

Ecological site F126XY002OH Foothslopes

Last updated: 9/27/2024
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.

MLRA notes

Major Land Resource Area (MLRA): 126X—Central Allegheny Plateau

This ecosite is found on hills and plateau in MLRA 126. Steep slopes are dominant, but level to gently rolling plateau remnants are conspicuous in throughout the area. The area is dominantly forest, containing large blocks of state forest, game lands, and national forest. Less than one-tenth of the MLRA consists of urban areas.

This narrative was created from the Landfire Biophysical Setting (BpS) description

Classification relationships

USDA-NRCS (USDA 2006):

Land Resource Region (LRR): N—East and Central Farming and Forest Region

Major Land Resource Area (MLRA): 126—Central Allegheny Plateau

USDA-FS (Cleland et al. 2007)

Province: 221 - Eastern Broadleaf Province

Section: 221E - Southern Unglaciaded Allegheny Plateau

Subsection: 221Ea - Pittsburgh Low Plateau

221Eb - Teays Plateau

221Ec - Ohio Valley Lowland

221Ed - East Hocking Plateau

This site crosswalks to Landfire biophysical setting (BpS) South-Central Interior Mesophytic Forest

NatureServe's description (2007) for the equivalent ecological system CES 202.887 South-Central Interior Mesophytic Forest & CES 202.373 Southern and Central Appalachian Cove Forest

South-Central Interior Mesophytic Forest

Component Associations

Association Unique ID Association Name

CEGL002411 *Fagus grandifolia* - *Acer saccharum* - *Liriodendron tulipifera* Unglaciaded Forest

CEGL004741 *Acer saccharum* - *Carya ovata* - *Juglans nigra* / *Symphoricarpos orbiculatus* / *Galium circaezans* Forest

CEGL004767 *Tsuga canadensis* - (*Liriodendron tulipifera*, *Fagus grandifolia*) / (*Magnolia macrophylla*, *Ilex opaca*) / *Polystichum acrostichoides* Forest

CEGL005043 *Tsuga canadensis* - *Fagus grandifolia* - *Acer saccharum* / (*Hamamelis virginiana*, *Kalmia latifolia*) Forest

CEGL005222 *Liriodendron tulipifera* - *Tilia americana* var. *heterophylla* - *Aesculus flava* - *Acer saccharum* / (*Magnolia tripetala*) Forest

CEGL006144 *Quercus alba* - *Fagus grandifolia* Western Allegheny Plateau Forest

CEGL006201 *Acer saccharum* - *Liriodendron tulipifera* - *Fraxinus americana* / *Staphylea trifolia* Forest

CEGL006237 *Acer saccharum* - *Fraxinus americana* - *Tilia americana* - *Liriodendron tulipifera* / *Actaea racemosa* Forest

CEGL007200 *Fagus grandifolia* Ridge and Valley Forest

CEGL007201 *Fagus grandifolia* - *Liriodendron tulipifera* / *Euonymus americanus* / *Athyrium filix-femina* ssp. *asplenioides* Forest

CEGL007213 *Quercus alba* - *Fagus grandifolia* / *Hydrangea quercifolia* - *Viburnum acerifolium* / *Carex picta* - *Polystichum acrostichoides* Forest

CEGL007220 *Liriodendron tulipifera* / (*Cercis canadensis*) / (*Lindera benzoin*) Ruderal Forest

CEGL007233 *Quercus alba* - *Quercus rubra* - *Carya ovalis* / *Acer saccharum* / *Polystichum acrostichoides* Forest

CEGL007698 *Quercus rubra* - *Acer saccharum* - *Tilia americana* var. *heterophylla* - *Aesculus flava* - (*Cladrastis kentukea*) Forest

CEGL007879 *Juglans nigra* / *Verbesina alternifolia* Ruderal Forest

CEGL007881 *Fagus grandifolia* - *Quercus alba* / *Cornus florida* Forest

CEGL008428 *Quercus alba* - (*Liriodendron tulipifera*, *Liquidambar styraciflua*) / *Calycanthus floridus* / *Athyrium filix-femina* Forest

CEGL008488 *Quercus rubra* - *Tilia americana* var. *heterophylla* - *Carya carolinae-septentrionalis* / *Acer* (*barbatum*, *leucoderme*) / *Hydrangea quercifolia* Forest

Southern and Central Appalachian Cove Forest

Component Associations

Association Unique ID Association Name

CEGL004293 *Impatiens* (*capensis*, *pallida*) - *Monarda didyma* - *Rudbeckia laciniata* var. *humilis* Herbaceous Vegetation

CEGL004296 *Diphylleia cymosa* - *Saxifraga micranthidifolia* - *Laportea canadensis* Herbaceous Vegetation

CEGL004982 *Betula alleghaniensis* - *Tilia americana* var. *heterophylla* / *Acer spicatum* / *Ribes cynosbati* / *Dryopteris marginalis* Forest

CEGL006186 *Liriodendron tulipifera* - *Quercus rubra* - *Fraxinus americana* / *Asimina triloba* / *Actaea racemosa* - *Uvularia perfoliata* Forest

CEGL006237 *Acer saccharum* - *Fraxinus americana* - *Tilia americana* - *Liriodendron tulipifera* / *Actaea racemosa* Forest

CEGL006304 *Liriodendron tulipifera* - *Pinus strobus* - *Tsuga canadensis* - *Quercus* (*rubra*, *alba*) / *Polystichum acrostichoides* Forest

CEGL006472 *Tilia americana* var. *heterophylla* - *Aesculus flava* - *Acer saccharum* / *Cystopteris bulbifera* - *Asarum canadense* Forest

CEGL007102 *Pinus strobus* - *Tsuga canadensis* / *Rhododendron maximum* - (*Leucothoe fontanesiana*) Forest

CEGL007136 *Tsuga canadensis* / *Rhododendron maximum* - (*Clethra acuminata*, *Leucothoe fontanesiana*) Forest

CEGL007220 *Liriodendron tulipifera* / (*Cercis canadensis*) / (*Lindera benzoin*) Ruderal Forest

CEGL007233 *Quercus alba* - *Quercus rubra* - *Carya ovalis* / *Acer saccharum* / *Polystichum acrostichoides* Forest

CEGL007291 *Liriodendron tulipifera* - *Tilia americana* var. *heterophylla* - (*Aesculus flava*) / *Actaea racemosa* Forest

CEGL007543 *Liriodendron tulipifera* - *Betula lenta* - *Tsuga canadensis* / *Rhododendron maximum* Forest

CEGL007693 *Tsuga canadensis* - *Halesia tetraptera* - (*Fagus grandifolia*, *Magnolia fraseri*) / *Rhododendron maximum* / *Dryopteris intermedia* Forest

CEGL007695 *Aesculus flava* - *Acer saccharum* - (*Fraxinus americana*, *Tilia americana* var. *heterophylla*) / *Hydrophyllum canadense* - *Solidago flexicaulis* Forest

CEGL007710 *Liriodendron tulipifera* - *Fraxinus americana* - (*Tilia americana*, *Aesculus flava*) / *Actaea racemosa* - *Laportea canadensis* Forest

CEGL007711 *Tilia americana* var. *heterophylla* - *Fraxinus americana* - (*Ulmus rubra*) / *Sanguinaria canadensis* - (*Aquilegia canadensis*, *Asplenium rhizophyllum*) Forest

CEGL007878 *Quercus rubra* - *Tilia americana* var. *heterophylla* - (*Halesia tetraptera* var. *monticola*) / *Collinsonia canadensis* - *Prosartes lanuginosa* Forest

CEGL008407 *Tsuga canadensis* - (*Fagus grandifolia*, *Tilia americana* var. *heterophylla*) / *Magnolia tripetala* Forest

CEGL008412 *Acer* (*nigrum*, *saccharum*) - *Tilia americana* / *Asimina triloba* / *Jeffersonia diphylla* - *Caulophyllum thalictroides* Forest

CEGL008510 *Liriodendron tulipifera* - *Quercus rubra* - *Magnolia acuminata* / *Cornus florida* Forest

CEGL008512 *Tsuga canadensis* - *Quercus prinus* - *Liriodendron tulipifera* / *Kalmia latifolia* - (*Rhododendron catawbiense*) Forest

Ecological site concept

These sites generally occur on uplands with MAAT > 45 degree F. These lands are typically concave surface morphometry

From Landfire <http://www.landfire.gov/index.php>:

Geographic Range

The mixed-mesophytic forest region (Küchler 1964) is located in two of Bailey’s ecoregion sections (McNab and Avers 1994). It includes the southern portion of the Southern Unglaciated Allegheny Plateau Section (southeastern OH, western West VA, northeastern KY). It also covers the Northern Cumberland Plateau Section (eastern KY and east-central TN; and southern Blue Ridge ecoregion, and a very small portion in northeast AL and northwest GA). There are also scattered occurrences in northwestern and central PA (C.E. Williams, G. Nowacki personal communication). In the southern limits of this forest type, one might find this more restricted to more northerly aspects.

These high-diversity, predominately deciduous forests occur on deep and enriched soils (in some cases due to, or enhanced by, the presence of limestone or related base-rich geology), usually in somewhat protected landscape positions such as coves or lower slopes. The core distribution of this system lies in the Cumberland and Allegheny plateaus, extending into the adjacent southern Ridge and Valley and portions of the Interior Low Plateau where it is located entirely south of the glacial boundary.

Biophysical Site Description

Mixed mesophytic forests occur on moist, topographically protected areas (e.g. coves, v-shaped valleys, N and E facing toe slopes) within highly dissected hills and mountains. On slopes it forms a mosaic with pyrogenic oak-hickory forests, whereby mixed mesophytic forests are restricted to the most protected coves and oak-hickory occurs on the interfluves. These Plateaus are mature and dissected, most of the landscape consisting of high hills and narrow valleys. Elevations range from 650 to 1,300ft in the Allegheny Plateau and from 1,270 to 2,000ft in the Cumberland Plateau (McNab and Avers 1994). The dissected topography creates strong gradients in microclimate and soil moisture and fertility at the local (watershed) scale (Hutchins et al. 1976, Iverson et al. 1997, Morris and Boerner 1998). In the absence of frequent or catastrophic disturbance, these environmental gradients determine forest composition (Hutchins et al. 1976, Muller 1982, Iverson et al. 1997, Dyer 2001).

These forests occupy the transition zone from the oak-hickory forest to the northern hardwood forest. They are among the most diverse in the US containing more than 30 canopy tree species. This type lies west of the Appalachians and transitions from the more northern sugar maple-beech-birch forest in northern West VA, southwestern PA (lesser extent in northwestern and central PA), and southern OH southward down the Allegheny Mountains, across the Allegheny Plateau including all of the Cumberland Plateau, and into northern AL where it transitions to the oak-hickory-pine type of the Southern Mixed Hardwood Forest (Brown et al. 2000). Two major and distinct forest types within this BpS are typically recognized: mixed-oak and mixed-mesophytic. This model focuses on the mixed-mesophytic type.

Associated sites

F126XY004OH	Side Slope Side Slopes
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Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	(1) <i>Acer saccharum</i> (2) <i>Quercus rubra</i>
Shrub	(1) <i>Actaea racemosa</i>
Herbaceous	Not specified

Physiographic features

Colluvial soils on footslopes, benches, or toeslopes.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Hills > Plateau (2) Hills > Hill
Runoff class	Very low to very high
Elevation	152–305 m
Slope	0–35%
Water table depth	38–183 cm
Aspect	Aspect is not a significant factor

Climatic features

The regional climate of the unglaciated Central Allegheny Plateau is predominately a humid continental climate grading at the extreme southwestern corner a to humid temperate climate with hot summers and cool winters (Beck et al., 2018; Bailey, 2014). However, the local climate is highly influenced by the dissected terrain, where climatic variations may be greater at the local scale, e.g., cooler temperatures and shorter growing season at higher elevations and more northerly latitudes. High-intensity, convective thunderstorms are common in summer. Winter precipitation is mostly snow.

Climate change is occurring, and the resiliency of any ecological site will depend upon the direct and indirect effects upon component species and shifting atmospheric and soil conditions.

Table 3. Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (characteristic range)	139-168 days
Freeze-free period (characteristic range)	167-198 days
Precipitation total (characteristic range)	1,016-1,092 mm
Frost-free period (actual range)	131-171 days
Freeze-free period (actual range)	156-201 days
Precipitation total (actual range)	991-1,143 mm
Frost-free period (average)	151 days
Freeze-free period (average)	184 days
Precipitation total (average)	1,067 mm

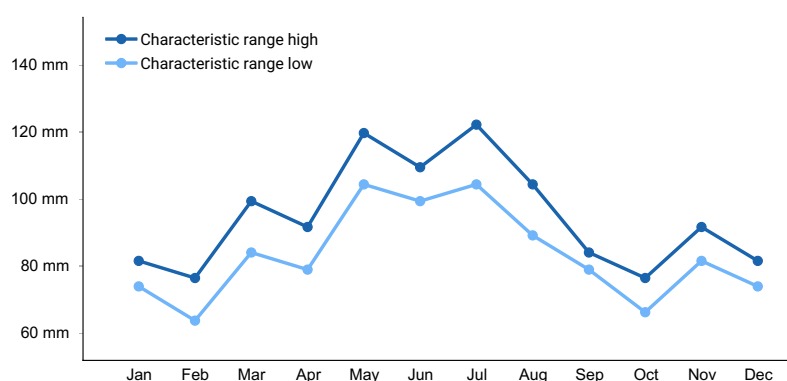


Figure 1. Monthly precipitation range

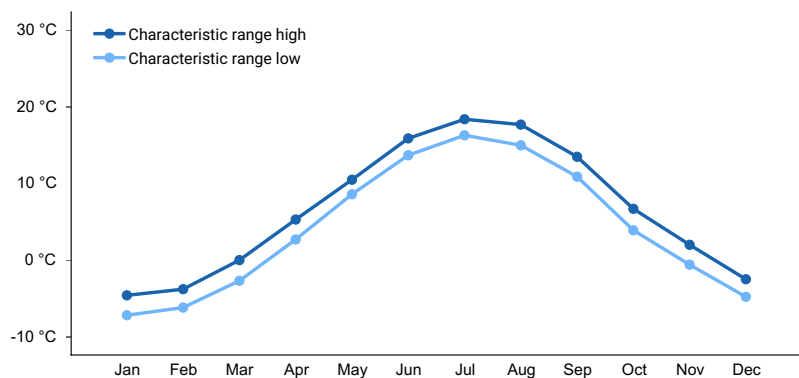


Figure 2. Monthly minimum temperature range

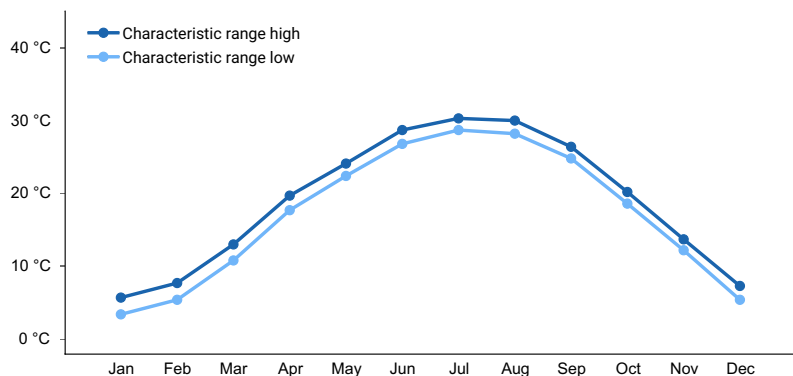


Figure 3. Monthly maximum temperature range

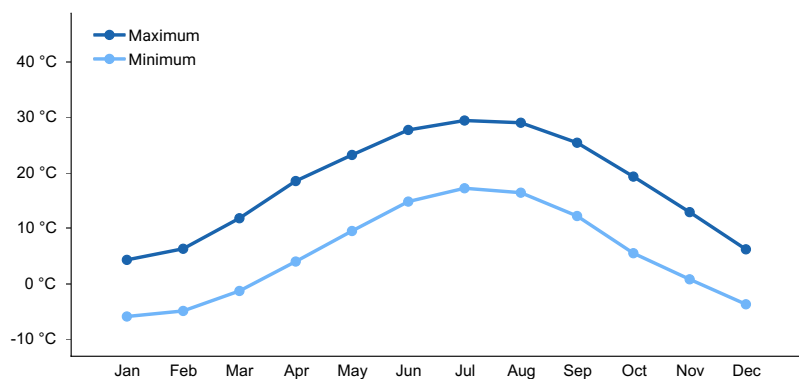


Figure 4. Monthly average minimum and maximum temperature

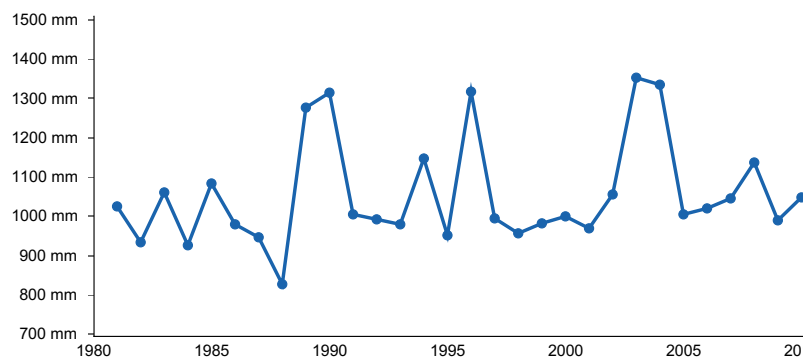


Figure 5. Annual precipitation pattern

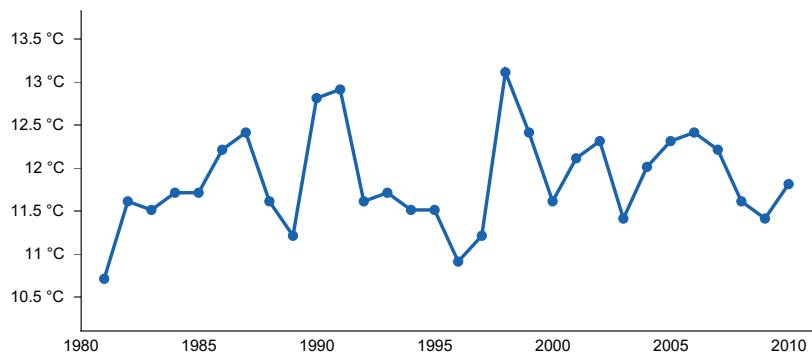


Figure 6. Annual average temperature pattern

Climate stations used

- (1) WHEELING [USC00469482], Wheeling, WV
- (2) SENECAVILLE LAKE [USC00337559], Senecaville, OH
- (3) CALDWELL 3 SE [USC00331175], Caldwell, OH
- (4) HANNIBAL L&D [USC00333500], New Martinsville, OH
- (5) WAYNESBURG 1 E [USC00369367], Waynesburg, PA
- (6) WEST UNION 2 [USC00469458], West Union, WV
- (7) PARKERSBURG [USW00013867], Parkersburg, WV
- (8) WINFIELD LOCKS [USC00469683], Red House, WV
- (9) PEA RIDGE PSD [USC00466912], Huntington, WV
- (10) HUNTINGTON SEWAGE PLT [USC00464397], Kenova, WV
- (11) LOYALHANNA LAKE [USC00365212], New Alexandria, PA
- (12) PITTSBURGH INTL AP [USW00094823], Coraopolis, PA

Influencing water features

Water features are not typically associated with this ecological site, but can be incidental.

Wetland description

N/A

Soil features

Colluvial soils on footslopes, benches, or toeslopes less than 35%.

Table 4. Representative soil features

Parent material	(1) Colluvium
Surface texture	(1) Silt loam (2) Silty clay loam
Drainage class	Somewhat poorly drained to well drained
Permeability class	Very slow to moderate
Depth to restrictive layer	53–183 cm
Surface fragment cover ≤3"	0%
Surface fragment cover >3"	1–9%
Available water capacity (7.6-17.8cm)	Not specified
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (8.9-21.3cm)	Not specified

Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (10.2-88.9cm)	Not specified
Subsurface fragment volume >3" (2.5-139.7cm)	Not specified

Ecological dynamics

Information contained in this section was adapted from several sources. The information presented is representative of very complex vegetation communities. Key indicator plants, animals and ecological processes are described to help inform land management decisions. Plant communities will differ across the MLRA because of the naturally occurring variability in weather, soils, and aspect. The reference plant community is not necessarily the management goal. The species lists are representative and are not botanical descriptions of all species occurring, or potentially occurring, on this site. They are not intended to cover every situation or the full range of conditions, species, and responses for the site.

From Landfire [http://www.landfire.gov/index.php:Vegetation Description](http://www.landfire.gov/index.php:Vegetation%20Description)

A diverse closed-canopy forest with dominant species including: beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), tulip-poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), American basswood (*Tilia americana* var. *heterophylla*), sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), yellow buckeye (*Aesculus flava*), *Magnolia acuminata*, and *Juglans nigra*, red oak (*Quercus rubra*), white oak (*Q. alba*) and formerly American chestnut (*Castanea dentata*) (Braun 1950, Muller 1982). The oak component tends to grade from white oaks in the southern areas to red and black oaks in the northern geographic range of this forest type. *Tsuga canadensis* may be a minor component of some stands. Trees may grow very large in undisturbed areas. In the northern areas, both white (*Fraxinus americana*) and green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*) can be up to 10-15% of forest type (C. Emanuel, personal communication). This forest type developed primarily on mesic, sheltered landscapes positions (e.g., lower slopes, coves, ravines) but also occurred on some dry-mesic slopes, where presumably fire was infrequent (Wade et al. 2000).

Adjacency or Identification Concerns

Mapping mixed mesophytic forests would likely focus on specific topographic positions, such as coves, valley bottoms typically v-shaped (excluding broad u-shaped floodplains), lower north and east facing slopes; sometimes west and south facing lower slopes where moisture permits; wet-mesic to mesic conditions on the landscape; rich fertile conditions/sites; shaded topographic positions (Nowacki personal communication). On side slopes, mixed mesophytic forest interbraid with oak-hickory forests, with mixed-mesophytic occurring in v-notches and coves (drainages) and oak-hickory on interfluves.

Uncharacteristic types (structure/composition/etc.) that may frequently occur today in this BpS include: non-native invasive species (plants, animals, insects, pathogens, etc.), deer herbivory (limiting species composition and structure), and historical fire suppression.

This forest type grades into Northeastern Interior Dry-Mesic Oak Forest (1303) - where this forest type grades into northern sites when soils are drier (shallower soils, sandier parent material), and as elevation is increased. In contrast the South-Central Interior Mesophytic Forest (1320) has gentler slopes with soils featuring a higher water holding capacity.

Issues or Problems

Though Küchler (1964) mapped and described this region as mixed-mesophytic, witness tree data (from early land surveys) and studies of old-growth forests suggest that mixed-oak forests were more abundant than mixed-mesophytic forests in many areas prior to European settlement (Beatley 1959, McCarthy et al. 1987, Abrams et al. 1995, Dyer 2001, McCarthy et al. 2001, Rentch et al. 2003). Delineating the potential boundaries of 'mixed-mesophytic' forest type today should recognize that this boundary is influenced by human management interactions: historic logging and high-grading, the absence of fire, deer populations (herbivory), and non-native invasive species (plants, animals, insects and disease).

Native Uncharacteristic Conditions

Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) is a significant invader in these sites, due to its ability to persist in fairly intact canopy as well as its high water demand (K. Brown, personal communication).

State and transition model

State and Transition Diagram

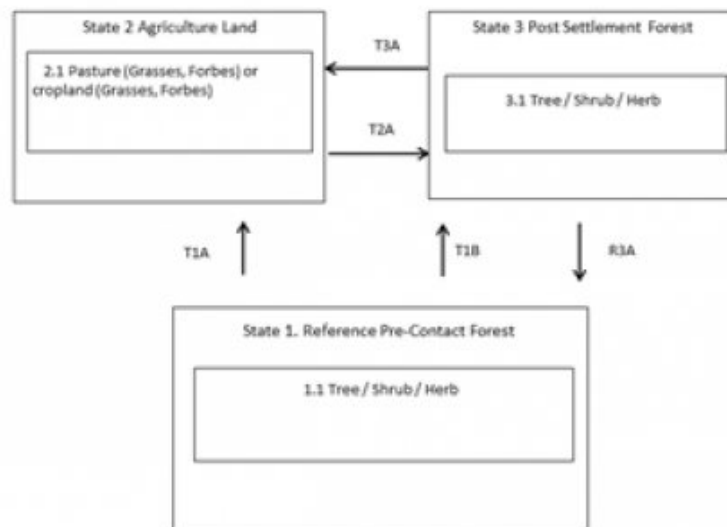


Figure 7. State and Transition

Legend

- T1A, T3A Clearcutting to convert to agricultural land.
- T1B Logging and fire suppression.
- T2A Agriculture abandonment and regrowth of forest
- R3A Eliminate undesirable species with herbicides, cutting or prescribed fire

Figure 8. Legend

State 1 Reference Pre-Contact Forest

The reference state can be represented by several communities within the Northeastern Interior Dry-Mesic Oak Forest (Natureserve, 2007). Forest overstory canopies are oak dominated and generally closed canopy.

Community 1.1 Tree/Shrub/Herb

Chestnut Oak-Black Oak/American Witch hazel Forest best captures the nature of this vegetation state. The dominate overstory canopy consist of Oaks with minor canopy coverage of Hickory. The shrub layer contains American Witch Hazel, greenbrier and ericads. The herb layer will contain flowering forbes (asters and goldenrod), ferns (woodferns) and grasses (native fescue, povertygrass).

State 2

Post Settlemet Forest

This forest vegetation community is the result of removing fire from the landscape, and poor logging techniques (high grading). Following European settlement fire as a management tool was abandoned and mesophication of the vegetation took place.

Community 2.1

Tree/Shrub/Herb

Maple and Red Oak Forest best captures the nature of this vegetation state. The dominate overstory canopy consist of Maple and Oak with minor canopy coverage of Basswood. The shrub layer contains Maple leafed viburnum, rubus and black banebery. The herb layer will contain flowering forbes (asters and goldenrod), ferns (woodferns), grasses (native fescue, povertygrass)and sedges.

Community 2.2

Tree/Shrub/Herb

Maple and Red Oak Forest best captures the nature of this vegetation state. The dominate overstory canopy consist of Maple and Oak with minor canopy coverage of Basswood. The shrub layer contains Maple leafed viburnum, rubus and black banebery. The herb layer will contain flowering forbes (asters and goldenrod), ferns (woodferns), grasses (native fescue, povertygrass)and sedges.

State 3

Agricultural Land

Land managed for agricultural production of crops and livestock.

Community 3.1

Pasture (Grasses, Forbes) or Cropland (Grasses, Forbes)

This community phase may contain a wide variety of plants depending on the level of management. In pasture circumstances that are managed tall fescue, bluegrass and white clover will dominate the vegetation canopy. Without management such as prescribed grazing, nutrient management and weed control, less desirable forage species and weeds will invade.

Transition T1A

State 1 to 2

The site is logged and managed for agricultural land.

Transition T1B

State 1 to 3

The site is logged and fire is suppressed allowing mesophication to occur.

Restoration pathway R3A

State 2 to 1

Remove undesirable species using herbicides, cutting or prescribed fire. Plant desired species if absent from the site.

Transition T3A

State 2 to 2

The site is logged and managed for agricultural land.

Transition T2A

State 3 to 3

The site agricultural management is abandoned and forest regrowth occurs through natural succession or tree planting.

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.

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Contributors

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Approval

Greg Schmidt, 9/27/2024

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	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:**
