

Ecological site F128XY522WV

Mesic Organic Mountain Bog Soils

Last updated: 5/14/2025
Accessed: 09/15/2026

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): 128X–Southern Appalachian Ridges and Valleys

MLRA 128 falls into the East and Central Farming and Forest Region. This MLRA is in Tennessee (36 percent), Alabama (27 percent), Virginia (25 percent), and Georgia (12 percent). It makes up about 21,095 square miles (54,660 square kilometers). Most of this MLRA is in the Tennessee Section of the Valley and Ridge Province of the Appalachian Highlands. The thin stringers in the western part of the area are mostly in the Cumberland Plateau Section of the Appalachian Plateaus Province of the Appalachian Highlands. A separate area of the MLRA in northern Alabama is in the Highland Rim Section of the Interior Low Plateaus Province of the Interior Plains. The western side of the area is dominantly hilly to very steep and is rougher and much steeper than the eastern side, much of which is rolling and hilly. Elevation ranges from 660 feet (200 meters) near the southern end of the area to more than 2,400 feet (730 meters) in the part of the area in the western tip of Virginia. Some isolated linear mountain ridges rise to nearly 4,920 feet (1,500 meters) above sea level. The MLRA is highly diversified. It has many parallel ridges, narrow intervening valleys, and large areas of low, irregular hills. The bedrock in this area consists of alternating beds of limestone, dolomite, shale, and sandstone of early Paleozoic age. Ridgetops are capped with more resistant carbonate and sandstone layers, and valleys have been eroded into the less resistant shale beds. These folded and faulted layers are at the southernmost extent of the Appalachian Mountains. The narrow river valleys are filled with unconsolidated deposits of clay, silt, sand, and gravel.

Ecological site concept

This ecosite is found in mountain bogs in MLRA 128: Southern Appalachian Ridges and Valleys. This PES roughly corresponds to Appalachian bog classification developed by the The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Natural Heritage Program (DCR-DNH), some of which occur in the Washington and Jefferson National Forests in Virginia. Bog vegetation is frequently a mosaic of tree or shrub patches and herbaceous openings. The ecological dynamics of these systems are not well understood.

Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	(1) <i>Pinus echinata</i>
Shrub	(1) <i>Ilex collina</i>
Herbaceous	Not specified

Physiographic features

This ecosite is found in mountains, bogs in MLRA 128: Southern Appalachian Ridges and Valleys

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Bog (2) Mountain
Ponding duration	Brief (2 to 7 days)
Ponding frequency	None to frequent
Elevation	910 – 1,220 m
Slope	0 %
Ponding depth	0 – 20 cm
Water table depth	0 – 30 cm
Aspect	Aspect is not a significant factor

Climatic features

The average annual precipitation in most of this area is 41 to 55 inches (1,040 to 1,395 millimeters). It increases to the south and is as much as 66 inches (1,675 millimeters) at the highest elevations in east Tennessee and the northwest corner of Georgia. The maximum precipitation occurs in midwinter and midsummer, and the minimum occurs in autumn. Most of the rainfall occurs as high-intensity, convective thunderstorms. Snowfall may occur in winter. The average annual temperature is 52 to 63 degrees F (11 to 17 degrees C), increasing to the south. The freeze-free period averages 205 days and ranges from 165 to 245 days. It is longest in the southern part of the area and shortest at high elevations and at the northern end.

Table 3 Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (average)	150 days
Freeze-free period (average)	180 days
Precipitation total (average)	1,020 mm

- (1) COVINGTON FLTR PLT [USC00442044], Covington, VA
- (2) STAFFORDSVILLE 3 ENE [USC00448022], Pearisburg, VA

Influencing water features

The soils are hydric and wooded. They are associated with hydric criterion 1 – “All Histels except Folistels, and all Histosols except Folists.”

Soil features

This soil formed in a thick layer of decomposing organic litter over materials weathered from sandstone. It is in mountain bogs. The slopes range from 0 to 3 percent. They are typically deep (40 to 60 inches) to bedrock, with some shallower areas included. They are very poorly drained. The available water capacity of these soils is moderate. The depth to a seasonal high water table is 0 to 1 foot. They are not subject to flooding, and are frequently ponded. The soil reaction ranges from extremely acid to strongly acid (pH from 3.5 to 5.5).

The soil component associated with this site is: Haplosaprists

Parent Material Kind: organic, woody material; organic, herbaceous material; creep deposits

Parent Material Origin: sandstone, unspecified (creep deposits)

Surface texture is muck.

Table 4. Representative soil features

Parent material	(1) Woody organic material – sandstone
Drainage class	Very poorly drained
Permeability class	Moderate
Soil depth	40 – 120 cm
Available water capacity (0-101.6cm)	11.18 – 13.72 cm
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (0-101.6cm)	3.5 – 5.5
Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (Depth not specified)	0 – 30 %
Subsurface fragment volume >3" (Depth not specified)	10 – 60 %

Ecological dynamics

According to the DCR-DNH, these sites roughly correspond to their Appalachian Bog classification. The description of that system is as follows:

"The ecological dynamics of these naturally rare communities are not well understood, and many examples are currently suffering from shrub and tree invasions. Factors that may have been responsible for creating and maintaining open bogs include fire, grazing, beavers, and deep deposition of unstable soils.

Bog vegetation is frequently a mosaic of tree or shrub patches and herbaceous openings. Several compositional variants associated with geography and elevation have been documented in Virginia. Species common to most variants include great rhododendron (*Rhododendron maximum*), Catawba rhododendron (*Rhododendron catawbiense*), silky willow (*Salix sericea*), smooth alder (*Alnus serrulata*), cinnamon fern (*Osmundastrum cinnamomeum* var. *cinnamomeum*), tawny cottongrass (*Eriophorum virginicum*), prickly bog sedge (*Carex atlantica*), Fraser's marsh St. Johns-wort (*Hypericum fraseri*), and brownish beaksedge (*Rhynchospora capitellata*).

Species more restricted to low-elevation (below 900 m [3000 ft]) bogs of the Ridge and Valley and Cumberland Mountains include pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*), round-leaved sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia* var. *rotundifolia*), bushy bluestem (*Andropogon glomeratus* var. *glomeratus*), tussock sedge (*Carex stricta*), tuberous grass-pink (*Calopogon tuberosus*), yellow fringed orchid (*Platanthera ciliaris*), and Nuttall's reed-grass (*Calamagrostis cinnoides*)."

Because the ecological dynamics of this system are not well understood, no State and Transition Model was developed. This should be completed in future projects when field plots can be established.

State and transition model

Additional community tables

Other references

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Thornthwaite, Charles W. 1948. An approach toward a rational classification of climate. *Geographical Review* 38(1): 55-94.

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Vegetation plot data. 2015. Retrieved from: <http://vegbank.org/vegbank/index.jsp>

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Contributors

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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	09/15/2026
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:
