

Ecological site F057XY019MN Dense Till Upland Hardwood Forest

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General information

Provisional. A provisional ecological site description has undergone quality control and quality assurance review. It contains a working state and transition model and enough information to identify the ecological site.

MLRA notes

Major Land Resource Area (MLRA): 057X–Northern Minnesota Gray Drift

The Northern Minnesota Gray Drift (57) is located within the Northern Lakes Forest and Forage Region. This area is entirely in north-central Minnesota and makes up about 9,785 square miles (Figure 1). The entire area is covered by Wisconsin-age glacial drift. The glacial deposits are from four major ice lobes—Des Moines, Rainy, Superior, and Wadena. The landscape developed through a series of glaciations and the subsequent retreating and wasting of the ice sheets, which resulted in a complex pattern of moraines, outwash plains, drumlins, lake plains and drainages. Lakes, ponds and marshes are common. The thickness of the glacial till ranges from 90 to 185 meters. Some areas of these deposits are overlain by outwash or lacustrine sediments. Some depressional areas have an accumulation of organic matter. The organic deposits are more than 2.5 meters thick in some areas. Elevation ranges from 300 to 500 meters across the area. (USDA-NRCS 2006)

The dominant soil orders in this MLRA are Alfisols, Entisols, and Histisols, with some Mollisols in the westernmost part of the area. The soils in the area have a frigid soil temperature regime; aquic or udic soil moisture regime, and mixed mineralogy. Their natural drainage class is related to landscape position. In general, the Alfisols formed in till on moraines, Entisols formed in outwash on moraines and outwash plains, and Histisols formed in organic material over outwash or till on moraines or outwash plains. (USDA-NRCS 2006)

Classification relationships

Major Land Resource Area (MLRA): Northern Minnesota Gray Drift (57) (USDA Handbook 296, 2006)

USFS Subregions: Northern Minnesota Drift & Lake Plain Section (212N); Chippewa Plains Subsection (212Na), Pine Moraines & Outwash Plains Subsections (212Nc), St. Louis Moraines Subsection (212Nb); Minnesota & NE Iowa Morainal Section (222M); Hardwood Hills Subsection (222Ma); Northern Superior Uplands Section (212L); Nashwauk Uplands Subsection (212Lc); Northern Minnesota & Ontario Peatlands Section (212M); Littlefork-Vermillion Uplands Subsection (212Ma) (Cleland et al. 2007).

US EPA Level IV Ecoregion: Itasca and St. Louis Moraines (50q); Chippewa Plains (50r); Nashwauk/Marcell Moraines and Uplands (50s); Alexandria Moraines and Detroit Lakes Outwash Plain (51j); McGrath Till Plain and Drumlins (51k); Wadena/Todd Drumlins and Osakis Till Plain (51l) (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2013)

Ecological site concept

Dense Till Upland Hardwood Forest are fairly limited within MLRA 57, and typically occur on summit, shoulders and backslope hillslope positions on drumlins and ground moraines. These sites typically exist on soils with dense till with root restricting characteristics within a depth of 150 centimeters on both loamy and sandy textures with generally less than 35 percent rock fragments within a depth of 100 centimeters.

Associated sites

F057XY021MN	Loamy Upland Moist Hardwood Forest These sites occur on summit, shoulders and backslope hillslope positions on moraines and till plains. These sites typically exist on soils with loamy textures of loam, sandy loam, sandy clay loam or fine sandy loam within a depth of 50 centimeters. The underlying parent material is generally medium textured till, sandy loam till or stratified materials with generally less than 35 percent rock fragments within a depth of 100 centimeters.
F057XY015MN	Wet Mixed Forest These sites occur on footslope and toeslope hillslope positions, drainageways surrounded by uplands or on the edge of uplands grading to very poorly drained peatland soils. These sites typically exist on loamy and occasionally sandy moraines and till plains. Parent material is calcareous fine to loamy textured glacial till, stratified material and occasionally sandy.

Similar sites

F057XY021MN	Loamy Upland Moist Hardwood Forest These sites occur on summit, shoulders and backslope hillslope positions on moraines and till plains. These sites typically exist on soils with loamy textures of loam, sandy loam, sandy clay loam or fine sandy loam within a depth of 50 centimeters. The underlying parent material is generally medium textured till, sandy loam till or stratified materials with generally less than 35 percent rock fragments within a depth of 100 centimeters.
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Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	(1) <i>Quercus rubra</i> (2) <i>Populus tremuloides</i>
Shrub	(1) <i>Prunus virginiana</i> (2) <i>Cornus alternifolia</i>
Herbaceous	(1) <i>Thalictrum</i> (2) <i>Uvularia grandiflora</i>

Physiographic features

Dense Till Upland Hardwood Forest are fairly limited within MLRA 57, and typically occur on summit, shoulders and backslope hillslope positions on drumlins and ground moraines.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Hillslope profile	(1) Summit (2) Shoulder (3) Backslope
Landforms	(1) Drumlin (2) Ground moraine
Runoff class	Low to high
Flooding frequency	None
Ponding frequency	None
Elevation	590–2,030 ft
Slope	0–15%
Water table depth	20–60 in
Aspect	Aspect is not a significant factor

Climatic features

In general, MLRA 57 has cold winters and warm summers. About 65 percent of the annual precipitation falls as rain during the 5-month growing season (May through September), and an additional 18 percent falls as snow. The

freeze-free period averages 150 days and ranges from 120 to 175 days.

Table 3. Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (characteristic range)	94-119 days
Freeze-free period (characteristic range)	123-140 days
Precipitation total (characteristic range)	26-28 in
Frost-free period (actual range)	89-125 days
Freeze-free period (actual range)	120-141 days
Precipitation total (actual range)	26-30 in
Frost-free period (average)	107 days
Freeze-free period (average)	131 days
Precipitation total (average)	28 in

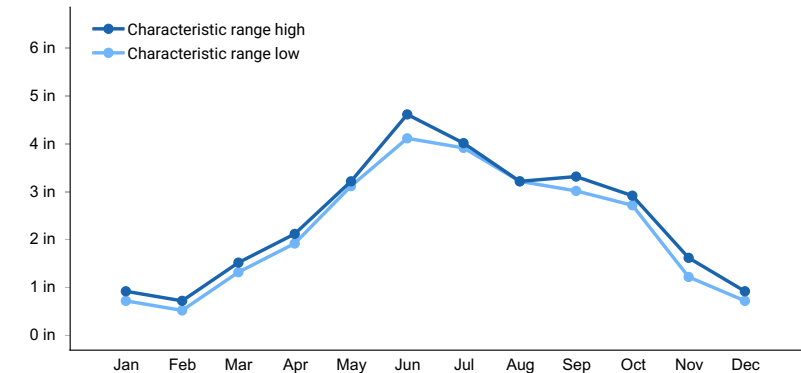


Figure 1. Monthly precipitation range

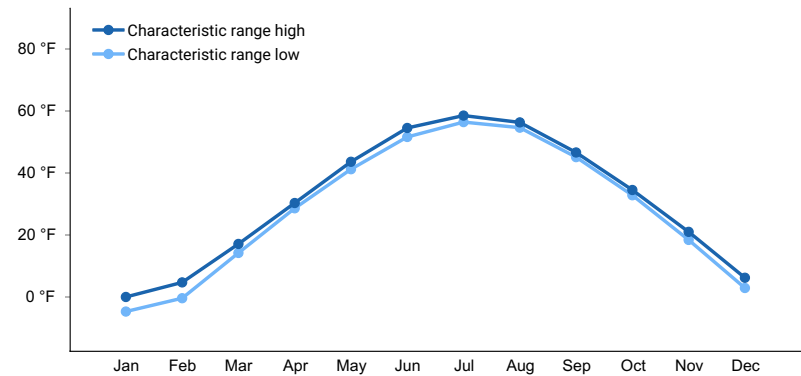


Figure 2. Monthly minimum temperature range

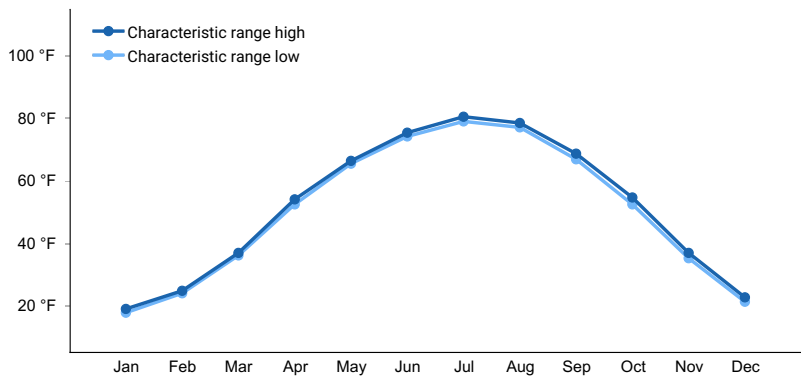


Figure 3. Monthly maximum temperature range

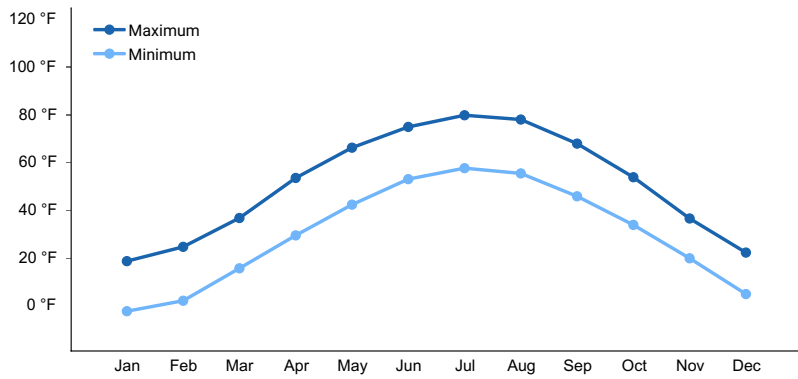


Figure 4. Monthly average minimum and maximum temperature

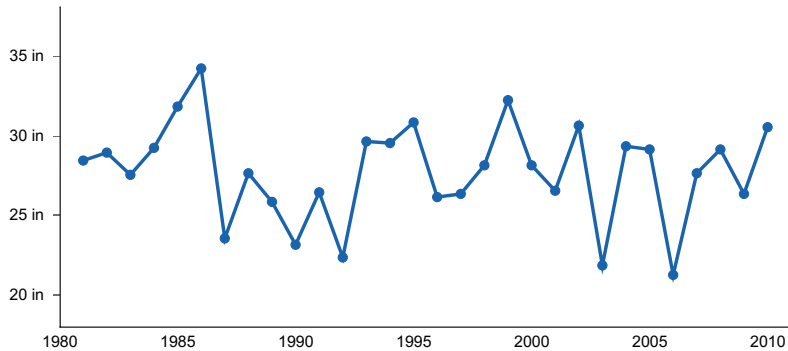


Figure 5. Annual precipitation pattern

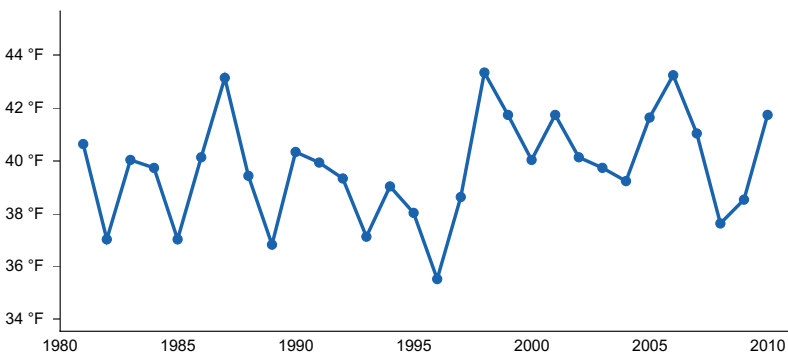


Figure 6. Annual average temperature pattern

Climate stations used

- (1) LONG PRAIRIE [USC00214861], Long Prairie, MN
- (2) NEW YORK MILLS [USC00215902], New York Mills, MN
- (3) ITASCA UNIV OF MINN [USC00214106], Park Rapids, MN
- (4) CASS LAKE [USC00211374], Cass Lake, MN
- (5) GULL LAKE DAM [USC00213411], Brainerd, MN

Influencing water features

None

Wetland description

Not Applicable

Soil features

This site is represented by the Blowers, Huntersville, Keewatin, Redeye, and Rockwood soil series. These sites

typically exist on soils with dense till with root restricting characteristics within a depth of 150 centimeters on both loamy and sandy textures with generally less than 35 percent rock fragments within a depth of 100 centimeters. Soils are moderately well to well drained with rust and gray redoximorphic features and or depth to seasonal water table from 50 to greater than 150 centimeters.

Table 4. Representative soil features

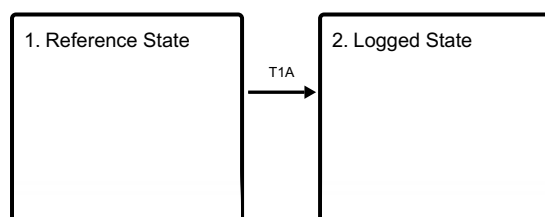
Parent material	(1) Till
Surface texture	(1) Loam (2) Sandy loam (3) Loamy sand
Drainage class	Somewhat poorly drained to moderately well drained
Permeability class	Moderately slow to moderate
Soil depth	80 in
Surface fragment cover <=3"	3–9%
Surface fragment cover >3"	0–6%
Available water capacity (0-60in)	4.1–6 in
Calcium carbonate equivalent (0-40in)	0–3%
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (0-40in)	5.5–7.1
Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (0-40in)	5–7%
Subsurface fragment volume >3" (0-40in)	0–2%

Ecological dynamics

Plant communities are typically dominated by basswood, northern red oak and sugar maple. Minor canopy species may include green ash, paper birch, red maple, bur oak, and quaking aspen. Important shrub species include chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*), pagoda dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*), prickly gooseberry (*Ribes cynosbati*), and beaked hazel (*Corylus cornuta*). Common ground species include early meadow-rue (*Thalictrum dioicum*), lady fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*), large-flowered bellwort (*Uvularia grandiflora*), Clayton's sweet cicely (*Osmorhiza claytonii*), Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*), large-leaved aster (*Eurybia macrophylla*), wild sarsaparilla (*Aralia nudicaulis*), zigzag goldenrod (*Solidago flexicaulis*), hog peanut (*Amphicarpaea bracteata*), and rugulose and yellow violets (*Viola canadensis/pubescens* group).

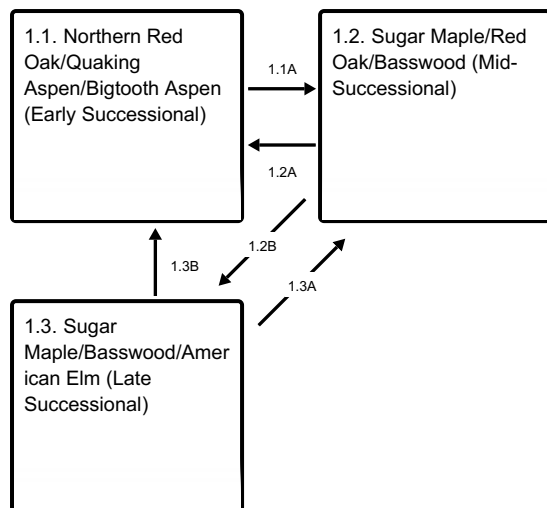
State and transition model

Ecosystem states



T1A - Mechanical removal of tree species for timber harvest.

State 1 submodel, plant communities



1.1A - Lack of fire/blow downs (35-95 years)

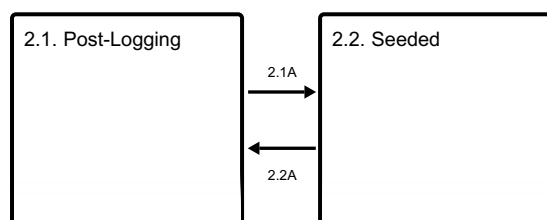
1.2A - Increased low intensity fire frequency and blow downs (<35 years)

1.2B - Lack of fire/blow downs (95-195 years)

1.3B - Stand replacing fire

1.3A - Increased low intensity fire frequency and blow downs (<95 years)

State 2 submodel, plant communities



2.1A - Planting of desired species and herbicide use.

2.2A - Harvest of tree species upon desired growth stage.

State 1

Reference State

The reference state of the Dense Till Upland Hardwood Forest ecological site consists of three forest communities in varying successional levels.

Community 1.1

Northern Red Oak/Quaking Aspen/Bigtooth Aspen (Early Successional)

Young forests recovering from fire or wind, notable quaking aspen dominance (0-35 years).

Dominant plant species

- northern red oak (*Quercus rubra*), tree
- quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), tree
- bigtooth aspen (*Populus grandidentata*), tree
- chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*), shrub

Community 1.2

Sugar Maple/Red Oak/Basswood (Mid-Successional)

A transitional period marked with a decline in northern red oak/aspen and stand replacement. Along with development of understory which includes bur oak and white pine (35-95 years).

Dominant plant species

- sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), tree
- northern red oak (*Quercus rubra*), tree
- basswood (*Tilia*), tree
- American elm (*Ulmus americana*), tree

Community 1.3

Sugar Maple/Basswood/American Elm (Late Successional)

Mature forest with prominent deciduous canopy (95+ years).

Dominant plant species

- sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), tree
- basswood (*Tilia*), tree
- American elm (*Ulmus americana*), tree
- northern red oak (*Quercus rubra*), tree
- bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*), tree
- eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*), tree

Pathway 1.1A

Community 1.1 to 1.2

Lack of fire/blow downs (35-95 years)

Pathway 1.2A

Community 1.2 to 1.1

Increased low intensity fire frequency and blow downs (<35 years)

Pathway 1.2B

Community 1.2 to 1.3

Lack of fire/blow downs (95+ years)

Pathway 1.3B

Community 1.3 to 1.1

Stand replacing fire

Pathway 1.3A

Community 1.3 to 1.2

Increased low intensity fire frequency and blow downs (<95 years)

State 2

Logged State

Removal of tree species for timber harvest leaves an open canopy with very disturbed understory vegetation. Shrubs dominate immediately post logging and often prevent tree's from re-establishing quickly.

Community 2.1

Post-Logging

Removal of tree species for timber harvest leaves an open canopy with very disturbed understory vegetation. Shrubs dominate immediately post logging and often prevent tree's from re-establishing quickly.

Community 2.2

Seeded

Reseeded to a forested site with desired timber species.

Pathway 2.1A

Community 2.1 to 2.2

Planting of desired species for future timber harvest and herbicide use to prevent shrubs from dominating.

Pathway 2.2A

Community 2.2 to 2.1

Harvest of tree species upon desired growth stage.

Transition T1A

State 1 to 2

Mechanical removal of tree species for timber harvest.

Additional community tables

Inventory data references

Information presented was derived from Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Field Guide to the Native Plant Communities of Minnesota, USDA-NRCS soil survey information, and USDA Plants Database.

Relationship to Other Established Classifications:

MN DNR Native Plant Community (MN DNR, 2003); the reference community of this Provisional Ecological Site is most similar to:

MHc36 Central Mesic Hardwood Forest

Other references

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USDA, NRCS. 2018. The PLANTS Database (<http://plants.usda.gov>, 27 March 2018). National Plant Data Team, Greensboro, NC 27401-4901 USA.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. 2013. Level III and IV ecoregions of the continental United States: Corvallis, Oregon, U.S. EPA, National Health and Environmental Effects Research Laboratory, map

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Approval

Suzanne Mayne-Kinney, 10/03/2023

Acknowledgments

MLRA 57 technical team completed in 2022.

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.

Author(s)/participant(s)	
Contact for lead author	
Date	05/12/2025
Approved by	Suzanne Mayne-Kinney
Approval date	
Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on	Annual Production

Indicators

1. **Number and extent of rills:**

2. **Presence of water flow patterns:**

3. **Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:**

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

5. **Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies:**

6. **Extent of wind scoured, blowouts and/or depositional areas:**
-
7. **Amount of litter movement (describe size and distance expected to travel):**
-
8. **Soil surface (top few mm) resistance to erosion (stability values are averages - most sites will show a range of values):**
-
9. **Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness):**
-
10. **Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:**
-
11. **Presence and thickness of compaction layer (usually none; describe soil profile features which may be mistaken for compaction on this site):**
-
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:
- Sub-dominant:
- Other:
- Additional:
-
13. **Amount of plant mortality and decadence (include which functional groups are expected to show mortality or decadence):**
-
14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth (in):**
-
15. **Expected annual annual-production (this is TOTAL above-ground annual-production, not just forage annual-production):**
-
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:

17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:**
