

Ecological site F004BX104CA
Redwood-Douglas-fir/Pacific rhododendron,
ridge-tops,
schist, red clay

Accessed: 09/30/2026

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.

Classification relationships

No relationship has been established to other classifications.

Associated sites

F004BX101CA	Redwood/Douglas-fir/Pacific rhododendron, mountain slopes, schist, clay loam F004BX101CA is also located on summits of ridges like F004BX104CA.
F004BX105CA	Douglas-fir/tanoak/California huckleberry, ridge-tops, schist, red clay Both of the F004BX105CA and F004BX104CA are found on ridgetops within different geographic areas in Redwood National Park. F004BX105 tends to be on drier, more inland sites than F004BX104CA.

Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	(1) <i>Sequoia sempervirens</i> (2) <i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i>
Shrub	(1) <i>Rhododendron macrophyllum</i>
Herbaceous	Not specified

Physiographic features

This ecological site is found on ridge-tops and upper-mountain slopes west of Redwood Creek. It occurs on uniform, nearly-level to moderately steep summits and slightly convex shoulders of broad ridges and moderately steep to steep mountain slopes.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Ridge (2) Mountain slope
Flooding frequency	None

Elevation	90 – 780 m
Slope	0 – 50 %
Water table depth	150 cm
Aspect	Aspect is not a significant factor

Climatic features

The climate is humid with cool, foggy summers and cool, moist winters. Coastal influence limits the diurnal range in temperatures. Summertime temperatures may range from 65 to 70 degrees F. The mean annual precipitation ranges from 70 to 100 inches and usually falls from October to May.

Table 3 Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (average)	290 days
Freeze-free period (average)	290 days
Precipitation total (average)	2,540 mm

Influencing water features

There are no influencing water features on this site.

Soil features

These well-drained soils developed from residuum and colluvium derived primarily from schist. To a lesser extent, there are soils on the site developed from residuum and colluvium derived from sandstone and mudstone, or weakly consolidated fluvial and marine deposits. They are very strongly to strongly acidic at 40 inches with a dominantly clayey subsurface rock content ranging from non-gravelly to gravelly. These soils are dominantly very deep with small areas that are moderately deep to a paralithic contact.

This ecological site occurs on the following soil components and map units within Redwood National and State Parks:

Map Unit Soil Component

251 Surpur
290 Surpur
290 Mettah
558 Trailhead
559 Trailhead
560 Trailhead
562 Fortyfour

Table 4. Representative soil features

Surface texture	(1) Loam (2) Silty clay loam (3) Clay loam
Family particle size	(1) Clayey
Drainage class	Well drained
Permeability class	Slow to moderately slow
Soil depth	80 – 200 cm
Surface fragment cover <=3"	0 – 10 %
Surface fragment cover >3"	Not specified
Available water capacity (0-101.6cm)	12.7 – 22.86 cm
Calcium carbonate equivalent (0-101.6cm)	Not specified
Electrical conductivity (0-101.6cm)	Not specified
Sodium adsorption ratio (0-101.6cm)	Not specified
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (0-101.6cm)	4.5 – 5.5
Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (Depth not specified)	0 – 30 %

Subsurface fragment volume >3" (Depth not specified)	Not specified
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Ecological dynamics

The redwood's interior range is largely contained within the coastal fog belt. Coastal fog ameliorates the effects of solar radiation on conifer transpiration rates (Daniel, 1942). Research in the redwood region (Dawson, 1998) has indicated that fog drip and direct fog uptake by foliage may contribute significant amounts of moisture to the forest floor during summer months and over the course of the year.

Previous harvesting and the use of fire to treat logging slash have changed species composition on many formerly redwood-dominated sites (Noss et al, 2000). Within many areas of the park, aerial seeding of Douglas-fir has led to a 10:1 ratio of Douglas-fir to redwood (Noss, 2000).

The historical origins of fires within the northern redwood region remain unknown. Lightning-ignited fires are considered rare. However, Native American burning is thought to have played a major role by burning fires from the interior into the redwood zone (Veirs, 1996). Natural fire intervals ranged from 500 to 600 years on the coast, 150 to 200 years on intermediate sites, and 50 years on inland sites. The northern range of redwoods evolved within a low to moderate natural disturbance regime (Veirs, 1979).

Surface fires likely modified the tree species composition by favoring the thicker-barked redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) (Veirs, 1979). Western hemlock's (*Tsuga heterophylla*) shallow roots and thin bark make it susceptible to fire damage (Arno, 2002). Fires also expose the mineral-rich soil and reduce competition from other plants, thereby increasing the establishment of new western hemlock (Veirs, 1979, Williamson, 1976). Tanoak (*Lithocarpus densiflorus*) seedlings and sapling-sized stems are often top-killed by surface fire, though larger stems may survive with only basal wounding (Tappeiner, 1984).

Both redwood and tanoak have the ability to re-sprout following fire (Veirs, 1996). After fire, redwood may sprout from the root crown or from dormant buds located under the bark of the bole and branches (Noss, 2000). The sprouting ability of redwood is most vigorous in younger stands and decreases with age. Frequent fire reduces tanoak's sprouting ability and also tends to keep understories open (Arno, 2002). Fire exclusion would allow for the gradual increase of tanoak in the understory (McMurray, 1989).

A moderate fire could lead towards more of a mosaic in regeneration patterns. Patches of trees would be killed leaving others slightly damaged or unharmed. Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) regeneration would be favored in the large gaps that are created following a moderate fire, potentially leading to a larger proportion of Douglas-fir to redwood for several centuries (Agee, 1993). Without these gaps caused by fire, Douglas-fir regeneration is unsuccessful, and with continued lack of disturbance it may slowly be replaced by redwood as the dominant canopy species (Veirs, 1979, 1996).

Fires will also alter the composition of shrubs and forbs in the understory community. California huckleberry (*Vaccinium ovatum*) is a common species in both moist and dry redwood environments. It is normally a fire-dependent shrub species, but little is known concerning its adaptation to fire under low to moderate fire return intervals (Tirmenstein, 1990). Following a fire, California huckleberry will often re-sprout and recover rapidly.

Pacific rhododendron (*Rhododendron macrophyllum*) is considered sensitive to fire. Following a surface fire, it may reestablish seedlings by sprouting from the rootcrown or stembase (Crane, 1990). After a disturbance such as fire, a decrease in plant cover is common, and will be followed by a gradual increase in cover over time.

Other potential disturbances in the redwood zone include winter storms that can cause top breakage. This breakage may kill individual or groups of trees and create small openings from windfall (Noss, 2000). This would likely favor the establishment of redwood and other shade tolerant conifers. On alluvial sites with periodic flooding, redwood and other colonizing hardwoods would dominate (Veirs, 1996). Where existing redwoods are inundated, new roots would develop in newly deposited silt (Veirs, 1996).

State and transition model

Figure 3. 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 2.1 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 7. Community 3.1 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 8. Community 4.1 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 9. Community 5.1 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 10. Community 6.1 plant community composition

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

The Redwood forest provides habitat for many species of mammals and native birds. Predators include black bear, fisher and marten, mountain lion, fox and bobcat. Ungulates included deer and elk, which use the forested areas for foraging and cover. Many bird species use the redwood forest on a seasonal basis. Bird species include warblers, tanagers, sparrows, blackbirds, the Marbeled Murrelet, the Northern spotted owl and the Bald Eagle. Common reptiles found in forested areas would include the alligator lizard and garter snake. Amphibians are mostly associated with riparian and wetland areas. The northwest salamander and two newt species spend much of their lives in upland habitat.

Hydrological functions

These soils have a slow to moderate infiltration rate when thoroughly wet. They are moderately fine-textured, moderately deep to very deep and well-drained. These soils have a moderate rate of water transmission through the soil profile. The site is subject to erosion where adequate vegetative cover is not maintained. Road building, timber harvest, and site preparation for planting may increase surface erosion and potential for mass wasting. Hydrologic Groups Supur-290--C Mettah-290--D Trailhead-558--C Trailhead-559--C Trailhead-560--C Fortyfour-562--D

Recreational uses

Limitations to recreational uses and development may occur due to slope considerations, soil texture and the amount of rock fragments.

Wood products

Redwood is a highly valued lumber because of its resistance to decay. Uses of redwood include house siding, paneling, trim and cabinetry, decks, hot tubs, fences, garden structures, and retaining walls. Other uses include fascia, molding and industrial storage and processing tanks. Douglas-fir is employed in residential structures and light commercial timber-frame construction. It is also used for solid timber heavy duty construction such as pilings, wharfs, bridge components and warehouse construction.

Other products

Redwood burls are used for tabletops, veneers, bowls and other turned products. Redwood bark is widely used as garden mulch. Douglas-fir is a very desirable Christmas tree; branches and cones are also used as materials for Christmas wreaths. California huckleberries are made into wine, as well as processed into pie fillings for home and commercial use. Foliage of the California huckleberry is used by florists in floral arrangements and to make Christmas decorations.

Other information

Pacific rhododendron is sometimes used for erosion protection on steep slopes. California Huckleberry leaves may be eaten by deer, and its berries are utilized by many bird and mammal species including bear, fox, squirrel, and skunk. NOTE-Forest Site Productivity: SI for PSME is using 50 yr base age (KING); SI for Redwood is using 100 year base age (L&P).

Table 11. Representative site productivity

Common Name	Symbol	Site Index Low	Site Index High	CMAI Low	CMAI High	Age Of CMAI	Site Index Curve Code	Site Index Curve Basis	Citation
redwood	SESE3	151	160	218	240	—	—	—	

Douglas-fir	PSME	130	165	129	176	–	–	–	
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Inventory data references

Data was collected utilizing both transects and vegetation data at the location of soil pits, unless otherwise noted. Plot numbers are given by year and soil pit number. Surpur-251 08-21 08-48 09-67 Mettah-290 92-34 92-37 03-38 92-36 04-02 Surpur-290 03-34 03-37 Trailhead-558 04-46 Trailhead-559 02-44 01-07 01-09 6005 (Note) Trailhead-560 01-03 02-41 Fortyfour-562 6015 (Note)

Type locality

Location 1: Humboldt County, CA	
UTM zone	N
UTM northing	4562447
UTM easting	414809
General legal description	Trailhead - Redwood National Park, Humboldt County; California; Bald Hills Quadrangle

Other references

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Contributors

Judy Welles

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	
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:
