

Ecological site F043BP609ID

Upland Cold Woodland Group

Last updated: 3/01/2024

Accessed: 08/24/2026

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): 043B—Central Rocky Mountains

The Central Rocky Mountains (MLRA 43B) of Idaho exist primarily in central and southeast portions of the state. The climate is extremely variable with precipitation lows of 9 to 100 inches per year and frost free days of less than 30 to over 110 days. The geology of the region is also highly variable. The combination of variable climate and geology create a complex relationship of plant communities. MLRA 43B elevations vary with most mountain peaks reaching an elevation of 6,000 to 8,000 feet (1,830 to 2,440 meters), but peaks exceeding 10,000 feet (3,050 meters) are not uncommon.

LRU notes

LRU P: PES (Provisional Ecological Site or Group - PEG) A PROVISIONAL ECOLOGICAL SITE is a conceptual grouping of soil map unit components within a Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) based on the similarities in response to management. Although there may be wide variability in the productivity of the soils grouped into a Provisional Site, the soil vegetation interactions as expressed in the state-and-transition model are similar and the management actions required to achieve objectives, whether maintaining the existing ecological state or managing for an alternative state, are similar. Provisional sites are likely to be refined into a more precise concept during the process of meeting the APPROVED ECOLOGICAL SITE DESCRIPTION criteria.

Classification relationships

This PROVISIONAL ECOLOGICAL SITE has been developed to meet the standards established in the National Ecological Site Handbook. The information associated with this ecological site does not meet the Approved Ecological Site Description Standard, but it has been through Quality Control and Quality Assurance processes to assure consistency and completeness. Further investigations, reviews and correlations are necessary before it becomes an Approved Ecological Site Description.

Ecological site concept

• Site does not receive any additional water • Dominant Cover: Coniferous Forest • Soils are o Generally not saline or saline-sodic (limited extent) o Moderately deep, deep, or very deep o Typically less than 5% stone and boulder cover (15% max) • Soil surface texture ranges from sandy loam to clay loam in surface mineral 4" • Site Landform: mountain slopes, ridges, escarpments • Area of rugged mountain, hills, plateaus, and valleys of the Central Rocky Mountains in central and southeastern Idaho. • Parent material is colluvium, colluvium over residuum, residuum • Moisture Regime: ustic to udic • Temperature Regime: cryic • Elevation Range: 4500-10000 • Slope: 0-90% (typically less than 35%)

Associated sites

F043BP612ID	Limy Cold Woodland Group
F043BP616ID	Ashy Cold Woodland Group

Similar sites

F043BP611ID	Upland, Warm Woodland Group
F043BP610ID	Upland Cool Woodland Group

Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	Not specified
Shrub	Not specified
Herbaceous	Not specified

Physiographic features

Site exists on a variety of landforms in the mountains including mountain slopes, ridges, and escarpments. Slopes are variable from one to 90 percent; however, typically less than 35 percent. Site is typically located on the middle to upper third of the landscape.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Mountains > Ridge (2) Mountains > Mountain slope (3) Mountains > Escarpment
Elevation	1,520 – 3,050 m
Slope	0 – 90 %
Aspect	Aspect is not a significant factor

Climatic features

The climate of this site tends to be cold and wet; receiving up to 80 inches of precipitation with 10 to 60 frost free days. A majority of the precipitation on this site comes from winter snowfall.

Table 3 Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (characteristic range)	10-40 days
Freeze-free period (characteristic range)	50-80 days
Precipitation total (characteristic range)	510-640 mm

Frost-free period (actual range)	0-50 days
Freeze-free period (actual range)	40-100 days
Precipitation total (actual range)	460-660 mm
Frost-free period (average)	20 days
Freeze-free period (average)	70 days
Precipitation total (average)	560 mm

- (1) GIBBONSVILLE [USC00103554], Gibbonsville, ID
- (2) ISLAND PARK [USC00104598], Island Park, ID
- (3) WEST YELLOWSTONE [USC00248857], West Yellowstone, MT

Influencing water features

Site is not associated with water resources. Snowpack from this site directly contributes to stream flows; however, concentrated flows are rarely seen

Wetland description

n/a

Soil features

Soils are formed from colluvium, colluvium over residuum, or residuum. Textures will vary based on local geology; however, they tend to be loamy.

Table 4. Representative soil features

Parent material	(1) Colluvium – igneous, metamorphic and sedimentary rock (2) Residuum – igneous, metamorphic and sedimentary rock
Surface texture	(1) Gravelly, cobbly, extremely gravelly loam (2) Cobbly, very cobbly silt loam (3) Very cobbly, very gravelly sandy loam

Family particle size	(1) Fine-loamy (2) Loamy-skeletal (3) Fine (4) Sandy-skeletal (5) Coarse-loamy
Drainage class	Well drained to excessively drained
Permeability class	Slow to rapid
Depth to restrictive layer	50 cm
Soil depth	50 – 250 cm
Surface fragment cover <=3"	0 – 30 %
Surface fragment cover >3"	0 – 50 %
Available water capacity (0-101.6cm)	2.79 – 22.1 cm
Clay content (0-101.6cm)	10 – 50 %
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (0-101.6cm)	4.5 – 7.6
Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (0-101.6cm)	0 – 50 %
Subsurface fragment volume >3" (0-101.6cm)	0 – 20 %

Ecological dynamics

1.1 Subalpine fir dominated forest with limited Douglas fir and lodgepole pine. Community relatively resilient.

T1A Post-disturbance includes stand replacement fire, insect pestilence and disease. Fire frequency is long but fire is intense.

2.2 Post Fire forest dominated by lodgepole pine with Douglas fire and Englemann's spruce increasing. Shrubs and grasses returning to pre-fire positions.

2.1 Post fire shrub dominant community with saplings of lodgepole pine being common. Fireweed dominant forb. Grasses may increase outside of fireweed patches

2.1A Time where trees start to re-establish

2.2A Community phase shift is due to fire, insect pestilence and disease. Fire frequency is long but fire is intense.

R2A Restoration pathway where the site, over time, without fire, insect pestilence, or disease moves back to the Reference State. Subalpine fir comes back in and shades out the other tree species. This process takes over 150 years.

State and transition model

Additional community tables

Animal community

This ecological site is considered important habitat for large wild game such as deer, elk, and moose; as well as, upland birds such as ruffed, dusky, and spruce grouse. Typically this site is considered marginal for livestock grazing; however, if the tree canopy is open it is grazeable.

Recreational uses

Site frequently used by many outdoor recreationists such as bird watchers, campers, hikers, bikers, and hunters.

Wood products

The dominant forest type is typically not suited to forest products; however, subordinate species such as Douglas fir and lodgepole pine have many uses. Harvest of this site will prove challenging as this site is typically located on the middle to upper third of the landscape.

Inventory data references

Information was gathered from Forest Habitat Type guides and other reference material gathered historically by range and forest professionals.

Other references

Steele, Robert; Pfister, Robert D.; Ryker, Russell A.; Kittams, Jay A. 1981. Forest Habitat Types of Central Idaho. General Technical Report INT-114. Ogden, UT: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Intermountain Forest and Range Experiment Station. 138 p.

Steele, Robert; Cooper, Stephen V.; Ondov, David M.; Roberts, David W.; Pfister, Robert D. 1983. Forest habitat types of eastern Idaho-western Wyoming. Gen. Tech. Rep. INT-144. Ogden, UT: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Intermountain Forest and Range Experiment Station. 122 p.

Contributors

Grant Petersen

Bryan Christenson

Approval

Kirt Walstad, 3/01/2024

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	08/24/2026
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:
