

Ecological site F094CY032MI Cool Acidic Sandy Depression

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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.

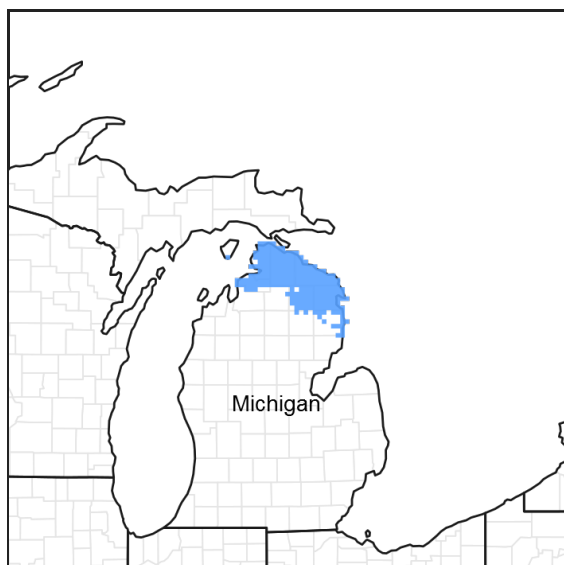


Figure 1. Mapped extent

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.

MLRA notes

Major Land Resource Area (MLRA): 094C–Northern Michigan Limestone Lake Plains

This area is dominated by lake plains, some of which are till-floored plains. Drumlins, moraines, and outwash plains occur throughout the area. The terrain includes flat outwash and lake plains and steep slopes in areas of moraines. Elevation ranges from 177 to 300 m (580 to 985 ft). Local topographic relief averages 7 m and ranges up to 79 m (25 to 260 ft). The Cheboygan, Ocqueoc, and Thunder Bay Rivers are the major streams in the area. This area is covered with thin to thick glacial deposits. Bedrock is generally at shallow depths and is evident throughout the area. It consists of Devonian limestone and dolomite with interbedded shale, chert, and anhydrite stringers. Karst features are very common in the area.

About two-thirds of this MLRA is in small, privately owned holdings, and the other third consists of State forestland. The forests are used mainly for timber production and recreation. Dairy and beef operations are very important enterprises in the area. Forage and feed grain crops for dairy cattle and other livestock are the principal crops. Wheat, oats, corn, potatoes, and hay also are grown. Wilderness State Park Natural Area, Negwegon State Park, Atlanta State Forest, and Beaver Island State Wildlife Research Area are among the more notable conservation lands in the area.

Summary of existing land use:
Upland Forest (40%)

Hardwood (24%)
Conifer (14%)
Swamps and Marshes (32%)
Developed (10%)
Agricultural (8%)
Open Water (6%)

Classification relationships

According to the USFS (Bailey) system of ecoregions, the site is located mostly within 212Hj (Presque Isle Lake and Till Plains) and 212Hi (Valders Red Till and Sandy Lake Plain) subsections. According to the EPA (Omernik) system of ecoregions, the site is located in 50ab (Cheboygan Lake Plain) and eastern 50ac (Onaway Moraines) level IV ecoregions. This site roughly corresponds to PArVCo, in the Kotar system. This site corresponds to the Lowland, ecological land type phase, 62, in the USFS Ecological Land Type system.

Ecological site concept

The central concept of Cool Acidic Sandy Depression is lowlands with a seasonal high watertable 25 to 100 cm deep (moderately well drained or somewhat poorly drained) and a soil pH of the upper 50 cm less than 5.5, and a low base saturation, including Spodosols, Ultic subgroups, and dysic great groups and families. Site occurs on sandy drift (outwash, ice contact, or lake plains) where soil textures are sand or loamy sand (upper 50 cm >70% sand). Site is in lower elevation northern portions of the MLRA where boreal conifer species are more frequent associates. Vegetation trending towards mesophytic forest with an acidophilic species composition.

Associated sites

| | |
|-------------|----------------------------------|
| F094CY031MI | Cool Rich Sandy Drift |
| F094CY033MI | Cool Wet Acidic Sandy Depression |

Similar sites

| | |
|-------------|-------------------------|
| F094AB020MI | Acidic Sandy Depression |
|-------------|-------------------------|

Table 1. Dominant plant species

| | |
|------------|--|
| Tree | (1) <i>Tsuga canadensis</i> (2) <i>Thuja occidentalis</i> |
| Shrub | Not specified |
| Herbaceous | (1) <i>Cornus canadensis</i> |

Physiographic features

Site occurs on coarse textured ice contact, glacial till, outwash, and lake plain deposits. Landforms are gently sloping lower slope positions and depressions.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Landforms | (1) Kame (2) Outwash plain (3) Lake plain |
| Runoff class | Negligible to low |
| Elevation | 581–1,319 ft |
| Water table depth | 10–39 in |
| Aspect | Aspect is not a significant factor |

Climatic features

Mean annual temperatures are 6.0 to 7.1 °C (43 to 45 °F). The warmest six months average 14.6 to 15.4 °C (58 to 60 °F). Mean July temperatures range from 19.1 to 20.2 °C (66 to 68 °F). Mean January temperatures range from -7.9 to -5.9 °C (18 to 21 °F). The maximum monthly average daily highs are 24.1 to 27.3 °C (75 to 81 °F). The minimum monthly average daily lows are -13.3 to -9.4 °C (8 to 15 °F). Mean annual precipitation ranges from 720 to 810 mm (28 to 32 in). The western one-third of the area is wetter than the eastern two-thirds. The precipitation occurs as both rain during the growing season and snow in winter. Average 0 °C (32 °F) frost-free season ranges from 100 to 161 days. Average -2 °C (28 °F) freeze-free season is 137 to 188 days. Mean annual snowfall ranges from 1.6 to 2.9 m (60 to 110 in). Mean annual extreme minimum temperatures range from -31.6 to -23 °C (-25 to -9 °F), or hardiness zones 4b to 6a.

Table 3. Representative climatic features

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Frost-free period (characteristic range) | 101-119 days |
| Freeze-free period (characteristic range) | 125-155 days |
| Precipitation total (characteristic range) | 30 in |
| Frost-free period (actual range) | 83-132 days |
| Freeze-free period (actual range) | 121-173 days |
| Precipitation total (actual range) | 29-31 in |
| Frost-free period (average) | 108 days |
| Freeze-free period (average) | 143 days |
| Precipitation total (average) | 30 in |

Climate stations used

- (1) CROSS VILLAGE 1E [USC00201896], Harbor Springs, MI
- (2) ONAWAY 4N [USC00206184], Onaway, MI
- (3) CHEBOYGAN [USC00201492], Cheboygan, MI
- (4) ALPENA WWTP [USW00014814], Alpena, MI
- (5) PELLSTON RGNL AP [USW00014841], Pellston, MI
- (6) ROGERS CITY [USC00207094], Rogers City, MI
- (7) ALPENA CO RGNL AP [USW00094849], Alpena, MI

Influencing water features

Site has seasonal high water table within 25-100 cm of the surface.

Soil features

Soils are very poorly drained sands. They are commonly classified Typic Endoaquods, Oxyaquic Haplorthods, and Typic Epiaquods, and commonly mapped as Au Gres, Croswell, and Tacoda series or components. The top 50 cm has a typical pH of 5.4 and is 90% sand and 1.2% organic matter. At depth, pH ranges up to 6.5, and texture averages 90% sand and 5% clay. Depth to impeded hydraulic conductivity or root restrictive layers averages >200 cm. Depth to carbonates averages >200 cm.

Table 4. Representative soil features

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Parent material | (1) Outwash |
| Surface texture | (1) Sand |
| Drainage class | Moderately well drained to somewhat poorly drained |
| Permeability class | Moderately rapid to rapid |

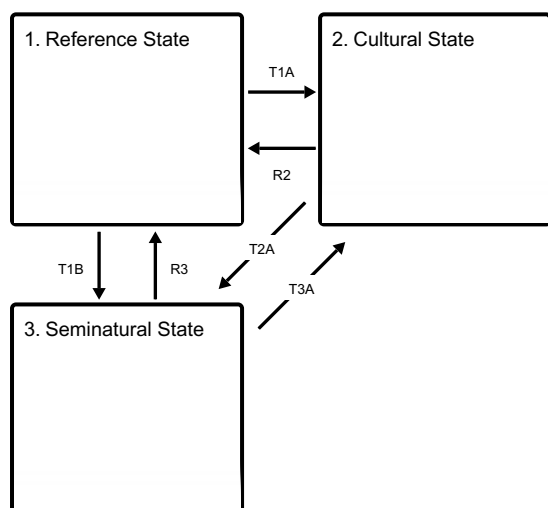
| | |
|---|--------------|
| Soil depth | 79 in |
| Surface fragment cover <=3" | 0–1% |
| Surface fragment cover >3" | 0% |
| Available water capacity (0-39.4in) | 1.57–3.94 in |
| Soil reaction (1:1 water) (0-19.7in) | 6.5–7.5 |
| Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (0-59.1in) | 0–10% |
| Subsurface fragment volume >3" (0-59.1in) | 0–5% |

Ecological dynamics

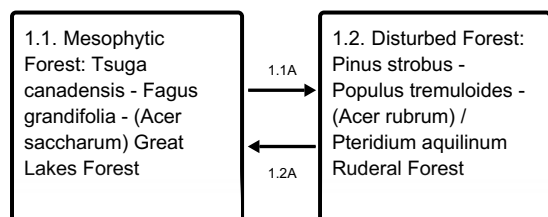
Cool Acidic Sandy Depression tends to share the same ecological dynamics as Natureserve/Landfire system, Laurentian-Acadian Pine-Hemlock-Hardwood Forest. Stand replacing fires occurred every 250-950 years, with light surface fires every 140-550 years. Overstory was dominated by acid tolerant, low nutrient demanding, shade tolerant hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) and red maple (*Acer rubrum*). The moist low nutrient status of the soil tends to support Ericaceae, and species with boreal affinities like dwarf dogwood (*Cornus canadensis*). Kotar community, PARVCo (Pinus spp.-*Acer rubrum*/Vaccinium spp.-*Cornus canadensis*), understory indicator species include: *Aralia nudicaulis*, *Clintonia borealis*, *Coptis trifolia*, *Cornus canadensis*, *Eurybia macrophylla*, *Gaultheria procumbens*, *Lysimachia borealis*, *Maianthemum canadense*, *Medeola virginiana*, *Mitchella repens*, *Osmundastrum cinnamomeum*, *Pteridium aquilinum*, *Vaccinium angustifolium*, and *Viburnum lentago* (Wild Sarsaparilla, Yellow Bluebead-Lily, Goldthread, Bunchberry, Big-leaved Aster, Teaberry, Star-flower, Canada Mayflower, Indian Cucumber-root, Partridge-berry, Cinnamon Fern, Bracken Fern, Northern Lowbush Blueberry, and Nannyberry).

State and transition model

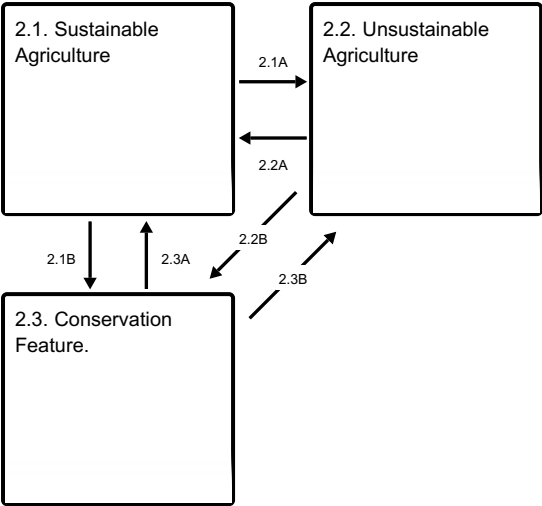
Ecosystem states



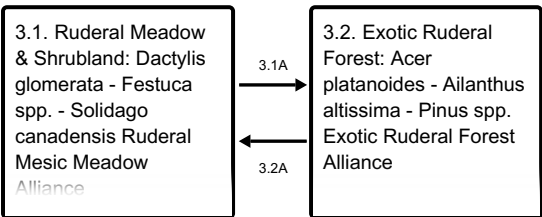
State 1 submodel, plant communities



State 2 submodel, plant communities



State 3 submodel, plant communities



State 1
Reference State

Dominant plant species

- eastern hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*), tree
- arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis*), tree
- bunchberry dogwood (*Cornus canadensis*), other herbaceous

Community 1.1
Mesophytic Forest: *Tsuga canadensis* - *Fagus grandifolia* - (*Acer saccharum*) Great Lakes Forest

Community 1.2
Disturbed Forest: *Pinus strobus* - *Populus tremuloides* - (*Acer rubrum*) / *Pteridium aquilinum* Ruderal Forest

Pathway 1.1A
Community 1.1 to 1.2

Blowdown/clearcut/fire.

Conservation practices

| |
|--------------------------|
| Prescribed Burning |
| Forest Stand Improvement |

Pathway 1.2A
Community 1.2 to 1.1

Succession

State 2
Cultural State

Community 2.1
Sustainable Agriculture

Community 2.2
Unsustainable Agriculture

Community 2.3
Conservation Feature.

Can be a grassed waterway, conservation reserve, a small patch pollinator garden, or other land taken out of its primary cultural production to mitigate or reduce impacts of adjacent land use, and is not by itself a permanent restoration of a complete native biological community and associated ecosystem services.

Pathway 2.1A
Community 2.1 to 2.2

Apply unsustainable farming techniques.

Pathway 2.1B
Community 2.1 to 2.3

Establish conservation feature.

Conservation practices

| |
|--------------------|
| Conservation Cover |
| Grassed Waterway |

Pathway 2.2A
Community 2.2 to 2.1

Apply sustainable farming techniques.

Conservation practices

| |
|----------------------------------|
| Conservation Crop Rotation |
| Cover Crop |
| Nutrient Management |
| Integrated Pest Management (IPM) |

Pathway 2.2B
Community 2.2 to 2.3

Establish conservation feature.

Conservation practices

| |
|--------------------|
| Conservation Cover |
| Grassed Waterway |

Pathway 2.3A

Community 2.3 to 2.1

Revert to sustainable agriculture.

Conservation practices

| |
|----------------------------------|
| Conservation Crop Rotation |
| Cover Crop |
| Nutrient Management |
| Integrated Pest Management (IPM) |

Pathway 2.3B

Community 2.3 to 2.2

Revert to unsustainable agriculture.

State 3

Seminatural State

Community 3.1

Ruderal Meadow & Shrubland: *Dactylis glomerata* - *Festuca* spp. - *Solidago canadensis*

Ruderal Mesic Meadow Alliance

Community 3.2

Exotic Ruderal Forest: *Acer platanoides* - *Ailanthus altissima* - *Pinus* spp. Exotic Ruderal

Forest Alliance

Pathway 3.1A

Community 3.1 to 3.2

Succession

Pathway 3.2A

Community 3.2 to 3.1

Blowdown/clearcut

Transition T1A

State 1 to 2

Clear vegetation; cultivate domesticated species

Transition T1B

State 1 to 3

Clear vegetation, invasive species introduced

Restoration pathway R2

State 2 to 1

Remove domesticated species; restore native species

Conservation practices

| |
|-----------------------------|
| Brush Management |
| Tree/Shrub Site Preparation |

| |
|---|
| Tree/Shrub Establishment |
| Restoration and Management of Rare and Declining Habitats |
| Upland Wildlife Habitat Management |
| Herbaceous Weed Control |

Transition T2A

State 2 to 3

Abandoned, succession

Restoration pathway R3

State 3 to 1

Control invasive species; restore native species

Conservation practices

| |
|---|
| Brush Management |
| Tree/Shrub Site Preparation |
| Tree/Shrub Establishment |
| Restoration and Management of Rare and Declining Habitats |
| Upland Wildlife Habitat Management |
| Herbaceous Weed Control |

Transition T3A

State 3 to 2

Clear vegetation; cultivate domesticated species

Additional community tables

Other references

A PROVISIONAL ECOLOGICAL SITE is a conceptual grouping of soil map unit components within a major land resource area (MLRA) based on the similarities in response to management. A provisional ecological site is a first approximation based on a cursory literature review, personal experience, and limited field reconnaissance. As more adequate literature review, expert opinion, and intensive plot data are collected, the site concept is subject to shifting, broadening, narrowing, subdivision, or re-aggregation in definition. Likewise, the community dynamics will be more elaborate in content, and may also change in structure, upon reaching approved status.

Future work, as described in a project plan, to validate the information in this provisional ecological site description is needed. This will include field activities to collect low and medium intensity sampling, soil correlations, and analysis of that data. Annual field reviews should be done by soil scientists and vegetation specialists. A final field review, peer review, quality control, and quality assurance reviews of the ESD will be needed to produce the final document. Annual reviews of the project plan are to be conducted by the Ecological Site Technical Team.

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Contributors

Gregory J. Schmidt

Approval

Greg Schmidt, 9/11/2024

Acknowledgments

The following individuals made substantive comments regarding the development of the Provisional Ecological Sites: Randy Swaty, The Nature Conservancy; Trevor Hobbs, USFS; Richard A. Corner, USFS; Andy Henriksen, NRCS; Dan Zay, NRCS.

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 | 10/30/2023 |
| Approved by | Greg Schmidt |
| 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:**
-