

# Ecological site R009XY050OR

## Loamy Bench

### 10-15 PZ

Last updated: 5/05/2025

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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.

#### Associated sites

<b>R009XY003OR</b>	<p><b>Fan 10-15 PZ</b></p> <p>Fan 10-15" PZ</p>
<b>R009XY051OR</b>	<p><b>Loamy South 10-15 PZ</b></p> <p>Loamy South 10-15" PZ</p>
<b>R009XY052OR</b>	<p><b>Loamy Shallow South 10-15 PZ</b></p> <p>Loamy Shallow South 10-15" PZ</p>
<b>R009XY053OR</b>	<p><b>Very Shallow South 10-15 PZ</b></p> <p>Very Shallow South 10-15" PZ</p>
<b>R009XY054OR</b>	<p><b>Loamy North 10-15 PZ</b></p> <p>Loamy North 10-15" PZ</p>

#### Similar sites

<b>R009XY003OR</b>	<p><b>Fan 10-15 PZ</b></p> <p>Fan 10-15" PZ (higher production )</p>
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**Table 1. Dominant plant species**

Tree	Not specified
Shrub	Not specified
Herbaceous	Not specified

## Physiographic features

This site occurs on benches along the lower slopes of canyons. Slopes range from 0 to 30% with slopes of 2 to 15% being most typical. Elevation varies from 800 to 2800 feet.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Canyon
Elevation	240 – 850 m
Slope	0 – 20 %
Aspect	Aspect is not a significant factor

## Climatic features

The annual precipitation ranges from 10 to 15 inches. The precipitation occurs as rain and snow during the months of November through March. Localized, occasionally severe, convection storms occur during the summer. The mean annual air temperature is approximately 50 degrees F. Extreme temperatures range from 100 degrees F. to -20 degrees F. Soil temperature regimes are mesic. The frost-free period ranges from 90 to 140 days. The period of optimum plant growth is from April through mid July.

Table 3 Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (average)	140 days
Freeze-free period (average)	
Precipitation total (average)	380 mm

## Influencing water features

### Soil features

The soils of the site are formed in deep alluvium, colluvium and loess. They are moderately deep to deep. Typically the surface layer is a silt loam or gravelly silt loam over a loamy to cobbly clay loam subsoil. Stoniness is variable. Soil permeability is moderate. The available water holding capacity (AWC) is 6 to 10 inches. The erosion potential is moderate.

Table 4. Representative soil features

Surface texture	(1) Silt loam (2) Very gravelly silt loam
Family particle size	(1) Loamy
Drainage class	Well drained

Permeability class	Moderate
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## Ecological dynamics

Range in Characteristics:

Variability in plant composition and productin is dependent on soil depth and surface texture. Bluebunch wheatgrass increases on fine textured surfaces and sand drop seed increases on coarse textured surfaces. Produciton increases with soil depth.

Response to Disturbance:

If the condition of the site deteriorates as a result of overgrazing, bluebunch wheatgrass decreases. Sand dropseed increases along with lesser amounts of red threeawn. Cheatgrass, Japanese brome, annula fescues and a variety of unpalatable forbs including goatweed invade. With further deterioration, sand drop seed decreases, annuals and threeawn continue to increase, forage production decreases, areas of bare ground appear and soil erosion accelerates.

## 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 (%)
<b>Grass/Grasslike</b>					
1	<b>Perennial Deep-rooted Sub-dominant</b>			785-897	
	bluebunch wheatgrass	PSSP6	<i>Pseudoroegneria spicata</i>	785-897	–
2	<b>Perennial Deep-rooted Sub-dominant</b>			112-224	
	sand dropseed	SPCR	<i>Sporobolus cryptandrus</i>	112-224	–
5	<b>PPGG</b>			34-135	
	purple threeawn	ARPU9	<i>Aristida purpurea</i>	9-34	–
	needle and thread	HECO26	<i>Hesperostipa comata</i>	9-34	–
	prairie Junegrass	KOMA	<i>Koeleria macrantha</i>	9-34	–
	Sandberg bluegrass	POSE	<i>Poa secunda</i>	9-34	–
<b>Forb</b>					
7	<b>Perennial All Dominant</b>			34-101	
	common yarrow	ACMI2	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	11-34	–
	milkvetch	ASTRA	<i>Astragalus</i>	11-34	–
	plains pricklypear	OPPO	<i>Opuntia polyacantha</i>	11-34	–
9	<b>PPFF</b>			11-56	
	agoseris	AGOSE	<i>Agoseris</i>	1-6	–
	shaggy fleabane	ERPU2	<i>Erigeron pumilus</i>	1-6	–
	aster	EUCEP2	<i>Eucephalus</i>	1-6	–
	hairy false goldenaster	HEVI4	<i>Heterotheca villosa</i>	1-6	–
	hawkweed	HIERA	<i>Hieracium</i>	1-6	–
	desertparsley	LOMAT	<i>Lomatium</i>	1-6	–
	lupine	LUPIN	<i>Lupinus</i>	1-6	–
	beardtongue	PENST	<i>Penstemon</i>	1-6	–
	phacelia	PHACE	<i>Phacelia</i>	1-6	–
	phlox	PHLOX	<i>Phlox</i>	1-6	–
	narrowleaf skullcap	SCAN3	<i>Scutellaria angustifolia</i>	1-6	–
<b>Shrub/Vine</b>					
15	<b>SSSS</b>			22-67	

Saskatoon serviceberry	AMAL2	<i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i>	6-13	-
netleaf hackberry	CELAR	<i>Celtis laevigata var. reticulata</i>	6-13	-
buckthorn	RHAMN	<i>Rhamnus</i>	6-13	-
smooth sumac	RHGL	<i>Rhus glabra</i>	6-13	-
western poison ivy	TORY	<i>Toxicodendron rydbergii</i>	6-13	-

## Animal community

**Livestock Grazing:** This site is suited to spring, fall and winter use by cattle, sheep and horses under a planned grazing system. The key species is bluebunch wheatgrass. Bluebunch wheatgrass can be damaged if heavily grazed during periods of flowering and seed formation when root reserves and soil moisture is low. Use in the spring should be postponed until the soils are firm enough to prevent plant crown trampling damage and soil compaction. **Wildlife:** When the ecological condition is high this site provides food for deer, elk, and other mammals and upland birds. It is an important wintering area for deer and elk. **Native Wildlife Associated with The Potential Climax Community:** Mule deer, whitetail deer, elk, rodents and a variety of upland birds use this site for food.

## Hydrological functions

The soils of this site have excellent water holding capacities providing late season water for plant growth. The hydrologic cover condition is excellent when the ecological condition is high.

## Other information

When in poor condition this site has a high potential for mechanical range seeding.

## Contributors

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## Approval

Kirt Walstad, 5/05/2025

## 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.

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Date	07/30/2012
Approved by	
Approval date	

Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on	Annual Production
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## Indicators

1. **Number and extent of rills: None to some, moderate sheet & rill erosion hazard**  
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2. **Presence of water flow patterns: None to some**  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. **Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes: None**  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. **Bare ground from Ecological Site Description or other studies (rock, litter, lichen, moss, plant canopy are not bare ground): 5-10%**  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. **Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies: None**  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. **Extent of wind scoured, blowouts and/or depositional areas: None, slight wind erosion hazard**  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. **Amount of litter movement (describe size and distance expected to travel): Fine - limited movement**  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. **Soil surface (top few mm) resistance to erosion (stability values are averages - most sites will show a range of values): Moderately resistant to erosion; aggregate stability = 2-4**  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. **Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness): Moderately deep to deep, well drained, with a silt loam or gravelly silt loam surface; moderate OM (2-4%)**  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. **Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff: Significant ground cover (90-100%) and gentle slopes (0-30%) effectively limit rainfall impact and overland flow**  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. **Presence and thickness of compaction layer (usually none; describe soil profile features which may be mistaken for compaction on this site): None**  
\_\_\_\_\_

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:** Bluebunch wheatgrass > Sand dropseed > forbs > other grasses > shrubs

**Sub-dominant:**

**Other:**

**Additional:**

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13. **Amount of plant mortality and decadence (include which functional groups are expected to show mortality or decadence):**  
Normal decadence and mortality expected

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14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth ( in):**

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15. **Expected annual annual-production (this is TOTAL above-ground annual-production, not just forage annual-production):**  
Favorable: 1200, Normal: 1000, Unfavorable: 800 lbs/acre/year at high RSI (HCPC)

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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: Sand dropseed and three-awn will increase with deterioration of plant community. Annual bromes and annual fescues invade sites that have lost deep rooted perennial grass functional groups. Excessive erosion may occur, deteriorating site potential.**

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17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability: All species should be capable of reproducing annually**

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