

Ecological site R063BY007SD Saline Lowland

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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	Stan Boltz
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 normally less than 10 percent. Some slickspots may be associated with this site, and are not a part of this site. These slickspots will have higher amounts of bare ground and salt crusting.
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5. **Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies:** None.
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6. **Extent of wind scoured, blowouts and/or depositional areas:** None.
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7. **Amount of litter movement (describe size and distance expected to travel):** Litter falls in place.

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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 aggregate stability ratings typically 3 or greater. Surface organic matter adheres to the soil surface. Soil surface fragments will typically retain structure at least for short periods when dipped in distilled water. Some fragments will dissolve in less than 1 minute.
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9. **Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness):** Surface horizon is a dark gray E-horizon (leached). Structure is platy parting to fine granular.
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10. **Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:** Deep rooted species (mid and tall rhizomatous cool- and warm-season grasses and grass-like species) with fine and coarse roots positively influences 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 – when dry, B horizons can be hard or pan-like, and appear to be compacted, but no platy structure will be present.
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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: Tall and mid, warm-season grasses >
- Sub-dominant: Mid, cool-season rhizomatous grasses > mid, cool-season bunchgrasses > grass-like species >
- Other: Short, warm-season grasses > forbs > shrubs
- Additional:
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13. **Amount of plant mortality and decadence (include which functional groups are expected to show mortality or decadence):** Very little evidence of decadence or mortality.
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14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth (in):** About 50 to 70 percent litter cover, litter in contact with soil surface. Depth of litter is about 0.25 to 0.5 inches.
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15. **Expected annual annual-production (this is TOTAL above-ground annual-production, not just forage annual-production):** Total annual production ranges from 2,700 pounds/acre to 4,300 pounds/acre, with the reference value 3,500 pounds/acre (air-dry basis).
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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: State and local noxious weeds; Russian olive can dominate this site in localized areas.

17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:** Perennial grasses and grass-likes should have vigorous rhizomes or tillers.
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