

## Ecological site R027XY015NV STONY LOAM 4-8 P.Z.

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### 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.

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| Contact for lead author                     | State Rangeland Management Specialist |
| Date  | 06/20/2006                            |
| Approved by                                 | Kendra Moseley                        |
| Approval date                               |                                       |
| Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on | Annual Production                     |

### Indicators

- Number and extent of rills:** Rills are none to rare. A few can be expected on steeper slopes in areas subjected to summer convection storms or rapid spring snowmelt.
- Presence of water flow patterns:** Waterflow patterns are none to few and can be expected in areas subjected to summer convection storms. Flow patterns short and stable.
- Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:** Pedestals are rare with occurrence typically limited to area within waterflow patterns.
- Bare ground from Ecological Site Description or other studies (rock, litter, lichen, moss, plant canopy are not bare ground):** Bare Ground  $\pm 25\%$
- Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies:** None
- Extent of wind scoured, blowouts and/or depositional areas:** None

7. **Amount of litter movement (describe size and distance expected to travel):** Fine litter (foliage from grasses and annual & perennial forbs) expected to move distance of slope length during intense summer convection storms or rapid snowmelt events. Persistent litter (large woody material) will remain in place except during large rainfall events.
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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):** Soil stability values should be 2 to 4 on most soil textures found on this site. (This will be field tested.)
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9. **Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness):** Surface structure is typically fine to very fine granular. Soil surface colors are light and are typified by an ochric epipedon. Organic matter of the surface 2 to 3 inches is typically less than 1 percent dropping off quickly below. Organic matter content can be more or less depending on micro-topography.
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10. **Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:** Shrub canopy provide some protection from raindrop impact. Very high amounts of surface rock fragments increase runoff potential yet stabilize soil.
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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):** Compacted layers are none. Subsoil argillic horizons or duripans are not to be interpreted as compacted layers.
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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: Low-statured salt desert shrubs (shadscale & Bailey's greasewood) > associated shrubs
- Sub-dominant: Deep-rooted, cool season, perennial bunchgrasses > > warm season, rhizomatous perennial grasses > deep-rooted, cool season, perennial forbs > fibrous, shallow-rooted, cool season, annual and perennial forbs > shallow-rooted, warm season perennial bunchgrasses
- Other:
- Additional:
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13. **Amount of plant mortality and decadence (include which functional groups are expected to show mortality or decadence):** Dead branches within individual shrubs common and standing dead shrub canopy material may be as much as 30% of total woody canopy; mature bunchgrasses commonly have dead centers.
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14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth ( in):** Reference Plant Community: Fine litter between plant interspaces and under canopy (10-15%) and depth of litter is < ¼ inch.
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15. **Expected annual annual-production (this is TOTAL above-ground annual-production, not just forage annual-**

**production):** For normal or average growing season (February thru May)  $\pm 350$  lbs/ac; Favorable years  $\pm 500$  lbs/ac; Unfavorable years  $\pm 200$  lbs/ac

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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: Potential invaders include cheatgrass, halogeton, Russian thistle and annual mustards.
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17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:** All functional groups should reproduce in average and above average growing season years. Little growth or reproduction occurs during extended or extreme drought conditions.
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