

## **Ecological site F110XY016IL Sand Woodland**

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### **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.

### **MLRA notes**

Major Land Resource Area (MLRA): 110X–Northern Illinois and Indiana Heavy Till Plain

The Northern Illinois and Indiana Heavy Till Plain (MLRA 110) encompasses the Northeastern Morainal, Grand Prairie, and Southern Lake Michigan Coastal landscapes (Schwegman et al. 1973, WDNR 2015). It spans three states – Illinois (79 percent), Indiana (10 percent), and Wisconsin (11 percent) – comprising about 7,535 square miles (Figure 1). The elevation is about 650 feet above sea level (ASL) and increases gradually from Lake Michigan south. Local relief varies from 10 to 25 feet. Silurian age fractured dolomite and limestone bedrock underlie the region. Glacial drift covers the surface area of the MLRA, and till, outwash, lacustrine deposits, loess or other silty material, and organic deposits are common (USDA-NRCS 2006).

The vegetation in the MLRA has undergone drastic changes over time. At the end of the last glacial episode – the Wisconsin glacial episode – the evolution of vegetation began with the development of tundra habitats, followed by a phase of spruce and fir forests, and eventually spruce-pine forests. Not until approximately 9,000 years ago did the climate undergo a warming trend which prompted the development of deciduous forests dominated by oak and hickory. As the climate continued to warm and dry, prairies began to develop approximately 8,300 years ago. Another shift in climate that resulted in an increase in moisture prompted the emergence of savanna-like habitats from 8,000 to 5,000 years before present (Taft et al. 2009). Forests maintained footholds on steep valley sides, morainal ridges, and wet floodplains. Fire, droughts, and grazing by native mammals helped to maintain the prairies and savannas until the arrival of European settlers, and the forests were maintained by droughts, wind, lightning, and occasional fire (Taft et al. 2009; NatureServe 2018).

### **Classification relationships**

USFS Subregions: Southwestern Great Lakes Morainal (222K) and Central Till Plains and Grand Prairies (251D) Sections; Kenosha-Lake Michigan Plain and Moraines (222Kg), Valparaiso Moraine (Kj), and Eastern Grand Prairie (251Dd) Subsections (Cleland et al. 2007)

U.S. EPA Level IV Ecoregion: Kettle Moraines (53b), Illinois/Indiana Prairies (54a), and Valparaiso-Wheaton Morainal Complex (54f) (USEPA 2013)

National Vegetation Classification – Ecological Systems: North-Central Oak Barrens (CES202.727) (NatureServe 2018)

National Vegetation Classification – Plant Associations: *Quercus velutina* – (*Quercus alba*)/*Schizachyrium scoparium* – *Lupinus perennis* Wooded Grassland (CEGL002492) (Nature Serve 2018)

Biophysical Settings: North-Central Interior Dry-Mesic Oak Forest and Woodland (BpS 4213100) (LANDFIRE 2009)

Illinois Natural Areas Inventory: Dry-mesic sand savanna (White and Madany 1978)

## Ecological site concept

Sand Woodlands are located within the green areas on the map. They occur on uplands. The soils are Alfisols and Entisols that are poorly to excessively drained, formed in eolian deposits and outwash.

The historic pre-European settlement vegetation on this ecological site was dominated by open oak woodlands. Black oak (*Quercus velutina* Lam.) , little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium* (Michx.) Nash), and Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pensylvanica* Lam.) are the dominant species on the site. Other grasses present can include Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans* (L.) Nash) and porcupinegrass (*Hesperostipa spartea* (Trin.) Barkworth) (White and Madany 1978; NatureServe 2018). Forbs typical of an undisturbed plant community associated with this ecological site include flaxleaf whitetop aster (*Ionactis linariifolius* (L.) Greene), fernleaf yellow false foxglove (*Aureolaria pedicularia* (L.) Raf. var. *pedicularia*), and sundial lupine (*Lupinus perennis* L.) (White and Madany 1978; Taft et al. 1997). Fire is the primary disturbance factor that maintains this ecological site, while periodic drought and large mammal grazing are secondary factors (LANDFIRE 2009; Taft et al. 2009; NatureServe 2018).

## Associated sites

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| R110XY015IL | <b>Wet Sand Prairie</b><br>Outwash that is shallow to a high-water table including Fieldon, Gilford, Granby, Granby variant, Hooppole, and Mussey |
|-------------|---|

## Similar sites

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| F110XY005IL | <b>Sandstone Woodland</b><br>Sandstone Woodlands are a similar vegetation type, but the site is shallow to sandstone bedrock |
|-------------|--|

Table 1. Dominant plant species

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| Tree       | (1) <i>Quercus velutina</i>   |
| Shrub      | Not specified   |
| Herbaceous | (1) <i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i><br>(2) <i>Carex pensylvanica</i> |

## Physiographic features

Sand Woodlands occur on uplands. They are situated on elevations ranging from approximately 470 to 1200 feet ASL. The site does not experience flooding but rather generates runoff to adjacent, downslope ecological sites.

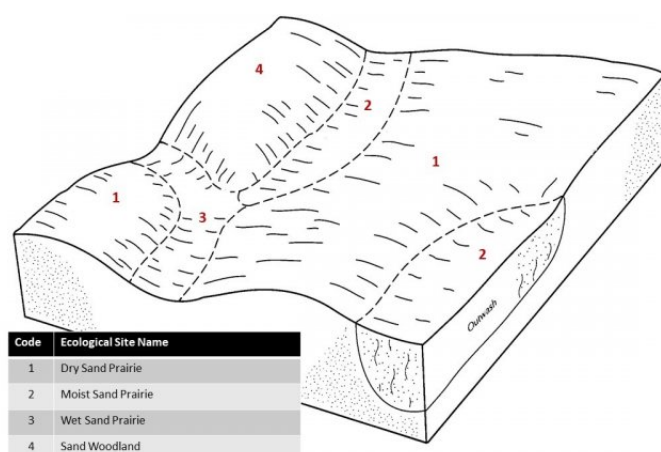


Figure 1. Representative block diagram of Sand Woodland and associated ecological sites.



**Figure 2.**

**Table 2. Representative physiographic features**

|                     |                                    |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| Slope shape across  | (1) Convex                         |
| Slope shape up-down | (1) Convex                         |
| Landforms           | (1) Upland                         |
| Runoff class        | Negligible to high                 |
| Elevation           | 470–1,200 ft                       |
| Slope               | 0–30%                              |
| Water table depth   | 18–80 in                           |
| Aspect              | Aspect is not a significant factor |

**Climatic features**

The Northern Illinois and Indiana Heavy Till Plain falls into the hot-summer humid continental climate (Dfa) and warm-summer humid continental climate (Dfb) Köppen-Geiger climate classifications (Peel et al. 2007). The two main factors that drive the climate of the MLRA are latitude and weather systems. Latitude, and the subsequent reflection of solar input, determines air temperatures and seasonal variations. Solar energy varies across the seasons, with summer receiving three to four times as much energy as opposed to winter. Weather systems (air masses and cyclonic storms) are responsible for daily fluctuations of weather conditions. High-pressure systems are responsible for settled weather patterns where sun and clear skies dominate. In fall, winter, and spring, the polar jet stream is responsible for the creation and movement of low-pressure systems. The clouds, winds, and precipitation associated with a low-pressure system regularly follow high-pressure systems every few days (Angel n.d.).

The soil temperature regime of MLRA 110 is classified as mesic, where the mean annual soil temperature is between 46 and 59°F (USDA-NRCS 2006). Temperature and precipitation occur along a north-south gradient, where temperature and precipitation increase the further south one travels. The average freeze-free period of this ecological site is about 182 days, while the frost-free period is about 142 days (Table 2). The majority of the precipitation occurs as rainfall in the form of convective thunderstorms during the growing season. Average annual precipitation is 38 inches, which includes rainfall plus the water equivalent from snowfall (Table 3). The average annual low and high temperatures are 40.4 and 59.5°F, respectively.

**Table 3. Representative climatic features**

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| Frost-free period (characteristic range)   | 134-146 days |
| Freeze-free period (characteristic range)  | 174-189 days |
| Precipitation total (characteristic range) | 37-39 in     |
| Frost-free period (actual range)           | 132-157 days |

|                                    |              |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Freeze-free period (actual range)  | 173-199 days |
| Precipitation total (actual range) | 37-39 in     |
| Frost-free period (average)        | 142 days     |
| Freeze-free period (average)       | 182 days     |
| Precipitation total (average)      | 38 in        |

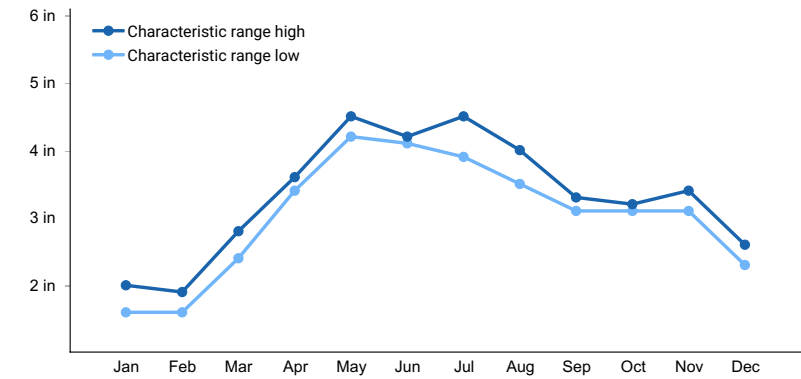


Figure 3. Monthly precipitation range

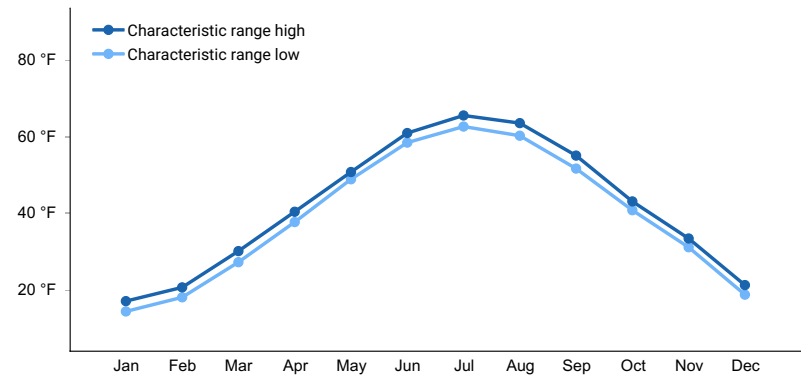


Figure 4. Monthly minimum temperature range

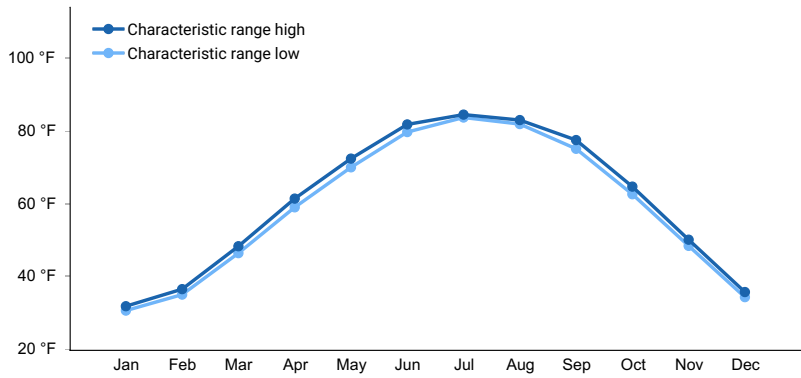
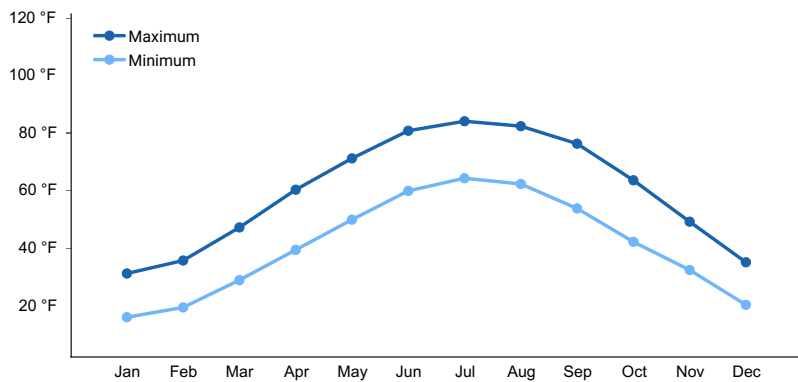
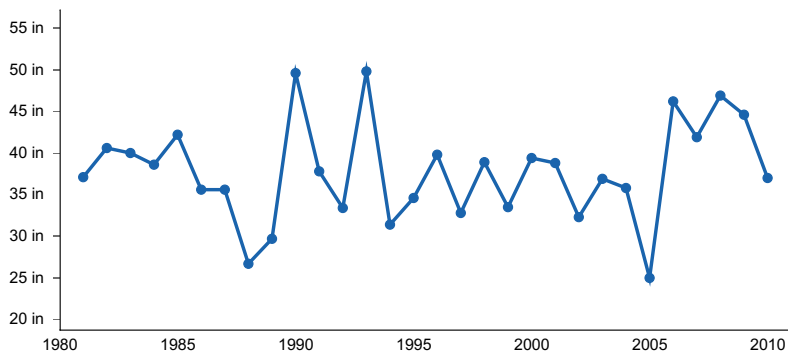


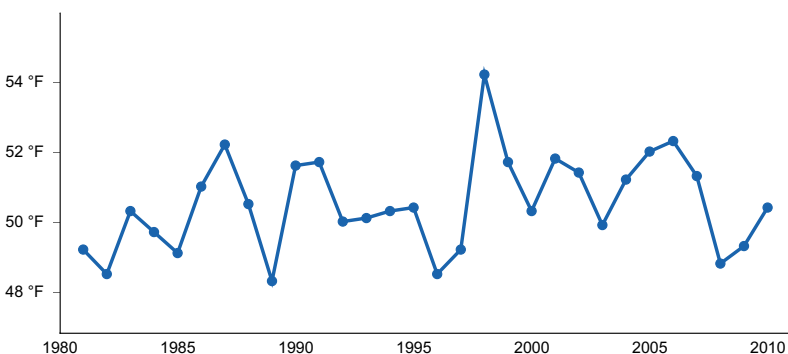
Figure 5. Monthly maximum temperature range



**Figure 6. Monthly average minimum and maximum temperature**



**Figure 7. Annual precipitation pattern**



**Figure 8. Annual average temperature pattern**

## Climate stations used

- (1) WATSEKA 2 NW [USC00119021], Watseka, IL
- (2) KANKAKEE WASTEWATER [USC00114603], Kankakee, IL
- (3) DWIGHT [USC00112500], Dwight, IL
- (4) CHICAGO MIDWAY AP [USW00014819], Chicago, IL
- (5) ANTIOCH [USC00110203], Antioch, IL

## Influencing water features

Sand Woodlands are not influenced by wetland or riparian water features. Precipitation is the main source of water for this ecological site. Infiltration is slow to high (Hydrologic Groups A and C), and surface runoff is negligible to high. Surface runoff contributes some water to downslope ecological sites.

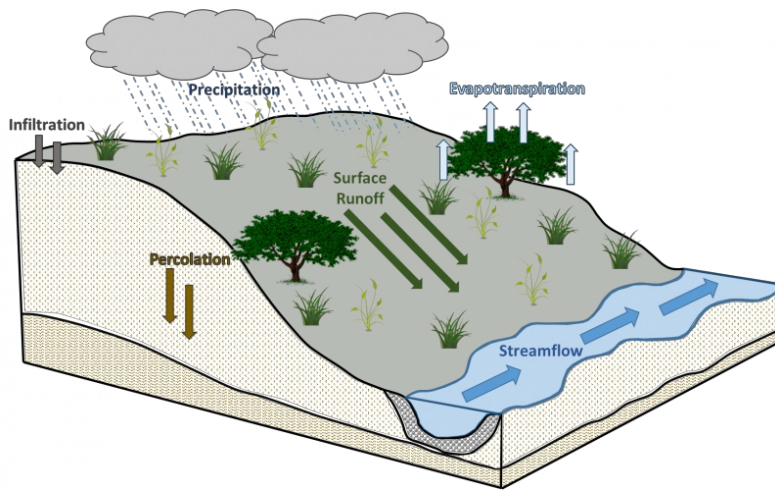


Figure 9. Hydrologic cycling in Sand Woodland ecological site.

### Soil features

Soils of Sand Woodlands are in the Alfisols and Entisols orders, further classified as Aquic Hapludalfs, Aquollic Hapludalfs, Typic Hapludalfs, Typic Endoaqualfs, Aquic Udipsamments, Lamellic Udipsamments, and Typic Udipsamments with slow to high infiltration and negligible to high runoff potential. The soil series associated with this site includes Alvin, Boyer, Chelsea, Oakville, Plainfield, Roby, Ruark, and Wasepi and soils classified as Udipsamments. The parent material is eolian deposits and outwash, and the soils are poorly to excessively drained and very deep. Soil pH classes are very strongly acid to moderately alkaline. No rooting restrictions are noted for the soils of this ecological site.

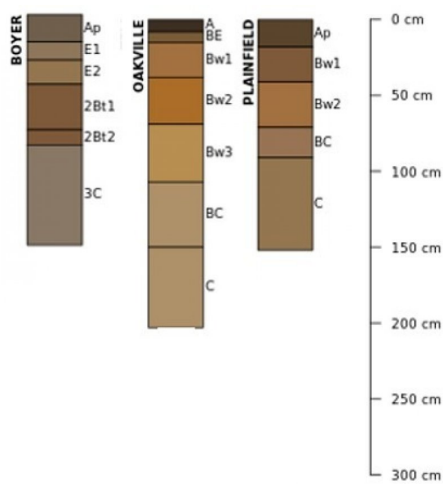


Figure 10. Profile sketches of soil series associated with Sand Woodland.

Table 4. Representative soil features

|                             |                                       |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Parent material             | (1) Eolian deposits<br>(2) Outwash    |
| Family particle size        | (1) Fine-loamy<br>(2) Coarse-loamy    |
| Drainage class              | Poorly drained to excessively drained |
| Permeability class          | Slow to rapid                         |
| Depth to restrictive layer  | 80 in                                 |
| Soil depth                  | 80 in                                 |
| Surface fragment cover <=3" | 0%                                    |
| Surface fragment cover >3"  | 0%                                    |

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| Available water capacity<br>(Depth not specified)        | 3–7 in       |
| Calcium carbonate equivalent<br>(Depth not specified)    | 0–45%        |
| Electrical conductivity<br>(Depth not specified)         | 0–2 mmhos/cm |
| Sodium adsorption ratio<br>(Depth not specified)         | 0            |
| Soil reaction (1:1 water)<br>(Depth not specified)       | 4.5–8.4      |
| Subsurface fragment volume <=3"<br>(Depth not specified) | 0–24%        |
| Subsurface fragment volume >3"<br>(Depth not specified)  | 3–5%         |

## Ecological dynamics

The information in this Ecological Site Description, including the state-and-transition model (STM), was developed based on historical data, current field data, professional experience, and a review of the scientific literature. As a result, all possible scenarios or plant species may not be included. Key indicator plant species, disturbances, and ecological processes are described to inform land management decisions.

The MLRA lies within the tallgrass prairie ecosystem of the Midwest, but a variety of environmental and edaphic factors resulted in landscape that historically supported prairies, savannas, forests, and various wetlands. Sand Woodlands form an aspect of this vegetative continuum. This ecological site occurs on uplands on somewhat poorly to excessively drained soils. Species characteristic of this ecological site consist of an open canopy of oaks with a continuous understory of herbaceous vegetation.

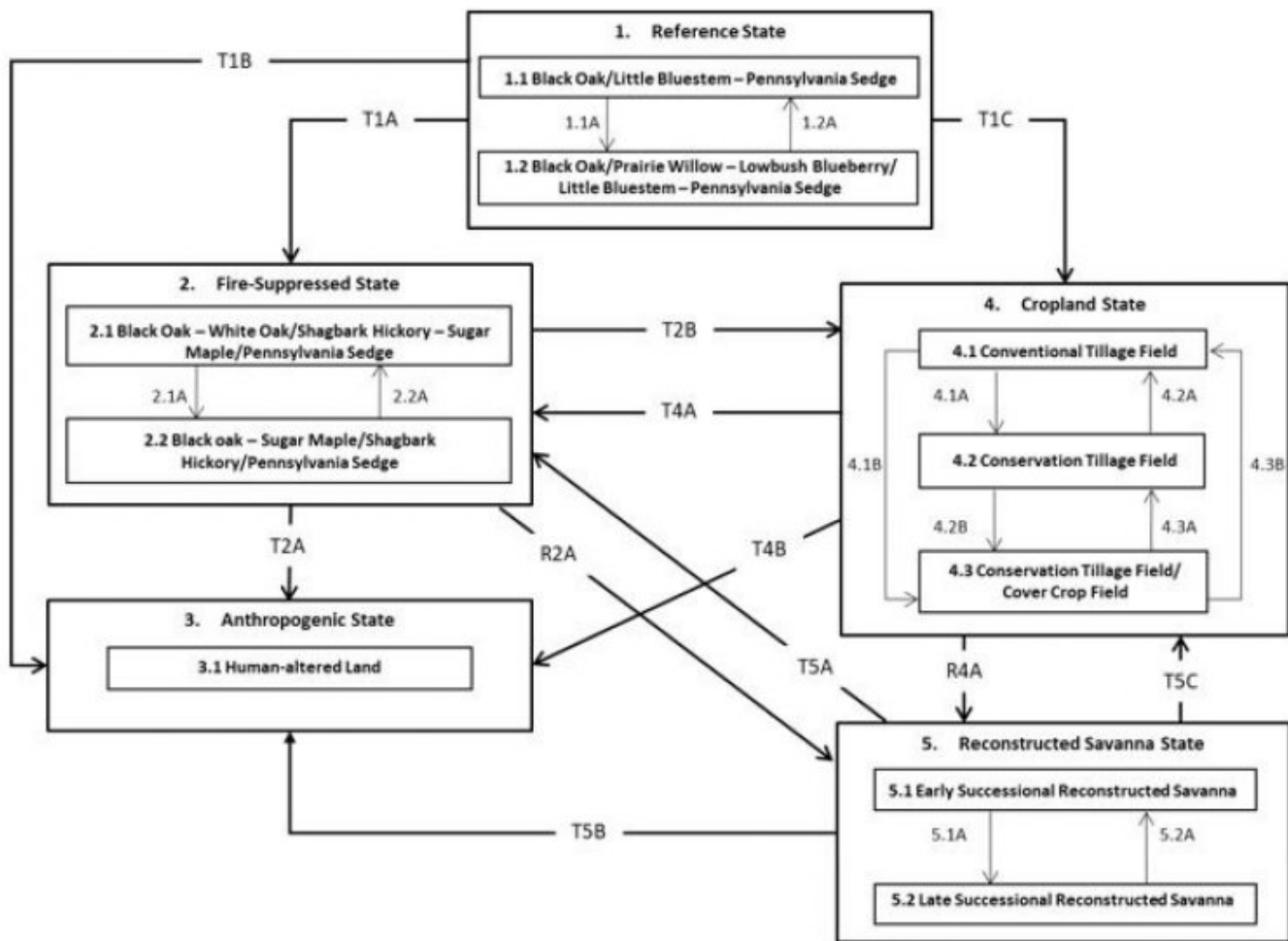
Fire is a critical factor that maintains Sand Woodlands. Fire typically consisted of low- to moderate-severity surface fires every 15 to 25 years (LANDFIRE 2009). Ignition sources included summertime lightning strikes from convective storms and bimodal, human ignitions during the spring and fall seasons. Native Americans regularly set fires to improve sight lines for hunting, drive large game, improve grazing and browsing habitat, agricultural clearing, and enhance vital ethnobotanical plants (Barrett 1980; LANDFIRE 2009).

Drought, grazing, and windthrow have also played a role in shaping this ecological site. The periodic episodes of reduced soil moisture in conjunction with the somewhat poorly to excessively-drained soils have favored the proliferation of plant species tolerant of such conditions. Drought can also slow the growth of plants and result in dieback of certain species. Damage to trees from storms can vary from minor, patchy effects of individual trees to stand effects that temporarily affect community structure and species richness and diversity (Irland 2000; Peterson 2000). When coupled with fire, periods of drought, herbivory, and high wind events can greatly delay the establishment and maturation of woody vegetation (Pyne et al. 1996).

Today, Sand Woodlands have been reduced from their pre-settlement extent as a result of type-conversion to agricultural or other human-modified landscape. Remnants that do exist have had fire suppressed long enough to allow the site to convert to a closed canopy forest. A return to the historic plant community may not be possible following extensive land modification, but long-term conservation agriculture or woodland reconstruction efforts can help to restore some biotic diversity and ecological function. The state-and-transition model that follows provides a detailed description of each state, community phase, pathway, and transition. This model is based on available experimental research, field observations, literature reviews, professional consensus, and interpretations.

## State and transition model

## F110XY016IL SAND WOODLAND



| Code               | Process   |
|--------------------|---|
| 1.1A               | Replacement fire every 20 years   |
| 1.2A               | Fire return interval greater than 25 years                                      |
| T1A, T4A, T5A      | Long-term fire suppression and/or land abandonment                              |
| 2.1A               | Continued fire suppression  |
| 2.2A               | Single large disturbance event such as fire, drought, or windstorm              |
| T1B, T2A, T4B, T5B | Vegetation removal and human alterations/transportation of soils                |
| T1C, T2B, T5C      | Agricultural conversion via tillage, seeding, and non-selective herbicide       |
| 4.1A               | Less tillage, residue management  |
| 4.1B               | Less tillage, residue management, and implementation of cover cropping          |
| 4.2B               | Implementation of cover cropping  |
| 4.2A, 4.3B         | Intensive tillage, remove residue, and reinitiate monoculture row cropping      |
| 4.3A               | Remove cover cropping   |
| R2A, R4A           | Site preparation, tree planting, non-native species control, and native seeding |
| 5.1A               | Invasive species control and implementation of disturbance regimes              |
| 5.2A               | Drought or improper timing/use of management actions                            |

### State 1

#### Reference State

The reference plant community is categorized as an open oak woodland community, dominated by deciduous trees and herbaceous vegetation. The two community phases within the reference state are dependent on recurring fire intervals. The severity and intensity of fire alters species composition, cover, and extent, while regular fire intervals



keep woody species from closing the canopy. Drought, grazing, and windthrow have more localized impacts in the reference phases, but do contribute to overall species composition, diversity, cover, and productivity.

## **Community 1.1**

### **Black Oak/Little Bluestem - Pennsylvania Sedge**

Sites in this reference community phase are an open canopy woodland. Black oak is the dominant tree, on the site. Trees are large (21 to 33 inches DBH) and cover ranges from 61 to 80 percent (LANDFIRE 2009). The open canopy allows for a continuous herbaceous layer. Little bluestem, Pennsylvania sedge, Indiangrass, porcupinegrass are the dominant monocots. Characteristic forbs include flaxleaf whitetop aster, fernleaf yellow false foxglove, and sundial lupine (White and Madany 1978). Surface fires will maintain this phase, but replacement fires every 20 years will shift the community to phase 1.2 (LANDFIRE 2009).

#### **Dominant plant species**

- black oak (*Quercus velutina*), tree
- little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), grass
- Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*), other herbaceous

## **Community 1.2**

### **Black Oak/Prairie Willow - Lowbush Blueberry/Little Bluestem - Pennsylvania Sedge**

This reference community phase represents natural succession as a result of reduced fire return interval. Tree size class remains steady, but canopy cover ranges from 21 to 60 percent shifting the site to a savanna. Shrubs develop due to the increasing light availability and can include prairie willow (*Salix humilis* Marshall), lowbush blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium* Aiton), and New Jersey tea (*Ceanothus americanus* L.) (White and Madany 1978). Surface fires occurring approximately every 20 years will maintain this phase, but fire intervals beyond 25 years will shift it to community phase 1.1 (LANDFIRE 2009).

#### **Dominant plant species**

- black oak (*Quercus velutina*), tree
- prairie willow (*Salix humilis*), shrub
- lowbush blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*), shrub
- little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), grass
- Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*), other herbaceous

## **Pathway 1.1A**

### **Community 1.1 to 1.2**

Replacement fire every 20 years.

## **Pathway 1.2A**

### **Community 1.2 to 1.1**

Fire return interval greater than 25 years.

## **State 2**

### **Fire-Suppressed State**

Long term fire suppression can transition the reference plant community from an open woodland to a closed canopy forest. As the natural fire regime is removed from the landscape, encroachment and dominance by shade-tolerant, fire-intolerant species ensues. This results in a positive feedback loop of mesophication whereby plant community succession continuously creates cool, damp shaded conditions that perpetuate a closed canopy ecosystem (Nowacki and Abrams 2008). Succession to this forested state can occur in as little as 50 years from the last fire (LANDFIRE 2009).

## **Community 2.1**

## **Black Oak - White Oak/Shagbark Hickory - Sugar Maple/Pennsylvania Sedge**

This community phase represents the early stages of long-term fire suppression. The oak canopy increases to 81 to 100 percent cover (LANDFIRE 2009). The subcanopy supports both fire-tolerant and fire-intolerant species including shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata* (Mill.) K. Koch) and sugar maple (*Acer saccharum* L.), respectively. The herbaceous layer diversity is reduced and begins to shift to shade-tolerant species. As fire suppression continues, the site will shift to community phase 2.2.

### **Dominant plant species**

- black oak (*Quercus velutina*), tree
- white oak (*Quercus alba*), tree
- shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata*), shrub
- sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), shrub
- Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*), other herbaceous

## **Community 2.2**

### **Black Oak - Sugar Maple/Shagbark Hickory/Pennsylvania Sedge**

Sites falling into this community phase have a well-established closed forest canopy. Tree size class is still large, but stem density increases (LANDFIRE 2009). Oaks are still present, but seedlings and saplings are greatly reduced or absent as they are unable to develop in the shade of the forest. Under these closed-canopy stands, the subcanopy and herbaceous layers support only the most shade-tolerant species.

### **Dominant plant species**

- black oak (*Quercus velutina*), tree
- sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), tree
- shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata*), shrub
- Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*), other herbaceous

## **Pathway 2.1A**

### **Community 2.1 to 2.2**

Continued fire suppression.

## **Pathway 2.2A**

### **Community 2.2 to 2.1**

Severe disturbance event such as a replacement fire, severe drought, or windstorm.

## **State 3**

### **Anthropogenic State**

The anthropogenic state occurs when the reference state is cleared and developed for human use and inhabitation, such as for commercial and housing developments, landfills, parks, golf courses, cemeteries, earthen spoils, etc. The native vegetation has been removed and soils have either been altered in place (e.g. cemeteries) or transported from one location to another (e.g. housing developments). Most of the soils in this state have 50 to 100 cm of overburden on top of the natural soil. This natural material can be determined by observing a buried surface horizon or the unaltered subsoil, till, or lacustrine parent materials. This state is generally considered permanent.

## **Community 3.1**

### **Human-altered land**

Sites in this community phase have had the native plant community removed and soils heavily re-worked in support of human development projects.

## **State 4**

## **Cropland State**

The continuous use of tillage, row-crop planting, and chemicals (i.e., herbicides, fertilizers, etc.) has effectively eliminated the reference community and many of its natural ecological functions in favor of crop production. Corn and soybeans are the dominant crops for the site, and common wheat (*Triticum aestivum* L.) and alfalfa (*Medicago sativa* L.) may be rotated periodically. These areas are likely to remain in crop production for the foreseeable future.

### **Community 4.1**

#### **Conventional Tillage Field**

Sites in this community phase typically consist of monoculture row-cropping maintained by conventional tillage practices. They are cropped in either continuous corn or corn-soybean rotations. The frequent use of deep tillage, low crop diversity, and bare soil conditions during the non-growing season negatively impacts soil health. Under these practices, soil aggregation is reduced or destroyed, soil organic matter is reduced, erosion and runoff are increased, and infiltration is decreased, which can ultimately lead to undesirable changes in the hydrology of the watershed (Tomer et al. 2005).

### **Community 4.2**

#### **Conservation Tillage Field**

This community phase is characterized by rotational crop production that utilizes various conservation tillage methods to promote soil health and reduce erosion. Conservation tillage methods include strip-till, ridge-till, vertical-till, or no-till planting systems. Strip-till keeps seedbed preparation to narrow bands less than one-third the width of the row where crop residue and soil consolidation are left undisturbed in-between seedbed areas. Strip-till planting may be completed in the fall and nutrient application either occurs simultaneously or at the time of planting. Ridge-till uses specialized equipment to create ridges in the seedbed and vegetative residue is left on the surface in between the ridges. Weeds are controlled with herbicides and/or cultivation, seedbed ridges are rebuilt during cultivation, and soils are left undisturbed from harvest to planting. Vertical-till systems employ machinery that lightly tills the soil and cuts up crop residue, mixing some of the residue into the top few inches of the soil while leaving a large portion on the surface. No-till management is the most conservative, disturbing soils only at the time of planting and fertilizer application. Compared to conventional tillage systems, conservation tillage methods can improve soil ecosystem function by reducing soil erosion, increasing organic matter and water availability, improving water quality, and reducing soil compaction.

### **Community 4.3**

#### **Conservation Tillage Field/Alternative Crop Field**

This community phase applies conservation tillage methods as described above as well as adds cover crop practices. Cover crops typically include nitrogen-fixing species (e.g., legumes), small grains (e.g., rye, wheat, oats), or forage covers (e.g., turnips, radishes, rapeseed). The addition of cover crops not only adds plant diversity but also promotes soil health by reducing soil erosion, limiting nitrogen leaching, suppressing weeds, increasing soil organic matter, and improving the overall soil ecosystem. In the case of small grain cover crops, surface cover and water infiltration are increased, while forage covers can be used to graze livestock or support local wildlife. Of the three community phases for this state, this phase promotes the greatest soil sustainability and improves ecological functioning within a cropland system.

### **Pathway 4.1A**

#### **Community 4.1 to 4.2**

Tillage operations are greatly reduced, crop rotation occurs on a regular interval, and crop residue remains on the soil surface.

### **Pathway 4.1B**

#### **Community 4.1 to 4.3**

Tillage operations are greatly reduced or eliminated, crop rotation occurs on a regular interval, crop residue remains on the soil surface, and cover crops are planted following crop harvest.

## **Pathway 4.2A**

### **Community 4.2 to 4.1**

Intensive tillage is utilized, and monoculture row-cropping is established.

## **Pathway 4.2B**

### **Community 4.2 to 4.3**

Cover crops are implemented to minimize soil erosion.

## **Pathway 4.3B**

### **Community 4.3 to 4.1**

Intensive tillage is utilized, cover crop practices are abandoned, monoculture row-cropping is established, and crop rotation is reduced or eliminated.

## **Pathway 4.3A**

### **Community 4.3 to 4.2**

Cover crop practices are abandoned.

## **State 5**

### **Reconstructed Sand Woodland State**

The combination of natural and anthropogenic disturbances occurring today has resulted in numerous forest health issues, and restoration back to the historic reference condition may not be possible. Woodlands are being stressed by non-native diseases and pests, habitat fragmentation, changes in soil conditions, and overabundant deer populations on top of naturally occurring disturbances (severe weather and native pests) (IFDC 2018). However, these habitats provide multiple ecosystem services including carbon sequestration; clean air and water; soil conservation; biodiversity support; wildlife habitat; timber, fiber, and fuel products; as well as a variety of cultural activities (e.g., hiking, camping, hunting) (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2005; IFDC 2018). Therefore, conservation of forests and woodlands should still be pursued. Woodland reconstructions are an important tool for repairing natural ecological functioning and providing habitat protection for numerous species associated with Sand Woodlands. Therefore, ecological restoration should aim to aid the recovery of degraded, damaged, or destroyed ecosystems. A successful restoration will have the ability to structurally and functionally sustain itself, demonstrate resilience to the ranges of stress and disturbance, and create and maintain positive biotic and abiotic interactions (SER 2002). The reconstructed sand woodland state is the result of a long-term commitment involving a multi-step, adaptive management process.

## **Community 5.1**

### **Early Successional Reconstructed Woodland**

This community phase represents the early community assembly from woodland reconstruction. It is highly dependent on the current condition of the site based on past and current land management actions, invasive species, and proximity to land populated with non-native pests and diseases. Therefore, no two sites will have the same early successional composition. Technical forestry assistance should be sought to develop suitable conservation management plans.

## **Community 5.2**

### **Late Successional Reconstructed Woodland**

Appropriately timed management practices (e.g., prescribed fire, hazardous fuels management, forest stand improvement, continuing integrated pest management) applied to the early successional community phase can help increase the stand maturity, pushing the site into a late successional community phase over time. A late successional reconstructed woodland will have an uneven-aged canopy and a well-developed shrub layer and understory.

**Pathway 5.1A**  
**Community 5.1 to 5.2**

Application of stand improvement practices in line with a developed management plan.

**Pathway 5.2A**  
**Community 5.2 to 5.1**

Reconstruction experiences a setback from extreme weather event or improper timing of management actions.

**Transition T1A**  
**State 1 to 2**

Long-term suppression transitions the site to the fire-suppressed state (2).

**Transition T1B**  
**State 1 to 3**

Vegetation removal and human alterations/transportation of soils transitions the site to the anthropogenic state (3).

**Transition T1C**  
**State 1 to 4**

Tillage, seeding of agricultural crops, and non-selective herbicide transition the site to the cropland state (4).

**Transition T2A**  
**State 2 to 3**

Vegetation removal and human alterations/transportation of soils transitions the site to the anthropogenic state (3).

**Transition T2B**  
**State 2 to 4**

Tillage, seeding of agriculture crops, and non-selective herbicide transition this site to the cropland state (4).

**Restoration pathway R2A**  
**State 2 to 5**

Site preparation, tree planting, invasive species control, and seeding native species transition this site to the reconstructed sand woodland state (5).

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

Land abandonment transitions the site to the fire-suppressed state (2).

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

Vegetation removal and human alterations/transportation of soils transitions the site to the anthropogenic state (3).

**Restoration pathway R4A**  
**State 4 to 5**

Site preparation, tree planting, invasive species control, and seeding native species transition this site to the reconstructed sand woodland state (5).

## **Transition T5A**

### **State 5 to 2**

Fire suppression and removal of active management transitions this site to the fire-suppressed state (2).

## **Transition T5B**

### **State 5 to 3**

Vegetation removal and human alterations/transportation of soils transitions the site to the anthropogenic state (3).

## **Transition T5C**

### **State 5 to 4**

Tillage, seeding of agricultural crops, and non-selective herbicide transition this site to the cropland state (4).

## **Additional community tables**

### **Inventory data references**

No field plots were available for this site. A review of the scientific literature and professional experience were used to approximate the plant communities for this provisional ecological site. Information for the state-and-transition model was obtained from the same sources. All community phases are considered provisional based on these plots and the sources identified in this ecological site description.

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## **Approval**

Chris Tecklenburg, 4/22/2020

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state and community phases of the state-and-transition model, providing peer review and technical editing, and conducting quality control and quality assurance reviews.

Table 6. List of primary contributors and reviewers.

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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)                    |                   |
| Contact for lead author                     |                   |
| Date  | 05/11/2025        |
| Approved by                                 | Chris Tecklenburg |
| 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:

---

### 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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