

Ecological site F122XY002KY

Deep Well Drained Limestone Uplands

Last updated: 5/14/2025
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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): 122X–Highland Rim and Pennyroyal

MLRA 122 is in Tennessee (47 percent), Kentucky (43 percent), Indiana (7 percent), and Alabama (3 percent). It makes up about 21,530 square miles (55,790 square kilometers). **SOILS:** Many of the soils in this MLRA are Udalfs. The moderately deep to very deep, well drained, clayey soils formed in limestone residuum. They are dominantly in rolling to steep areas of the “Outer Basin” (Mimosa, Braxton, Gladdice, and Hampshire series) and the undulating to hilly areas of the “Inner Basin” (Talbot and Bradyville series). The most agriculturally productive soils are the very deep, well drained, clayey or loamy soils that formed in alluvium and/or loess over alluvium or limestone residuum in nearly level to undulating areas (Armour, Cumberland, Harpeth, Lomond, and Maury series). The less extensive soils generally are moderately well drained to somewhat poorly drained and formed in loamy or clayey alluvium and/or residuum (Byler, Capshaw, Colbert, and Tupelo series). This MLRA has a significant acreage of Mollisols. Shallow or moderately deep, well drained, clayey Udolls (Ashwood and Barfield series) formed in limestone residuum dominantly in rolling to steep areas. Very shallow, well drained, clayey Rendolls (Gladeville series) formed in limestone residuum dominantly in undulating to rolling areas of the “Inner Basin.” Very deep, well drained or moderately well drained Udolls (Arrington, Egam, Lynnvill, and Staser series) and somewhat poorly drained or poorly drained Aquolls (Agee, Godwin, and Lanton series) formed in loamy or clayey alluvium derived from limestone on flood plains. Most of the remaining soils on flood plains are moderately well drained or well drained Udepts (Lindell and Ocana series). Udults are of small extent in this area. Most are very deep, well drained, and loamy and formed in gravelly colluvium or colluvium and the underlying residuum on steep hillsides (Dellrose soils). Rock outcrops are common on uplands. **BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES:** This area supports mixed oak forest vegetation. White oak, black oak, northern red oak, and some scarlet oak are the dominant tree species. Shagbark hickory, bitternut hickory, pignut hickory, and mockernut hickory also occur. Oak, blackgum, flowering dogwood, sassafras, Virginia pine, pitch pine, and shortleaf pine grow mostly on ridgetops. (Excerpt from United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service. 2006. Land Resource Regions and Major Land Resource Areas of the United States, the Caribbean, and the Pacific Basin. U.S. Department of Agriculture Handbook 296.)

Classification relationships

Scientific Name: Southern Interior Low Plateau Dry-Mesic Oak Forest, Unique Identifier: CES202.898 Possible Association: *Quercus alba* - *Quercus rubra* - *Quercus muehlenbergii* / *Cercis canadensis* Forest Translated Name: White Oak - Northern Red Oak - Chinquapin Oak / Eastern Redbud Forest Common Name: White Oak - Mixed Oak Dry-Mesic Alkaline Forest Unique Identifier: CEG002070 Classification Approach: International Vegetation Classification (IVC)

Ecological site concept

2 - Deep Well Drained Limestone Uplands MLRA 122 This PES describes hypotheses based on available data of many different scales and sources and has not been developed utilizing site-specific ecological field monitoring. This PES also does not encompass the entire complexity or diversity of these sites. Field studies would be required for detailed conservation planning or to develop a comprehensive and science-based native plant restoration plan. State 1. (Reference) Phase 1.1: Plant species dominants: White oak - northern red oak / rusty black haw – eastern redbud / rattlesnake fern - wild yam (*Quercus alba* - *Quercus rubra* / *Viburnum rufidulum* – *Cercis canadensis* / *Botrychium virginianum* - *Dioscorea quaternata*) Forests on these sites are generally mixed oak or oak-hickory. Understory communities are usually well-developed and contain herbs and forbs that thrive on limestone soils. Depending upon external influences such as fire and site management history, tree species may include a variety of oaks and hickories. Field work and site inspections are needed to determine the typical composition and dominance of understory species. The absence of a natural fire regime and a history of disturbances (logging, grazing, etc.) are influences that will move this community from an old growth mixed-oak or oak-hickory community to a more mesic hardwood community. Long-term lack of a natural fire regime or human disturbances can create a more mesic, shady environment which enhances the reproduction of quick growing, shade-tolerant species such as maples and reduces the successful regeneration of oaks and hickories. See additional State-Phase information under Community Phase Data. TO VALIDATE THE

INFORMATION IN THIS PROVISIONAL ECOLOGICAL SITE DESCRIPTION FUTURE FIELD WORK IS NEEDED. A final field review, peer review, quality control, and quality assurance reviews of the ESD will be needed to produce a document to be utilized for on-site conservation planning.

Associated sites

F122XY001KY	Deep Well Drained Cherty Uplands Deep, Well Drained Cherty Uplands
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Similar sites

F122XY003KY	Deep Well Drained Loamy Uplands Deep, Well Drained Loamy Uplands
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Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	(1) <i>Quercus alba</i> (2) <i>Quercus rubra</i>
Shrub	(1) <i>Viburnum rufidulum</i> (2) <i>Cercis canadensis</i>
Herbaceous	(1) <i>Botrychium virginianum</i> (2) <i>Dioscorea quaternata</i>

Physiographic features

These are deep, well drained, limestone uplands.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Hill (2) Ridge
Runoff class	Low to very high
Flooding frequency	None
Ponding frequency	None
Elevation	120 – 380 m
Slope	0 – 30 %

Water table depth	150 cm
Aspect	W, NW, N, NE, E, SE, S, SW

Climatic features

Climate

The average annual precipitation in this area is 43 to 63 inches (1,090 to 1,600 millimeters), increasing to the south. The maximum precipitation occurs in winter and early in spring, and the minimum occurs in fall. Most of the rainfall occurs as high-intensity, convective thunderstorms. Snowfall may occur in winter. The average annual temperature is 52 to 60 degrees F (11 to 16 degrees C), increasing to the south. The freeze-free period averages 210 days and ranges from 185 to 235 days. The longer freeze-free periods occur in the more southerly parts of the area.

(Excerpt from United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service. 2006. Land Resource Regions and Major Land Resource Areas of the United States, the Caribbean, and the Pacific Basin. U.S. Department of Agriculture Handbook 296.)

Table 3 Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (characteristic range)	160-170 days
Freeze-free period (characteristic range)	190-200 days
Precipitation total (characteristic range)	1,270-1,450 mm
Frost-free period (actual range)	150-170 days
Freeze-free period (actual range)	180-200 days
Precipitation total (actual range)	1,190-1,500 mm
Frost-free period (average)	160 days
Freeze-free period (average)	190 days
Precipitation total (average)	1,350 mm

- (1) CLARKSVILLE WWTP [USC00401790], Clarksville, TN
- (2) GREENSBURG [USC00153430], Greensburg, KY
- (3) COOKEVILLE [USC00402009], Cookeville, TN
- (4) WAYNESBORO [USC00409502], Waynesboro, TN
- (5) SALEM [USC00127755], Salem, IN

Influencing water features

There are no influencing water features for this group.

Soil features

These soils are deep - very deep, well drained with slow to moderate permeability on uplands.

Table 4. Representative soil features

Parent material	(1) Residuum – limestone
Surface texture	(1) Gravelly silt loam (2) Silty clay loam (3) Silty clay
Family particle size	(1) Clayey
Drainage class	Well drained
Permeability class	Slow to moderate
Soil depth	100 – 230 cm
Surface fragment cover ≤3"	Not specified
Surface fragment cover >3"	Not specified
Available water capacity (0-101.6cm)	15.24 – 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)	4.5 – 10

Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (Depth not specified)	0 – 10 %
Subsurface fragment volume >3" (Depth not specified)	0 – 10 %

Ecological dynamics

F122XY002KY- Deep Well Drained Limestone Uplands

Communities described in this provisional document reflect plant communities that are likely to be found on these soils and have not been extensively field verified. This PES describes hypotheses based on available data of many different scales and sources and has not been developed utilizing site-specific ecological field monitoring. This PES does not encompass the entire complexity or diversity of these sites. Additional field studies are needed to develop a comprehensive and science-based native plant restoration plan for these soils.

Forest Vegetation as listed in Official Series Descriptions (OSD):

Hagerstown: Native vegetation is mixed hardwoods, including black walnut.

Haggatt: Native vegetation is deciduous hardwood forest (Indiana only)

Knobcreek: Native vegetation is deciduous hardwood forest. (Indiana only)

Lowell: Native forest has upland oaks, hickory, walnut, ash, hackberry, locusts, redbud, and red cedar as the dominant species.

Only two tree species can be selected for entry into the database as dominants; however, multiple tree species may be dominant on these sites and it will vary depending on aspect, soil depth, seed sources, management, and disturbance history.

State 1. Forestland

Phase 1.1: Plant species dominants:

White oak - northern red oak / rusty black haw – eastern redbud / rattlesnake fern - wild yam

(*Quercus alba* - *Quercus rubra* / *Viburnum rufidulum* – *Cercis canadensis* / *Botrychium virginianum* - *Dioscorea quaternata*)

Forests on these limestone-influenced sites are generally mixed oak or oak-hickory. In areas with more topography, the north and east slopes may show an increase in shade tolerant hardwood species such as maples. Understory communities are usually well-developed and contain herbs and forbs that thrive on limestone soils. The shrub layer is usually sparse in older, reference type communities but may be dense in successional stages.

Depending upon external influences such as fire and site management history, tree species may include a variety of oaks, hickories and other hardwoods.

Higher quality understory communities reflect the limestone influence and may include:

twinleaf, false rue anemone, early meadow rue, Dutchman's breeches, squirrel corn, nodding trillium, shooting star, alumroot, false Solomon's seal, yellow trout lily, celandine poppy, yellow corydalis, large-flowered bellwort, sessile trillium, blue-eyed Mary, wild yam, jack in the pulpit, smooth Solomon's seal, avens, glade bluets, beaked agrimony, white snakeroot. (*Delphinium tricorne*, *Jeffersonia diphylla*, *Enemion biternatum*, *Thalictrum dioicum*, *Dicentra cucullaria*, *Dicentra canadensis*, *Trillium flexipes*, *Dodecatheon meadia*, *Heuchera americana*, *Maiantheum racemosa*, *Erythronium americanum*, *Stylophorum diphyllum*, *Corydalis flavula*, *Uvularia grandiflora*, *Trillium sessile*, *Collinsia verna*, *Dioscorea quaternata*, *Arisaema triphyllum*, *Geum canadense*, *Agrimonia rostellata*, and *Ageratina altissima*.)

Field work and site inspections are needed to determine the exact composition and dominance of understory species. Shrubs and vines on these sites may include spicebush, various grapes, Virginia creeper, and poison ivy. (*Lindera benzoin*, *Vitis* spp., *Parthenocissus quinquefolia*, and *Toxicodendron radicans*).

The absence of a natural fire regime and a history of disturbances (logging, grazing, etc.) are influences that will move this community from an old growth mixed-oak or oak-hickory community to a more mesic hardwood community. Long-term lack of a natural fire regime or human disturbances can create a more mesic, shady environment which enhances the reproduction of quick growing, shade-tolerant species such as maples, ashes, etc. and reduces the successful regeneration of oaks and hickories.

This state may be impacted by the invasion of non-native honeysuckle within the understory. *Lonicera* spp. (usually *L. maackii* in central Kentucky) alters the native plant communities due to shade and competition. Long-term, multi-year control efforts are required to control

this aggressive non-native plant and restore native woodlands.

State: 2. Pasture

Phase 2.1: Managed Pasture. Plant species dominants: *Schedonorus arundinaceus* (tall fescue)

Pasture plant species are dependent on seeding, weed control, concurrent land uses, on-going levels of disturbance, and landowner goals. Individual site and soil characteristics, along with management activities, will influence production levels.

Many species of grass, both warm and cool season, are available and suitable for these sites. Common forage species include tall fescue, orchard grass, Kentucky bluegrass, Johnson grass, timothy, and various species of clover.

Management of pasture sites should follow conservation planning standards and protocols which include watershed protection, soil health, and adequate forage species.

Transitioning this state to a reference condition would require long-term timber stand improvement practices to control non-native vegetation and manage for desired hardwood species.

State: 3 – Transitional (Abandoned Field)

Phases 3.1: Plant species dominants: *Juniperus virginiana*/ *Rubus* spp. - *Rosa multiflora*/ *Vernonia gigantea* - *Schedonorus arundinaceus*
Eastern red cedar /blackberry – multiflora rose/ ironweed- tall fescue

Tree species regeneration on these sites will depend on the severity and duration of disturbance, soil characteristics, adjacent plant communities and seed sources, post-disturbance management inputs, presence or absence of continued site disturbances (grazing), slope, and aspect.

Transitioning this state to a reference condition would require timber stand improvement practices to control non-native vegetation and manage for desired hardwood species.

State 4: Phase 4.1. Abandoned Croplands

Plant species dominant:

henbit deadnettle (*Lamium amplexicaule*) – mouse-eared chickweed (*Cerastium L.*)

Abandonment of cropland would result in many weed species taking over the site. Initially, annual weeds would be predominate followed by grasses, shrubs and finally, pioneers trees.

It would require years of management, plantings, and weed control to establish successional communities that could transition to a reference community.

State 4: Phase 4.1. Abandoned Croplands

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Abandonment of cropland would result in many weed species taking over the site. Initially, annual weeds would be predominate followed by grasses, shrubs and finally, pioneers trees.

It would require years of management, plantings, and weed control to establish successional communities that could transition to a reference community.

State: 5: Phase 5.1. Cropland

Dependent upon seeding and management. Most common crops are corn and soybeans.

TO VALIDATE THE INFORMATION IN THIS PROVISIONAL ECOLOGICAL SITE DESCRIPTION FUTURE FIELD WORK IS NEEDED. This will include field inspection and data collection including medium to high intensity sampling, soil correlations, and analysis of that data.

A final field review, peer review, quality control, and quality assurance reviews of the ESD will be needed to produce a document to be utilized for on-site conservation planning.

State and transition model

Additional community tables

Inventory data references

Site Development and Testing Plan Future work is needed, as described in a future project plan, to validate the information presented in this provisional ecological site description. Future work includes field sampling, data collection and analysis by qualified vegetation ecologists and soil scientists. As warranted, annual reviews of the project plan can be conducted by the Ecological Site Technical Team. A final field review, peer review, quality control, and quality assurance reviews of the ESD are necessary to approve a final document.

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Approval

Matthew Duvall, 5/14/2025

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	09/18/2026
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:
