Ecological site F047XA533UT
High Mountain Stony Loam
(mixed conifer)

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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): 047X–Wasatch and Uinta Mountains

MLRA 47 occurs in Utah (86 percent), Wyoming (8 percent), Colorado (4 percent), and Idaho (2 percent). It encompasses approximately 23,825 square miles (61,740 square kilometers). The northern half of this area is in the Middle Rocky Mountains Province of the Rocky Mountain System. The southern half is in the High Plateaus of the Utah Section of the Colorado Plateaus Province of the Intermontane Plateaus. Parts of the western edge of this MLRA are in the Great Basin Section of the Basin and Range Province of the Intermontane Plateaus. The MLRA includes the Wasatch Mountains, which trend north and south, and the Unita Mountains, which trend east and west. The steeply sloping, precipitous Wasatch Mountains have narrow crests and deep valleys. Active faulting and erosion are a dominant force in controlling the geomorphology of the area. The Uinta Mountains have a broad, gently arching, elongated shape. Structurally, they consist of a broadly folded anticline that has an erosion-resistant quartzite core. The Wasatch and Uinta Mountains have an elevation of 4,900 to about 13,500 feet (1,495 to 4,115 meters). The mountains in this area are primarily fault blocks that have been tilted up. Alluvial fans at the base of the mountains are recharge zones for the basin fill aquifers. An ancient shoreline of historic Bonneville Lake is evident on the footslopes along the western edge of the area. Rocks exposed in the mountains are mostly Mesozoic and Paleozoic sediments, but Precambrian rocks are exposed in the Uinta Mountains. The Uinta Mountains are one of the few ranges in the United States that are oriented west to east. The southern Wasatch Mountains consist of Tertiary volcanic rocks occurring as extrusive lava and intrusive crystalline rocks. The average precipitation is from 8 to 16 inches (203 to 406 mm) in the valleys and can range up to 73 inches (1854 mm) in the mountains. In the northern and western portions of the MLRA, peak precipitation occurs in the winter months. The southern and eastern portions have a greater incidence of high-intensity summer thunderstorms; hence, a significant amount of precipitation occurs during the summer months. The average annual temperature is 30 to 50 degrees F (-1 to 15 C). The freeze-free period averages 140 days and ranges from 60 to 220 days, generally decreasing in length with elevation. The dominant soil orders in this MLRA are Aridisols, Entisols, Inceptisols, and Mollisols. The lower elevations are dominated by a frigid temperature regime, while the higher elevations experience cryic temperature regimes. Mesic temperature regimes come in on the lower elevations and south facing slopes in the southern portion of this MLRA. The soil moisture regime is typically xeric in the northern part of the MLRA, but grades to ustic in the extreme eastern and southern parts. The minerology is generally mixed and the soils are very shallow to very deep, generally well drained, and loamy or loamy –skeletal.

Ecological site concept

The soils of this site formed in slope alluvium, colluvium, and residuum derived from limestone, sandstone, shale, conglomerate and/or quartzite. The soil surface is usually covered in twigs, leaves, or bark, and small rock fragments. Gravels and cobbles make up greater than 35 percent of the soil volume. These soils are well to somewhat excessively drained. Depth to bedrock is at least 20 inches and most often exceeds 60 inches. Soil pH is neutral to acidic and surface textures range from sandy loams to silt loams. Available water-holding capacity ranges from 3.8 to 5.4 inches in the upper 40 inches of soil. The soil moisture regime is udic and the soil temperature regime is cryic.

Similar sites

F047XA532UT	**High Mountain Stony Loam (Douglas-fir)** This site has similar soils, but is dominated by Douglas fir rather than a mixed stand of White fir, Subalpine fir and Douglas fir.

Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	(1) *Pseudotsuga menziesii*
Shrub	(1) *Mahonia*
Herbaceous	(1) *Bromus*

Physiographic features

This site occurs on mountain slopes and ridges at elevations between 6,700 and 10,300 feet. It occurs on all aspects and slopes ranging from 8 to 60 percent. Runoff is medium to very high and niether flooding nor ponding occur on this site.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Mountain slope (2) Moraine
Runoff class	Medium to very high
Flooding frequency	None
Ponding frequency	None
Elevation	2,040 – 3,140 m
Slope	10 – 60 %
Aspect	Aspect is not a significant factor

Climatic features

The climate of this site is characterized by cold, long, snowy winters and cool dry summers. Annual precipitation ranges from 25 to 35 inches with most of the precipitation falling as winter snow or spring rain. Timing of precipitation is 60 - 65 percent during the plant dormant period (October to March). As precipitation decreases and temperature increases in June, July and August, plant growth is reduced for all species and some herbaceous species go into dormancy.

Table 3 Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (average)	70 days
Freeze-free period (average)	90 days
Precipitation total (average)	890 mm

Influencing water features

Due to its landscape position, this site is not typically influenced by streams or wetlands.

Soil features

The soils of this site formed in slope alluvium, colluvium, and residuum derived from limestone, sandstone, shale, conglomerate and/or quartzite. The soil surface is usually covered in twigs, leaves, or bark, and small rock fragments. Gravels and cobbles make up approximately 35 percent of the soil volume. These soils are well to somewhat excessively drained. Depth to bedrock is at least 20 inches and most often exceeds 60 inches. Soil pH is neutral to acidic and surface textures range from sandy loams to silt loams. Available water-holding capacity ranges from 3.8 to 5.4 inches in the upper 40 inches of soil. The soil moisture regime is udic and the soil temperature regime is cryic.

Table 4. Representative soil features

Parent material	(1) Alluvium – metamorphic and sedimentary rock (2) Colluvium – metamorphic and sedimentary rock (3) Till – metamorphic and sedimentary rock
Surface texture	(1) Cobbly sandy loam (2) Channery silty clay loam (3) Gravelly loam
Family particle size	(1) Loamy-skeletal
Drainage class	Well drained to somewhat excessively drained
Permeability class	Moderately slow to moderately rapid
Depth to restrictive layer	100 – 150 cm
Soil depth	100 – 150 cm
Surface fragment cover <=3"	10 – 20 %
Surface fragment cover >3"	0 – 20 %
Available water capacity (0-101.6cm)	9.65 – 13.72 cm
Calcium carbonate equivalent (0-101.6cm)	Not specified

Electrical conductivity (0-101.6cm)	Not specified
Sodium adsorption ratio (0-101.6cm)	Not specified
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (0-101.6cm)	5.6 – 7.3
Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (0-101.6cm)	0 – 40 %
Subsurface fragment volume >3" (0-101.6cm)	10 – 40 %

Ecological dynamics

It is impossible to determine in any quantitative detail the historic climax plant community (HCPC) for this ecological site because of the lack of direct historical documentation preceding all human influence. In some areas, the earliest reports of dominant plants include the cadastral survey conducted by the General Land Office, which began in the late 19th century for this area (Galatowitsch 1990). However, up to the 1870s the Shoshone Indians, prevalent in northern Utah and neighboring states, grazed horses and set fires to alter the vegetation for their needs (Parson 1996). In the 1860s, Europeans brought cattle and horses to the area, grazing large numbers of them on unfenced parcels year-long (Parson 1996). Itinerant and local sheep flocks followed, largely replacing cattle as the browse component increased.

Below is a State and Transition Model diagram to illustrate the “phases” (common plant communities), and “states” (aggregations of those plant communities) that can occur on the site. Differences between phases and states depend primarily upon observations of a range of disturbance histories in areas where this ESD is represented. These situations include grazing gradients to water sources, fence-line contrasts, patches with differing dates of fire, herbicide treatment, tillage, and kinds and times of timber harvest, etc. Reference State 1 illustrates the common plant communities that probably existed just prior to European settlement.

The major successional pathways within states, (“community pathways”) are indicated by arrows between phases. “Transitions” are indicated by arrows between states. The drivers of these changes are indicated in codes decipherable by referring to the legend at the bottom of the page and by reading the detailed narratives that follow the diagram. The transition between Reference State 1 and State 2 is considered irreversible because of the naturalization of exotic species of both flora and fauna, possible extinction of native species, and climate change. There may have also been accelerated soil erosion.

When available, monitoring data (of various types) were employed to validate more subjective inferences made in this diagram. See the complete files in the office of the State Range Conservationist for more details.

State and transition model

Figure 3. 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 (%)
Shrub/Vine					

0	**Shrub**	39-196	
Grass/Grasslike			
0	**Grasses**	50-252	
Forb			
0	**Forbs**	22-112	

Table 6. Community 2.1 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)

Table 7. Community 3.1 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)

Animal community

a. Livestock Grazing This site is suited to cattle and sheep grazing during the summer and fall. Livestock will often concentrate on this site taking advantage of the shade and shelter offered by the tree overstory. Many areas are not used because of steep slopes or lack of adequate water. Attentive grazing management is required due to steep slopes and erosion hazards. Harvesting trees under a sound management program can open up the tree canopy to allow increased production of understory species desirable for grazing. b. Initial Stocking Rates Stocking rates vary in accordance with such factors as kind and class of grazing animal, season of use, and fluctuation in climate. Actual use records for individual sites, together with a determination of the degree to which the sites have been grazed and an evaluation of trend in site condition, offer the most reliable basis for developing initial stocking rates. Selection of initial stocking rates for given grazed units is a planning decision. This decision should be made only after careful consideration of the total resources available, evaluation of alternatives for use and treatment, and establishment of objectives by the decisionmaker. Wildlife species seeking food and cover in this forest site include moose, elk, mule deer, bear, porcupine, snowshoe hare, owl, and woodpecker.

Recreational uses

This site has aesthetic values and can be suitable for camping when slopes are gentle. Hunting is difficult on this site due to the dense tree canopy, though big game regularly use this site in the fall.

Wood products

6. Silvicultural Practices a. Harvest cut selectively or in small patches (size dependent upon site conditions) to enhance forage production. 1. Thinning and improvement cutting – removal of poorly formed, diseased, and low vigor trees. 2. Harvest thinning – selectively harvest surplus trees to achieve desired spacing. Save large, healthy, full-crowned trees. Do not select only “high grade” trees during thinning. b. Prescription burning program may be used to maintain desired canopy cover and manage site reproduction. c. Selective tree removal on suitable sites to enhance forage production and manage site reproduction. d. Pest Control – use necessary and approved control for specific pests or diseases. e. Fire hazard – fire is usually not a problem in mature grazed stands.

Other information

4. Limitations and Considerations a. Potential for sheet and rill erosion is moderate to severe depending on slope. b. Moderate to severe equipment limitations on steeper slopes and on sites having extreme surface stoniness. c. Proper spacing is the key to a well managed multiple use and multi-product forest. 5. Essential Requirements a. Adequately protect from uncontrolled burning. b. Protect soils from accelerated erosion. c. Apply proper grazing management practices (see management guides)

Table 8. Representative site productivity

Common Name	Symbol	Site Index Low	Site Index High	CMAI Low	CMAI High	Age Of CMAI	Site Index Curve Code	Site Index Curve Basis	Citation
Rocky Mountain Douglas-fir	*PSMEG*	28	33	34	39	–	–	–	

Other references

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Approval

Scott Woodall, 9/19/2019

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:**

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2. **Presence of water flow patterns:**

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3. **Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:**

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4. **Bare ground from Ecological Site Description or other studies (rock, litter, lichen, moss, plant canopy are not bare ground):**

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5. **Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies:**

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6. **Extent of wind scoured, blowouts and/or depositional areas:**

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7. **Amount of litter movement (describe size and distance expected to travel):**

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8. **Soil surface (top few mm) resistance to erosion (stability values are averages - most sites will show a range of values):**

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9. **Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness):**

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10. **Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:**

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11. **Presence and thickness of compaction layer (usually none; describe soil profile features which may be mistaken for compaction on this site):**

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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:

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

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14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth (in):**

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15. **Expected annual annual-production (this is TOTAL above-ground annual-production, not just forage annual-production):**

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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:**

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17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:**
