

Ecological site R011XY034OR

Sandy North Slopes

8-11 PZ

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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): 011X–Snake River Plains

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Ecological site concept

Site does not receive additional moisture Soils are: Not saline or saline sodic Deep to very deep, with 35% coarse fragments (by volume), not skeletal not strongly or violently effervescent in the surface mineral 10" Surface textures range from loamy fine sand to loamy sand the surface mineral 4" Slope is 30% Clay content is ≈35% in surface mineral 4" Site does not have an argillic horizon with >35% clay

Associated sites

R011XY012OR	Silty 8-11 PZ Silty 8-11 PZ
R011XY016OR	Sandy 8-11 PZ Sandy 8-11 PZ
R011XY032OR	Silty North Slopes 8-11 PZ Silty North Slopes 8-11 PZ

Similar sites

R011XY016OR	Sandy 8-11 PZ Sandy 8-11 PZ (non-aspect site, lower production)
R011XY032OR	Silty North Slopes 8-11 PZ Silty North Slopes 8-11 PZ (silty surface, different composition - beardless wheatgrass dominant)

Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	Not specified
Shrub	(1) <i>Atriplex canescens</i> (2) <i>Artemisia tridentata ssp. wyomingensis</i>
Herbaceous	(1) <i>Hesperostipa comata</i> (2) <i>Poa secunda</i>

Physiographic features

This site occurs on low elevation north aspects of terraces in the Malheur, Owyhee and adjacent Snake River drainage. Slopes typically range from 12 to 60%. Elevations vary from 2,100 to 3,000 feet.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Terrace
Elevation	640 – 910 m
Slope	10 – 60 %
Aspect	N

Climatic features

The annual precipitation ranges from 8 to 11 inches, most of which occurs in the form of rain during the months of December through April. The soil temperature regime is mesic with a mean air temperature of 53 degrees F. Temperature extremes range from 110 to -10 degrees F. The frost free period ranges from 120 to 170 days. The optimum growth period for plant growth is late March through June.

Table 3 Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (average)	170 days
Freeze-free period (average)	
Precipitation total (average)	280 mm

Influencing water features

Soil features

The soils of this site are typically deep and well to somewhat excessively drained. Typically the surface layer is a fine sandy loam to a loamy fine sand. The subsoil is a loamy sand to sand 15 to 40 inches thick. Depth to lacustrine, alluvial or tuffaceous sediments ranges from 40 to greater than 60 inches. Permeability is moderately rapid to rapid. The available water holding capacity (AWC) is about 4 to 8 inches for the profile. The erosion potential, both wind and water, is severe.

Table 4. Representative soil features

Parent material	(1) Eolian sands – rhyolite
Surface texture	(1) Fine sandy loam (2) Loamy fine sand
Family particle size	(1) Sandy
Drainage class	Well drained to somewhat excessively drained
Permeability class	Moderately rapid to rapid
Soil depth	100 – 150 cm
Available water capacity (0-101.6cm)	10.16 – 15.24 cm

Ecological dynamics

The potential native plant community is dominated by four-wing saltbush and needle and thread. Wyoming big sagebrush and Indian ricegrass are prominent. Sandberg bluegrass, forbs and a variety of other shrubs are present. Vegetative composition of the community is approximately 80 percent grasses, 5 percent forbs and 15 percent shrubs. The approximate ground cover is 60 to 70 percent (basal and crown).

Range in Characteristics:

Variability in plant composition on this site results from variations in soil surface texture. Four-wing saltbush and needle and thread increase on loamy sand surfaces. Indian ricegrass increases on coarse sandy surfaces. Thurber's needlegrass increases on fine sandy loam surfaces. Antelope bitterbrush occurs over gravels. Production increases at the upper end of the precipitation zone.

Response to Disturbance:

Disturbances that impact the condition of this site include overgrazing by large ungulates, fire, droughts that impact the hydrologic functions of these low-lying sites, and outside anthropogenic impacts that affect site hydrology which will impact water availability for the reference plants. Any disturbance that continues long enough or is of great enough severity will reduce reference plant vigor and cover rapidly.

When the condition of the site deteriorates as a result of over grazing four-wing saltbush, needle and thread and Indian ricegrass decrease. Wyoming big sagebrush, rabbitbrush, broom snakeweed and sand dropseed increase. Cheatgrass invades along with other annuals and biennial weeds. Bare ground increases. With fire and continued disturbance fourwing saltbush sagebrush is severely impacted. Rabbitbrush increases slightly and annuals and noxious biennial forbs continue to invade. Under deteriorated conditions excessive wind erosion in the bare soil interspaces reduces the site potential. Small migration dunes, blowouts and hummocks develop. Water erosion increases with excessive erosion most pronounced in drainage areas where deep incised gulley's form.

States: ARTRW/B RTE-bare ground; B RTE/biennial forbs-bare ground (following fire on degraded range)

**The State-and-Transition Model represents only the Reference Plant Community phase due to limited time, data, and literature support at the time of development. Future work will be needed to describe dynamics, alternative states and land use models.

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	Dominant, perennial, deep rooted bunchgrass			605-807	
	needle and thread	HECO26	<i>Hesperostipa comata</i>	605-807	–
2	Sub-dominant, perennial, deeprooted bunchgrass			50-101	
	Indian ricegrass	ACHY	<i>Achnatherum hymenoides</i>	50-101	–
4	Dominant, perennial, shallow-rooted grass			20-50	
	Sandberg bluegrass	POSE	<i>Poa secunda</i>	20-50	–
5	Other perennial grasses			20-101	
	Thurber's needlegrass	ACTH7	<i>Achnatherum thurberianum</i>	6-20	–
	beardless wheatgrass	PSSPI	<i>Pseudoroegneria spicata ssp. inermis</i>	6-20	–
	thickspike wheatgrass	ELLA3	<i>Elymus lanceolatus</i>	6-20	–
	basin wildrye	LECI4	<i>Leymus cinereus</i>	0-20	–
	foxtail wheatgrass	PSSA2	× <i>Pseudelymus saxicola</i>	0-11	–
	sand dropseed	SPCR	<i>Sporobolus cryptandrus</i>	0-11	–
	squirreltail	ELEL5	<i>Elymus elymoides</i>	6-11	–
Forb					
8	Dominant, perennial forbs			30-50	
	arrowleaf balsamroot	BASA3	<i>Balsamorhiza sagittata</i>	20-30	–
	buckwheat	ERIOG	<i>Eriogonum</i>	10-20	–
9	Other forbs			30-101	
	common yarrow	ACMI2	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	6-10	–
	milkvetch	ASTRA	<i>Astragalus</i>	6-10	–
	fleabane	ERIGE2	<i>Erigeron</i>	6-10	–
	western stoneseed	LIRU4	<i>Lithospermum ruderale</i>	0-10	–
	desertparsley	LOMAT	<i>Lomatium</i>	6-10	–
	lupine	LUPIN	<i>Lupinus</i>	0-10	–
	phlox	PHLOX	<i>Phlox</i>	6-10	–
	scarlet globemallow	SPCO	<i>Sphaeralcea coccinea</i>	0-6	–
	plains pricklypear	OPPO	<i>Opuntia polyacantha</i>	0-6	–
	beardtongue	PENST	<i>Penstemon</i>	0-6	–
	common woolly sunflower	ERLA6	<i>Eriophyllum lanatum</i>	0-6	–
	hawksbeard	CREPI	<i>Crepis</i>	2-6	–
	onion	ALLIU	<i>Allium</i>	2-6	–
Shrub/Vine					
11	Dominant shrubs			40-101	
	fourwing saltbush	ATCA2	<i>Atriplex canescens</i>	20-50	–
15	Other shrubs			20-101	
	spiny hopsage	GRSP	<i>Grayia spinosa</i>	11-30	–
	winterfat	KRLA2	<i>Krascheninnikovia lanata</i>	0-30	–
	antelope bitterbrush	PUTR2	<i>Purshia tridentata</i>	11-30	–
	horsebrush	TETRA3	<i>Tetradymia</i>	0-20	–
	granite prickly phlox	LIPU11	<i>Linanthus pungens</i>	6-20	–
	broom snakeweed	GUSA2	<i>Gutierrezia sarothrae</i>	6-20	–
	basin big sagebrush	ARTRT	<i>Artemisia tridentata ssp. tridentata</i>	6-20	–
	rubber rabbitbrush	ERNA10	<i>Ericameria nauseosa</i>	6-20	–
	green rabbitbrush	ERTE18	<i>Ericameria teretifolia</i>	6-20	–

Animal community

Livestock Grazing: This site is suitable for livestock grazing use in the late fall, winter and early spring under a planned grazing system. Use should be postponed until the soils are firm enough to prevent trampling damage and soil compaction. Grazing management should be keyed for needle and thread and four wing saltbush. Deferred grazing or rest is recommended at least once every three years. Native Wildlife Associated with the Potential Climax Community: This site is commonly used by pronghorn antelope, mule deer, rabbits, rodents, upland birds and various predators. Antelope and mule deer make excellent use of the site for spring forage.

Hydrological functions

The soils of this site are subject to both wind and water erosion. When the hydrologic cover is high they have high wind erosion resistance, low runoff potential and high infiltration rates. Hydrologic cover is high when needle and thread and other deep rooted bunchgrass components is greater than 70 percent of potential.

Contributors

A.BAHN/T.BLOOMER/E.PETERSON
T.Bloomer,E.Petersen,A.Bahn

Approval

Kendra Moseley, 9/23/2020

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	08/20/2026
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:

17. Perennial plant reproductive capability:
