

## Ecological site F098XA022MI Loamy Slopes

Last updated: 1/12/2024  
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): 098X–Southern Michigan and Northern Indiana Drift Plains

"This area is in the Eastern Lake Section of the Central Lowland Province of the Interior Plains. It is a broad glaciated plain that is deeply mantled by till in the north and outwash to the south. Much of the area is nearly level to gently rolling. Elevation ranges from 183 to 391 m (600 to 1285 ft). Local topographic relief averages 9 m and ranges up to 74 m (30 to 245 ft). Highest relief occurs adjacent to river valleys eroded through moraines. Topography is more subdued south of the Atlantic/Gulf drainage divide near the Michigan/Indiana state line, elevations ranging from 185 to 280 m (605 to 920 ft). Local topographic relief in the south averages 4 m and ranges up to 49 m (10 to 160 ft).

The surface of this area is covered by 30 to 150 m (100 to 500 ft) of glacial drift in most areas. At the northern edge of the area, the drift is more than 100 meters (300 ft) thick. From the Grand River basin northward, most of the drift consists of till from the Saginaw Lobe of the Wisconsin Ice Sheet. From the Kalamazoo River basin southward, there are significant deposits of unconsolidated sand and gravel outwash formed between major lobes of the receding Wisconsin Ice Sheet. The outwash deposits are reworked as sand dunes in the Kankakee River basin.

The bedrock beneath the glacial deposits in this area is deformed in the shape of a basin. The center of this basin is in the north-central part of the area. Pennsylvanian-age sandstone are in the center of the basin, and Mississippian-age sandstone and shale beds form the outer rings of the basin. In a few areas the drift deposits are

less than 2 m (6 ft) thick, where glacial outwash channels have eroded to limestone bedrock in Grand Rapids, and where sandstone bedrock cuestas peak in elevation in near Hillsdale, Michigan. A sandstone cliff < 15 m high (<50 ft) occurs along a short stretch of the Grand River in Grand Ledge, Michigan.

Most of the rivers in this area are short because of their proximity to the Great Lakes east and west of the area. The largest watersheds, the St. Joseph River, Grand River, and Kalamazoo River drain into Lake Michigan. The southern extent of the MLRA is drained by the Kankakee River of the Mississippi River watershed."

## Classification relationships

### Site Development and Testing Plan

Future work is needed, as described in a future project plan, to validate the information presented in this provisional ecological site description. Future work includes field sampling, data collection and analysis by qualified vegetation ecologists and soil scientists. As warranted, annual reviews of the project plan can be conducted by the Ecological Site Technical Team. A final field review, peer review, quality control, and quality assurance reviews of the ESD are necessary to approve a final document.

## Ecological site concept

The central concept of the Loamy Slopes is a wide range of textures on slopes >15% associated with erosion along drainages. There is a tendency for mesophytic vegetation of beech and sugar maple. The wide range of aspects, slope positions, and seasonal groundwater seeps result in a broad range of potential sites, but due to the local scale of this variation relative to the size of the trees, there is poor differentiation among canopy dominants. Northeastern aspects and foot slopes trend toward mesophytic vegetation, whereas southwest shoulders have is a potential for more xeric oaks. May form a complex with narrow sandy floodplain terraces. Sandier areas with open slopes not associated with drainages are treated as the Sandy Drift Backslope.

## Associated sites

F098XA015MI	Dry Loamy Drift Plains
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## Similar sites

F098XA015MI	Dry Loamy Drift Plains
F098XA021MI	Sandy Slopes

Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	(1) <i>Acer nigrum</i> (2) <i>Fagus grandifolia</i>
Shrub	Not specified
Herbaceous	(1) <i>Dryopteris marginalis</i>

## Physiographic features

Site is most commonly found on ravines eroded into till or outwash, and slopes along river valleys.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Ravine
Runoff class	Medium to very high
Elevation	604–1,276 ft
Slope	15–100%
Water table depth	39 in

Aspect	W, NW, N, NE, E, SE, S, SW
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## Climatic features

This ecological site experiences a humid continental climate with mild summers and cold winters. Precipitation is moderately well distributed through the year with higher amounts during the growing season than the winter. Temperature extremes are moderated by the Great Lakes compared to other inland continental locations, though not as much as MLRAs directly bordering the Great Lakes. Mean annual extreme minimum temperatures range from -26.6 to -20.8°C (-16 to -5°F), which falls within hardiness zones 5a to 6a. Annual snowfall is enhanced by the Great Lakes, mainly on the western half of the MLRA.

**Table 3. Representative climatic features**

Frost-free period (characteristic range)	117-134 days
Freeze-free period (characteristic range)	152-165 days
Precipitation total (characteristic range)	32-39 in
Frost-free period (actual range)	115-140 days
Freeze-free period (actual range)	144-173 days
Precipitation total (actual range)	31-41 in
Frost-free period (average)	128 days
Freeze-free period (average)	158 days
Precipitation total (average)	35 in

## Climate stations used

- (1) ALMA [USC00200146], Alma, MI
- (2) HOWELL WWTP [USC00203947], Howell, MI
- (3) SAINT JOHNS [USC00207280], Saint Johns, MI
- (4) THREE RIVERS [USC00208184], Three Rivers, MI
- (5) BATTLE CREEK KELLOGG AP [USW00014815], Battle Creek, MI
- (6) LAPORTE [USC00124837], La Porte, IN
- (7) WANATAH 2 WNW [USC00129222], Valparaiso, IN
- (8) COLDWATER ST SCHOOL [USC00201675], Coldwater, MI
- (9) FLINT 7 W [USC00202851], Flushing, MI
- (10) GREENVILLE 2 NNE [USC00203429], Greenville, MI
- (11) GULL LK BIOLOGICAL STN [USC00203504], Augusta, MI
- (12) FLINT BISHOP INTL AP [USW00014826], Flint, MI
- (13) EAST LANSING 4 S [USC00202395], Holt, MI
- (14) HILLSDALE [USC00203823], Hillsdale, MI
- (15) IONIA 2SSW [USC00204078], Ionia, MI
- (16) JACKSON REYNOLDS FLD [USW00014833], Jackson, MI
- (17) LANSING CAPITAL CITY AP [USW00014836], Lansing, MI
- (18) GRAND RAPIDS [USW00094860], Grand Rapids, MI
- (19) DOWAGIAC 1 W [USC00202250], Dowagiac, MI
- (20) OWOSSO WWTP [USC00206300], Owosso, MI

## Influencing water features

In context of a ravine, the site is a complex with inclusions of base slope seeps and intermittent to small perennial stream floodplains too small to be mapped as their own map units.

## Soil features

Soils are well drained to moderately well drained loams on >15% slopes. They are commonly classified as Typic

Hapludalfs, Haplic Glossudalfs, and Oxyaquic Hapludalfs, and commonly mapped as Oshtemo, Marlette, and Miami series.

Table 4. Representative soil features

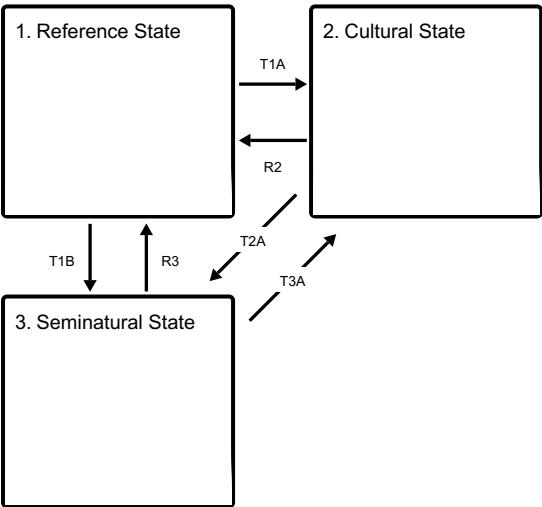
Parent material	(1) Drift (2) Colluvium
Surface texture	(1) Loam
Drainage class	Well drained
Permeability class	Moderately slow to moderately rapid
Soil depth	79 in
Surface fragment cover <=3"	0–5%
Surface fragment cover >3"	0–1%
Available water capacity (0-39.4in)	5.12–8.66 in
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (0-19.7in)	5.5–7
Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (0-59.1in)	0–35%
Subsurface fragment volume >3" (0-59.1in)	0–15%

Ecological dynamics

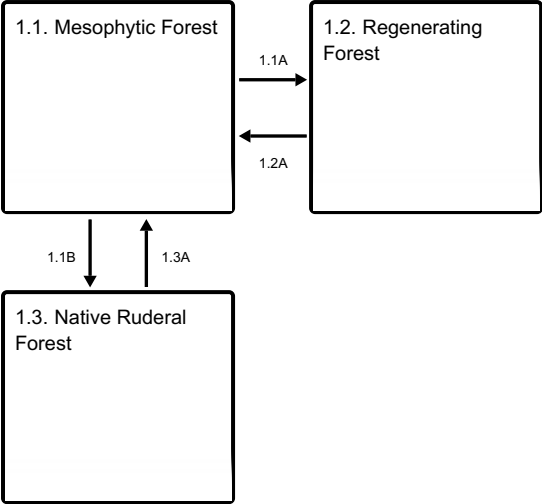
Fire was rare in sheltered valley locations. Succession towards beech-maple forest communities occurred. Red and white oaks may characterize the upper slopes, especially southwestern aspects with warmer and drier microclimates. The reference community is composed of many species with no clear dominant, but black maple (*Acer nigrum*) and beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) are among the more frequent species. Marginal wood fern (*Dryopteris marginalis*), though a minor constituent of the diverse mesophytic herb understory, may be diagnostic of slopes. In the southern portion of the area, where winters are milder, windthrow maintains occasional tuliptree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*).

State and transition model

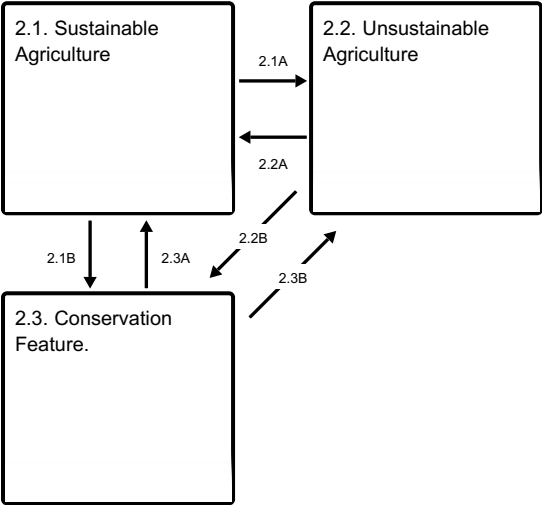
Ecosystem states



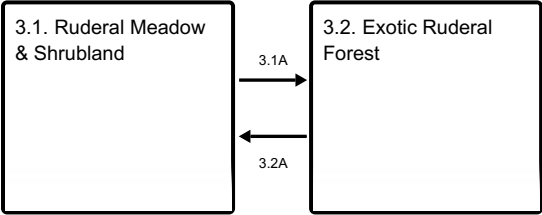
State 1 submodel, plant communities



State 2 submodel, plant communities



State 3 submodel, plant communities



State 1  
Reference State

The Reference State consists of mesic hardwoods and associated successional phases.

Dominant plant species

- black maple (*Acer nigrum*), tree
- American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), tree
- marginal woodfern (*Dryopteris marginalis*), other herbaceous

Community 1.1  
Mesophytic Forest

Community 1.2  
Regenerating Forest

## **Community 1.3**

### **Native Ruderal Forest**

#### **Pathway 1.1A**

#### **Community 1.1 to 1.2**

Blowdown/clearcut

##### **Conservation practices**

Forest Stand Improvement
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#### **Pathway 1.1B**

#### **Community 1.1 to 1.3**

Blowdown/clearcut

##### **Conservation practices**

Early Successional Habitat Development/Management
Forest Stand Improvement

#### **Pathway 1.2A**

#### **Community 1.2 to 1.1**

Succession

#### **Pathway 1.3A**

#### **Community 1.3 to 1.1**

Succession

##### **Conservation practices**

Tree/Shrub Site Preparation
Tree/Shrub Establishment

## **State 2**

### **Cultural State**

[Alternative States to be developed; refer to component communities.]

#### **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**

[Alternative States to be developed; refer to component communities.]

#### **Community 3.1**

##### **Ruderal Meadow & Shrubland**

#### **Community 3.2**

##### **Exotic Ruderal Forest**

#### **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

### Inventory data references

Site Development and Testing Plan

Future work is needed, as described in a future project plan, to validate the information presented in this provisional ecological site description. Future work includes field sampling, data collection and analysis by qualified vegetation ecologists and soil scientists. As warranted, annual reviews of the project plan can be conducted by the Ecological Site Technical Team. A final field review, peer review, quality control, and quality assurance reviews of the ESD are necessary to approve a final document.

### Other references

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## Contributors

Greg Schmidt

## Approval

Nels Barrett, 1/12/2024

## Acknowledgments

Matt Bromley and Andy Henriksen reviewed the narratives. Matt Bromley reviewed associated soil map units.

## 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	05/11/2025
Approved by	Nels Barrett
Approval date	
Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on	Annual Production

## Indicators

### 1. Number and extent of rills:

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### 2. Presence of water flow patterns:

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

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

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

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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:

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17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:**

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