

Ecological site AX004A01X005

Isomesic Udic Alluvial Terrace Forest

Last updated: 5/02/2025
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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): 004A–Sitka Spruce Belt

This area consists of a long and narrow band of marine terraces, coastal estuaries, sand dunes, low relief hills, and mountain slopes that parallels the Pacific Ocean. This area is entirely within the Pacific Border Province of the Pacific Mountain System in Oregon and Washington. In Washington, this area ranges in elevation from sea level to a maximum of 1800 feet (550 meters) inland. The portion of this area in northern Washington consists primarily of glacial deposits, with some scattered young Tertiary sedimentary rocks. The climate is cool and moist, with minimal changes between seasons. Summer temperatures are moderated by the proximity of cool ocean water and fog. Sitka spruce forests are characteristic of this area. The average annual precipitation is 52 to 60 inches (1,320 to 1,525 millimeters) near the beach and can be as much as about 150 inches (3,800 millimeters) at the higher elevations along the inland edge of the MLRA. Most of the rainfall occurs during low-intensity, Pacific frontal storms. Precipitation is evenly distributed throughout fall, winter, and spring; summers are cool and dry. Snowfall accumulation is rare on the ocean side of this area, but some snowfall occurs along the eastern boundary. This area lies within the coastal fog belt zone, and heavy fogs are common in summer. Supplemental moisture is provided by fog condensation. Dominant soil orders in this MLRA are Andisols, Inceptisols, Spodosols, and Entisols.

Ecological site concept

Isomesic Udic Alluvial Terrace Forest sites occur on high terraces and colluvial aprons in river valleys. This site occurs in the transitional zone between floodplain forests and upland forests. Unlike the floodplain forests, flooding occurs very rarely on this site. Isomesic Udic Alluvial Terrace sites are characterized by a dense overstory of western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*) and Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*). Dominant conifers are shade-tolerant and may continually regenerate in the shaded understory. The understory shrub layer is dominated by oval-leaf blueberry (*Vaccinium ovalifolium*), salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*), red huckleberry (*Vaccinium parvifolium*), and vine maple (*Acer circinatum*). The forb layer is typically composed of western swordfern (*Polystichum munitum*), western cordilleran bunchberry (*Cornus unalaschensis*), twinflower (*Linnaea borealis*), threelobed foamflower (*Tiarella trifoliata*), common ladyfern (*Athyrium filix-femina*), false lily of the valley (*Maianthemum dilatatum*), and redwood-sorrel (*Oxalis oregana*).

Associated sites

AX004A01X003	Isomesic Udic Floodplain Forest Isomesic Udic Floodplain Forest sites occur on lower alluvial terraces and are subject to more frequent flooding.
AX004A01X401	Isomesic Udic Forest Isomesic Udic Forests are upland forest sites found above Isomesic Udic Alluvial Terrace Forest sites.
AX004A01X403	Udic Moist Forest Isomesic Udic Moist Forests are upland forest sites found above Isomesic Udic Alluvial Terrace Forest sites.

AX001X01X200	Temperate Wet Meadow Temperate Wet Meadows are found on depressions and seeps adjacent to or surrounded by Isomesic Udic Alluvial Terrace Forest sites. Temperate Wet Meadow sites lack tree cover.
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Similar sites

AX001X01X003	Mesic Udic Alluvial Terrace Forest Mesic Udic Alluvial Terrace Forest sites occur at higher elevations and lack Sitka spruce (<i>Picea sitchensis</i>).
AX001X01X107	Frigid Udic Alluvial Terrace Forest Frigid Udic Alluvial Terrace Forest sites occur at much higher elevations and support Pacific silver-fir (<i>Abies amabilis</i>).

Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	(1) <i>Tsuga heterophylla</i> (2) <i>Picea sitchensis</i>
Shrub	(1) <i>Vaccinium ovalifolium</i> (2) <i>Vaccinium parvifolium</i>
Herbaceous	(1) <i>Cornus unalaschkensis</i> (2) <i>Oxalis oregana</i>

Legacy ID

F004AA005WA

Physiographic features

This site primarily occurs on high terraces in river valleys. Isomesic Udic Alluvial Terrace Forest sites are found on higher alluvial terraces and do not receive frequent floodwater. As a result of their transitional landscape position, these forests display some character of both Isomesic Udic Floodplain Forests and upland isomesic udic forest sites.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) River valley > Terrace
Flooding duration	Brief (2 to 7 days)
Flooding frequency	Very rare
Ponding frequency	None
Elevation	50 – 300 m

Slope	0 – 10 %
Water table depth	150 cm
Aspect	W, NW, N, NE, E, SE, S, SW

Climatic features

This site occurs in an isomesic temperature and udic moisture regime. Precipitation arrives mostly via low-intensity, Pacific frontal storms. Precipitation mostly falls as rain, but some snowfall occurs along the eastern boundary of the area. Precipitation is evenly distributed throughout the fall, winter, and spring, while summers are dry. Heavy fog is very common in the summer, contributing supplemental moisture. The frost-free period of this area is strongly tied to ocean proximity; the eastern edge of the area has a significantly shorter growing season than the western edge. There is relatively little seasonal variation in air temperature due to Pacific Ocean influence.

Table 3 Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (characteristic range)	180-240 days
Freeze-free period (characteristic range)	
Precipitation total (characteristic range)	2,010-3,000 mm

Influencing water features

Isomesic Udic Alluvial Terrace sites are only subject to very rare flooding. Water features do not significantly influence plant community dynamics on site.

Soil features

The soils are very deep, have very high or high Ksat throughout, and are well drained. The soils are formed in mixed alluvium. The soil surface texture is Silt Loam or Loam. Clay content is eight to 17 percent throughout. The soil series for this ecological site are Mountmeany and Marymere. 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) Alluvium
Surface texture	(1) Silt loam (2) Loam
Drainage class	Well drained
Soil depth	150 cm

Surface fragment cover <=3"	0 – 10 %
Surface fragment cover >3"	0 – 10 %
Available water capacity (0-101.6cm)	8.89 – 21.59 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)	10 – 20 %

Ecological dynamics

Isomesic Udic Alluvial Terrace sites are subject to disturbance from windstorm events, wildfires, floods, and mass movement events. Windthrow may create small gaps in the overstory canopy that favor understory regeneration. Frequent windthrow creates varied-age patches of trees. Root and butt rot fungi exacerbate trees' susceptibility to windthrow. Wildfires are an additional source of disturbance, though they occur much less frequently. The fire regime of this forest type is characterized by infrequent, severe fire events. The fire return interval is very high, 100 to nearly 1,000 years (FEIS, 2012). Flooding events may occur very rarely. Since these sites are generally located on high stream terraces, a large volume of water is required for streams to overflow to this level. Alluvial terrace forest sites experience less than one percent probability of flooding in any year. When they do occur, intense flood events may cause tree mortality, scour the mineral soil surface, and can remove existing vegetation from the site.

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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Table 9. Community 1.5 plant community composition

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

Alec Haulotte
Erin Kreutz
Abigail Field
Max Ross
Erik Dahlke

Approval

Kirt Walstad, 5/02/2025

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	08/31/2026
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:
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17. Perennial plant reproductive capability:
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