

## Ecological site F098XB026IN Kankakee Wet Floodplains

Last updated: 1/12/2024  
Accessed: 05/12/2025

### 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

Among the USFS ecoregional framework (Cleland et al., 2007), most of MLRA 98 is represented by the Humid Temperate Domain (200), Hot Continental Division (220), Midwest Broadleaf Forest Province (222), South Central Great Lakes Section (222J), subsections 222Jc, 222Jg, 222Jh, and 222Jf. Similar sites within the portion of MLRA 98 that overlap the Prairie Division (250) and Prairie Parkland Province (251) are treated as separate ecological sites. MLRA 98 recently was adjusted to exclude portions of Warm Continental Division (210), Laurentian Mixed Forest Province (212) to the north, and subsections 222Ja and 222Jb to the northwest.

Among the EPA ecoregional framework (Omernik and Griffith, 2014), most of MLRA 98 falls within Eastern Temperate Forests (Level I: 8), Mixed Wood Plains (Level II: 8.1), Southern Michigan/Northern Indiana Drift Plains (Level III: 56), and Level IV: 56b, 56g, and 56h. Similar sites within the portion of MLRA 98 that overlap the Central USA Plains (Level II: 8.2) and Central Corn Belt Plains (Level III: 54) are treated as separate ecological sites. MLRA 98 recently was adjusted to exclude portions of Northern Forests (Level I: 5), Mixed Wood Shield (Level II: 5.2), Northern Lakes and Forests (Level III: 50) to the north, and level IV: 56d and 56f to the northwest.

## Ecological site concept

The central concept of the Kankakee Wet Floodplains is a wide range of mineral soil texture subject to periodic flooding of longer duration such that primarily hydrophytic vegetation occurs. Warmer climate results in a somewhat different species composition than wet floodplains further north. Silver maple and cottonwood are prevalent flood-tolerant tree species in this area.

## Associated sites

F098XB025IN	<b>Kankakee Moist Floodplains</b>
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## Similar sites

F098XA004MI	<b>Wet Floodplains</b>
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Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	(1) <i>Acer saccharinum</i> (2) <i>Populus deltoides</i>
Shrub	(1) <i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>
Herbaceous	(1) <i>Saururus cernuus</i> (2) <i>Mikania scandens</i>

## Physiographic features

Site is on floodplains on glaciofluvial and glaciolacustrine deposits.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Flood plain
Runoff class	Negligible to low

Flooding duration	Very brief (4 to 48 hours) to very long (more than 30 days)
Flooding frequency	Occasional to very frequent
Elevation	531–919 ft
Water table depth	0–10 in
Aspect	Aspect is not a significant factor

## Climatic features

This ecological site experiences a humid continental climate with warm summers and cold winters. Precipitation is moderately well distributed through the year with higher amounts during the growing season than the winter. This ecological site is distributed only along the southern portion of the MLRA, and consequently is outside the moderating envelope of the Great Lakes. This area does have slightly greater annual rainfall due to being slightly closer to the main source of moisture (the Gulf of Mexico) than the rest of the MLRA, but this trend is canceled out by higher potential evapotranspiration rates. More significantly, this area has lower snowfall, warmer summer temperatures, and more frequent lightning, all of which contribute to higher fire frequencies than northern portions of the MLRA.

**Table 3. Representative climatic features**

Frost-free period (average)	160 days
Freeze-free period (average)	187 days
Precipitation total (average)	41 in

## Influencing water features

Site is seasonally flooded for long enough durations during the growing season to exclude upland species.

## Soil features

Soils are poorly drained to very poorly drained sands and loams on floodplains. They are commonly classified as Fluvaquentic Endoaquolls, Typic Endoaquolls, and Cumulic Endoaquolls, and commonly mapped as Craigmile, Suman, and Cohoctah series.

**Table 4. Representative soil features**

Parent material	(1) Alluvium
Surface texture	(1) Silt (2) Sand (3) Loam
Drainage class	Very poorly drained to poorly drained
Permeability class	Moderately slow to rapid
Soil depth	79 in
Surface fragment cover ≤3"	0–1%
Surface fragment cover >3"	0–1%
Available water capacity (0–39.4in)	1.97–9.84 in
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (0–19.7in)	6–7
Subsurface fragment volume ≤3" (0–59.1in)	0–5%

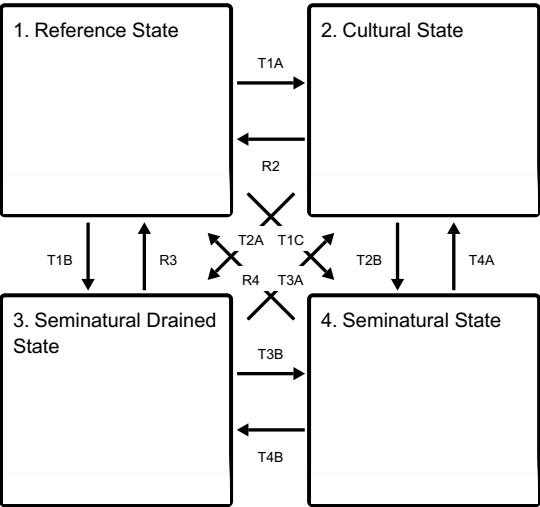
Subsurface fragment volume >3" (0-59.1in)	0–1%
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Ecological dynamics

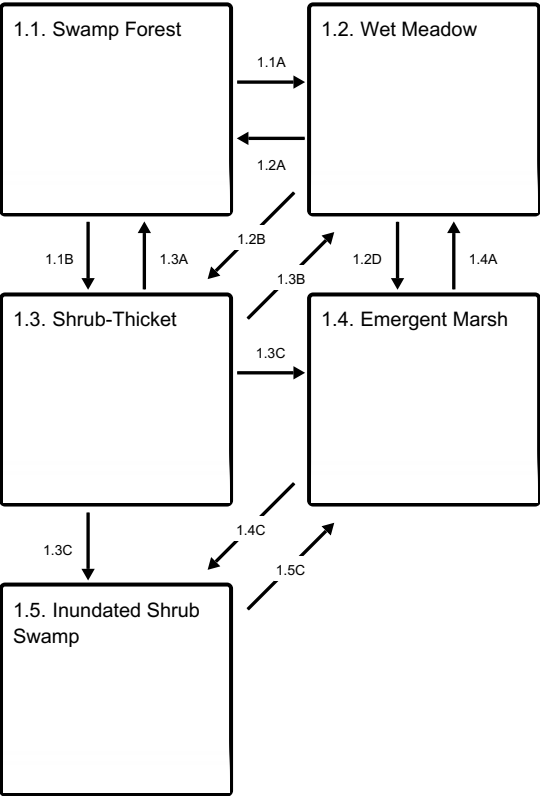
Fire was locally important adjacent to other fire prone ecological sites. Windthrow is a frequent disturbance due to shallow rooting in wet soils. Wet anoxic soils favor facultative and obligate wetland species. The seasonal flooding is of long enough duration that only a few of the most flood tolerant tree species can establish themselves. The tendency for frequent fire in and adjacent to this site increases the likelihood of periodic windthrow or flash flooding, thus favoring early successional floodplain species like cottonwood and willow. The reference community is dominated by silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*) or eastern cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*). Open understories may include buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) covered in climbing hempvine (*Mikania scandens*). Swales of Lizard's tail (*Saururus cernuus*) also occur. Snowbell (*Styrax americana*), a shrub disjunct from the Gulf-Atlantic Coastal Plain, occurs locally in the understory.

State and transition model

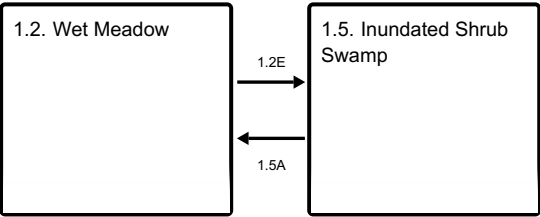
Ecosystem states



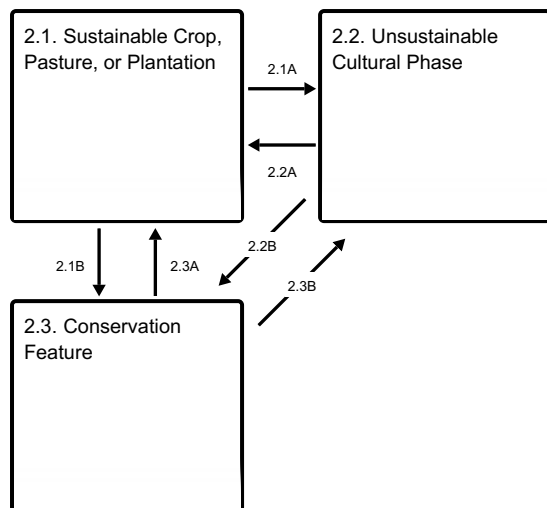
State 1 submodel, plant communities



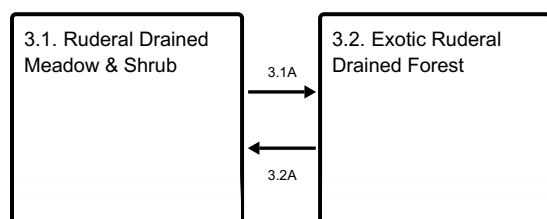
Communities 2 and 5 (additional pathways)



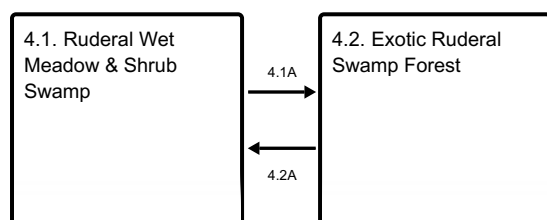
### State 2 submodel, plant communities



### State 3 submodel, plant communities



### State 4 submodel, plant communities



## State 1

### Reference State

The Reference State consists of a mosaic of swamp forest, shrub swamp, wet meadows, and marshes.

### Dominant plant species

- silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*), tree
- eastern cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*), tree
- common buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), shrub
- climbing hempvine (*Mikania scandens*), other herbaceous
- lizard's tail (*Saururus cernuus*), other herbaceous

### Community 1.1

#### Swamp Forest

### Community 1.2

#### Wet Meadow

### Community 1.3

#### Shrub-Thicket

### Community 1.4

#### Emergent Marsh

## **Community 1.5**

### **Inundated Shrub Swamp**

#### **Pathway 1.1A**

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

Temporary prolonged inundation.

#### **Pathway 1.1B**

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

Clearcut/Blowdown.

##### **Conservation practices**

Early Successional Habitat Development/Management
Forest Stand Improvement

#### **Pathway 1.2A**

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

Succession.

##### **Conservation practices**

Tree/Shrub Site Preparation
Tree/Shrub Establishment

#### **Pathway 1.2B**

##### **Community 1.2 to 1.3**

Succession.

##### **Conservation practices**

Tree/Shrub Site Preparation
Tree/Shrub Establishment

#### **Pathway 1.2D**

##### **Community 1.2 to 1.4**

Permanent inundation.

#### **Pathway 1.2E**

##### **Community 1.2 to 1.5**

Shrub establishment; permanent inundation.

##### **Conservation practices**

Tree/Shrub Establishment
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#### **Pathway 1.3A**

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

Succession.

## Conservation practices

Tree/Shrub Site Preparation
Tree/Shrub Establishment

### Pathway 1.3B

#### Community 1.3 to 1.2

Temporary prolonged inundation.

### Pathway 1.3C

#### Community 1.3 to 1.4

Permanent inundation.

### Pathway 1.3C

#### Community 1.3 to 1.5

Permanent inundation.

### Pathway 1.4A

#### Community 1.4 to 1.2

Drop water table.

### Pathway 1.4C

#### Community 1.4 to 1.5

Temporary drop water table; shrub establishment.

### Pathway 1.5A

#### Community 1.5 to 1.2

Drop water table; shrub mortality.

## Conservation practices

Brush Management
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### Pathway 1.5C

#### Community 1.5 to 1.4

Temporary drought; shrub mortality.

## State 2

### Cultural State

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

### Community 2.1

#### Sustainable Crop, Pasture, or Plantation

### Community 2.2

#### Unsustainable Cultural Phase

**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**

Revert to unsustainable cultural practices.

**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**

Implement sustainable cultural practices.

**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**

Implement sustainable cultural practices.

**Conservation practices**

Conservation Crop Rotation
Cover Crop
Nutrient Management



**Pathway 2.3B**  
**Community 2.3 to 2.2**

Revert to unsustainable cultural practices.

**State 3**  
**Seminatural Drained State**

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

**Community 3.1**  
**Ruderal Drained Meadow & Shrub**

**Community 3.2**  
**Exotic Ruderal Drained Forest**

**Pathway 3.1A**  
**Community 3.1 to 3.2**

Succession

**Pathway 3.2A**  
**Community 3.2 to 3.1**

Blowdown/clearcut.

**Conservation practices**

Early Successional Habitat Development/Management
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Forest Stand Improvement
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**State 4**  
**Seminatural State**

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

**Community 4.1**  
**Ruderal Wet Meadow & Shrub Swamp**

**Community 4.2**  
**Exotic Ruderal Swamp Forest**

**Pathway 4.1A**  
**Community 4.1 to 4.2**

Succession.

**Pathway 4.2A**  
**Community 4.2 to 4.1**

Blowdown/clearcut.

**Conservation practices**

Early Successional Habitat Development/Management
Forest Stand Improvement

### **Transition T1A**

#### **State 1 to 2**

Drain; clear vegetation; cultivate domesticated species.

### **Transition T1B**

#### **State 1 to 3**

Drain; clear vegetation, invasive species introduced.

### **Transition T1C**

#### **State 1 to 4**

Clear vegetation, invasive species introduced.

### **Restoration pathway R2**

#### **State 2 to 1**

Restore hydrology; remove domesticated species; restore native species.

#### **Conservation practices**

Brush Management
Restoration and Management of Rare and Declining Habitats
Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management
Wetland Restoration
Herbaceous Weed Control

### **Transition T2A**

#### **State 2 to 3**

Abandon, succession.

### **Transition T2B**

#### **State 2 to 4**

Restore hydrology; abandon; succession.

#### **Conservation practices**

Wetland Restoration
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### **Restoration pathway R3**

#### **State 3 to 1**

Restore hydrology; control invasive species; restore native species

#### **Conservation practices**

Brush Management
Restoration and Management of Rare and Declining Habitats

Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management
Wetland Restoration
Herbaceous Weed Control

### **Transition T3A** **State 3 to 2**

Clear vegetation; cultivate domesticated species.

### **Transition T3B** **State 3 to 4**

Restore hydrology.

#### **Conservation practices**

Wetland Restoration
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### **Restoration pathway R4** **State 4 to 1**

Control invasive species; restore native species.

#### **Conservation practices**

Brush Management
Restoration and Management of Rare and Declining Habitats
Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management
Herbaceous Weed Control

### **Transition T4A** **State 4 to 2**

Drain; clear vegetation; cultivate domesticated species.

### **Transition T4B** **State 4 to 3**

Drain.

## **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	05/12/2025
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:**

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7. **Amount of litter movement (describe size and distance expected to travel):**

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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):**

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

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10. **Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:**

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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):**

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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:

Sub-dominant:

Other:

Additional:

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