

## Ecological site R029XY049NV SANDY LOAM 8-12 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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Approved by	Kendra Moseley
Approval date	
Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on	Annual Production

### Indicators

- 1. 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.
- 2. Presence of water flow patterns:** Water flow patterns are none to rare but can be expected in areas subjected to summer convection storms or rapid snowmelt.
- 3. Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:** Pedestals are rare. Occurrence is usually limited to areas of water flow patterns.
- 4. Bare ground from Ecological Site Description or other studies (rock, litter, lichen, moss, plant canopy are not bare ground):** Bare Ground  $\pm$  45 percent; surface rock fragments less than 25 percent; shrub canopy 15 to 25 percent.
- 5. Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies:** None.
- 6. Extent of wind scoured, blowouts and/or depositional areas:** Wind-scour areas are rare but may occur after severe wildfires.

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7. **Amount of litter movement (describe size and distance expected to travel):** Fine litter (foliage from grasses and annual and 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 3 to 6 on most soil textures found on this site. Areas of this site occurring on soils that have a physical crust will probably have stability values less than 3. (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 thin platy or subangular blocky. Soil surface colors are pale browns and soils are typified by an ochric epipedon. Organic matter of the surface 2 to 3 inches is typically 1 to 1.5 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:** Perennial herbaceous plants (especially deep-rooted bunchgrasses [i.e., Indian ricegrass] slow runoff and increase infiltration. Shrub canopy and associated litter break raindrop impact and provide 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):** Compacted layers are none. 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: Deep-rooted, cool season, perennial bunchgrasses (Indian ricegrass) > evergreen shrubs (Wyoming big sagebrush)
- Sub-dominant: associated shrubs> rhizomatous, perennial grasses>deep-rooted, cool season, perennial forbs=fibrous, shallow-rooted, cool season, annual and perennial forbs
- Other: warm-season bunchgrasses, evergreen trees
- 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 35 percent of total woody canopy; some of the mature bunchgrasses (less than 20 percent) have dead centers.
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14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth ( in):** Between plant interspaces 20-30% and litter depth is
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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 (through June)  $\pm$  800 lbs/ac; Favorable years  $\pm$  1100 lbs/ac and unfavorable years  $\pm$  500 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, annual mustards. Utah juniper and singleleaf pinyon may increase on this site.
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17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:** All functional groups should reproduce in average (or normal) and above average growing season years. Reduced growth and reproduction occur during drought years.
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