USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Ecological site R058AE003MT
Sandy (Sy) RRU 58A-E 10-14" p.z.

Accessed: 05/11/2025

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.

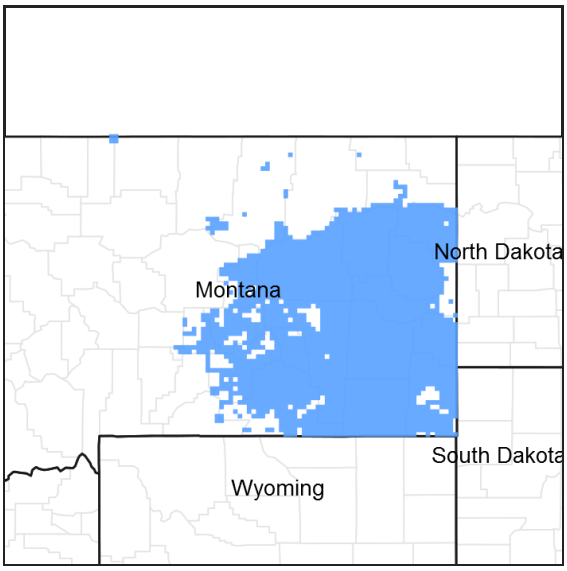


Figure 1. Mapped extent

Areas shown in blue indicate the maximum mapped extent of this ecological site. Other ecological sites likely occur within the highlighted areas. It is also possible for this ecological site to occur outside of highlighted areas if detailed soil survey has not been completed or recently updated.

Associated sites

R058AY001MT	**Loamy (Lo) 10-14 P.Z.**
R058AE006MT	**Sandy-Steep (SyStp) RRU 58A-E 10-14" p.z.**
R058AE018MT	**Sands (Sa) RRU 58A-E 10-14" p.z.**

Similar sites

R058AE018MT	**Sands (Sa) RRU 58A-E 10-14" p.z.** The Sand and Silty sites occupy similar landscape positions, differing mainly by texture.
R058AY001MT	**Loamy (Lo) 10-14 P.Z.** The Sand and Silty sites occupy similar landscape positions, differing mainly by texture.
R058AE006MT	**Sandy-Steep (SyStp) RRU 58A-E 10-14" p.z.** The Sandy-Steep site differs mainly by being on steeper slopes (>15%).

Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	Not specified
Shrub	Not specified

Herbaceous	Not specified

Physiographic features

This ecological site occurs on nearly level to strongly sloping sedimentary plains, hills, terraces, and fans. The slopes range from 0-15%, but are mainly less than 8%. This site occurs on all exposures. Aspect is not significant

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Plain (2) Alluvial fan (3) Terrace
Flooding frequency	None
Ponding frequency	None
Elevation	1,900–3,500 ft
Slope	0–15%
Water table depth	60 in
Aspect	Aspect is not a significant factor

Climatic features

MLRAs 58A and 60B are considered to have a continental climate characterized by cold winters, hot summers, low humidity, light rainfall, and much sunshine. Extremes in temperature are typical. The climate is the result of this MLRA's location in the geographic center of North America. There are few natural barriers on the northern Great Plains and the winds move freely across the plains and account for rapid changes in temperature. Seasonal precipitation is often limiting for plant growth. Annual fluctuations in species composition and total production are typical depending on the amount and timing of rainfall.
Temperatures can be very extreme in this part of Montana. Summer daytime temperatures are typically quite warm, generally averaging in the mid to upper 80º's F for July and August. Summertime temperatures will typically reach in the 100º's F at some point during the summer, and can reach 90º F any month between May and September. Conversely, winter temperatures can be cold, averaging in the mid teens to mid 20º's F for December and January. There will typically be several days of below zero temperatures each winter. It is not uncommon for temperatures to reach 30–40º F below zero, or even colder, most any winter.

Spring can be windy throughout these MLRA's, with winds averaging over 10 mph about 15 percent of the time. Speeds of 50 mph or stronger can occasionally occur as a weather system crosses this part of Montana.

MLRAs 58AE and 60BE have been divided into two distinct precipitation zones for the purpose of developing ecological site descriptions: 10–14" Mean Annual Precipitation (MAP) and 15–19" MAP.

10–14 inch zone:

The majority of the rangeland in these areas falls within the 11 to 13 inch range. During an average year, 70 to 75 percent of the annual precipitation falls between April and September, which are the primary growing season months.

Snowfall is not heavy in the area, averaging 28 total inches in the 10-14 inch MAP (Yellowstone Valley). Heavy snowfall occurs infrequently, usually late in the winter or early spring. Snow cover is typically 1 to 3 inches.

The frost free (32º F.) season averages about 105 to 145 days each year in the uplands, to nearly 170 days along the Yellowstone River Valley.

For local climate station information, refer to http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/cgibin/state.pl?state=mt.

Table 3. Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (average)	145 days
Freeze-free period (average)	170 days
Precipitation total (average)	14 in

Influencing water features

None

Soil features

These soils are coarse to fine sandy loams over 20 inches deep. Effective rooting depth is greater than 20 inches. There are no significant limitations to plant growth. These soils are very susceptible to wind erosion. Water erosion is typically a minor limitation.

Table 4. Representative soil features

Surface texture	(1) Sandy loam (2) Fine sandy loam (3) Coarse sandy loam
Family particle size	(1) Sandy
Drainage class	Well drained
Permeability class	Moderately rapid to rapid
Soil depth	20–60 in
Available water capacity (0-40in)	5–8 in
Calcium carbonate equivalent (0-40in)	0–5%
Electrical conductivity (0-40in)	0–2 mmhos/cm
Sodium adsorption ratio (0-40in)	0–4
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (0-40in)	7.4–8.4

Ecological dynamics

This site developed under Northern Great Plains climatic conditions, which included the natural influence of large herbivores and occasional fire. The plant community upon which interpretations are primarily based is the Historic Climax Plant Community (HCPC). This community is given as a reference to understand the original potential of this site, and is not always considered to be the management goal for every acre of rangeland. The following descriptions should enable the landowner or manager to better understand which plant communities occupy their land, and assist with setting goals for vegetation management. It can also be useful to understand the environmental and economic values of each plant community.

This site is considered highly resilient to disturbance as it has only minor soil limitations for plant growth. Changes may occur to the Historic Climax Plant Community due to management actions and/or climatic conditions. Under continued adverse impacts, a moderate decline in vegetative vigor and composition will occur. Under favorable vegetative management treatments the site can more readily return to the Historic Climax Plant Community.

Continual adverse impacts to this site over a period of years will result in the decrease of the taller, more palatable species such as prairie sandreed and little bluestem. These plants will be replaced by needleandthread, sand

dropseed, threadleaf sedge, blue grama, non-palatable forbs, and yucca. Continued deterioration results in increased amounts of red threeawn, green and fringed sagewort, and cactus.

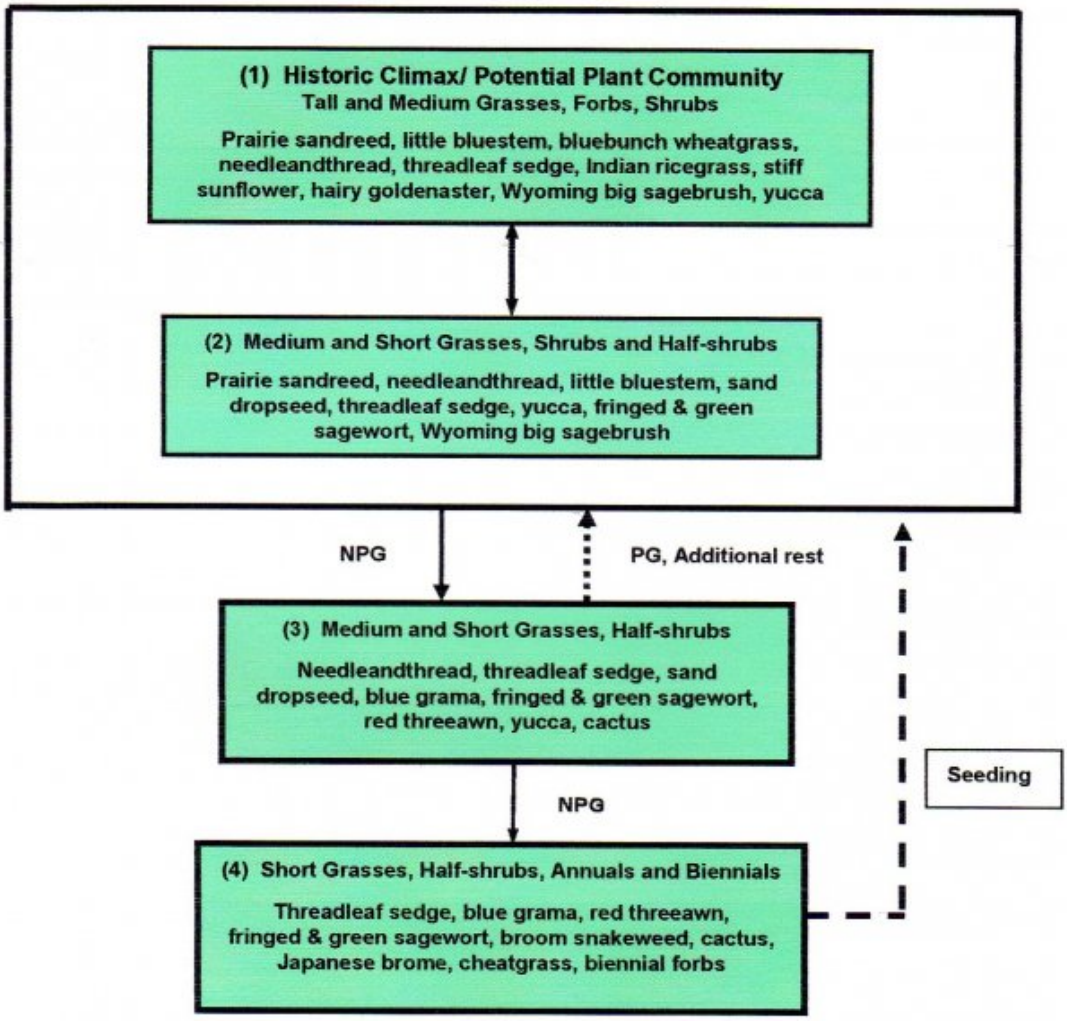
Plants that are not a part of the climax community that are most likely to invade are cheatgrass, Japanese brome, six-weeks fescue, false buffalograss, broom snakeweed, thistles, leafy spurge, and knapweeds.

State and transition model

MLRA: 58A – Sedimentary Plains, East
MLRA: 60B – Pierre Shale Plains, East
R058AE003MT, R060BE574MT

10b. Plant Communities and Transitional Pathways (State and Transition Model): Transitions in plant community composition occur along a gradient that is not linear. Many processes are involved in the changes from one community to another. Changes in climate, elevation, soils, landform, fire patterns and frequency, and grazing all play a role in determining which of the plant communities will be expressed. The following model outlines some of the various plant communities that may occur on this site and provides a diagram of the relationship between plant community and type of use or disturbance.

Plant Communities and Transitional Pathways (diagram)



Smaller boxes within a larger box indicate that these communities will normally shift among themselves with slight variations in precipitation and other disturbances. Moving outside the larger box indicates the community has crossed a threshold (heavier line) and will require intensive treatment to return to Community 1 or 2. Dotted lines indicate a reduced probability for success.

NOTE: Not all species present in the community are listed in this table. Species listed are representative of the plant functional groups that occur in the community.

PG = Prescribed Grazing: Use of a planned grazing strategy to balance animal forage demand with available forage resources. Timing, duration, and frequency of grazing are controlled and some type of grazing rotation is applied to allow for plant recovery following grazing.

NPG = Non-Prescribed Grazing: Grazing which has taken place that does not control the factors as listed above, or animal forage demand is higher than the available forage supply.

State 1
Plant Community 1: Tall and Medium Grasses/ Forbs/ Shrubs

Community 1.1

Plant Community 1: Tall and Medium Grasses/ Forbs/ Shrubs

This is the interpretive plant community and is considered to be the Historic Climax Plant Community (HCPC) for this site. This plant community contains a high diversity of tall and medium height grasses (prairie sandreed, little bluestem, big bluestem, bluebunch wheatgrass (western part of RRU), needleandthread, and Indian ricegrass), and short grasses and sedges (sand dropseed, plains muhly, sun sedge, prairie junegrass, threadleaf sedge, and blue grama). There are abundant forbs, shrubs, and half-shrubs which occur in small percentages. This plant community is well adapted to the Northern Great Plains climatic conditions. The diversity in plant species and the presence of tall, deep-rooted perennial grasses allows for high drought tolerance. Individual species can vary greatly in production depending on growing conditions (timing and amount of precipitation and temperature). Plants on this site have strong, healthy root systems that allow production to increase significantly with favorable precipitation. Abundant plant litter is available for soil building and moisture retention. Plant litter is properly distributed with very little movement off-site and natural plant mortality is very low. This plant community provides for soil stability and a functioning hydrologic cycle.

Table 5. Annual production by plant type

Plant Type	Low (Lb/Acre)	Representative Value (Lb/Acre)	High (Lb/Acre)
Grass/Grasslike	800	1280	1840
Forb	150	240	345
Shrub/Vine	50	80	115
Total	**1000**	**1600**	**2300**

Table 6. Ground cover

Tree foliar cover	0%
Shrub/vine/liana foliar cover	1-5%
Grass/grasslike foliar cover	70-85%
Forb foliar cover	5-10%
Non-vascular plants	0%
Biological crusts	0-1%
Litter	0%
Surface fragments >0.25" and <=3"	0%
Surface fragments >3"	0%
Bedrock	0%
Water	0%
Bare ground	0%

Table 7. Soil surface cover

Tree basal cover	0%
Shrub/vine/liana basal cover	1-2%
Grass/grasslike basal cover	10-15%
Forb basal cover	1-4%
Non-vascular plants	0%
Biological crusts	1-2%
Litter	40-50%
Surface fragments >0.25" and <=3"	0-4%
Surface fragments >3"	0%

Bedrock	0%
Water	0%
Bare ground	20-25%

Table 8. Canopy structure (% cover)

Height Above Ground (Ft)	Tree	Shrub/Vine	Grass/ Grasslike	Forb
<0.5	–	–	–	–
>0.5 <= 1	–	–	–	–
>1 <= 2	–	1-5%	70-85%	5-10%
>2 <= 4.5	–	–	–	–
>4.5 <= 13	–	–	–	–
>13 <= 40	–	–	–	–
>40 <= 80	–	–	–	–
>80 <= 120	–	–	–	–
>120	–	–	–	–

State 2
Plant Community 2: Medium and Short Grasses/ Shrubs and Half-shrubs

Community 2.1
Plant Community 2: Medium and Short Grasses/ Shrubs and Half-shrubs

Slight disturbances, minor climate shifts or slight variations in soils and/or topography can produce a plant community where prairie sandreed and needleandthread are co-dominant. Medium height grasses, short grasses and non-palatable forbs tend to become a slightly larger part of the plant community. Some of these other species include thickspike or wheatgrass, threadleaf sedge, sand dropseed, and fringed and green sagewort. Yucca and Wyoming big sagebrush can become slightly more prevalent. Grass biomass production and litter become reduced on the site as the taller grasses disappear, increasing evaporation and reducing moisture retention. Additional open space in the community can result in undesirable invader species. This plant community provides for moderate soil stability.

State 3
Plant Community 3: Medium and Short Grasses/ Half-shrubs

Community 3.1
Plant Community 3: Medium and Short Grasses/ Half-shrubs

With continued heavy disturbance the plant community tends to become dominated by needleandthread and short grasses such as threadleaf sedge, sand dropseed and blue grama. Forbs and half-shrubs, including fringed and green sagewort, tend to make up a larger part of the plant community. Less desirable species such as red threeawn, plains pricklypear, brittle cactus, and yucca begin to become common. Plant Community 3 is less productive than Plant Community 1 or 2. The reduction in plant litter and shorter plant heights result in higher soil temperatures, poor water infiltration rates, and high evapotranspiration. This community can respond positively to improved grazing management but it will take additional inputs to move it towards a community similar in production and composition to that of Plant Community 1 or 2.

State 4
Plant Community 4: Short Grasses/ Half-shrubs/ Annuals and Biennials

Community 4.1

Plant Community 4: Short Grasses/ Half-shrubs/ Annuals and Biennials

This community is primarily composed of short grasses and sedges such as threadleaf sedge and blue grama. Red threeawn and green and fringed sagewort typically become major components of the community. A remnant of the potential plant community may remain, especially needleandthread, but in much smaller proportions. Species such as cheatgrass, six-weeks fescue, false buffalograss, annual and biennial forbs, broom snakeweed, plains pricklypear, and brittle cactus also become a common part of the community. Plant Community 4 is substantially less productive than Plant Community 1 or 2. The lack of litter and short plant heights result in higher soil temperatures, poor water infiltration rates, and high evaporation, which gives threadleaf sedge or blue grama a competitive advantage over the cool season tall and medium grasses. This community has lost many of the attributes of a healthy rangeland, including good infiltration, minimal erosion and runoff, nutrient cycling and energy flow. Annual species are often aggressive and competitive with seedlings of perennial plants. Significant economic inputs and time would be required to move this community toward a higher successional stage and a more productive plant community. Seeding is necessary to restore desirable native perennial species.

Additional community tables

Table 9. Community 1.1 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production (Lb/Acre)	Foliar Cover (%)
Grass/Grasslike					
1	**Native grasses and sedges**			790–1610	
	bluebunch wheatgrass	PSSP6	*Pseudoroegneria spicata*	50–1380	–
	prairie sandreed	CALO	*Calamovilfa longifolia*	200–805	–
	little bluestem	SCSCS	*Schizachyrium scoparium var. scoparium*	150–574	–
	needle and thread	HECOC8	*Hesperostipa comata ssp. comata*	100–460	–
	big bluestem	ANGE	*Andropogon gerardii*	0–230	–
	threadleaf sedge	CAFI	*Carex filifolia*	50–230	–
	sun sedge	CAINH2	*Carex inops ssp. heliophila*	0–230	–
	tufted wheatgrass	ELMA7	*Elymus macrourus*	10–115	–
	plains muhly	MUCU3	*Muhlenbergia cuspidata*	10–115	–
	western wheatgrass	PASM	*Pascopyrum smithii*	10–115	–
	Indian ricegrass	ACHY	*Achnatherum hymenoides*	0–115	–
	sand dropseed	SPCR	*Sporobolus cryptandrus*	0–115	–
2	**Native grasses and sedges**			10–230	
	Grass, perennial	2GP	*Grass, perennial*	10–115	–
	blue grama	BOGR2	*Bouteloua gracilis*	10–115	–
	needleleaf sedge	CADU6	*Carex duriuscula*	10–115	–
	prairie Junegrass	KOMA	*Koeleria macrantha*	10–115	–
	green needlegrass	NAVI4	*Nassella viridula*	10–115	–
	Sandberg bluegrass	POSE	*Poa secunda*	10–115	–
3	**Native grasses**			1–2	
	Fendler threeawn	ARPUL	*Aristida purpurea var. longiseta*	1–2	–
Forb					
4	**Native forbs**			150–345	
	Forb, perennial	2FP	*Forb, perennial*	10–115	–
	common yarrow	ACMI2	*Achillea millefolium*	10–115	–
	tarragon	ARDR4	*Artemisia dracunculus*	10–115	–

	aster	ASTER	*Aster*	10–115	–
	purple prairie clover	DAPU5	*Dalea purpurea*	10–115	–
	blacksamson echinacea	ECAN2	*Echinacea angustifolia*	10–115	–
	sanddune wallflower	ERCAC	*Erysimum capitatum var. capitatum*	10–115	–
	buckwheat	ERIOG	*Eriogonum*	10–115	–
	stiff sunflower	HEPA19	*Helianthus pauciflorus*	10–115	–
	hairy false goldenaster	HEVI4	*Heterotheca villosa*	10–115	–
	dotted blazing star	LIPU	*Liatris punctata*	10–115	–
	spiny phlox	PHHO	*Phlox hoodii*	10–115	–
	white milkwort	POAL4	*Polygala alba*	10–115	–
	scurfpea	PSORA2	*Psoralidium*	10–115	–
	upright prairie coneflower	RACO3	*Ratibida columnifera*	10–115	–
	Missouri goldenrod	SOMI2	*Solidago missouriensis*	10–115	–
	scarlet globemallow	SPCO	*Sphaeralcea coccinea*	10–115	–
	prairie thermopsis	THRH	*Thermopsis rhombifolia*	10–115	–
5	**Native forbs (toxic properties)**			1–2	
	deathcamas	ZIGAD	*Zigadenus*	1–2	–
Shrub/Vine					
6	**Native shrubs and half-shrubs**			50–115	
	Shrub, broadleaf	2SB	*Shrub, broadleaf*	10–40	–
	silver sagebrush	ARCA13	*Artemisia cana*	10–40	–
	prairie sagewort	ARFR4	*Artemisia frigida*	10–40	–
	Wyoming big sagebrush	ARTRW8	*Artemisia tridentata ssp. wyomingensis*	10–40	–
	winterfat	KRLA2	*Krascheninnikovia lanata*	10–40	–
	skunkbush sumac	RHTR	*Rhus trilobata*	10–40	–
	prairie rose	ROAR3	*Rosa arkansana*	10–40	–
	soapweed yucca	YUGL	*Yucca glauca*	10–40	–
7	**Native shrubs and half-shrubs**			1–46	
	broom snakeweed	GUSA2	*Gutierrezia sarothrae*	1–46	–
	brittle pricklypear	OPFR	*Opuntia fragilis*	1–46	–
	plains pricklypear	OPPO	*Opuntia polyacantha*	1–46	–

Animal community

Livestock Grazing Interpretations:

Managed livestock grazing is suitable on this site as it has the potential to produce an abundance of high quality forage. This is often a preferred site for grazing by livestock, and animals tend to congregate in these areas. In order to maintain the productivity of this site, stocking rates must be managed carefully on adjoining sites with less production to be sure livestock drift
onto the Sandy site is not excessive. Management objectives should include maintenance or improvement of the plant community. Shorter grazing periods and adequate re-growth after grazing are recommended for plant maintenance and recovery. Heavy stocking and season-long use of this site can be detrimental and will alter the plant community composition and production over time.

Whenever Plant Community 2 occurs (medium and short grasses, shrubs and half-shrubs), grazing management strategies need to be implemented to avoid further deterioration. This community is still stable, productive, and healthy provided it receives proper management. This community will respond fairly quickly to improved grazing management including increased growing season rest of key forage plants. Grazing management alone can usually move this community back to one more similar to potential if a good seed source of the taller grasses still exists.

Plant Communities 3 and 4 have substantially reduced forage production, and a high percentage of aggressive, non-palatable species. Once these plant communities become established, it will be much more difficult to restore the site to a community that resembles the potential with grazing management alone. Additional growing season rest is often necessary for re-establishment of the desired species and to restore the stability and health of the site. Brush management and/or seeding will be necessary to restore desirable native perennial species back into Community 4.

Wildlife Interpretations:

The following is a description of habitat values for the different plant communities that may occupy the site:

Plant Community 1: Tall & Medium Grasses/ Forbs/ Shrubs (HCPC):

The predominance of grasses and diversity of forbs, shrubs and half-shrubs in this community favors grazers and mixed feeders such as bison, pronghorn and elk. Suitable thermal and escape cover for mule deer is limited because of low shrub cover. Large animal nutrition levels are relatively high year-long with the diversity of plant life forms and seasonality. When this plant community is adjacent to large blocks of sagebrush-grassland, it can provide quality sage grouse lek sites and brood habitat. The complex plant structural diversity provides habitat for a wide array of small mammals and neotropical migratory birds. Diverse prey populations are available for raptors such as short-eared owls and American kestrels. The mix of grass stature and life forms along with scattered shrubs and a variety of forbs provides habitat for many bird species including the upland sandpiper, sharp-tailed grouse, loggerhead shrike, Baird's, grasshopper and savanna sparrow, chestnut-collared longspur and western meadowlark. This community is especially favorable for ground-nesting birds because of the abundant residual spring cover and litter cover available for nesting, escape and thermal cover.

Plant Community 2: Medium and Short Grasses/ Shrubs and Half-shrubs:

The partial loss of structural diversity makes this plant community somewhat less attractive to the variety of wildlife species using the HCPC. A decrease in residual plant material and litter cover is usually associated with degradation of the HCPC, which makes this community less attractive for ground-nesting birds. The predominance of mixed grass species plus scattered shrubs can be attractive habitat for Baird's and grasshopper sparrows. Pronghorn may make considerable use of this type because of forb availability in the generally open landscape.

Plant Community 3: Medium and Short Grasses/ Half-shrubs:

Sparser vegetation and greater coverage of bare ground provides suitable habitat for mountain plovers, horned larks and McCown's longspurs. However, a lack of complex vegetation structure and residual cover makes this community poor habitat in general for most ground-nesting birds and relatively poor big game habitat. Pronghorn may forage in this community spring though fall.

Plant Community 4: Short Grasses/ Half-shrubs/ Annuals and Biennials:

This community has low habitat value for most wildlife species. It may be important in providing lek sites for sage grouse when adjacent to sagebrush stands and provides forage for pronghorn seasonally. Ground-nesting birds favoring sparse vegetation, such as the long-billed curlew and mountain plover, may use this community.

Hydrological functions

The soils associated with this ecological site are generally in Hydrologic Soil Group B. The infiltration rates for these soils will normally be moderate to moderately rapid. The runoff potential for this site is low, depending on slope and ground cover/health. Runoff curve numbers generally range from 65 to 83.

Good hydrologic conditions exist on rangelands if plant cover (grass, litter, and brush canopy) is greater than 70%. Fair conditions exist when cover is between 30 and 70%, and poor conditions exist when cover is less than 30%. Sites in high similarity to HCPC (Plant Communities 1 and 2) generally have enough plant cover and litter to optimize infiltration, minimize runoff and erosion, and have a good hydrologic condition. The deep root systems of the potential vegetation help maintain or increase infiltration rates and reduce runoff.

Sites in low similarity (Plant Communities 3 and 4) are generally considered to be in poor hydrologic condition as the majority of plant cover is from shallow-rooted species such as threadleaf sedge, annuals, and half-shrubs. Erosion is minor for sites in high similarity. Rills and gullies should not be present. Water flow patterns, if present, will be barely observable. Plant pedestals are essentially non-existent. Plant litter remains in place and is not moved by erosion. Soil surfaces should not be compacted or crusted. Plant cover and litter helps retain soil moisture for use by the plants. Maintaining a healthy stand of perennial vegetation will optimize the amount of precipitation that is received. (Reference: Engineering Field Manual, Chapter 2 and Montana Supplement 4).

Recreational uses

This site provides recreational opportunities for big game and upland bird hunting, and hiking. The forbs have flowers that appeal to photographers. This site provides valuable open space and visual aesthetics.

Other information

The following is an example of how to calculate the recommended stocking rate. This example does not use production estimates from this specific ecological site. You will need to adjust the annual production values and run the calculations using total annual production values from the ecological sites encountered on each individual ranch/pasture. Before making specific recommendations, an on-site evaluation must be made.

Example of total annual production amounts by type of year:
Favorable years = 2200 lbs/acre
Normal years = 1480 lbs/acre
Unfavorable years = 1200 lbs/acre

It is recommended that on slopes of 30% or less, stocking rate should be derived from the total annual production pounds minus 500 pounds for residual dry matter and 25% harvest efficiency. On slopes over 30%, stocking rate is derived from total annual production pounds minus 800 pounds for residual dry matter and 25% harvest efficiency. Refer to the NRCS National Range and Pasture Handbook for a list of Animal Unit Equivalents.

Sample Calculations using Favorable Year production amounts:

< 30% slopes: AUM/AC = [(2200-500)(0.25)]/915 lbs/month for one AU = 0.46 AUM/AC
AC/AUM = (1.0 AU)/(0.46AUM/AC) = 2.2 AC/AUM

> 30% slopes: AUM/AC = [(2200-800)(0.25)]/915 lbs/month for one AU = 0.38 AUM/AC
AC/AUM = (1.0 AU)/(0.38 AUM/AC) = 2.6 AC/AUM

NOTE: 915 lbs/month for one Animal Unit is used as the baseline for maintenance requirements. This equates to 30 lbs/day of air-dry forage (1200 lb cow at 2.5% of body weight).

Contributors

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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.

Author(s)/participant(s)	T. DeCock;R Kilian
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Date	06/11/2014
Approved by	Jon Siddoway
Approval date	
Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on	Annual Production

Indicators

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

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

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3. **Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:** None.

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4. **Bare ground from Ecological Site Description or other studies (rock, litter, lichen, moss, plant canopy are not bare ground):** Bare ground is < 20%. Bare ground will occur as small areas less than 2 inches in diameter.

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5. **Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies:** Active gullies should not be present. Existing gullies should be “healed” with a good vegetative cover.

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6. **Extent of wind scoured, blowouts and/or depositional areas:** None. Historic blowouts should be “healed” with a good vegetative cover.

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7. **Amount of litter movement (describe size and distance expected to travel):** Little to no plant litter movement. Plant litter remains in place and is not moved by erosional forces.

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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):** Surface Soil Aggregate Stability under plant canopy should typically be 5 or greater. Surface Soil Aggregate Stability not under plant canopy should typically be 5 or slightly less.

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9. **Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness):** Use soil survey series description.

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10. **Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:** High grass canopy and basal cover and small gaps between plants should reduce raindrop impact and slow overland flow, providing increased time for infiltration to occur. A combination of shallow and deep rooted species has a positive effect on 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):** No compaction layer or soil surface crusting should be evident.

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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: Warm season, mid-stature, bunchgrasses > Warm season, Tall-stature, rhizomatous grasses

    Sub-dominant: Cool season, mid-stature, bunch grasses >Cool season, short-stature, bunch grasses and sedges = Cools season, short-stature, rhizomatous grasses and sedges = forbs

    Other: Minor components: shrubs = Cool season, mid-stature, rhizomatous grasses

    Additional: (Blue grama should be grouped with warm season, short-stature, rhizomatous grasses due to its growth form)

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13. **Amount of plant mortality and decadence (include which functional groups are expected to show mortality or decadence):** Very low.

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14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth (in):** Litter cover is in contact with soil surface.

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15. **Expected annual annual-production (this is TOTAL above-ground annual-production, not just forage annual-production):** 1950 to 2300 #/acre (13 to 14 inch precip. Zone) 1000 to 1600 #/ac (10 to 12 inch precip. Zone).

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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:** Sulphur cinquefoil, common tansy, oxeye daisy, Leafy spurge, knapweeds, whitetop, Dalmatian toadflax, yellow toadflax, St. Johnswort, perennial pepperweed. Kentucky bluegrass and smooth brome can be invasive on the eastern boarder of Montana for these MLRAs.

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17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:** All species are capable of reproducing.
