

## Ecological site R027XY016NV SODIC DUNES

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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.

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- Presence of water flow patterns:** Water flow patterns none to rare.

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- Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:** Pedestals are rare with occurrence typically limited to areas affected by wind scouring.

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- Bare ground from Ecological Site Description or other studies (rock, litter, lichen, moss, plant canopy are not bare ground):** Bare Ground  $\pm$  70% depending on amount of surface rock fragments.

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- Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies:** None

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- Extent of wind scoured, blowouts and/or depositional areas:** Rare to slight

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- Amount of litter movement (describe size and distance expected to travel):** Fine litter (foliage from grasses and

annual & perennial forbs) is expected to move the distance of slope length during intense summer storms. 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 1 to 4 on the coarse surface soil textures found on this site. (To 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 single grain. Soil surface colors are light and the soils are typified by an ochric epipedon. Organic carbon of the surface 2 to 3 inches is less than 1 percent.
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10. **Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:** Perennial herbaceous plants (especially deep-rooted bunchgrasses [i.e., Indian ricegrass] slow runoff and increase infiltration. The sparse shrub canopy and associated litter break raindrop impact and provide a limited opportunity for snow catch and accumulation on site.
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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):** None
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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: Reference Plant Community: Low-statured salt desert shrubs. (By above ground production)
- Sub-dominant: Deep-rooted, cool season, perennial bunchgrasses > shallow-rooted, cool season, perennial grasses = deep-rooted, cool season, perennial forbs = fibrous, shallow-rooted, cool season, annual and perennial forbs. (By above ground production)
- 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 are common and standing dead shrub canopy material may be as much as 30% of total woody canopy; some of the mature bunchgrasses (to 35%) have dead centers.
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14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth ( in):** Under canopy and between plant interspaces (5-15%)
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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 (March thru May)  $\pm$  300 lbs/ac; Spring moisture significantly affects total production. Favorable years  $\pm$  450 lbs/ac and 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, red-stem filaree, annual mustards, and bassia.
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17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:** All functional groups should reproduce in average (or normal) and above average growing season years. Little growth or reproduction occurs in drought years.
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