

Ecological site R010XB044OR

JD Droughty South

9-12 PZ

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.

Associated sites

R010XB064OR	JD North 9-12 PZ The site is on droughty north slopeswith Bluebunch wheatgrass predominant.
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Similar sites

R010XB041OR	JD Clayey South 9-12 PZ Site is on Clayey South slopes with a 9-12
R010XB052OR	JD Droughty Shallow South 9-12 PZ Site is a droughty south with shallow soils.

Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	Not specified
Shrub	Not specified
Herbaceous	Not specified

Physiographic features

This site occurs on southerly exposures of low elevation terraces composed of early Cenezoic tuffaceous sediments. Slopes typically range from 15 to 60% with slopes. Elevation varies from 1300 to 2400 feet.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Hill (2) Terrace
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Flooding frequency	None
Ponding frequency	None
Elevation	400 – 730 m
Slope	20 – 60 %
Ponding depth	0 cm
Water table depth	180 cm
Aspect	SE, S, W

Climatic features

Elevation and aspect affect precipitation and the relative effectiveness of the precipitation and temperatures. Temperature changes can occur rapidly. In addition, the topography also results in localized cold air drainages, along with occasional cold air entrapment and inversions in the valleys. Annual snowfall is 13 inches to 17 inches, with most coming in the winter and spring. Snow cover is of short duration and melts quickly at low elevations.

Table 3 Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (average)	150 days
Freeze-free period (average)	210 days
Precipitation total (average)	310 mm

Influencing water features

Soil features

Soils on this site are Mollisols with predominantly gravelly loam over clay textures. The soils are very deep with fine textures and well drained. These soils are formed from Cenezoic Tuffaceous Sediments that are weathered from John Day (mid-Oligocene) or Clarno (late Eocene) geological formations. Cobbles are present. The soils are generally aridic. The major taxonomic units correlated to this site include fine, smectitic, mesic Vertic Palexerolls.

Table 4. Representative soil features

Surface texture	(1) Loam (2) Gravelly loam
Family particle size	(1) Clayey

Drainage class	Well drained
Permeability class	Very slow
Soil depth	150 cm
Surface fragment cover <=3"	20 %
Surface fragment cover >3"	20 %
Available water capacity (0-101.6cm)	15.24 – 22.86 cm
Calcium carbonate equivalent (0-101.6cm)	0 – 10 %
Electrical conductivity (0-101.6cm)	Not specified
Sodium adsorption ratio (0-101.6cm)	Not specified
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (0-101.6cm)	6.6 – 7.8
Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (Depth not specified)	20 %
Subsurface fragment volume >3" (Depth not specified)	30 %

Ecological dynamics

The interpretative plant community for this site is the Historic Climax Plant Community (HCPC). Grasses with few forbs and shrubs dominate this plant community. Fluctuations in species composition and relative production may change from year to year dependent upon abnormal precipitation or other climatic factors. The historic climax plant community has been determined by study of rangeland relic areas, or areas protected from excess disturbance. Trends in plant communities going from heavily grazed areas to lightly grazed areas, seasonal pastures, and historical accounts have also been used.

Pathways for the state and transition model are as follows:

- 1 - Over grazing w/o frequent fire
- 2 - Proper grazing or rest
- 3 - Continued mis-management with fire
- 4 - Rest and re-seed, time

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 (%)
Grass/Grasslike					
1				919-1289	
	Thurber's needlegrass	ACTH7	<i>Achnatherum thurberianum</i>	673-897	–
	bluebunch wheatgrass	PSSPS	<i>Pseudoroegneria spicata ssp. spicata</i>	224-336	–
	Indian ricegrass	ACHY	<i>Achnatherum hymenoides</i>	22-56	–
2				45-157	
	sand dropseed	SPCR	<i>Sporobolus cryptandrus</i>	22-112	–
	Sandberg bluegrass	POSE	<i>Poa secunda</i>	22-45	–
Forb					
3				8-56	
	milkvetch	ASTRA	<i>Astragalus</i>	3-6	–
	prairie clover	DALEA	<i>Dalea</i>	1-3	–
	buckwheat	ERIOG	<i>Eriogonum</i>	1-3	–
	desertparsley	LOMAT	<i>Lomatium</i>	1-3	–
	common yarrow	ACMI2	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	1-3	–
Shrub/Vine					
4				73-90	
	broom snakeweed	GUSA2	<i>Gutierrezia sarothrae</i>	22-90	–
	western juniper	JUOC	<i>Juniperus occidentalis</i>	6-11	–
	basin big sagebrush	ARTRT	<i>Artemisia tridentata ssp. tridentata</i>	6-11	–
	rabbitbrush	CHRY9	<i>Chrysothamnus</i>	6-11	–

Table 6. Community 2.1 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
Grass/Grasslike					
1				1-9	
	sand dropseed	SPCR	<i>Sporobolus cryptandrus</i>	0-9	–
	bluebunch wheatgrass	PSSPS	<i>Pseudoroegneria spicata ssp. spicata</i>	0-4	–
2				112-179	
	medusahead	TACA8	<i>Taeniatherum caput-medusae</i>	135-179	–
	cheatgrass	BRTE	<i>Bromus tectorum</i>	90-135	–
Forb					
3				1-4	
	common yarrow	ACMIM2	<i>Achillea millefolium var. millefolium</i>	0-4	–
	buckwheat	ERIOG	<i>Eriogonum</i>	0-4	–
Shrub/Vine					

4				101-168	
	broom snakeweed	GUSA2	<i>Gutierrezia sarothrae</i>	90-135	–
	basin big sagebrush	ARTRT	<i>Artemisia tridentata ssp. tridentata</i>	45-90	–
	western juniper	JUOC	<i>Juniperus occidentalis</i>	22-45	–

Animal community

Grazing Livestock grazing is suitable for this site as long as management objectives include the improvement or maintenance of this site. It is easy to overuse this site and cause a shift in vegetation that is difficult to change. This site has the potential to produce a large amount of high quality forage. Management should be aimed at harvesting the forage as quickly as possible, letting the site recover from the grazing event prior to fall dormancy. Initial stocking rates will be determined with the landowner or decisionmaker. They will be based on past use histories and type and condition of the vegetation. Calculations used to determine an initial starting stocking rate will be based on forage preference ratings. Wildlife The main wildlife species of concern on this site are large herbivores. These are mule deer and elk. These wildlife species can possibly overuse this site before the time cattle or sheep are planned to be grazed. Being an open grassland, this site is home to a variety of small herbivores, birds, and their associated predators. This site is mainly a foraging area for the larger wildlife. No threatened or endangered wildlife species rely on this site for any of their habitat requirements.

Hydrological functions

The site has a high potential in low seral condition to produce significant run-off to receiving waters. The hydrology of this site is characterized by high intensity thunderstorms during the summer months and by low intensity frontal storms during the winter.

Recreational uses

None

Wood products

No wood products are associated with this site.

Other products

None

Other information

Increase in western juniper and the subsequent competition for moisture will lead to a reduction of available forage. Overgrazing can easily reduce ground cover and accelerate soil loss. Improving infiltration and permeability, and reducing runoff should be the immediate goal of juniper control.

Type locality

Location 1: Wheeler County, OR	
Township/Range/Section	T7S R19E S34
Longitude	120° 27' 19"
General legal description	USGS Quad; Clarno. John Day Fossil Beds National Monument, Clarno Unit, approximately 300 feet east and 1200 feet south of the NW corner of section 34, T.7S, R.19E.

Location 2: Grant County, OR	
Township/Range/Section	T11S R26E S5
Latitude	44° 38'45"
Longitude	119° 37'40"
General legal description	USGS Quad: Mt. Misery, Oregon. Foree Unit, John Day Fossil Beds National Monument. (80% SI)
Location 3: Grant County, OR	
Township/Range/Section	T12S R26E S6
Latitude	44° 33'30"
Longitude	119° 39'10"
General legal description	USGS Quad; Picture Gorge West, Oregon. John Day Fossil Beds National Monument. (80% SI)

Other references

Soil Conservation Service, Relative Forage Preference of Plants for Grazing Use by Season, Range Technical Note No. 16, 1982.

Western Regional Climate Center, NOAA, National Weather Service, Portland, OR. Web site - <http://nimbo.wrh.noaa.gov/Portland/climate.html>.

Natural Vegetation of Oregon and Washington, Jerry F. Franklin and C. T. Dyrness.

The Ecological Provinces of Oregon, E. William Anderson, Michael M. Borman, and William C. Krueger.

Contributors

CB
Ed Petersen, Rangeland Management Specialist, John Day Field Office, And Alan Bahn, Rangeland Management Specialist, Baker City Field Office
JPR

Approval

Kirt Walstad, 5/13/2025

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)	Jeff Repp and Bruce Frannsen
Contact for lead author	State Rangeland Management Specialist for NRCS - Oregon
Date	08/06/2012
Approved by	
Approval date	
Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on	Annual Production

Indicators

1. Number and extent of rills: None to very few on steeper slopes, moderate sheet & rill erosion hazard

2. Presence of water flow patterns: None to very few on steeper slopes

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): 10-25%

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 = 3-5

9. Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness): Very deep well drained clay loams, gravelly loams, or very cobbly or stony loams: moderate OM (1-3%)

10. Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff: Moderate ground cover (50-60%) and gentle to steep slopes (15-60%) moderately 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: Thurber needlegrass > Bluebunch wheatgrass > shrubs > forbs > other grasses

Sub-dominant:

Other:

Additional:

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

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):
Favorable: 1200, Normal: 1000, Unfavorable: 800 lbs/acre/year at high RSI (HCPC)

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: Western Juniper readily invades the site. Cheatgrass and Medusahead invade sites that have lost dep rooted perennial grass functional groups.

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