

Ecological site R083AY020TX Sand Hills

Last updated: 9/19/2023
Accessed: 04/17/2026

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): 083A–Northern Rio Grande Plain

This area is entirely in Texas and south of San Antonio. It makes up about 11,115 square miles (28,805 square kilometers). The towns of Uvalde, Cotulla, and Hondo are in the western part of the area, and Beeville, Goliad, and Kenedy are in the eastern part. The town of Alice is just outside the southern edge of the area. Interstate Highways 35 and 37 cross this area. This area is comprised of inland, dissected coastal plains.

Classification relationships

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, 2006. -Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) 83A

Ecological site concept

Sites are very deep sands with little horizon development. Active dunes can form without vegetation to hold the soil in place.

Associated sites

R083AY022TX	Loamy Sand
R083AY023TX	Sandy Loam

Similar sites

R083EY020TX	Sand Hills
-------------	------------

Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	Not specified
Shrub	(1) <i>Quercus virginiana</i>
Herbaceous	(1) <i>Schizachyrium littorale</i> (2) <i>Heteropogon contortus</i>

Physiographic features

These soils are on nearly level to gently sloping. Slope ranges from 0 to 5 percent on sand dunes associated with river systems. This area is comprised of inland, dissected coastal plains.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Coastal plain > Dune
Runoff class	Negligible
Elevation	60 – 310 m
Slope	0 – 10 %
Aspect	Aspect is not a significant factor

Climatic features

MLRA 83A is subtropical, subhumid on the western boundary and subtropical humid on the eastern boundary. Winters are dry and mild and the summers are hot and humid. Tropical maritime air masses predominate throughout spring, summer, and fall. Modified polar air masses exert considerable influence during winter, creating a continental climate characterized by large variations in temperature. Average precipitation for MLRA 83A is 20 inches on the western boundary and 35 inches on the eastern boundary. Peak rainfall, because of rain showers, occurs late in spring and a secondary peak occurs early in fall. Heavy thunderstorm activities increase in April, May, and June. July is hot and dry with little weather variations. Rainfall increases again in late August and September as tropical disturbances increase and become more frequent. Tropical air masses from the Gulf of Mexico dominate during the spring, summer, and fall. Prevailing winds are southerly to southeasterly throughout the year except in December when winds are predominately northerly.

Table 3 Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (characteristic range)	220-250 days
Freeze-free period (characteristic range)	260-370 days
Precipitation total (characteristic range)	640-810 mm
Frost-free period (actual range)	210-260 days
Freeze-free period (actual range)	250-370 days
Precipitation total (actual range)	610-940 mm
Frost-free period (average)	240 days
Freeze-free period (average)	310 days

Precipitation total (average)	740 mm
-------------------------------	--------

- (1) CUERO [USC00412173], Cuero, TX
- (2) GOLIAD [USC00413618], Goliad, TX
- (3) NIXON [USC00416368], Stockdale, TX
- (4) CARRIZO SPRINGS 3W [USC00411486], Carrizo Springs, TX
- (5) FOWLERTON [USC00413299], Fowlerton, TX
- (6) HONDO [USC00414254], Hondo, TX
- (7) KARNES CITY 2N [USC00414696], Karnes City, TX
- (8) PEARSALL [USC00416879], Pearsall, TX
- (9) POTEET [USC00417215], Poteet, TX
- (10) CALLIHAM [USC00411337], Calliham, TX
- (11) CHARLOTTE 5 NNW [USC00411663], Charlotte, TX
- (12) MATHIS 4 SSW [USC00415661], Mathis, TX
- (13) TILDEN 4 SSE [USC00419031], Tilden, TX
- (14) UVALDE 3 SW [USC00419268], Uvalde, TX
- (15) CROSS [USC00412125], Tilden, TX
- (16) DILLEY [USC00412458], Dilley, TX
- (17) FLORESVILLE [USC00413201], Floresville, TX
- (18) LYTTLE 3W [USC00415454], Natalia, TX
- (19) PLEASANTON [USC00417111], Pleasanton, TX
- (20) HONDO MUNI AP [USW00012962], Hondo, TX
- (21) BEEVILLE 5 NE [USC00410639], Beeville, TX
- (22) CHEAPSIDE [USC00411671], Gonzales, TX

Influencing water features

Runoff is negligible or very low due to the sandy surface texture. Drainage is somewhat excessive.

Wetland description

N/A

Soil features

The soils are very deep, somewhat excessively drained, rapidly permeable that formed in deep eolian sand deposits of Holocene age. The only soil series correlated to the site is Falfurrias. The taxonomic classification is a mixed, hyperthermic Typic Ustipsamments.

Table 4. Representative soil features

Parent material	(1) Eolian deposits – sedimentary rock
Surface texture	(1) Fine sand
Family particle size	(1) Sandy
Drainage class	Somewhat excessively drained
Permeability class	Rapid
Soil depth	200 cm

Surface fragment cover <=3"	Not specified
Surface fragment cover >3"	Not specified
Available water capacity (0-101.6cm)	7.62 cm
Calcium carbonate equivalent (0-101.6cm)	0 – 10 %
Electrical conductivity (0-101.6cm)	Not specified
Sodium adsorption ratio (0-101.6cm)	Not specified
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (0-101.6cm)	5.1 – 8.4
Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (Depth not specified)	Not specified
Subsurface fragment volume >3" (Depth not specified)	Not specified

Ecological dynamics

The Northern Rio Grande Plain MLRA was a disturbance-maintained system. Prior to European settlement (pre-1825), fire and grazing were the two primary forms of disturbance. Grazing by large herbivores included antelope, deer, and small herds of bison. The infrequent but intense, short-duration grazing by these species suppressed woody species and invigorated herbaceous species. The herbaceous savannah species adapted to fire and grazing disturbances by maintaining belowground tissues. Wright and Bailey (1982) report that there are no reliable records of fire frequency for the Rio Grande Plains because there are no trees to carry fire scars from which to estimate fire frequency. Because savannah grassland is typically of level or rolling topography, a natural fire frequency of three to seven years seems reasonable for this site.

Precipitation patterns are highly variable. Long-term droughts, occurring three to four times per century, cause shifts in species composition by causing die-off of seedlings, less drought-tolerant species, and some woody species. Droughts also reduce biomass production and create open space, which is colonized by opportunistic species when precipitation increases. Wet periods allow midgrasses to increase in dominance.

Historical accounts prior to 1800 identify grazing by herds of wild horses, followed by heavy grazing by sheep and cattle as settlement progressed. Grazing on early ranches changed natural graze-rest cycles to continuous grazing and stocking rates exceeded the carrying capacity. These shifts in grazing intensity and the removal of rest from the system reduced plant vigor for the most palatable species, which on this site were mid-grasses and palatable forbs. Shortgrasses and less palatable forbs began to dominate the site. This shift

resulted in lower fuel loads, which reduced fire frequency and intensity. The reduction in fires resulted in an increase in size and density of woody species.

Today, primarily beef cattle graze rangeland and pastureland. However, horse numbers are increasing rapidly on small acreage properties in the region. There are some areas where dairy cattle, poultry, goats, and sheep are locally important. Whitetail deer, wild turkey, bobwhite quail, and dove are the major wildlife species, and hunting leases are a major source of income for many landowners in this area. Introduced pasture has been established on many acres of old cropland and in areas with deeper soils. Buffelgrass is the most common introduced plant on the site and to a lesser extent bermudagrass, guineagrass (*Urochloa maxima*), and kleingrass, which are more commonly used for hay. Cropland is found in the valleys, bottomlands, and deeper upland soils. Wheat (*Triticum* spp.), oats (*Avena* spp.), forage and grain sorghum (*Sorghum* spp.), cotton (*Gossypium* spp.), and corn (*Zea mays*) are major crops in the region.

State and transition model

Figure 7. STM

Additional community tables

Table 5. Community 1.1 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
Grass/Grasslike					
1	Tallgrasses			841-1793	
	shore little bluestem	SCLI11	<i>Schizachyrium littorale</i>	560-1681	–
	switchgrass	PAVI2	<i>Panicum virgatum</i>	112-1121	–
	gulfdune paspalum	PAMO4	<i>Paspalum monostachyum</i>	560	–
2	Tallgrasses			0-336	
	big bluestem	ANGE	<i>Andropogon gerardii</i>	0-336	–
	Indiangrass	SONU2	<i>Sorghastrum nutans</i>	0-336	–
3	Midgrasses			112-336	
	tanglehead	HECO10	<i>Heteropogon contortus</i>	112-280	–
	brownseed paspalum	PAPL3	<i>Paspalum plicatum</i>	112-280	–
	crinkleawn grass	TRACH2	<i>Trachypogon</i>	112-280	–
4	Midgrasses			224-448	
	crabgrass	DIGIT2	<i>Digitaria</i>	112-224	–
	balsamscale grass	ELION	<i>Elionurus</i>	112-224	–
	knotgrass	PADI6	<i>Paspalum distichum</i>	112-224	–
	thin paspalum	PASE5	<i>Paspalum setaceum</i>	112-224	–
	Wright's threeawn	ARPUW	<i>Aristida purpurea</i> var. <i>wrightii</i>	56-112	–
Forb					
5	Forbs			28-112	
	bundleflower	DESMA	<i>Desmanthus</i>	28-84	–
	coastal indigo	INMI	<i>Indigofera miniata</i>	28-84	–
	dotted blazing star	LIPU	<i>Liatris punctata</i>	28-84	–
	sensitive plant	MIMOS	<i>Mimosa</i>	28-84	–
	yellow puff	NELU2	<i>Neptunia lutea</i>	28-84	–
	American snoutbean	RHAM	<i>Rhynchosia americana</i>	28-84	–
6	Forbs			0-56	
	Forb, annual	2FA	<i>Forb, annual</i>	0-56	–
Shrub/Vine					
7	Shrubs			84-140	
	live oak	QUVI	<i>Quercus virginiana</i>	84-224	–

8	Shrubs			0-28	
	spiny hackberry	CEEH	<i>Celtis ehrenbergiana</i>	0-1	–
	snakewood	CONDA	<i>Condalia</i>	0-1	–
	pricklypear	OPUNT	<i>Opuntia</i>	0-1	–
	mesquite	PROSO	<i>Prosopis</i>	0-1	–

Table 6. Community 1.2 plant community composition

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

Table 7. Community 2.1 plant community composition

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

Table 8. Community 2.2 plant community composition

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

Table 9. Community 3.1 plant community composition

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

Animal community

Cattle and many species of wildlife make extensive use of this ecological site. White-tailed deer may be found scattered across the prairie, and are found in heavier concentrations where woody cover exists. Feral hogs (*Sus scrofa*) are present and, at times, become abundant. Coyotes (*Canis latrans*) are abundant, and probably have replaced the red wolf (*Canis rufus*) in this mammalian predator niche. Rodent populations rise during drier periods and fall during periods of inundation. Geese (family Anatidae) and sandhill cranes (*Grus canadensis*) abound during winter. Many species of avian predators including northern harriers (*Circus cyaneus*), red-tailed hawks (*Buteo jamaicensis*), kestrels (*Falco sparverius*), white-tailed kites (*Elanus leucurus*), and, occasionally, swallow-tailed kites (*Elanoides forficatus*). Many species of grassland birds use the ecological site, including blue grosbeaks (*Guiraca caerulea*), dickcissels (*Spiza americana*), eastern meadowlarks (*Sturnella magna*), and several sparrows, including Cassin's sparrow (*Aimophila cassinii*), vesper sparrow (*Pooecetes gramineus*), lark sparrow (*Chondestes grammacus*), savannah sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*), grasshopper sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*), and Le Conte's sparrow (*Ammodramus leconteii*).

Hydrological functions

Water infiltration is rapid in the fine sands of the site. Therefore, runoff and soil erosion from water are seldom problematic.

Inventory data references

Information presented was derived from the revised Range Site, literature, limited NRCS clipping data (417s), field observations, and personal contacts with range-trained personnel.

Other references

AgriLife. 2009. Managing Feral Hogs Not a One-shot Endeavor. AgNews, April 23, 2009. <http://agnews.tamu.edu/showstory.php?id=903>.

Archer, S. 1995. Herbivore mediation of grass-woody plant interactions. *Tropical Grasslands*, 29:218-235.

Archer, S. 1995. Tree-grass dynamics in a *Prosopis*-thornscrub savanna parkland: reconstructing the past and predicting the future. *Ecoscience*, 2:83-99.

Archer, S. 1994. Woody plant encroachment into southwestern grasslands and savannas: rates, patterns and proximate causes. *Ecological implications of livestock herbivory in the West*, 13-68.

Archer, S. and F. E. Smeins. 1991. Ecosystem-level Processes. In *Grazing Management: An Ecological Perspective*. Edited by R.K. Heischmidt and J.W. Stuth. Timber Press, Portland, OR.

Baen, J. S. 1997. The growing importance and value implications of recreational hunting leases to agricultural land investors. *Journal of Real Estate Research*, 14:399-414.

- Bailey, V. 1905. North American Fauna No. 25: Biological Survey of Texas. United States Department of Agriculture Biological Survey. Government Printing Office, Washington D. C.
- Bestelmeyer, B. T., J.R. Brown, K. M. Havstad, R. Alexander, G. Chavez, and J. E. Herrick. 2003. Development and use of state-and-transition models for rangelands. *Journal of Range Management*, 56(2):114-126.
- Box, T. W. 1960. Herbage production on four range plant communities in South Texas. *Journal of Range Management*, 13:72-76.
- Briske, B B, B. T. Bestelmeyer, T. K. Stringham, and P. L. Shaver. 2008. Recommendations for development of resilience-based State-and-Transition Models. *Rangeland Ecology and Management*, 61:359-367.
- Brown, J. R. and S. Archer. 1999. Shrub invasion of grassland: recruitment is continuous and not regulated by herbaceous biomass or density. *Ecology*, 80(7):2385-2396.
- Diamond, D. D. and T. E. Fulbright. 1990. Contemporary plant communities of upland grasslands of the Coastal Sand Plain, Texas. *Southwestern Naturalist*, 35:385-392.
- Dillehay T. 1974. Late quaternary bison population changes on the Southern Plains. *Plains Anthropologist*, 19:180-96.
- Edward, D. B. 1836. The history of Texas; or, the immigrants, farmers, and politicians guide to the character, climate, soil and production of that country. Geographically arranged from personal observation and experience. J. A. James and Co., Cincinnati, OH.
- Everitt, J. H., D. L. Drawe, and R. I. Leonard. 2002. *Trees, Shrubs, and Cacti of South Texas*. Texas Tech University Press, Lubbock, TX.
- Everitt, J. H., D. L. Drawe, and R. I. Lonard. 1999. *Field Guide to the Broad-Leaved Herbaceous Plants of South Texas*. Texas Tech University Press. Lubbock, TX.
- Foster, J. H. 1917. Pre-settlement fire frequency regions of the United States: a first approximation. Tall Timbers Fire Ecology Conference Proceedings No. 20.
- Foster, W. C., ed. 1998. *The La Salle Expedition to Texas: The Journal of Henry Joutel, 1684-1687*. Texas State Historical Association, Austin, TX.
- Frost, C. C. 1995. Presettlement fire regimes in southeastern marshes, peatlands, and swamps. In: *Proceedings, 19th Tall Timbers fire ecology conference*, 39-60. Tall Timbers Research Station, Tallahassee, FL.
- Fulbright, T. E. and S. L. Beasom. 1987. Long-term effects of mechanical treatment on white-tailed deer browse. *Wildlife Society Bulletin*, 15:560-564.
- Fulbright, T. E., J. A. Ortega-Santos, A. Lozano-Cavazos, and L. E. Ramirez-Yanez. 2006. Establishing vegetation on migrating inland sand dunes in Texas. *Rangeland Ecology and Management*, 59:549-556.
- Fulbright, T. E., D. D. Diamond, J. Rappole, and J. Norwine. The Coastal Sand Plain of Southern Texas. *Rangelands*, 12:337-340.
- Gould, F. W. 1975. *The Grasses of Texas*. Texas A&M University Press, College Station, TX.
- Grace, J. B., L. K. Allain, H. Q. Baldwin, A. G. Billock, W. R. Eddleman, A. M. Given, C. W. Jeske, and R. Moss. 2005. Effects of prescribed fire in the coastal prairies of Texas. USGS Open File Report 2005-1287.
- Hamilton, W. and D. Ueckert. 2005. Rangeland Woody Plant Control: Past, Present, and Future. In: *Brush Management: Past, Present, and Future*, 3-16. Texas A&M University Press. College Station, TX.
- Hansmire, J. A., D. L. Drawe, B. B. Wester and C.M. Britton. 1988. Effect of winter burns on forbs and grasses of the Texas Coastal Prairie. *The Southwestern Naturalist*, 33(3):333-338.
- Heitschmidt R. K., Stuth J. W., eds. 1991. *Grazing management: an ecological perspective*. Timberline Press, Portland, OR.
- Inglis, J. M. 1964. A history of vegetation of the Rio Grande Plains. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Bulletin No. 45, Austin, TX.
- Kneuper, C. L., C. B. Scott, and W. E. Pinchak. 2003. Consumption and dispersion of mesquite seeds by ruminants. *Journal of Range Management*, 56:255-259.
- Kramp, B., R. Ansley, and D. Jones. 1998. Effect of prescribed fire on mesquite seedlings. *Texas Tech University Research Highlights - Range, Wildlife and Fisheries Management*, 29:13.

- Le Houerou, H. N. and J. Norwine. 1988. The ecoclimatology of South Texas. In *Arid lands: today and tomorrow*. Edited by E. E. Whitehead, C. F. Hutchinson, B. N. Timmesman, and R. G. Varady, 417-444. Westview Press, Boulder, CO.
- Lehman, V. W. 1965. Fire in the range of Attwater's prairie chicken. *Tall Timbers Fire Ecology Conference*, 4:127-143.
- Lehman, V. W. 1969. *Forgotten Legions: Sheep in the Rio Grande Plain of Texas*. Texas Western Press, El Paso, TX.
- Mann, C. 2004. 1491. *New Revelations of the Americas before Columbus*. Vintage Books, New York City, NY.
- Mapston, M. E. 2009. Feral Hogs in Texas. Rep. Texas Cooperative Extension. 23 Apr. 2009 <http://icwdm.org/Publications/pdf/Feral%20Pig/Txferalhogs.pdf>
- McClendon, T. 1991. Preliminary description of the vegetation of South Texas exclusive of the Coastal Saline Zones. *Texas Journal of Science*, 43:13-32.
- McGinty A., D. N. Ueckert. 2001. The Brush Busters success story. *Rangelands*, 23:3-8.
- McLendon, T. 1991. Preliminary description of the vegetation of south Texas exclusive of coastal saline zones. *Texas Journal of Science*, 43:13-32.
- Norwine, J. 1978. Twentieth-century semiarid climates and climatic fluctuations in Texas and northeastern Mexico. *Journal of Arid Environments*, 1:313-325.
- Norwine, J. and R. Bingham. 1986. Frequency and severity of droughts in South Texas: 1900-1983, 1-17. In *Livestock and wildlife management during drought*. Edited by R. D. Brown. Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, Kingsville, TX.
- Olmsted, F. L. 1857. *A journey through Texas, or a saddle trip on the Southwest frontier: with a statistical appendix*. Dix, Edwards, and co., New York, London.
- Prichard, D. 1998. *A User Guide to Assessing Proper Functioning Condition and the Supporting Science for Lentic Areas*. Bureau of Land Management. National Applied Resource Sciences Center, CO.
- Rappole, J. H. and G. W. Blacklock. 1994. *A field guide: Birds of Texas*. Texas A&M University Press, College Station, TX.
- Rhyne, M. Z. 1998. Optimization of wildlife and recreation earnings for private landowners. M. S. Thesis, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, Kingsville, TX.
- Schindler, J. R. and T. E. Fulbright. 2003. Roller chopping effects on Tamaulipan scrub community composition. *Journal of Range Management*, 56:585-590.
- Schmidley, D. J. 1983. *Texas mammals east of the Balcones Fault zone*. Texas A&M University Press, College Station, TX.
- Scifres C. J., W. T. Hamilton, J. R. Conner, J. M. Inglis, and G. A. Rasmussen. 1985. *Integrated Brush Management Systems for South Texas: Development and Implementation*. Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, College Station, TX.
- Scifres, C. J. and W. T. Hamilton. 1993. *Prescribed burning for brushland management: the South Texas example*. Texas A&M Press, College Station, TX.
- Scifres, C. J. 1975. Systems for improving McCartney rose infested coastal prairie rangeland. *Texas Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin MP 1225*.
- Smeins, F. E., S. Fuhlendorf, and C. Taylor, Jr. 1997. Environmental and Land Use Changes: A Long Term Perspective. In *Juniper Symposium*, 1-21. Texas Agricultural Experiment Station.
- Smeins, F. E., D. D. Diamond, and W. Hanselka. 1991. Coastal prairie, 269-290. In *Ecosystems of the World: Natural Grasslands*. Edited by R. T. Coupland. Elsevier Press, Amsterdam, Netherlands.
- Soil Survey Staff, Natural Resources Conservation Service, United States Department of Agriculture. *Soil Survey Geographic (SSURGO) Database*.
- Snyder, R. A. and C. L. Boss. 2002. Recovery and stability in barrier island plant communities. *Journal of Coastal Research*, 18:530-536.
- Stiles, H. R., ed. 1906. *Joutel's journal of La Salle's last voyage, 1686-1687*. Joseph McDonough, Albany, NY.
- Stringham, T. K., W. C. Krueger, and P. L. Shaver. 2001. State and transition modeling: and ecological process approach. *Journal of*

Range Management, 56(2):106-113.

Texas A&M Research and Extension Center. 2000. Native Plants of South Texas <http://uvalde.tamu.edu/herbarium/index.html>.

Texas Agriculture Experiment Station. 2007. Benny Simpson's Texas Native Trees <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/ornamentals/natives/>.

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. 2007. List of White-tailed Deer Browse and Ratings. District 8.

Tharp, B. C. 1926. Structure of Texas Vegetation east of the 98th meridian. Bulletin 2606. University of Texas, Austin. TX.

Thurow, T. L. 1991. Hydrology and Erosion. In: Grazing Management: An Ecological Perspective. Edited by R.K. Heitschmidt and J.W. Stuth. Timber Press, Portland, OR.

Urbatsch, L. 2000. Chinese tallow tree (*Triadica sebifera* (L.) Small. USDA-NRCS Plant Guide.

USDA-NRCS Plant Database. 2018. <https://plants.usda.gov/>.

Van't Hul, J. T., R. S. Lutz and N. E. Mathews. 1997. Impact of prescribed burning on vegetation and bird abundance on Matagorda Island, Texas. *Journal of Range Management*, 50:346-360.

Vines, R. A. 1984. *Trees of Central Texas*. University of Texas Press, Austin, TX.

Wade, D. D., B. L. Brock, P. H. Brose, J. B. Grace, G. A. Hoch, and W. A. Patterson III. 2000. Fire in Eastern ecosystems. In *Wildland fire in ecosystems: effects of fire on flora*. Edited by J. K. Brown and J. Kaplers. United States Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station, Ogden, UT.

Weltz, M. A. and W. H. Blackburn. 1995. Water budget for south Texas rangelands. *Journal of Range Management*, 48:45-52.

Whittaker, R. H., L. E. Gilbert, and J. H. Connell. 1979. Analysis of a two-phase pattern in a mesquite grassland, Texas. *Journal of Ecology*, 67:935-52.

Wright, B. D., R. K. Lyons, J. C. Cathey, and S. Cooper. 2002. White-tailed deer browse preferences for South Texas and the Edwards Plateau. *Texas Cooperative Extension Bulletin B-6130*.

Wright, H.A. and A.W. Bailey. 1982. *Fire Ecology: United States and Southern Canada*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, NJ.

Approval

Bryan Christensen, 9/19/2023

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)	Vivian Garcia, Zone RMS, NRCS, Corpus Christi, Texas
Contact for lead author	361-241-0609
Date	01/12/2010
Approved by	

Approval date	
Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on	Annual Production

Indicators

1. **Number and extent of rills:** None.

2. **Presence of water flow patterns:** None.

3. **Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:** None.

4. **Bare ground from Ecological Site Description or other studies (rock, litter, lichen, moss, plant canopy are not bare ground):** 0 to 5 percent bare ground. Small and non-connected areas.

5. **Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies:** None.

6. **Extent of wind scoured, blowouts and/or depositional areas:** Due to the sandy properties of the soil, severe soil erosion by wind can occur.

7. **Amount of litter movement (describe size and distance expected to travel):** Under normal rainfall, little litter movement should be expected; however, litter of all sizes may move long distances.

8. **Soil surface (top few mm) resistance to erosion (stability values are averages - most sites will show a range of values):** Soil surface under the reference community is resistant to erosion. Stability class range is expected to be 5 to 6.

9. **Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness):** 0 to 3 inches, very pale brown (10YR 7/3) fine sand, brown (10YR 5/3) moist; single grain; loose; common fine roots; slightly acid; clear smooth boundary.

10. **Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:** High canopy, basal cover and density with small interspaces should make rainfall impact negligible. This site has well drained soils, deep with level to gently sloping (0 to 5 percent) which produces negligible runoff and water erosion.

11. **Presence and thickness of compaction layer (usually none; describe soil profile features which may be mistaken for compaction on this site):** No evidence of compaction.

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: Warm-season tallgrasses >

Sub-dominant: Warm-season midgrasses >

Other: Forbs > Shrubs

Additional: Forbs make up 5 percent species composition while shrubs make up 5 percent.

13. **Amount of plant mortality and decadence (include which functional groups are expected to show mortality or decadence):**
Perennial grasses will naturally exhibit a minor amount (less than 5%) of senescence and some mortality every year.

14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth (in):** Litter is primarily herbaceous.

15. **Expected annual annual-production (this is TOTAL above-ground annual-production, not just forage annual-production):**
2,500 to 3,500 pounds per acre.

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:** Mesquite and bur grass are the primary invaders. Other invaders include guineagrass, King Ranch bluestem, lotebush, pricklypear, yucca, spiny hackberry, brasil, and live oak.

17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:** All perennial species should be capable of reproducing every year unless disrupted by extended drought, overgrazing, wildfire, insect damage, or other events occurring immediately prior to, or during the reproductive phase.
