

Ecological site R070BB013NM Gyp Hills

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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.

Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	Not specified
Shrub	Not specified
Herbaceous	Not specified

Physiographic features

This site occurs on hills, escarpments and breaks between higher and lower plains or terraces, and canyon sides between deep desert drainageways. Slopes range from 10 to 30 percent. Direction of slope varies, the northern exposures having cooler and more moist soils, and the southern exposures having hotter and drier soils in general. Elevations range from 2,800 to 4,000 feet.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Hill (2) Canyon
Flooding frequency	None
Ponding frequency	None
Elevation	850 – 1,220 m
Slope	10 – 30 %
Water table depth	0 cm
Aspect	N, S

Climatic features

The frost free season ranges from 180 to 221 days between early April and late October. The optimum growing season of the major native warm season plants coincides with the summer rains during June, July, August, and September. However, plants can make some growth at any time during the frost free period when moisture is available and minimum daily temperatures stay above 51 degrees F.

Vegetation on this site will be limited to plants which can take advantage of moisture at the time it falls, since the soil profiles have large amounts of available water for short periods of time and then rapidly dry. The majority of precipitation comes in the form of high intensity, short duration thunderstorms. Little or no available moisture can be stored in the soil profiles of this site. Strong winds from the southwest blow during January through June which accelerate soil drying within the plant root zone and further discourage cool season plant growth or occupancy of the site.

Table 3 Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (average)	220 days
Freeze-free period (average)	240 days
Precipitation total (average)	330 mm

Influencing water features

This site is not influenced by water from wetlands or streams.

Soil features

Soils are very shallow and moderately deep to gypsum. Surface and subsurface layers are loam, fine sandy loam, and gravelly loam overlying dense layers of cemented gypsum material or gypsum rock at depths of 7 to 22 inches. The gypsum rock and gypsum materials commonly outcrop to the surface as inclusions of rock outcrop or raw gypsumland which are void of vegetation and not part of the ecological site. In general the greater the slope, the greater the amount of gypsum and rock outcrop. The gypsum materials and gypsum rock are restrictive to root development. The site has a droughty appearance due to the soils inability to support a dense stand of vegetation. If unprotected by plant cover and organic residue, the soil becomes easily water eroded.

Minimum and maximum values listed below represent the characteristic soils for this site.

Characteristic Soils:

Aztec

Table 4. Representative soil features

Surface texture	(1) Loam (2) Fine sandy loam (3) Gravelly loam
Family particle size	(1) Loamy
Drainage class	Well drained to somewhat excessively drained
Permeability class	Moderately slow to moderate

Soil depth	0 – 50 cm
Surface fragment cover <=3"	0 – 20 %
Surface fragment cover >3"	0 – 10 %
Available water capacity (0-101.6cm)	5.08 – 12.7 cm
Calcium carbonate equivalent (0-101.6cm)	10 – 40 %
Electrical conductivity (0-101.6cm)	Not specified
Sodium adsorption ratio (0-101.6cm)	Not specified
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (0-101.6cm)	7.4 – 8.4
Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (Depth not specified)	0 – 30 %
Subsurface fragment volume >3" (Depth not specified)	0 – 10 %

Ecological dynamics

The general aspect of this site is that of a rough, broken badlands, sparsely vegetated and highly dissected. There is more of the surface area comprised of bare ground and rock than that which is vegetated. The map delineations of this site are in actuality a complex of bare ground, rock outcrop, a few deep soil pockets in cracks and fissures of the bedrock and areas of very shallow soils. The vegetation on the very shallow soil areas is dominated by rhizomatous and stoloniferous short grasses and forbs. Shrubs and half shrubs are apparent and rather unevenly distributed. The potential plant community varies somewhat with depth of soil, exposure and slope. Large bare areas with only surface lichens are common. Where there is little or no soil over the gypsum material only rough coldenia may be present.

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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Grass/Grasslike					
1				45-67	
	gypsum grama	BOBR	<i>Bouteloua breviseta</i>	45-67	–
	black grama	BOER4	<i>Bouteloua eriopoda</i>	45-67	–
2				22-34	
	gyp dropseed	SPNE	<i>Sporobolus nealleyi</i>	22-34	–
3				2-11	
	threeawn	ARIST	<i>Aristida</i>	2-11	–
	low woollygrass	DAPU7	<i>Dasyochloa pulchella</i>	2-11	–
Shrub/Vine					
4				11-22	
	fourwing saltbush	ATCA2	<i>Atriplex canescens</i>	11-22	–
	littleleaf sumac	RHMI3	<i>Rhus microphylla</i>	11-22	–
5				11-16	
	knifeleaf condalia	COSP3	<i>Condalia spathulata</i>	11-16	–
	crown of thorns	KOSP	<i>Koeberlinia spinosa</i>	11-16	–
6				7-11	
	creosote bush	LATR2	<i>Larrea tridentata</i>	7-11	–
	algerita	MATR3	<i>Mahonia trifoliolata</i>	7-11	–
	soaptree yucca	YUEL	<i>Yucca elata</i>	7-11	–
7				2-7	
	pricklypear	OPUNT	<i>Opuntia</i>	2-7	–
	pricklyleaf dogweed	THAC	<i>Thymophylla acerosa</i>	2-7	–
Forb					
8				34-56	
	hairy crinklemat	TIHI	<i>Tiquilia hispidissima</i>	34-56	–
9				11-22	
	flax	LINUM	<i>Linum</i>	11-22	–
	blazingstar	MENTZ	<i>Mentzelia</i>	11-22	–
	fiddleleaf	NAMA4	<i>Nama</i>	11-22	–
	Texan phacelia	PHINT	<i>Phacelia integrifolia</i> var. <i>texana</i>	11-22	–
	threadleaf ragwort	SEFLF	<i>Senecio flaccidus</i> var. <i>flaccidus</i>	11-22	–
10				11-22	
	whitest evening primrose	OEAL	<i>Oenothera albicaulis</i>	11-22	–
	beardtongue	PENST	<i>Penstemon</i>	11-22	–
	desert unicorn-plant	PRAL4	<i>Proboscidea althaeifolia</i>	11-22	–
	whitestem paperflower	PSCO2	<i>Psilostrophe cooperi</i>	11-22	–
11				2-11	
	Forb, annual	2FA	<i>Forb, annual</i>	2-11	–
	Seven River Hills buckwheat	ERGY	<i>Eriogonum gypsophilum</i>	2-11	–

Animal community

This site provides habitats which support a resident animal community that is characterized by bobcat, gray fox, black-tailed jackrabbit, rock squirrel, rock pocket mouse, red-tailed hawk, scaled quail, loggerhead shrike, Texas horned lizard, lesser earless lizard, and western diamondback rattlesnake. Where closely associated with high cliffs and ledges as in the Guadalupe and Sacramento Mountains, golden eagle and prairie falcon hunt over the site. Fourwing saltbush, littleleaf sumac, spiny allthorn, and knifeleaf condalia provide protective cover for scaled quail. Fourwing saltbush and littleleaf sumac are browsed by desert mule deer. Seed, green herbage and fruit from a

variety of grasses, forbs, and shrubs provide food for a number of birds and mammals, including dove and quail.

Hydrological functions

The runoff curve numbers are determined by field investigations using hydraulic cover conditions and hydrologic soil groups. Soil Series Hydrologic Group Aztec B/C

Recreational uses

Recreational Uses: This site offers recreation potential for hiking, horseback riding, rock, gem, and mineral collecting, nature observation and photography, and quail, dove, and predator hunting.

Wood products

This site provides little or no wood products other than curiosities and small furniture which can be made from the roots and stems of mesquite where it has invaded. The woody pods of devilsclaw are also used in curiosities.

Other products

About 75% of the area within map delineation's of this site are not suitable for domestic livestock grazing because of steep slope, rock outcrop and lack of forage. Grazing is least damaging to this sparse vegetative cover during fall and winter. The site is best utilized by goats or yearling cattle following seasons of abundant moisture. During normal or unfavorable years the plants are adequately utilized by native fauna. This site should not be depended on to furnish needed forage for perennial livestock breeding operations but can furnish some incidental grazing in conjunction with adjacent sites in the same pastures.

Other information

Guide to Suggested Initial Stocking Rate Acres per Animal Unit Month Similarity Index Ac/AUM 100 - 76 7.5 – 10.0 75 – 51 9.5 – 13.0 50 – 26 13.1 – 19.0 25 – 0 30.0 - +

Inventory data references

Data collection for this site was done in conjunction with the progressive soil surveys within the Southern Desertic Basins, Plains and Mountains, Major Land Resource Areas of New Mexico. This site has been mapped and correlated with soils in the following soil surveys. Eddy County, Lea County, and Chavez County

Contributors

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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:
