

Ecological site AX001X01X301

Cryic Udic Shallow Subalpine Meadow

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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): 001X–Northern Pacific Coast Range, Foothills, and Valleys

This area consists of a long and narrow range of mountains with associated foothills and valleys that parallels the Pacific Ocean. This area is entirely within the Pacific Border Province of the Pacific Mountain System in Oregon and Washington. MLRA 1 is bounded on the north by the highest elevations of the Olympic Mountains and the strait of Juan de Fuca, and by the Klamath Mountains on the south. The Washington portion of this MLRA is primarily composed of young Tertiary sedimentary rocks (siltstone and sandstone) mixed with some volcanic rocks of the same age. Glacial till and outwash deposits are also found in the northern half of this area in Washington. Much of this area is accreted terrane formed by tectonic processes. The average annual precipitation ranges from 60 to 200 inches (1,525 to 5,580 millimeters), increasing with elevation. Most of the precipitation in this area occurs during low-intensity, Pacific frontal storms and is evenly distributed throughout fall, winter, and spring. The dominant soil orders in this MLRA are Andisols, Inceptisols, and Ultisols. Soil depths broadly range from shallow to very deep. Soils are primarily well drained, however poorly-drained soils may be found in depressional areas and on alluvial floodplains. Surface textures are typically medial and loamy or clayey. Soils in this area dominantly have a mesic or frigid temperature regime and a udic moisture regime. Soils with aquic moisture regimes and cryic temperature regimes also occur.

Ecological site concept

Cryic Udic Shallow Subalpine Meadow sites occur on cirques, bench basins, and bedrock knobs at elevations above 900 meters. These sites are characterized by a community of shrubs, forbs, and graminoids. Tree establishment is generally precluded by high snowpack, low temperatures, and shallow soils (less than 20 inches to restriction); however, tree islands may occasionally develop on site. These sites frequently generate run-off moisture that increases the effective precipitation of associated Cryic Udic Moist Meadow, Cryic Udic Wet Meadow, and Cryic Aquic Meadow sites. Shallow soils further limit plant available water on site. These sites are commonly distributed throughout the mid to high elevation zones of the park, except for the Northeast quadrant of the park where the Cryic Udic Dry Meadow site is more common.

Associated sites

AX001X01X304	Cryic Udic Moist Subalpine Meadow Cryic Udic Moist Subalpine Meadow sites may be found on more stable adjacent slopes. Increased effective precipitation encourages high productivity on Cryic Udic Moist Subalpine Meadow sites.
AX001X01X305	Cryic Udic Wet Subalpine Meadow Cryic Udic Wet Subalpine Meadow sites may be found on more stable adjacent slopes. Cryic Udic Wet Subalpine Meadow sites have seasonally high water tables. Increased effective precipitation encourages high productivity on Cryic Udic Wet Subalpine Meadow sites.

AX001X01X306	Crylic Aquic Subalpine Wet Meadow Crylic Aquic Subalpine Wet Meadow sites may be found on seeps or depressions adjacent to Crylic Udic Shallow Subalpine Meadow sites. Crylic Aquic Subalpine Wet Meadow sites are subject to frequent ponding for long duration.
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Similar sites

AX001X01X302	Crylic Udic Dry Subalpine Meadow Crylic Udic Dry Subalpine Meadow sites occur on moderately deep or deeper soils.
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Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	Not specified
Shrub	(1) <i>Phyllodoce empetrifomis</i> (2) <i>Vaccinium deliciosum</i>
Herbaceous	(1) <i>Lupinus latifolius</i> (2) <i>Luetkea pectinata</i>

Legacy ID

R001XA301WA

Physiographic features

This site primarily occurs on glacial valley walls, cirques, benches, knobs, and colluvial aprons on mountains.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Mountains > Glacial-valley wall (2) Mountains > Cirque (3) Mountains > Bench (4) Mountains > Knob (5) Mountains > Colluvial apron
Flooding frequency	None
Ponding frequency	None
Elevation	900 – 1,900 m
Slope	0 – 100 %

Water table depth	150 cm
Aspect	W, NW, N, NE, E, SE, S, SW

Climatic features

This site occurs in a cryic temperature and udic moisture regime. Precipitation arrives mostly via low-intensity, Pacific frontal storms. Precipitation is unevenly distributed, with the lowest amounts on the leeward side of the Coast Range mountains. Precipitation falls largely as snow in higher elevations. Precipitation is evenly distributed throughout the fall, winter, and spring, while summers are dry. Air temperatures vary significantly along the elevation gradient.

Table 3 Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (characteristic range)	30-90 days
Freeze-free period (characteristic range)	
Precipitation total (characteristic range)	1,500-3,990 mm

Influencing water features

There are no dominant water features influencing plant community dynamics on site. Cryic Udic Shallow Subalpine Meadow sites occur on less stable sites and generate run-off that is captured by more stable downslope sites. Water loss to run-off exacerbates the plant-available moisture limitations that are inherent to shallow soils on site.

Soil features

The soils that support this ecological site occur in the cryic soil temperature regime and the udic soil moisture regime. Allincreek soils are shallow, formed from residuum, and occur on ridges, summits, and structural benches. These soils are all well drained and have high or very high saturated hydraulic conductivity. They have a rock fragment content of greater than 35 percent in the control section, and a relatively high organic carbon content in the surface horizons. The primary limiting factor to plant growth is low available water capacity. Although representative of this site, these soils may exist across multiple ecological sites because of naturally variable slope, texture, rock fragments, and pH. An on-site soil pit and the most current ecological site key are necessary to classify a site.

Table 4. Representative soil features

Parent material	(1) Residuum
Surface texture	(1) Very gravelly silt loam (2) Very gravelly loam
Drainage class	Well drained
Soil depth	30 – 50 cm
Surface fragment cover <=3"	0 – 10 %

Surface fragment cover >3"	Not specified
Available water capacity (0-101.6cm)	2.79 – 4.06 cm
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (0-25.4cm)	4.5 – 5.5
Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (0-50.8cm)	20 – 50 %
Subsurface fragment volume >3" (0-50.8cm)	0 – 20 %

Ecological dynamics

The Cryic Udic Shallow Subalpine Meadow site is found at mid-to-high elevations in the park where snowpack persists long into the spring and summer. Long duration snowpack cover significantly reduces growing degree days on site. These sites are typically located toward the windward side of the Olympic mountains but may occasionally occur on sufficiently protected aspects within the rain shadow where solar radiation does not significantly reduce effective precipitation. These sites are typically located on moderate slopes and have inferior water capture efficiency relative to more stable Moist Subalpine Meadow, Wet Subalpine Meadow, and Aquic Subalpine Meadow sites.

Cryic Udic Shallow Subalpine Meadows are subject to severe disturbance from wildfire, avalanches, and mass-movement events. The fire regime of this site likely resembles that of adjacent and lower High Cryic Udic Forest sites which is characterized by high-intensity burns with a long return interval greater than 200 years (FEIS). Historical fires would likely begin in lower-elevation forests and move upslope to these meadow sites. When fire does occur, burns are usually patchy and low-extent due to discontinuous fuels. Cryic Udic Shallow Subalpine Meadow sites are susceptible to avalanches and mass-movement events. Powerful avalanches may remove trees and hard-stemmed shrubs from the site and create early seral conditions favorable for establishment of graminoids and forbs. Mass movement can occur on unstable slopes and remove all or nearly all vegetation from the site.

High snowpack generally precludes tree establishment on sites, but trees may occasionally establish at the lower elevations of this ecological site. Once established, trunks and limbs may provide shelter from snowdrifts and allow additional seedlings to recruit in tree island mosaics. Cryic Udic Shallow Subalpine Meadow sites are subject to high-intensity winds that are capable of uprooting and throwing trees. Temporal and spatial patterns of tree establishment on this site are unpredictable due to large interannual variations in snowfall.

State and transition model

Additional community tables

Table 5. Community 1.1 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 6. Community 1.2 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 7. Community 1.3 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 8. Community 1.4 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Approval

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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)	
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Contact for lead author	
Date	09/24/2026
Approved by	
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:
