

Ecological site F006XB001WA

Frigid Xeric Mountain Slopes

(Douglas-fir Moderately Dry Shrub/Herb)

Last updated: 5/13/2025
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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): 006X–Cascade Mountains, Eastern Slope

Major Land Resource Area (MLRA): 006X–Cascade Mountains, Eastern Slope. Stretching from northern Washington to southern Oregon, MLRA 6 encompasses the mountain slopes, foothills, elevated plateaus and valleys on the eastern slopes of the Cascade mountains. This MLRA is a transitional area between the Cascade Mountains to the west and the lower lying Columbia Basalt Plateau to the east. Situated in the rain shadow of the Cascade Crest, this MLRA receives less precipitation than portions of the cascades further west and greater precipitation than the basalt plateaus to the east. Geologically, the majority of the MLRA is dominated by Miocene volcanic rocks, while the northern portion is dominated by Pre-Cretaceous metamorphic rocks and the southern portion is blanketed with a thick mantle of ash and pumice from Mount Mazama. The soils in the MLRA dominantly have a mesic, frigid, or cryic soil temperature regime, a xeric soil moisture regime, and mixed or glassy mineralogy. They generally are moderately deep to very deep, well drained, and loamy or ashy. Biologically, the MLRA is dominated by coniferous forest, large expanses of which are dominated by ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir or lodgepole pine. Areas experiencing cooler and moister conditions include grand fir, white fir, and western larch while the highest elevations include pacific silver fir, subalpine fir and whitebark pine. Economically, timber harvest and recreation are important land uses in these forests. Historically, many of these forests would have experienced relatively frequent, low and mixed severity fire favoring the development of mature forests dominated by ponderosa pine or Douglas-fir. In the southern pumice plateau forests, less frequent, higher severity fire was common and promoted the growth of large expanses of lodgepole pine forests.

LRU notes

Common Resource Area (CRA) 6.5 - Chiwaukum Hills and Lowlands This LRU occurs predominantly on mountains slopes and plateaus. The soils are dominantly in the Alfisols and Mollisols taxonomic order, with minor areas of Inceptisols and Andisols . Soil parent materials are dominantly colluvium and residuum from igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic rock, glacial outwash, and glacial till, with a mixture of loess volcanic ash in the upper part. Taxonomic soil climate is primarily a frigid temperature regime and xeric moisture regime with average annual precipitation of about 27 inches. Other LRU'S where the site occurs: CRA 6.6 - Yakima Plateau and Slopes CRA 6.8 - Oak-Conifer Eastern Cascades - Columbia Foothills

Classification relationships

CDS638 (WEN) – Douglas-fir/snowberry/pinegrass (PSME/SYAL/CARU)

Ecological site concept

The bulk of this ecological site is in the lower elevation mountain slopes, located on lower mountain foothills and slopes under 3000 feet. This is a Douglas-fir/Snowberry/Pinegrass site that is warmer and has increased brush species in the understory and no western larch.

Associated sites

F006XD002WA	Cool Frigid Xeric Ashy Slopes (Grand fir Cool Dry Grass) Extends from Chelan to Klickitat. On moister sites with grand fir.
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F006XB004WA	Mesic Xeric Foothills and Mountain Slopes (Ponderosa Pine Hot Dry Shrub Grass) Little warmer and drier.
F006XB003WA	Frigid Xeric Mountain Slopes (Grand fir Warm Moderately Dry Low Shrub/Herb) Little moister and cooler sites with Grand fir.

Similar sites

F006XA001WA	Cool Frigid Xeric Ashy Slopes (Douglas-fir Cool Dry Grass) Cooler sites with an understory dominated by pinegrass, and fewer shrubs. In association in Southern Chelan Co. and northern Kittitas Co.
F006XA007WA	Warm Frigid Xeric Mountain Slopes (Douglas-fir Warm Dry Shrub/Herb) Could be in association from Chelan to Yakima.

Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	(1) <i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i>
Shrub	(1) <i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>
Herbaceous	(1) <i>Calamagrostis rubescens</i>

Physiographic features

This ecological site occurs mainly on mountain back slopes, plateaus and terraces. It is found between 1,200 feet and 5,700 feet in elevation on all aspects. Slope gradients generally range from 2 to 65 percent, but can be found on slopes up to 90 percent.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Mountains > Mountain slope (2) Plateau > Terrace (3) Hills > Hillslope (4) Alluvial fan
Flooding duration	Brief (2 to 7 days)
Flooding frequency	None to occasional
Elevation	370 – 1,680 m

Slope	20 – 50 %
Water table depth	200 cm
Aspect	W, NW, N, NE, E, SE, S, SW

Table 3. Representative physiographic features (actual ranges)

Flooding duration	Not specified
Flooding frequency	Not specified
Elevation	60 – 1,980 m
Slope	0 – 90 %
Water table depth	40 – 200 cm

Climatic features

Mean Annual precipitation
Total Range: 18 - 45 inches
Central tendency: 20 - 30 inches

Mean Annual Air Temperature
Total Range: 2.7 - 10.0 C (37 - 50 F)
Central tendency: 6.1 - 8.8 C (43 - 48 F)

Frost-free period (days)
Total range: 70 - 140
Central tendency: 90 - 120

Representative Climate Station: USC00451504 – Cle Elem, WA; latitude 47.189, longitude -120.913; elevation 1900 feet.

Table 4 Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (characteristic range)	90-120 days
Freeze-free period (characteristic range)	
Precipitation total (characteristic range)	510-760 mm
Frost-free period (actual range)	70-140 days
Freeze-free period (actual range)	

Precipitation total (actual range)	460-1,140 mm
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Climate stations used

- (1) CLE ELUM [USC00451504], Cle Elum, WA

Influencing water features

This site is not influenced by water from a wetland or stream.

Wetland description

N/A

Soil features

This ecological site is associated with several soil mapunit components. The components are dominantly Vitrandic and Ultic taxonomic subgroups of Haploxeralf, Argixerolls and Haploxeroll great groups. Soils are dominantly moderately deep to very deep and have average available water capacity of about 5.8 inches (14.7 cm) in the 0 to 40-inches (0-100 cm) depth range. Soil parent material is dominantly colluvium and residuum from granitic, volcanic, metamorphic, and sedimentary rock, glacial outwash, and glacial till, with a mixture of loess volcanic ash in the upper part.

Dominant Soil Series: Nard, Suskin, Teanaway, Quiden, Maydol, Varelum, Ampad, Kaiders, Sauter

Parent Materials:

Kind – colluvium, residuum, glacial till, glacial outwash, alluvium

Origin – granitic, volcanic, metamorphic, and sedimentary rock

Figure 5. Map of soil mapunits with a major component linked to the Douglas-fir Moderately Dry Shrub/ Herb Ecological Site

Table 5. Representative soil features

Surface texture	(1) Ashy sandy loam (2) Ashy loam (3) Ashy silt loam
Family particle size	(1) Fine-loamy (2) Loamy-skeletal
Drainage class	Well drained
Surface fragment cover <=3"	0 – 20 %
Surface fragment cover >3"	0 – 20 %
Available water capacity (Depth not specified)	Not specified

Soil reaction (1:1 water) (0-25.4cm)	Not specified
Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (Depth not specified)	Not specified
Subsurface fragment volume >3" (Depth not specified)	Not specified

Table 6. Representative soil features (actual values)

Drainage class	Somewhat poorly drained to well drained
Surface fragment cover <=3"	Not specified
Surface fragment cover >3"	Not specified
Available water capacity (Depth not specified)	6.35 – 19.81 cm
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (0-25.4cm)	5.6 – 7.3
Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (Depth not specified)	0 – 50 %
Subsurface fragment volume >3" (Depth not specified)	0 – 30 %

Ecological dynamics

The bulk of this ecological site is in the lower elevation mountain slopes in the Leavenworth and Blewett Pass areas of CRA 6.5. It is also scattered in portions of CRA 6.6. It's predominantly located on lower mountain foothills and slopes under 3000 feet. This DF/Snowberry/Pinegrass site is warmer and differs than the Douglas-fir/pinegrass sites to the north due to the increased brush species in the understory and no western larch. It is a productive site with good tree stocking of Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine. Both species dominate the site with an understory of variety of shrubs along with pinegrass and elk sedge. Stands would normally be open grown with frequent low intensity fires (Fire Regime 1 in LANDFIRE 2007); however, fire exclusion has caused stand density to increase with mixed severity and stand replacing fires the norm.

State and transition model

Additional community tables

Table 7. Community 1.1 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 8. Community 1.2 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 9. Community 1.3 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 10. Community 1.4 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 11. Community 2.1 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 12. Community 3.1 plant community composition

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

Site index /Culmination of Mean Annual Increment (CMAI) Overall this site is productive for Douglas-fir, ponderosa pine. Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine being the preferred species for management. Site indexes are measured on 50 year and 100 year tables based on Breast Height Age (BA) or Total Age (TA). CMAI indicates the sites ability to produce wood at a certain age of a stand's maximum annual growth measured in cubic feet per acre.

Table 13. 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
ponderosa pine	<i>PIPO</i>	65	106	14	100	–	–	–	
Douglas-fir	<i>PSME</i>	60	90	43	68	–	–	–	

Inventory data references

Forest Service Plant Associations: CDS638 (WEN) – Douglas-fir/snowberry/pinegrass (PSME/SYAL/CARU)

Other references

Forest Plant Associations of the Wenatchee National Forest. PNW-GTR-359, October 1995. Lillybridge et.al.
Forest Plant Associations of the Yakima Indian Reservation, May 1988. Thomas, Hart, and Clausnitzer
Washington Natural Heritage Program. Ecosystems of Washington State, a Guide to Identification, Rocchio and Crawford, 2015 –
Northern Rocky Mt. Dry-Mesic Montane Mixed Conifer Forest
NRCS MLRA 6 Soil-Forest Productivity data base
NRCS Common Resource Area Maps (CRAs)
NRCS MLRA 6 Soil-Forest Plant Association data base
On site field reviews of Central and South CRAs with professional interpretation. June and July 2019. Kuhn, Campbell

Contributors

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Approval

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	04/01/2025
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:
