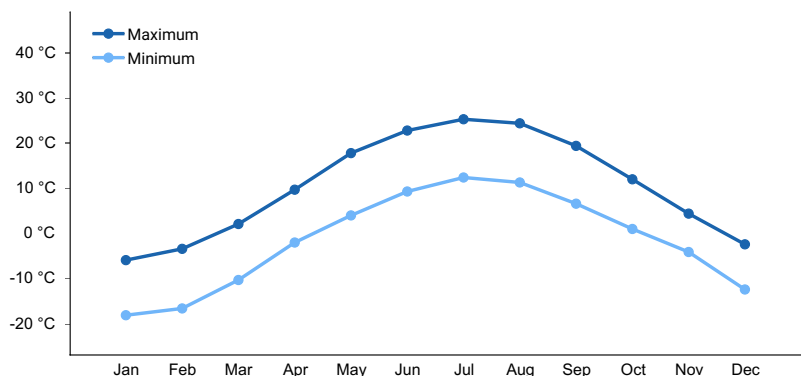


Figure 2. Monthly average minimum and maximum temperature

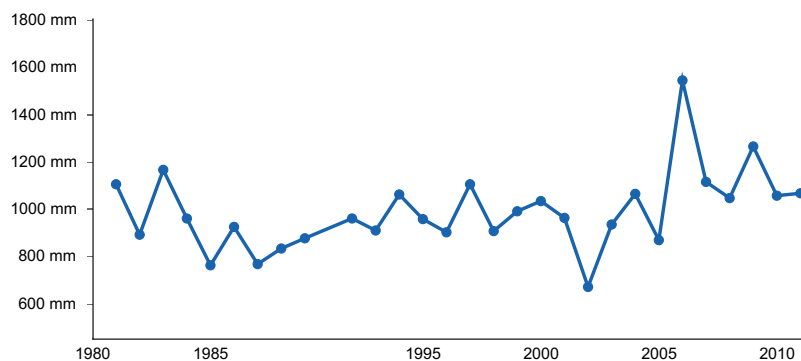


Figure 3. Annual precipitation pattern

Climate stations used

- (1) CARIBOU MUNI AP [USW00014607], Caribou, ME
- (2) ALLAGASH [USC00170200], Saint Francis, ME
- (3) BRIDGEWATER [USC00170833], Bridgewater, ME
- (4) FT KENT [USC00172878], Fort Kent, ME
- (5) HOULTON 5N [USC00173944], Houlton, ME
- (6) PRESQUE ISLE [USC00176937], Presque Isle, ME
- (7) HOULTON INTL AP [USW00014609], Houlton, ME

Influencing water features

This site receives significant run-in moisture from surrounding uplands, and consists of poorly- and very poorly-drained hydric soils. These wetland soils, combined with wetland hydrology, support wetland species in the overstory and understory. Though flooding and ponding do not typically occur on this site, an elevated water table from October to May influences vegetation composition and community dynamics.

Soil features

The soils of this site are deep, loamy and poorly- to very poorly-drained. They formed in relatively flat glacial outwash or lakebed sediments with slopes generally less than 8 percent. This site typically has few rock fragments throughout the soil profile, though some areas may have up to 40 percent gravel by volume. The soil temperature regime is frigid and the soil moisture regime is aquic.

Table 4. Representative soil features

Parent material	(1) Glaciofluvial deposits–slate (2) Glaciolacustrine deposits–siltstone
Surface texture	(1) Silt loam
Family particle size	(1) Loamy

Drainage class	Poorly drained to very poorly drained
Soil depth	165 cm
Surface fragment cover <=3"	0–1%
Surface fragment cover >3"	0–1%
Available water capacity (0-101.6cm)	5.08–29.21 cm
Calcium carbonate equivalent (0-101.6cm)	2%
Electrical conductivity (0-101.6cm)	0 mmhos/cm
Sodium adsorption ratio (0-101.6cm)	0
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (0-101.6cm)	4.5–7.3
Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (Depth not specified)	2–40%
Subsurface fragment volume >3" (Depth not specified)	0–3%

Ecological dynamics

The plant community is dominated by balsam fir and red spruce, with black spruce, northern white cedar, larch and red maple also common. Shrubs such as speckled alder, black huckleberry, mountain holly, lowbush blueberry and diverse heath shrubs are commonly found in the understory, along with diverse wetland herb and moss species.

Important drivers of plant community dynamics are logging, wind, and insects, particularly spruce budworm. As tree canopy is reduced over large areas or small patches due to one of these drivers, shrub and herbaceous productivity increases for a period of a few years before being overcome by thick stands of spruce and fir saplings. Twenty to sixty years following tree removal, spruce and fir saplings reach a young mature forest and understory species begin to re-establish and increase in the understory. After about sixty years without tree-removal disturbance, many mature balsam fir trees die, resulting in a red spruce-dominated stand. These mature stands include patches of younger stands resulting from small areas of blowdown or other disturbances.

Hurricane force winds and fire are rare on this site, but may result in entire stands reverting to the early herb/shrub phase.

When this site is cleared, drained, and cultivated, it transitions to a new state that produces mostly pasture, hay, or sometimes cropland.

State and transition model

Other references

Gawler, S. and A. Cutko. 2010. Natural Landscapes of Maine: A Guide to Natural Communities and Ecosystems. Maine Natural Areas Program, Maine Department of Conservation, Augusta, Maine.

Contributors

Jamin Johanson

Acknowledgments

Nick Butler and Carl Bickford provided significant input which greatly improved this ecological site concept.

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):**
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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:

13. **Amount of plant mortality and decadence (include which functional groups are expected to show mortality or decadence):**
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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):**
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16. **Potential invasive (including noxious) species (native and non-native). List species which BOTH characterize degraded states and have the potential to become a dominant or co-dominant species on the ecological site if their future establishment and growth is not actively controlled by management interventions. Species that become dominant for only one to several years (e.g., short-term response to drought or wildfire) are not invasive plants. Note that unlike other indicators, we are describing what is NOT expected in the reference state for the ecological site:**
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17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:**
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