

Ecological site R028AY018NV COARSE GRAVELLY LOAM 5-8 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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Date	06/22/2006
Approved by	
Approval date	
Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on	Annual Production

Indicators

- Number and extent of rills:** Rills are none to rare. A few short rills (<1m) can be expected on steeper slopes in areas subjected to summer convection storms or rapid spring snowmelt. These will begin to heal during the next growing season.

- Presence of water flow patterns:** Water flow patterns are none to rare. A few water flow patterns may be evident in areas subjected to summer convection storms. Where flow patterns are observed, they are short in length (<2m), meandering, and stable.

- Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:** Pedestals are none to rare with occurrence typically limited to areas within water flow patterns or after severe, extended drought with a corresponding die-off of vegetation. Terracettes are typically non-existent.

- Bare ground from Ecological Site Description or other studies (rock, litter, lichen, moss, plant canopy are not bare ground):** Bare Ground 40-50%

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

6. **Extent of wind scoured, blowouts and/or depositional areas:** Wind-scouring is rare but may occur after several years of severe drought or wet years where shrub and grass die-off has occurred.
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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 6 on most soil textures found on this site.
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9. **Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness):** Surface soil structure is typically fine to medium platy or subangular blocky. Soil surface colors are light grays and soils are typified by an ochric epipedon. Surface textures are gravelly sandy loams. Organic matter 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 bunchgrasses (Indian ricegrass) aid in infiltration and reduce runoff. Shrub canopy and associated litter provide some protection from raindrop impact and allow for snow capture on this 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):** Compacted layers are none. Platy or massive sub-surface horizons 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: Reference State: Deep-rooted, cool-season, perennial bunchgrasses (Indian ricegrass) = salt desert shrubs (shadscale, winterfat)
- Sub-dominant: associated shrubs > warm-season grasses > deep-rooted, perennial, forbs > fibrous, shallow-rooted, perennial forbs and annual forbs.
- 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 25% of total woody canopy; mature bunchgrasses commonly ($\pm 15\%$) have dead centers.
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14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth (in):** Between plant interspaces (15-25%) and depth ($< \frac{1}{4}$ in.)

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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 (thru May) ± 500 lbs/ac; Favorable Years ± 700 lbs/ac and unfavorable years ± 300 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 halogeton, Russian thistle, annual mustards, and cheatgrass.
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17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:** All functional groups should reproduce in above average and average growing season years. Little growth and reproduction occurs in extreme or extended drought periods.
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