

Ecological site R013XY039ID

Dry Meadow PONE-PHAL2

Last updated: 9/23/2020

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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): 013X–Eastern Idaho Plateaus

Land Resource Unit: B (Northwestern Wheat and Range) MLRA: 13 (Eastern Idaho Plateaus) EPA EcoRegion: Level III (Middle Rockies)

LRU notes

013X-Eastern Idaho Plateaus Additional Moisture Site. <https://soils.usda.gov/survey/geography/mlra/index.html>

Classification relationships

no data.

Ecological site concept

Site receives additional moisture not saline or sodic deep to very deep, somewhat poorly drained seasonal water table 60-100 cm (24-40 in)

Associated sites

R013XY016ID	Moist Mountain Loam 20+ PZ POTR
R013XY038ID	Meadow DECA18-CANE2
R013XY050ID	Riparian Wet Meadow SALIX/CAREX
R013XY053ID	Wet Meadow CAREX-JUNCUS

Similar sites

R013XY045ID	Loamy Bottom 12-16 PZ ARTRT/LECI4-ELLAL
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R013XY038ID	Meadow DECA18-CANE2
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Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	Not specified
Shrub	Not specified
Herbaceous	Not specified

Physiographic features

This site occurs on gently sloping topography in flood plains, stream terraces and drainageways. Slopes are generally less than 5 percent. The site is frequently dissected by old stream channels. Elevations range from 4000 to 8000 feet (1200-2450 meters).

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Flood plain (2) Stream terrace (3) Terrace
Flooding duration	Very brief (4 to 48 hours) to long (7 to 30 days)
Flooding frequency	None to occasional
Elevation	1,220 – 2,440 m
Slope	0 – 10 %
Water table depth	0 – 100 cm
Aspect	Aspect is not a significant factor

Climatic features

MLRA 13, the Eastern Idaho Plateaus, is part of the Northwestern Wheat and Range Region. Its elevation ranges from 4209 to 9331 feet above sea level, with an average elevation of 5787 feet. The average annual precipitation is 16.41 inches, with a range of 13.56 to 18.75 inches, based on ten long term climate stations located throughout the MLRA. A spike in precipitation amount often occurs in late spring, usually in May.

Temperatures vary widely in the MLRA throughout the year. A maximum temperature of 103° Fahrenheit occurred at the McCammon climate station (# 105716; elevation 4770 feet), while a minimum of -41° was recorded at the Kilgore station (#104908). At all stations temperatures throughout the year are usually below the national average. Kilgore also recorded the greatest annual snowfall amount of 217 inches. The average temperature is 41.4 degrees F. with an average high of 55.3 degrees and an average low of 27.5 degrees.

The frost-free period ranges from 64 to 90 days, while the freeze-free period can be 98 to 123 days.

Table 3 Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (average)	90 days
Freeze-free period (average)	120 days
Precipitation total (average)	480 mm

Influencing water features

This site is influenced by adjacent wetlands, streams, or run on.

Soil features

The soils of this site are loams to silty clay loams. The soils on this site are very poorly to moderately well drained and have slow to moderately rapid permeability. The water table fluctuates from the surface down to 48+ inches during the growing season, restricting most deep-rooted shrubs. Run-off is very slow and depression areas usually accumulate local sediment instead of eroding. Severe removal of vegetation can cause channel cutting, which may cause a lowering of the water table. These deep to very deep soils are formed from local alluvium. Reactions range from moderately acid to strongly alkaline. The available water holding capacity (AWC) ranges from very low to medium and is supplemented by upward capillary movement of water from the water table. The surface is usually dark in color and high in organic matter. These soils are characterized by either an aquic or xeric soil moisture regime. The soil temperature regime is generally frigid or cryic, but can be mesic.

Soil Series Correlated to this Ecological Site

- Bearbou
- Blackotter
- Chesbrook
- Enochville
- Inkom
- La Roco
- Lago
- Latahco
- Millerditch
- Nuffer
- Outlet
- Parehat
- Raynal
- Sawtelpeak
- Schodson
- Stamp
- Sudpeak

Table 4. Representative soil features

Surface texture	(1) Gravelly sandy loam (2) Silty clay loam (3) Loam
Drainage class	Poorly drained to moderately well drained

Permeability class	Slow to moderately rapid
Soil depth	150 cm
Surface fragment cover <=3"	0 – 30 %
Surface fragment cover >3"	0 – 10 %
Available water capacity (0-101.6cm)	5.59 – 23.11 cm
Calcium carbonate equivalent (0-101.6cm)	0 – 40 %
Electrical conductivity (0-101.6cm)	Not specified
Sodium adsorption ratio (0-101.6cm)	0 – 10
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (0-101.6cm)	5.6 – 10
Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (Depth not specified)	0 – 50 %
Subsurface fragment volume >3" (Depth not specified)	0 – 10 %

Ecological dynamics

Ecological Dynamics of the Site:

The dominant visual aspect of this site is a plant community dominated by Nevada bluegrass, alpine timothy, and meadow barley. Shrubs are normally not present, however several willow species can be found in small amounts. Composition by weight is approximately 80-90 percent grasses and grass-like and 10-20 percent forbs. Typically, the soil surface of the site is slightly undulating causing small depressions and high spots with variable soil moisture regimes. This site is commonly found in complex with the following sites:

1. Marsh site. Deeper depressions with water at or near the surface or slightly above the surface for the entire growing season. This site is dominated by broadleaf cattail, hardstem bulrush, and common threesquare.

2. Wet Meadow site. Shallow depressions with the water table at or near the surface for the entire growing season. This site is dominated by Carex and Juncus.

3. Meadow site. Slightly higher areas that are drier during the growing season. The water table is down to a depth of 20-40 inches by the end of the growing season. This site is dominated by tufted hairgrass and Nebraska sedge.

During the last few thousand years, this site has evolved in a semi-arid climate characterized by dry summers and cold, wet winters. Flooding and high water table have also influenced the development of this site. Herbivory has historically occurred on this site at low levels of utilization. Herbivores include pronghorn antelope, mule deer, Rocky Mountain elk, sage grouse, lagomorphs, and small rodents.

Fire has historically occurred on the site at intervals of 20-40 years. Fire has had little influence on the development of the site. This site normally burns in conjunction with an adjacent upland site.

The soils within any complex of meadow sites are highly variable. Factors that affect the determination of the site include depth to water table at end of growing season, micro-topography, and drainage class. Depth to water table and micro-topography are measurable features. Determination of drainage class requires the use of soil interpretation tables. Other interpretive factors that may be used for site determination are the frequency and duration of flooding and the depth, frequency, and duration of ponding.

Micro-topography is a feature that has a dramatic affect on depth to water table and the resulting plant communities. A few inches of change in surface elevation changes species composition and/or production. Slightly undulating topography is common in meadow complexes, therefore, more than one site should be expected.

An infinite number of combinations of factors that influence the ecology of potential plant communities exist. For practical purposes, four (4) plant communities where the depth to the water table drives the vegetative composition have been described. They are:

- Dry meadow Water table at >40" at end of growing season
- Meadow Water table at 20-40" at end of growing season
- Wet meadow Water table at 10-20" at end of growing season
- Marsh Water at surface to

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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Animal community

Wildlife Interpretations. Animal Community – Wildlife Interpretations This dry meadow ecological site provides diverse habitat for wetland and upland wildlife species. The seasonal hydrology results in abundant forage attracting invertebrate and vertebrate animals to this ecological site. Seasonal habitat is provided for resident and migratory animals including western toad, western rattlesnake, shrews, bats, jackrabbits, ground squirrels, mice, coyote, red fox, badger, sage-grouse, Ferruginous hawk, prairie falcon, grasshopper sparrow, horned lark, and western meadowlark. Large herbivore use of the ecological site is dominated by mule deer, pronghorn antelope, and elk. Native reptiles and amphibians are reliant on these dry meadow sites on a seasonal basis. Species of concern that may frequent the site include dwarf shrew, common sagebrush lizard, sharp-tailed grouse, sage-grouse, and Merriam's shrew. Loss of site hydrology significantly reduces the habitat value of this ecological site and also adjacent ecological sites. Open water is seasonal, only being provided by seasonal runoff, ponding, flooding, seasonal high water table, and natural springs. State 1 Phase 1.1 - Nevada Bluegrass/ Alpine Timothy/ Meadow Barley Reference Plant Community (RPC): The RPC provides a diversity of grasses and forbs used by native insect

communities who assist in pollination of the plant community. The insects are food for the many predator species utilizing the site. The reptile and amphibian community is represented by common sagebrush lizard, rubber boa, western rattlesnake, western toad, and northern leopard frog. A diverse amphibian population is a key indicator of good ecological health on this site. Loss of hydrology will limit or exclude amphibians from this ecological site. Sage-grouse utilize the meadows as summer and fall brood-rearing habitat. The plant community supports spring, summer, and fall forage needs of large mammals (pronghorn antelope, mule deer, and elk.). Limited thermal cover for ungulates is provided due to the lack of woody vegetation in the plant community. A diverse small mammal population including deer mouse, dwarf shrew, Merriam's shrew, and yellow-bellied marmots may utilize the habitat on a seasonal basis. State 1 Phase 1.2 - Threadleaf Sedge/ Meadow Barley/ Baltic Rush/ Rocky Mountain Iris/ Louisiana Sagewort Plant Community: This phase has developed due to improper grazing management. Insect diversity and populations would be similar to those in the Phase 1.1 plant community. Continued improper grazing management would lower the quality of amphibian and reptile habitat due to a more open landscape and reduced vertical plant structure. The plant community provides summer and fall brood-rearing habitat for sage-grouse when sagebrush cover is nearby. The plant community is desirable forage for ungulates but under continued improper grazing management, forage availability would be reduced in the summer and fall. Small mammal populations and diversity would be reduced due to limited vertical structure and increased vulnerability to predators. State 2 –Kentucky Bluegrass/ Louisiana Sagewort/ Foxtail Barley Plant Community: This state developed due to continued improper grazing management and a permanent lowering of the water table. Pollinators would be supported by an increase in forbs that require less moisture than plants in State 1, Phase 1.1 and 1.2. The loss of historic hydrology will limit or exclude use of the site by amphibians and many reptiles. Suitable habitat for the northern leopard frog, a species of concern, would not be provided. Habitat for grassland bird species would increase if the plant community is managed properly. If the plant community is not managed properly, grassland bird use would be minimal. Birds of prey (northern harrier and Ferruginous hawk) may range throughout these areas looking for prey species. Ungulates will utilize the herbaceous vegetation in summer and fall. Kentucky bluegrass is a desirable forage for deer and elk. Small mammal populations and diversity would be reduced due to limited vertical structure and vulnerability to predators. Grazing Interpretations. This site is suitable for grazing in late spring after soils have dried sufficiently to prevent trampling. They are also suitable for grazing in the summer and fall. Natural water supplies are likely to be limited or absent on the site in late summer and fall. Estimated initial stocking rate will be determined with the landowner or decision-maker. They will be based on the inventory which includes species, composition, similarity index, production, past use history, season of use, and seasonal preference. Calculations used to determine estimated initial stocking rate will be based on forage preference ratings.

Hydrological functions

Soils on this site are in hydrologic groups B, C, and D.

Recreational uses

This site has some value for aesthetics and natural beauty due to several spring and early summer blooming forbs and shrubs. Some hunting for sage grouse, rabbits, elk and deer occurs. Hikers and fishermen may traverse the edge of the site where it is adjacent to streams.

Wood products

none.

Other products

none.

Other information

Field Offices American Falls, ID Blackfoot, ID Burley, ID Driggs, ID Fort Hall, ID Idaho Falls, ID Malad, ID Pocatello, ID Rexburg, ID Soda Springs, ID St. Anthony, ID

Inventory data references

Information presented here has been derived from NRCS clipping and other inventory data. Also, field knowledge of range-trained personnel was used. Those involved in developing this site description include: Dave Franzen, co-owner, Intermountain Rangeland Consultants, LLC Jacy Gibbs, co-owner, Intermountain Rangeland Consultants, LLC Jim Cornwell, Range Management Specialist, IASCD Chris Hoag, Wetland Specialist, NRCS, Idaho Dan Ogle, Plant Materials Specialist, NRCS, Idaho Brendan Brazee, State Rangeland Management Specialist, NRCS, Idaho Lee Brooks, Range Management Specialist, IASCD Kristen May, Resource Soil Scientist, NRCS, Idaho

Type locality

Location 1: Bingham County, ID

Other references

Hironaka, M., M.A. Fosberg, A. H. Winward. 1983. Sagebrush-Grass Habitat Types of Southern Idaho. University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho. Bulletin Number "35".

USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station. 2004. Restoring Western Ranges and Wildlands. General Technical Report RMRS-GTR-136-vols. 1-3.

USDA, NRCS.2001. The PLANTS Database, Version 3.1 (<http://plants.usda.gov>). National Plant Data Center, Baton Rouge, LA 70874-4490 USA.

USDA, Forest Service, Fire Effects Information Database. 2004. www.fs.fed.us/database.

USDI Bureau of Land Management, US Geological Survey; USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Agricultural Research Service; Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health. Technical Reference 1734-6; Version 4-2005.

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.

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Date	04/30/2008
Approved by	
Approval date	
Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on	Annual Production

Indicators

1. **Number and extent of rills:** rills are not common on this site. If the site is degrading due to gully down-cutting, rills may occur on the side slopes of the gully.
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2. **Presence of water flow patterns:** water-flow patterns are common on this site. When they occur they are long, often running the length of the site and disrupted by cool season grasses. Water-flow patterns are also common from run-in from the adjacent uplands.

3. **Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:** both are rare on this site.

4. **Bare ground from Ecological Site Description or other studies (rock, litter, lichen, moss, plant canopy are not bare ground):** data is not available. On sites in mid-seral status bare ground may range from 20-30 percent but more data is needed.

5. **Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies:** gullies do not occur on this site.

6. **Extent of wind scoured, blowouts and/or depositional areas:** usually not present.

7. **Amount of litter movement (describe size and distance expected to travel):** fine litter in the interspaces may move more than 6 feet or even off the site following a significant flooding or run-off event.

8. **Soil surface (top few mm) resistance to erosion (stability values are averages - most sites will show a range of values):** values should range from 4 to 6 but needs to be tested.

9. **Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness):** structure ranges from weak, moderate and strong very fine, fine, and medium granular to weak very thin, thin and medium platy to weak and moderate very fine, fine, medium and coarse subangular blocky. Soil organic matter (SOM) generally ranges from 1 to 20 percent, but Sawtelpeak has a range from 60 to 95 percent. The surface color ranges from black to very dark brown to very dark grayish brown. The A or A1 horizon is typically 3 to 13 inches thick.

10. **Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:** deep-rooted grasses and grass-like slow run-off and increase infiltration.

11. **Presence and thickness of compaction layer (usually none; describe soil profile features which may be mistaken for compaction on this site):** normally not present. A compaction layer can develop if grazing occurs when the soils are wet.

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: cool season deep-rooted perennial grasses and grass-like

Sub-dominant: perennial forbs

Other: shallow rooted perennial bunchgrasses

Additional:

13. Amount of plant mortality and decadence (include which functional groups are expected to show mortality or decadence): most of the grasses and grass-likes on this site will become decadent in the absence of fire and ungulate grazing. Decadence or low vigor is a result of litter buildup in the crowns of the plants.
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14. Average percent litter cover (%) and depth (in): additional litter cover data is needed but is expected to be 35 to 50 percent to a depth of 0.2 inches. Under mature shrubs and basin wildrye, litter is >0.5 inches deep and is 90-100 percent ground cover.
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15. Expected annual annual-production (this is TOTAL above-ground annual-production, not just forage annual-production): is 1400 pounds per acre (1555 Kg/ha) in a year with normal precipitation and temperatures. Perennial grasses produce 80-90 percent of the total production and forbs 10-20 percent.
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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: includes cheatgrass, leafy spurge, whitetop, perennial pepperweed, rush skeletonweed, Canada, musk and scotch thistle, and diffuse and spotted knapweed.
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17. Perennial plant reproductive capability: all functional groups have the potential to reproduce in most years.
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