

Ecological site F094DY018WI

Lower Riparian Terraces

Accessed: 08/17/2026

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): 094D–Northern Highland Sandy Pitted Outwash

The Lower Riparian Terraces ecological site occupies about 5000 acres in MLRA 94D.

Ecological site concept

ATTENTION: This ecological site meets the NESH 2014 requirements for PROVISIONAL. A provisional ecological site is established after broad ecological site concepts are identified and an initial state-and-transition model is drafted. Following quality control and quality assurance reviews of the ecological site concepts, an identification number and name for the provisional ecological site are entered into ESIS. A provisional ecological site may include literature reviews, land use history information, some soils data, legacy data, ocular estimates for canopy and/or species composition by weight, and even some line-point intercept information. A provisional ecological site does not meet the NESH 2014 standards for an Approved ESD, but does provide the conceptual framework of soil-site correlation for the development of the ESD. For more information about this ecological site, please contact your local NRCS office. The Lower Riparian Terrace ecological site is on stream terraces and lakeshores including beaches above the ordinary high water mark. Flooding is rare, but possible adjacent to major rivers. These sites are greatly influenced by their proximity to water bodies and vice versa. They typically have subsurface water flowing toward the water body sub-irrigating the site and making the site more productive than non-riparian sites with similar soils. The soils occupying these sites are often stratified with loamy layers which increases water-holding capacity and fertility relative to nearby sandier sites. The lakeshore sites are subject to much more human disturbance than stream terrace sites. Both stream terrace sites and lakeshore sites are important wildlife habitat. These sites are part of a buffer zone between aquatic and terrestrial habitats.

Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	(1) <i>Pinus strobus</i> (2) <i>Acer rubrum</i>
Shrub	(1) <i>Viburnum acerifolium</i> (2) <i>Ribes triste</i>
Herbaceous	(1) <i>Carex gracillima</i> (2) <i>Matteuccia struthiopteris</i>

Physiographic features

The Lower Riparian Terrace ecological site is found adjacent to rivers, lakes, or floodplains. These sites consist of a gently sloping terrace riser and nearly level terrace tread landforms. Slopes are typically less than 5 percent, however the elevation of this site above the nearby water body is sufficient to increase drainage, and generally eliminate frequent flooding. The soil parent material is often stratified indicating it was deposited by ever-changing velocities of the glacial melt water and post glacial stream flow.

Figure 1. Lower Riparian Terrace

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Terrace (2) Lake plain (3) Outwash terrace
Flooding duration	Brief (2 to 7 days)
Flooding frequency	None to rare
Elevation	380 – 540 m
Slope	0 %
Water table depth	30 – 110 cm
Aspect	Aspect is not a significant factor

Climatic features

The climate is humid continental with very cold winters and warm summers. As is common across northern Wisconsin, two-thirds of the precipitation falls as rain during the relatively short growing season of late May to early September. Most of the rainfall is transpired by plants. Snow cover is likely in the months of November through April. Snow cover prevents deep frost penetration which promotes groundwater recharge.

Table 3 Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (average)	100 days
Freeze-free period (average)	120 days
Precipitation total (average)	860 mm

- (1) LONG LAKE DAM [USC00474829], Eagle River, WI
- (2) NORTH PELICAN [USC00476122], Rhinelander, WI
- (3) WILLOW RSVR [USC00479236], Hazelhurst, WI
- (4) REST LAKE [USC00477092], Manitowish Waters, WI

Influencing water features

Soil features

Lower Riparian Terraces ecological sites have nearly level to gently sloping, somewhat poorly drained to moderately well drained sandy soils characterized by the Flink and Cublake soil components. The surface layer can be loamy sand or sand. The subsoil and upper part of the substratum is sand with less than 15 percent gravel to a depth of 60 inches or so. Below 60 inches, the sandy substratum is typically stratified with loamy soil material of glacio-lacustrine or glacio-fluvial origin. The loamy layers increase water-holding capacity

and fertility of the site compared to sandier sites. Thereby resulting in increased biomass productivity of the site. Flooding is very rare on these sites, but since they located near water courses it is possible under extreme conditions. However, these sites are still greatly influenced by their proximity to water bodies. For example, the soils on these sites typically have subsurface water flowing through them toward the water body. Thereby sub-irrigating the site, thus making the site more productive than non-riparian sites with similar soils.

Table 4. Representative soil features

Surface texture	(1) Loam
Family particle size	(1) Sandy
Drainage class	Somewhat poorly drained to moderately well drained
Permeability class	Moderately slow to rapid
Soil depth	200 cm
Surface fragment cover $\leq 3"$	0 – 20 %
Surface fragment cover $> 3"$	Not specified
Available water capacity (0-101.6cm)	7.62 – 22.86 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)	4.8 – 6.2
Subsurface fragment volume $\leq 3"$ (Depth not specified)	0 – 20 %

Subsurface fragment volume >3" (Depth not specified)	Not specified
---	---------------

Ecological dynamics

These are riparian or lakeshore sites that draw a lot of development pressure, even though they are sub-optimal building sites. Often they were not selected as building sites in the first place because they too wet but subsequent expansions have used them for seasonal cabins or dwellings without basements.

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 (%)
-------	-------------	--------	-----------------	----------------------	------------------

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 (%)
-------	-------------	--------	-----------------	----------------------	------------------

Table 10. Community 3.2 plant community composition

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

Other references

- Attig JW. 1985 Pleistocene geology of Vilas County, Wisconsin. Wis. Geol. and Nat. Hist. Surv. Information Circular 50. 38 pp.
- Black MR., Judziwicz EJ. 2009. Wildflowers of Wisconsin and the Great Lakes Region: a comprehensive field guide. 2nd ed. Univ. Wisc. Press 275pp.
- Curtis JT. 1971. The Vegetation of Wisconsin: an ordination of plant communities. Univ. Wisc. Press. 657 pp.
- ECOMAP. 1993. National hierarchical framework of ecological units. USDA Forest Service, Washington, D.C.
- Epstein E, Smith W, Dobberpuhl J, Galvin A. 1999. Biotic inventory and analysis of the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest. Bureau of Endangered Resources, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. 263pp.
- Faber-Langedoen D, editor. 2001. Plant communities of the Midwest: Classification in an ecological context. Association for Biodiversity Information, Arlington, VA. 61 pp. + appendix (705 pp.).
- Grime JP. 1981. Plant Strategies and vegetation Processes. J Wiley and Sons. 222pp.
- Kent M, Coker P. 1992. Vegetation Description and Analysis: A Practical Approach. CRC Press, Boca Raton, FL. 363pp.
- Kotar J, Kovach JA, Burger TL. 2002. A Guide to Forest Communities and Habitat Types of Northern Wisconsin. 2nd ed. University of Wisconsin-Madison, Dept. of Forest Ecology and Management.
- Kozłowski TT, Pallardy SG. 2002. Acclimation and adaptive responses of woody plants to environmental stresses. The Botanical Review 68(2): 270-334.
- Mitchell SJ. 2013. Wind as a natural disturbance in forests; a synthesis. Forestry 86:147-157.
- Natural Resources Conservation Service. 2008. Hydrogeomorphic Wetland Classification System: An overview and modification to better meet the needs of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Technical Note No. 190–8–76.
- Pielou EC. 1991. After the Ice Age: the return of life to glaciated North America. Univ. Chicago Press, Chicago, IL. 366 pp.
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR). 2014. The ecological landscapes of Wisconsin: an assessment of ecological resources and a guide to planning sustainable management. Chapter 14, Northern Highland Ecological Landscape. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, PUB-SS-1131P 2014, Madison. 84 pp.
- Wisconsin Initiative on Climate Change Impacts (WICCI) 2011. Wisconsin's Changing Climate: Impacts and Adaptations. Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison & the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Madison, Wisconsin.
- Zobel RW. 1992. Soil environment constraints to root growth. Adv. Soil Science 19:27-51.

Contributors

Mark Krupinski

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:
