

Ecological site R030XC031NV SHALLOW LIMESTONE SLOPE 13+ 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	Sarah Quistberg
Approval date	
Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on	Annual Production

Indicators

- Number and extent of rills:** None, rock fragments armor the surface.

- Presence of water flow patterns:** A few may occur after summer convection storms, usually in the interspaces between shrubs.

- Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:** None

- Bare ground from Ecological Site Description or other studies (rock, litter, lichen, moss, plant canopy are not bare ground):** Typically less than 10 percent.

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

- Extent of wind scoured, blowouts and/or depositional areas:** None

- 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 (<10 ft) during intense summer convection storms or rapid snowmelt events. Persistent litter (large woody material) will remain in place except during large rainfall events.

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 surface 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):** Soil surface structure is weak coarse subangular blocky. Soil surface colors are dark grayish brown and soils are typified by a mollic epipedon. Organic matter of the surface 2 to 5 inches is 1 to 2 percent.
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10. **Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:** Dense shrub canopy and associated litter break raindrop impact and allow for snow capture on this site. Perennial deep-rooted grasses and forbs slow runoff and increase infiltration.
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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. Massive subsurface horizons should not be mistaken for compaction.
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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: Evergreen shrubs
- Sub-dominant: Deciduous shrubs > deep-rooted, cool-season perennial grasses > deep-rooted perennial forbs
- Other: Grass-like plants, annual forbs, 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 25% of total woody canopy. Mature bunchgrasses commonly have (~20%) have dead centers.
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14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth (in):** Total litter (in interspaces and under canopy) ranges from 15 to 30 percent and is less than 1/2 inch in depth.
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15. **Expected annual annual-production (this is TOTAL above-ground annual-production, not just forage annual-production):** For average growing season 1200 lbs/ac. Favorable years is 1500 lbs/ac and unfavorable years is 900 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 on this site include cheatgrass.

17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:** All functional groups should reproduce in average and above-average growing seasons. Less reproduction will occur in below-average precipitation years.
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