

Ecological site R035XC315AZ Sandy Upland 10-14" 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	Steve Barker
Approval date	
Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on	Annual Production

Indicators

1. **Number and extent of rills:** None

2. **Presence of water flow patterns:** None

3. **Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:** No pedestalling, but turf building of ¼ to ½ inch occurs on blue grama. Some mounding, 1 to 2 inches, on long-lived shrubs.

4. **Bare ground from Ecological Site Description or other studies (rock, litter, lichen, moss, plant canopy are not bare ground):** Bare ground is < or = 40 percent.

5. **Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies:** None

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

7. **Amount of litter movement (describe size and distance expected to travel):** No appreciable movement of litter.

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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):** A thin crust or “cap” will develop on the soil surface providing some protection against erosion. This crust is easily broken.
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9. **Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness):** The surface of soils associated with this site are single grained; loose. Color is reddish yellow (7.5YR 6/6) dry, yellowish red (7.5YR 4/6) moist.
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10. **Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:** Randomly scattered plants consisting of about 70 percent grasses, 25 percent shrubs and 5 percent forbs promote infiltration and reduce runoff. The average distance to the nearest perennial plant (fetch) is 2 inches, with the majority ranging from 0 to 3 inches, but occasionally as far as 5 inches.
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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: Grasses (60 to 75%) >> Shrubs (25 to 40%) > Forbs (5 to 10%).
- Sub-dominant:
- Other:
- Additional:
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13. **Amount of plant mortality and decadence (include which functional groups are expected to show mortality or decadence):** Due to the relatively droughty nature of these soils, drought, even short term, will result in plant mortality. In “normal” precipitation years mortality will be less than 10 percent.
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14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth (in):**
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15. **Expected annual annual-production (this is TOTAL above-ground annual-production, not just forage annual-production):** Average annual production on this site is expected to be 600 to 700 lbs/ac. in a year of average annual precipitation.
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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: Broom snakeweed (*Gutierrezia sarothrae*) is natural on the site, but disturbance may cause an increase in its abundance.

17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:** All plants native to this site are adapted to the climate and are capable of producing seeds, stolons, and/or rhizomes except during the most severe droughts.
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