USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Ecological site F144AY038NY
Semi-Rich Moist Till Uplands

Last updated: 10/04/2024
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): 144A–New England and Eastern New York Upland, Southern Part

MLRA 144A: New England and Eastern New York Upland, Southern Part
The eastern half of the eastern part of this MLRA is in the Seaboard Lowland Section of the New England Province of the Appalachian Highlands. The western half of the eastern part and the southeastern half of the western part are in the New England Upland Section of the same province and division. The northwestern half of the western part is in the Hudson Valley Section of the Valley and Ridge Province of the Appalachian Highlands. This MLRA is a very scenic area of rolling to hilly uplands that are broken by many gently sloping to level valleys that terminate in coastal lowlands. Elevation ranges from sea level to 1,000 feet (0 to 305 meters) in much of the area, but it is 2,000 feet (610 meters) on some hills. Relief is mostly about 6 to 65 feet (2 to 20 meters) in the valleys and about 80 to 330 feet (25 to 100 meters) in the uplands.
This area has been glaciated and consists almost entirely of till hills, drumlins, and bedrock-controlled uplands with a mantle of till. It is dissected by narrow glacio-fluvial valleys. The southernmost boundary of the area marks the farthest southward extent of Wisconsinian glaciation on the eastern seaboard. The river valleys and coastal plains are filled with glacial lake sediments, marine sediments, and glacial outwash. The bedrock in the eastern half of the area consists primarily of igneous and metamorphic rocks of early Paleozoic age. Granite is the most common igneous rock, and gneiss, schist, and slate are the most common metamorphic rocks. In the parts of the MLRA in eastern and southeastern New York, Devonian- to Pennsylvanian-age sandstone, shale, and limestone are dominant. Carbonate rocks, primarily dolomite and limestone, are the dominant kinds of bedrock in the part of this MLRA in northwestern Connecticut.

Classification relationships

USDA-NRCS (USDA 2006):
Land Resource Region (LRR): N—East and Central Farming and Forest Region
Major Land Resource Area (MLRA): 144A— New England and Eastern New York Upland, Southern Part.

USDA-FS (Cleland et al. 2007)
Province: 221 - Eastern Broadleaf Province
Section: 221A - Lower New England
Subsection: 221Aa – Boston Basin
221Ac – Narragansett-Bristol Lowland and Islands
221Ad – Southern New England Coastal Lowland
221Ae – Hudson Highlands
221Ag - Southeast New England Coastal Hills and Plains
221Ah - Worcester-Monadnock Plateau
221Ai – Gulf of Maine Coastal Plain
221Ak - Gulf of Maine Coastal Lowland
Section: 221B – Hudson Valley
Subsection: 221Ba – Hudson Limestone Valley

221Bb - Miami – Taconic Foothills
221Bc – Hudson Glacial Lake Plains

Ecological site concept

The Semi Rich Moist Till Uplands ecological site The site consists of very deep, moderately well drained loamy soils formed in melt-out till derived mostly from limestone. They occur on till plains, hills and low ridges. Slopes range from 0 to 15 percent. Soil pH is considered circumneutral (pH 5.6-8.4). Representative soils are Amenia and Georgia. The reference plant community is typified by a sugar maple-basswood (*Acer saccharum*- Tilea americana) forest with a rich herbaceous understory of many spring ephemerals and ferns.

Associated sites

F144AY036NY	**Semi-Rich Well Drained Till Uplands**
F144AY039NY	**Semi-Rich Wet Till Depressions**

Similar sites

F144AY033MA	**Shallow Dry Till Uplands**

Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	(1) *Acer saccharum* (2) *Fraxinus americana*
Shrub	(1) *Acer pensylvanicum*
Herbaceous	(1) *Caulophyllum thalictroides*

Physiographic features

The site occurs on till plains, hills, and ridges; it is not subject to flooding.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Upland > Hill (2) Drumlinoid ridge
Runoff class	Low to medium
Flooding frequency	None
Ponding frequency	None
Elevation	3–1,200 ft
Slope	0–15%
Water table depth	18–27 in
Aspect	Aspect is not a significant factor

Climatic features

The Koppen-Geiger climate classification of the area in which this MLRA occurs varies between Dfb (Warm-summer humid continental) in the North, and Dfa (Hot-summer humid continental) in the southern portion of the MLRA. Precipitation is usually uniformly distributed throughout the year. Near the coast, however, it is slightly lower in summer. Precipitation is slightly higher in spring and fall in inland areas. Rainfall occurs as high-intensity, convective thunderstorms during the summer. During the winter, most of the precipitation occurs as moderate-intensity storms (northeasters) that produce large amounts of rain or snow. The freeze-free period increases in length to the south.

Table 3. Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (characteristic range)	114-134 days
Freeze-free period (characteristic range)	145-167 days
Precipitation total (characteristic range)	41-51 in
Frost-free period (actual range)	112-145 days
Freeze-free period (actual range)	141-184 days
Precipitation total (actual range)	40-53 in
Frost-free period (average)	126 days
Freeze-free period (average)	158 days
Precipitation total (average)	46 in

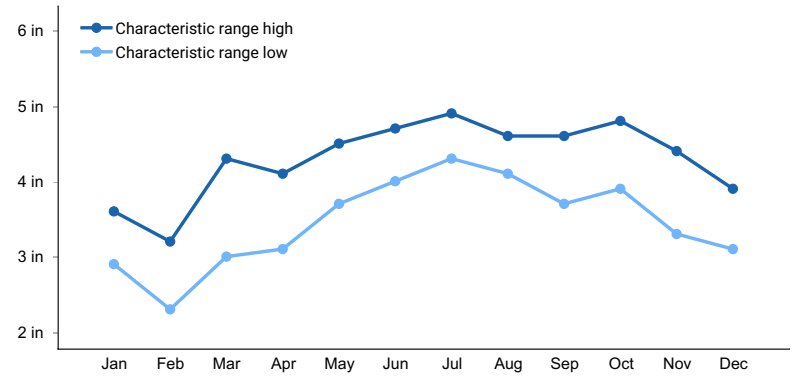


Figure 1. Monthly precipitation range

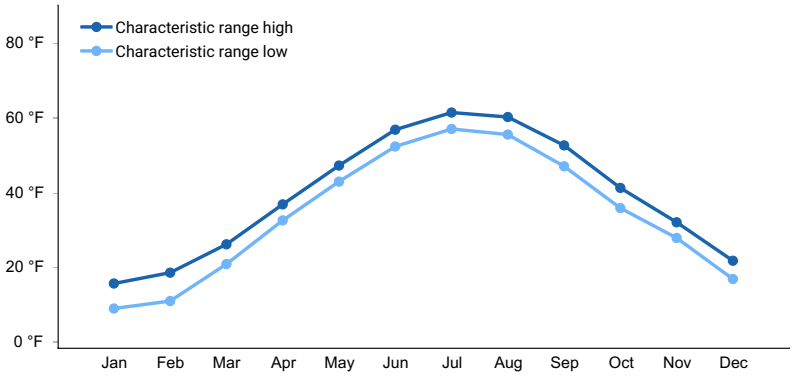


Figure 2. Monthly minimum temperature range

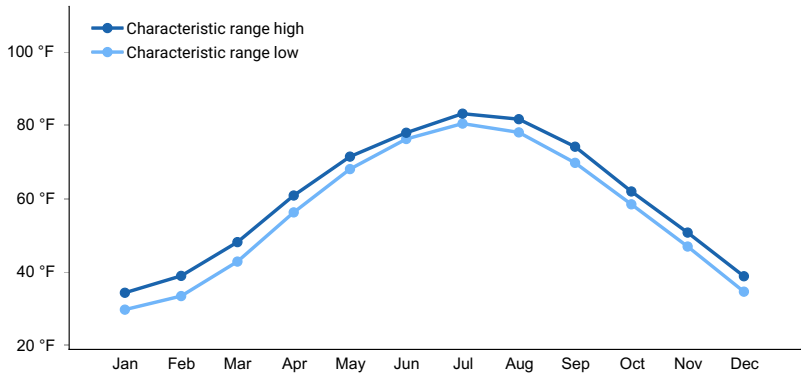


Figure 3. Monthly maximum temperature range

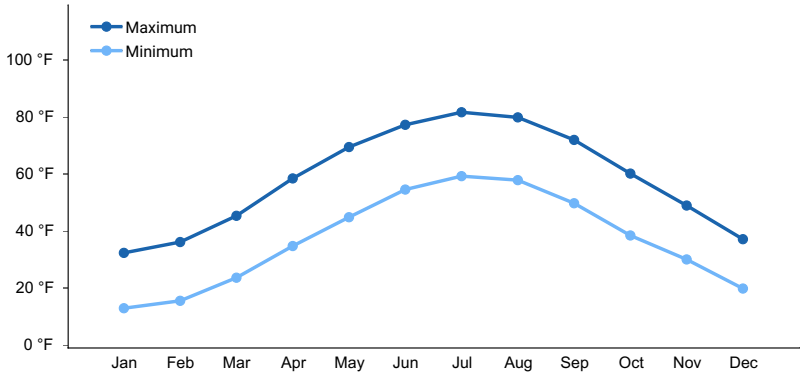


Figure 4. Monthly average minimum and maximum temperature

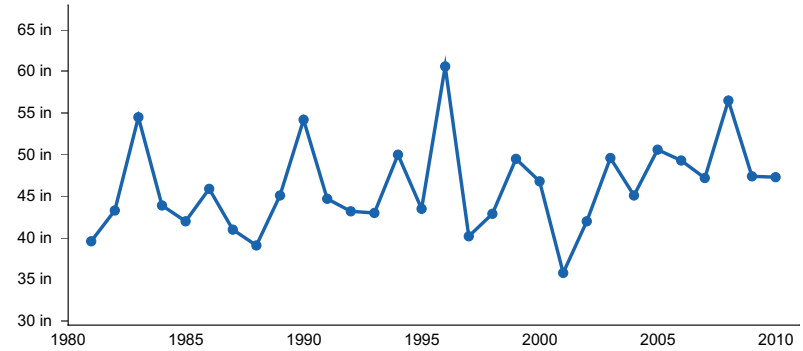


Figure 5. Annual precipitation pattern

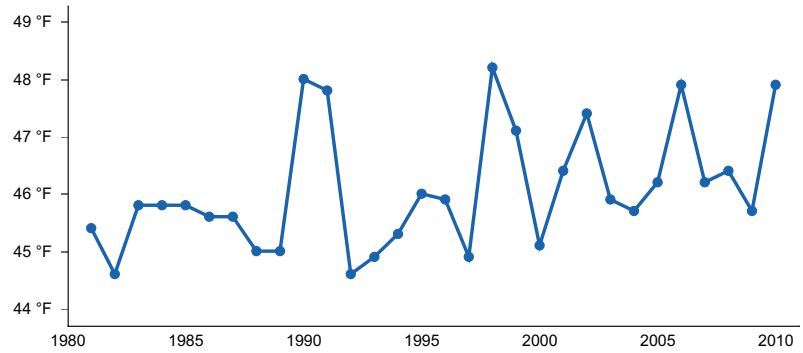


Figure 6. Annual average temperature pattern

Climate stations used

- (1) STORMVILLE [USC00308304], Stormville, NY
- (2) COPAKE [USC00301761], Copake, NY
- (3) DANBURY [USC00061762], Bethel, CT
- (4) RUTLAND [USC00436995], Rutland, VT
- (5) FALLS VILLAGE [USC00062658], Falls Village, CT
- (6) SHEPAUG DAM [USC00067373], Bantam, CT
- (7) GLENS FALLS AP [USW00014750], Queensbury, NY

Influencing water features

NONE

Wetland description

NONE

Soil features

The site consists of deep to very deep, moderately well drained loamy soils formed in melt-out till. The till is derived mainly from weathered limestone, dolomite, shale, schist, or slate. Soil pH is considered circumnuetral (pH 5.1-8.4) resulting in nutrient rich plant indicators. Representative soils are Amenia and Georgia.

.

Table 4. Representative soil features

Parent material	(1) Till–limestone and dolomite (2) Schist (3) Shale (4) Slate
Surface texture	(1) Silt loam
Family particle size	(1) Coarse-loamy
Drainage class	Moderately well drained
Permeability class	Very slow to slow
Depth to restrictive layer	42–72 in
Surface fragment cover <=3"	0%
Surface fragment cover >3"	0–2%
Available water capacity (Depth not specified)	5–6 in
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (0-40in)	5.1–8.4
Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (Depth not specified)	7–20%
Subsurface fragment volume >3" (Depth not specified)	1–3%

Ecological dynamics

Caveat: The vegetation information contained in this section and is only provisional, based on concepts, not yet validated with field work.*]

The vegetation groupings described in this section are based on the terrestrial ecological system classification and vegetation associations developed by NatureServe (Comer 2003). Terrestrial ecological SYSTEMS are specifically defined as a group of plant community-types called ASSOCIATIONS that tend to [co-]occur within landscapes with similar ecological processes, substrates, and/or environmental gradients. Any given system will typically manifest itself in a landscape at intermediate geographic scales of tens-to-thousands of hectares and will persist for 50 or more years. A vegetation association is a plant community that is much more specific to a given soil, geology, landform, climate, hydrology, and disturbance history. It is the basic unit for vegetation classification and recognized by the US National Vegetation Classification (US FDGC 2008). Each association will be named by the diagnostic and often dominant species that occupy the different height strata (tree, sapling, shrub, and herb). Within the NatureServe Explorer database (NatureServe, 2015), ecological systems are numbered by a Community Ecological System Code (CES) and individual vegetation associations are assigned an identification number called a Community Element Global Code (CEGL).

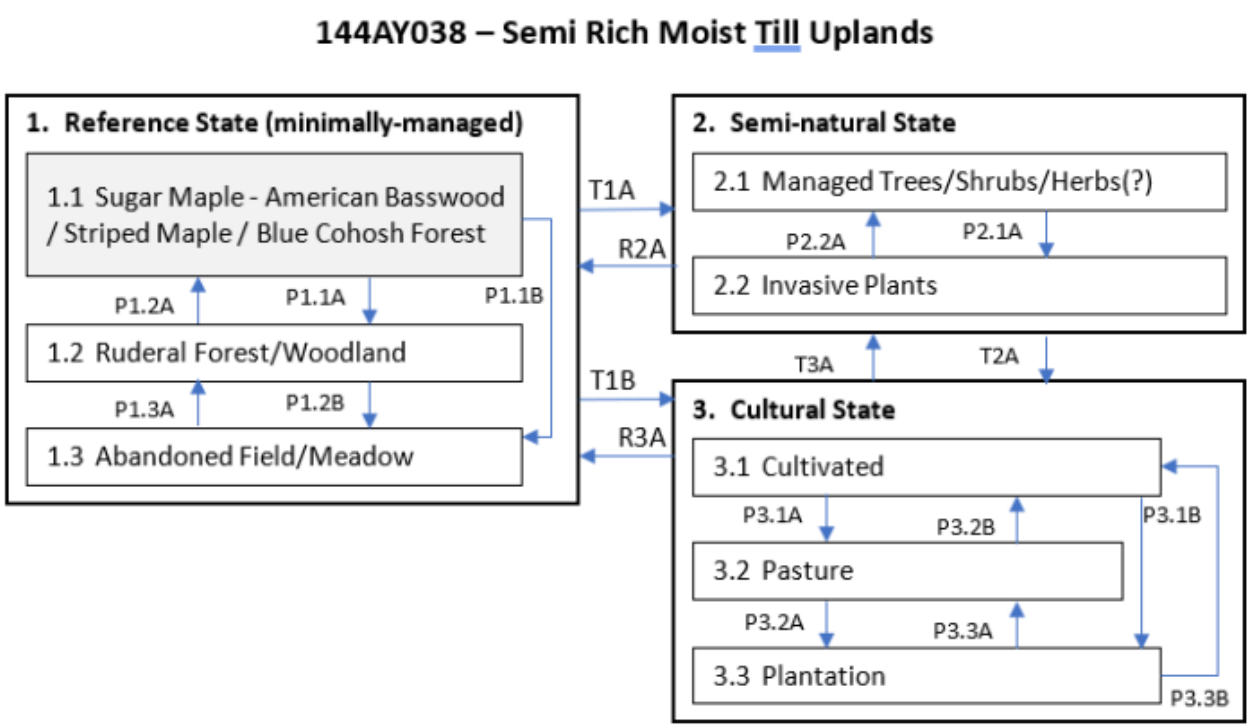
Additional and more localized vegetation information is provided by the State Natural Heritage Programs of Connecticut (Metzler and Barrett 2001), Massachusetts (Swain and Kearsley 2001), New Hampshire (Sperduto and Nichols, 2011), New York (Edinger et al., 2014), and Rhode Island (Enser and Lungren, 2006).

The Semi Rich Moist Till Uplands ecological site is characteristic of Appalachian (Hemlock)-Northern Hardwood Forest system (CES202.593) and the North-Central Interior and Appalachian Rich Swamp system (CES202.605).

The vegetation of these upland/wetland transitions is not well described. The reference community is varied but typified by mixed sugar-oak-basswood forest with a rich herbaceous understory of many spring ephemerals and ferns. Natural disturbances create canopy gaps formed by storm extremes ranging from windthrows to downbursts to ice-storms. Excessive deer browse may be an issue. Other agents-of-change include land conversions and fragmentation by agricultural, development, drainage, and logging. Invasive species include winged euonymus (euonymus alatus), barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*), shrubby honeysuckles (Lonicera spp.), multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*) and Japanese knotweed (Fallopia japonica).

[*Caveat] The information presented is representative of very complex vegetation communities. Key indicator plants 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 geography. The reference plant community is not necessarily the management goal. The drafts of species lists are merely 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.

State and transition model



Transition	*Drivers/practices*
T1A	Forest mgmt., Disturbance
T1B, T2A	Disturbance/cutting/clearing, Brush removal
R2A, R2B	Restoration & Mgmt, Forest Stand Improvement, Early Successional Habitat Development, Upland Wildlife Mgmt, Invasive spp. Control, Plant establishment
T3A	Abandonment, Plant establishment, Forest mgmt.
P2.1A	Disturbance, Invasive species establishment
P2.2A	Invasive spp. Control, Forest mgmt..
P1.3A, P1.2A	Abandonment, succession
P3.1A, P3.2A, P3.3A, P3.1B, P3.2B, P3.3B	Changing agricultural phases
P1.1A, P1.1B, P1.2B	Disturbance, Early Successional Habitat Development

State 1
Reference State (minimally-managed)

The reference plant community includes: • *Acer saccharum* - *Tilia americana* / *Acer pensylvanicum* / *Caulophyllum thalictroides* Forest Translated Name: Sugar Maple - American Basswood / Striped Maple / Blue Cohosh Forest Common Name: Transitional Northern Sugar Maple - Ash Rich Mesic Forest (CEGL006637)

Community 1.1
Sugar Maple - American Basswood / Striped Maple / Blue Cohosh Forest (CEGL006637)

Acer saccharum - *Tilia americana* / *Acer pensylvanicum* / *Caulophyllum thalictroides* Forest Translated Name: Sugar Maple - American Basswood / Striped Maple / Blue Cohosh Forest Common Name: Transitional Northern Sugar Maple - Ash Rich Mesic Forest (CEGL006637) This forest community has a well-developed tree canopy composed sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*) and American basswood (*Tilia americana*) with assocuiated white ash (*Fraxinus americana*), red maple (*Acer rubrum*), American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), and black cherry (*Prunus serotina*). Slippery elm (*Ulmus rubra*), white walnut (*Juglans cinerea*) are infrequent. Hop Hornbeam (*Ostrya virginiana*) is very common as a small tree. Shrubs include alternate-leaved dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*), witchhazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*), and American honeysuckle (*Lonicera canadensis*). The ground flora is diverse including spring ephemerals, Dutchman's breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*), squirrel corn (*Dicentra canadensis*), hepaticas (Hepatica spp.), Canada wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*), blue cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*), Canada white violet (*Viola canadensis*), round-leaved violet (*Viola rotundifolia*), white baneberry (*Actaea pachypoda*), bland sweet cicely (Osmorhiza claytonia), American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*), bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), and America trout-lily (Erythronium Americanum) are typical. Fern richness is usually high, including northern maiden hair fern (*Adiantum pedatum*), bulbet fragile fern (*Cystopteris bulbifera*), *Deparia acrostichoides* (= Athyrium thelypterioides), Goldie's wood fern (*Dryopteris goldieana*), marginal wood fern (*Dryopteris marginalis*), rattlesnake fern (*Botrychium virginianum*), Lady fern (Athyrium asplenoides, broad beech fern (*Phegopteris hexagonoptera* [= Thelypteris hexagonoptera]), and, especially in seepy spots, ostrich fern (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*). Many sedges are present such as broad loose-flowered sedge (*Carex laxiflora*), broad-leaved sedge (*Carex platyphylla*), plantain-leaved sedge (*Carex plantaginea*), nerveless woodland sedge (*Carex leptonervia*), summer sedge (*Carex aestivalis*), Davis' sedge (*Carex davisii*), and others. The herbaceous flora in seeps often contains eastern rough sedge (*Carex scabrata*), white snakeroot (*Ageratina altissima* [= Eupatorium rugosum]), jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*), pale jewelweed (*Impatiens pallida*), and zig-zag goldenrod (*Solidago flexicaulis*). (Source: NatureServe 2018 [accessed 2019], USNVC 2017 [accessed 2019]). Cross-referenced plant community concepts (typically by political State): CT: Sugar maple – white ash / blue cohosh Forest (Metzler and Barrett, 2006) MA: Rich mesic forest (Swain and Kearsley, 2001) NY: Maple-basswood rich mesic forest (Edinger et al., 2014)

Community 1.2
Ruderal Forest/Woodland

Community 1.3
Abandoned Field/Meadow

Disturbance

Pathway P1.1A
Community 1.1 to 1.2

Disturbance

Pathway P1.1B
Community 1.1 to 1.3

Disturbance

Pathway P1.2A

Community 1.2 to 1.1

Succession

Pathway P1.2B
Community 1.2 to 1.3

Disturbance

Pathway P1.3A
Community 1.3 to 1.2

Abandonment, Succession

State 2
Semi-natural State

The Semi-natural State would expect plant communities where ecological processes are primarily operating with some land conditioning in the past or present, e.g., managed forests, or plant communities that are an artifact of land management e.g., predominately invasive plants.

Community 2.1
Managed Trees/Shrubs/Herbs(?)

Community 2.2
Invasive Plants

Pathway P2.1A
Community 2.1 to 2.2

Disturbance, Invasive species establishment

Pathway P2.2A
Community 2.2 to 2.1

Invasive spp. Control, Forest mgmt.

State 3
Cultural State

The Cultural State would expect the ecological site to be very strongly conditioned by land management conversion, by transformation to Cultivated/Pasture/Plantation.

Community 3.1
Cultivated

Community 3.2
Pasture

Community 3.3
Plantation

Pathway P3.1A
Community 3.1 to 3.2

Changing agricultural phases

Pathway P3.1B
Community 3.1 to 3.3

Changing agricultural phases

Pathway P3.2A
Community 3.2 to 3.1

Changing agricultural phases

Pathway P3.2B
Community 3.2 to 3.3

Changing agricultural phases

Pathway P3.3A
Community 3.3 to 3.1

Changing agricultural phases

Pathway P3.3B
Community 3.3 to 3.2

Changing agricultural phases

Transition T1A
State 1 to 2

altered by human- induced Disturbance or Management

Conservation practices

Tree/Shrub Establishment
Forest Land Management
Forest stand improvement for habitat and soil quality

Transition T1B
State 1 to 3

Disturbance, clearing, cutting

Restoration pathway R2A
State 2 to 1

Plant removals, plantings, Invasive plant control, successional mgmt., forestry practices Restoration & Mgmt, Forest Stand Improvement, Early Successional Habitat Development, Upland Wildlife Mgmt, Invasive spp. Control, Plant establishment

Conservation practices

Brush Management
Tree/Shrub Establishment
Early Successional Habitat Development/Management
Forest Stand Improvement
Restoration and Management of Natural Ecosystems

Native Plant Community Restoration and Management
Forest Land Management
Invasive Plant Species Control

Transition T2A
State 2 to 3

Land clearing, cutting

Conservation practices

Brush Management
Land Clearing
Herbaceous Weed Control

Restoration pathway R3A
State 3 to 1

Plant removals, plantings, Invasive plant control, successional mgmt., forestry practices Restoration & Mgmt, Forest Stand Improvement, Early Successional Habitat Development, Upland Wildlife Mgmt, Invasive spp. Control, Plant establishment

Conservation practices

Restoration and Management of Natural Ecosystems
Native Plant Community Restoration and Management

Transition T3A
State 3 to 2

Abandonment. Plant establishment, Forest mgmt.

Conservation practices

Tree/Shrub Establishment
Forest Stand Improvement
Forest Land Management

Additional community tables

Inventory data references

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

REFERENCES

Cleland, D.T., J.A. Freeouf, J.E. Keys, G.J. Nowacki, C.A. Carpenter, and W.H.McNab. 2007. Ecological Subregions: Sections and Subsections for the conterminous United States. [Map. presentation scale 1:3,500,000,

colored; A.M. Sloan, cartographer] Gen. Tech. Report WO-76D. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Washington, DC. (https://www.fs.fed.us/research/publications/misc/73326-wo-gtr-76d-cleland2007.pdf)

Comer, P., D. Faber-Langendoen, R. Evans, S. Gawler, C. Josse, G. Kittel, S. Menard, M. Pyne, M. Reid, K. Schulz, K., Snow, and J.Teague. 2003. Ecological Systems of the United States: A Working Classification of U.S. Terrestrial Systems. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia.

Edinger, G.J., Evans, D.J., Gebauer, S., Howard, T.G., Hunt, D.M., and A.M. Olivero, A.M. (eds.). 2014. Ecological Communities of New York State, Second Edition: A revised and expanded edition of Carol Reschke's Ecological Communities of New York State. New York Natural Heritage Program, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Albany, NY.

Enser, R., Gregg, D., Sparks, C., August, P., Jordan, P., Coit, J., Raithel, C., Tefft, B., Payton, B., Brown, C. and LaBash, C., 2011. Rhode Island ecological communities classification. Rhode Island Natural History Survey, Kingston, RI.

Enser, R. and Lundgren, J.A., 2006. Natural communities of Rhode Island. Rhode Island Natural History Survey, Kingston (RI).

FGDC [Federal Geographic Data Committee]. 2008. National Vegetation Classification Standard, Version 2. Federal Geographic Data Committee, Vegetation Subcommittee, Washington DC..

Gawler, S.C. and Cutko, A., 2010. Natural landscapes of Maine: a guide to natural communities and ecosystems. Maine Natural Areas Program, Department of Conservation.

Metzler, K.J. and Barrett, J.P., 2006. The Vegetation of Connecticut, a Preliminary Classification. Department of Environmental Protection, State Geological and Natural History Survey of Connecticut.

NatureServe 2015. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available http://explorer.natureserve.org. (Accessed: December 2015).

PRISM Climate Group, Oregon State University. Available http://prism.oregonstate.edu, (created February 26, 2013).

Soil Survey Staff, Natural Resources Conservation Service, United States Department of Agriculture. 2006. Land Resource Regions and Major Land Resource Areas of the United States, the Caribbean, and the Pacific Basin. Agricultural Handbook 296. (https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/nrcs142p2_051845.pdf). Sperduto, D.D., & Nichols, W.F. 2011. Natural Communities of New Hampshire, Second Ed. NH Natural Heritage Bureau, Concord, NH. Publ. UNH Cooperative Extension.

Swain, P.C. and Kearsley, J.B., 2001. Classification of the natural communities of Massachusetts. Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife.

Thompson, E.H. and Sorenson, E.R., 2000. Wetland, woodland, wildland. Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife and The Nature Conservancy. Publ. University Press of New England.

USNVC [United States National Vegetation Classification]. 2017 (Date accessed). United States National Vegetation Classification Database V2.01. Federal Geographic Data Committee, Vegetation Subcomittee, Washington DC.

Contributors

Nels Barrett, Ph.D. (vegetation)

Approval

Greg Schmidt, 10/04/2024

Acknowledgments

Michael Margo and tech team provided earlier drafts. Josh Hibit made compliance updates w/ 2021 Checklist V.2

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:**