

Ecological site R035XC342AZ

Gypsum Hills

10-14" p.z.

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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): 035X–Colorado Plateau

AZ CRA 35.3 – Colorado Plateau Sagebrush – Grasslands Elevations range from 4500 to 6000 feet and precipitation averages 10 to 14 inches. Vegetation includes Wyoming big sagebrush, Utah juniper, Colorado pinyon - cliffrose, Mormon tea, fourwing saltbush, blackbrush Indian ricegrass, needle and thread, western wheatgrass Galleta, black grama, blue grama, and sand dropseed. The soil temperature regime is mesic and the soil moisture regime is ustic aridic. This unit occurs within the Colorado Plateau Physiographic Province and is characterized by a sequence of flat to gently dipping sedimentary rocks eroded into plateaus, valleys and deep canyons. Sedimentary rock classes dominate the plateau with volcanic fields occurring for the most part near its margin.

Associated sites

R035XC308AZ	Limestone/Sandstone Hills 10-14" p.z.
R035XC341AZ	Gypsum Hills 10-14" p.z. Calcareous

Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	(1) <i>Juniperus osteosperma</i> (2) <i>Pinus edulis</i>
Shrub	(1) <i>Ephedra nevadensis</i> (2) <i>Ephedra viridis</i>
Herbaceous	(1) <i>Sporobolus nealleyi</i> (2) <i>Pleuraphis jamesii</i>

Physiographic features

This desert shrub site occurs in an upland position. It does not benefit from run-on moisture, but excessive run-off can occur because of steep slopes.

Site is located on summits and black slopes of eroded plateaus, mesas and hills.

Cooler north and east slopes are slightly more productive, especially the grasses and forbs. At the lower elevation end, this site will more closely resemble D35-4 Gypsum Hills on the warmer south and west aspects.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Plateau (2) Mesa (3) Hill
Flooding frequency	None
Ponding frequency	None
Elevation	1,460 – 1,830 m
Slope	20 – 80 %
Aspect	N, E

Climatic features

Winter summer moisture ratios range from 70:30 to 60:40. Late spring is usually the driest period, and early fall moisture can be sporadic. Summer rains fall from June through September; moisture originates in the Gulf of Mexico and creates convective, usually brief, intense thunderstorms. Cool season moisture from October through May tends to be frontal; it originates in the Pacific and the Gulf of California and falls in widespread storms with longer duration and lower intensity. Precipitation generally comes as snow from December through February. Accumulations above 12 inches are not common but can occur. Snow usually lasts for 3-4 days, but can persist much longer. Summer daytime temperatures are commonly 95 - 100 F and on occasion exceed 105 F. Winter air temperatures can regularly go below 10 F and have been recorded below - 20 F.

Table 3 Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (average)	170 days
Freeze-free period (average)	190 days
Precipitation total (average)	360 mm

Influencing water features

Soil features

Soil moisture regime is ustic aridic; temperature regime is mesic. Surface textures are loam, sandy loam and crystalline gypsum. Subsoil textures are crystalline gypsum & gypsite. Soils are non-sodic and slightly to moderately alkaline. pH range is 7.4-8.0. Geologic parent material is old lacustrine deposits with a cap of colluvial deposition. Other geologic influences include plate tectonics that have shaped the landscape and exposed gypsum.

Water erosion hazard is very severe, particularly on slopes. Wind erosion hazard is moderate due to surface texture. Shallow depths and gypsum content make the Plant-soil moisture relationship poor.

Typical taxonomic unit includes:

SSA 623 Shivwits Area MU's 48 & 49 Tanbark;
SSA-701 Grand Canyon Area MU 154 Ustic Torriorthents.

Table 4. Representative soil features

Parent material	(1) Alluvium – rock gypsum
Surface texture	(1) Loam (2) Sandy loam
Drainage class	Moderately well drained to well drained
Permeability class	Moderately slow to moderate
Soil depth	0 – 40 cm
Surface fragment cover <=3"	0 – 10 %
Surface fragment cover >3"	0 – 10 %
Available water capacity (0-101.6cm)	0.25 – 4.32 cm
Calcium carbonate equivalent (0-101.6cm)	0 – 10 %
Electrical conductivity (0-101.6cm)	Not specified
Sodium adsorption ratio (0-101.6cm)	0 – 10
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (0-101.6cm)	7.4 – 10
Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (Depth not specified)	0 – 10 %
Subsurface fragment volume >3" (Depth not specified)	0 – 10 %

Ecological dynamics

The plant communities found on an ecological site are naturally variable. Composition and production will vary with yearly conditions, location, aspect, and the natural variability of the soils. The Historical Climax Plant Community represents the natural potential plant communities found on relict or relatively undisturbed sites. Other plant communities described here represent plant communities that are known to occur when the site is disturbed by factors such as fire, grazing, or drought.

Production data provided in this site description is standardized to air dry weight at the end of the summer growing season. The plant communities described in this site description are based on near normal rainfall years.

NRCS uses a Similarity Index to compare existing plant communities to the plant communities described here. Similarity index is determined by comparing the production and composition of a plant community to the production and composition of a plant community described in this site description. To determine Similarity index, compare the production (air dry weight) of each species to that shown in the plant community description. For each species, count no more than the maximum amount shown for the species, and for each group, count no more than the maximum amount shown for each group. Divide the resulting total by the total normal year production shown in the plant community description. If the rainfall has been significantly above or below normal, use the total production shown for above or below normal years. If field data is not collected at the end of the summer growing season, then the field data must be corrected to the end of the year production before comparing it to the site description. The growth curve can be used as a guide for estimating production at the end of the summer growing season.

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 (%)
Tree					
0				0-9	
	Utah juniper	JUOS	<i>Juniperus osteosperma</i>	0-9	–
	twoneedle pinyon	PIED	<i>Pinus edulis</i>	0-9	–
Shrub/Vine					
0				123-280	
	Bigelow sage	ARBI3	<i>Artemisia bigelovii</i>	31-62	–
	Nevada jointfir	EPNE	<i>Ephedra nevadensis</i>	31-62	–
	Torrey's jointfir	EPTO	<i>Ephedra torreyana</i>	31-62	–
	mormon tea	EPVI	<i>Ephedra viridis</i>	31-62	–
	buckwheat	ERIOG	<i>Eriogonum</i>	16-46	–
	Fremont's mahonia	MAFR3	<i>Mahonia fremontii</i>	16-46	–
	rubber rabbitbrush	ERNAG	<i>Ericameria nauseosa ssp. nauseosa var. glabrata</i>	9-28	–
	yellow rabbitbrush	CHVI8	<i>Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus</i>	7-18	–
	water jacket	LYAN	<i>Lycium andersonii</i>	3-16	–
	broom snakeweed	GUSA2	<i>Gutierrezia sarothrae</i>	3-16	–
	fourwing saltbush	ATCA2	<i>Atriplex canescens</i>	2-11	–
	James' galleta	PLJA	<i>Pleuraphis jamesii</i>	3-9	–
	winterfat	KRLA2	<i>Krascheninnikovia lanata</i>	1-4	–
2				3-9	
	kingcup cactus	ECTR	<i>Echinocereus triglochidiatus</i>	3-9	–
	plains pricklypear	OPPO	<i>Opuntia polyacantha</i>	3-9	–
	banana yucca	YUBA	<i>Yucca baccata</i>	3-9	–
3				0-7	
	buckwheat	ERIOG	<i>Eriogonum</i>	16-46	–

	Shrub (>.5m)	2SHRUB	<i>Shrub (>.5m)</i>	0-7	-
	Wyoming big sagebrush	ARTRW8	<i>Artemisia tridentata ssp. wyomingensis</i>	0-7	-
	blackbrush	CORA	<i>Coleogyne ramosissima</i>	0-7	-
	Eastern Mojave buckwheat	ERFAP	<i>Eriogonum fasciculatum var. polifolium</i>	0-7	-
Grass/Grasslike					
0				9-21	
	gyp dropseed	SPNE	<i>Sporobolus nealleyi</i>	9-21	-
	Indian ricegrass	ACHY	<i>Achnatherum hymenoides</i>	7-16	-
	needle and thread	HECOC8	<i>Hesperostipa comata ssp. comata</i>	7-16	-
	James' galleta	PLJA	<i>Pleuraphis jamesii</i>	3-9	-
	needle and thread	HECOC8	<i>Hesperostipa comata ssp. comata</i>	3-8	-
	Indian ricegrass	ACHY	<i>Achnatherum hymenoides</i>	3-8	-
	threeawn	ARIST	<i>Aristida</i>	0-3	-
	squirreltail	ELELE	<i>Elymus elymoides ssp. elymoides</i>	0-3	-
1				0-3	
	Grass, annual	2GA	<i>Grass, annual</i>	0-3	-
	Grass, perennial	2GP	<i>Grass, perennial</i>	0-3	-
	black grama	BOER4	<i>Bouteloua eriopoda</i>	0-3	-
	blue grama	BOGR2	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>	0-3	-
	sand dropseed	SPCR	<i>Sporobolus cryptandrus</i>	0-3	-
Forb					
0				3-16	
	Forb, annual	2FA	<i>Forb, annual</i>	0-16	-
	Forb, perennial	2FP	<i>Forb, perennial</i>	3-16	-
	Brenda's yellow cryptantha	CRFL5	<i>Cryptantha flava</i>	3-16	-
	desert trumpet	ERIN4	<i>Eriogonum inflatum</i>	3-16	-
	globemallow	SPHAE	<i>Sphaeralcea</i>	3-16	-
	desert princesplume	STPI	<i>Stanleya pinnata</i>	3-16	-

Animal community

Steep slopes, lack of water and low palatable forage production limit livestock use on this site. It is rarely found as an extensive area of land; more commonly, small areas are intermixed with other ecological sites. Management should be concentrated on prescribed livestock grazing and restricting off-road vehicle use. This site has limited potential for wildlife species, but is used some by mule deer. Potential species present include: great horned owl, black-throated sparrow, Western rattlesnake, coyote, western pipistrelle, black-tailed jackrabbit, red-tailed hawk, common raven, collared lizard, fringed myotis, mule deer, white-throated antelope squirrel, golden eagle, gopher snake, leopard lizard, deer mouse and pronghorn antelope. Other species may be present as well, to include migratory birds.

Recreational uses

Recreation includes hiking, hunting, photography and wildlife observation. This type of site is also attractive to off-road vehicle use and is easily eroded and degraded.

Other products

T&E species: None observed, however, the Siler pincushion cactus is found on a similar site with a different parent material.

Other information

Aspect Differences Near MLRA Boundaries: Cooler north and east slopes are slightly more productive, especially the grasses and forbs. At the lower elevation end, this site will more closely resemble D35-4 Gypsum Hills on the warmer south and west aspects.

Type locality

Location 1: Mohave County, AZ	
Township/Range/Section	T38N R11W S14
General legal description	Dutchman Draw 7.5 minute quad, about 1 mile west of Mainstreet Valley and 1/2 mile north of Navajo Trail

Other references

Sampling Technique EC GC FC PC

NRCS Range 417

NRCS AZ Range-1

NRCS Dry-Weight Rank 3 2

Contributors

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Unknown

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	
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:
