

Ecological site F134XY103MS

Southern Rolling Plains Loess Wet Terrace

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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): 134X–Southern Mississippi Valley Loess

MLRA 134, Southern Mississippi Valley Loess, is in Mississippi (39 percent), Tennessee (23 percent), Louisiana (15 percent), Arkansas (11 percent), Kentucky (9 percent), Missouri (2 percent), and Illinois (1 percent). It makes up about 26,520 square miles (68,715 square kilometers). The northern part of the area includes Paducah and Murray, Kentucky; Paragould, Jonesboro, and Forrest City, Arkansas; and Memphis, Dyersburg, Bartlett, and Germantown, Tennessee. The southern part includes Yazoo City, Clinton, and Jackson, Mississippi, and Baton Rouge, Opelousas, Lafayette, and New Iberia, Louisiana. This portion is the farthest southeast part of the MLRA in Louisiana. It is in the Mississippi Valley Loess Plains Section of the EPA Ecoregions in sub-section 74c, Southern rolling Plains. The dissected plains in this MLRA have a loess mantle that is thick at the valley wall and thins rapidly as distance from the valley wall increases. Although less dissected than the Bluff Hills (74a), the region has more irregular and dissected topography than adjacent 74b to the north in Mississippi. The historic forests contained shortleaf pine, loblolly pine, and upland oaks and hickories. Pine is naturally more prevalent here than in 74a and 74b. Land cover now is mostly mixed pine-hardwood forest, pine plantations, pasture, and cropland. The eastern boundary of this region is broad, with a gradual transition to the southern Coastal Plains.

Classification relationships

Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) and Land Resource Unit (LRU) (USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, 2006) EPA Level IV Ecoregion The Natural Communities of Louisiana - (Louisiana Natural Heritage Program - Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries)

Ecological site concept

Nearly Level Upland Terraces found on the lower elevations on local landscape, slopes can range up to above 6 percent in some areas but generally less than 1 percent. Drainage ranges from Moderately well to Somewhat poorly, with none to rare Flooding frequency. Some soils restrictions could include a brittle fragipan or a soils horizon with fragic properties and potentially soil sodium these restrictions when present will generally occur between 11 and 30 inches below the soil surface. The site is found in level IV EPA Ecoregion 74c, Southern Rolling Plains of the Mississippi Valley Loess Plains, within the Southern Mississippi Valley Loess Major Land Resource Area.

Associated sites

F134XY105MS	Southern Rolling Plains Loess Fragipan Upland 134XY105 Southern Rolling Plains Loess Fragipan Upland is found in a similar site position however it is better drained with greater slope.
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Similar sites

F134XY123LA	Baton Rouge Terrace Southern Loess Low Terrace 134XY123 Baton Rouge Terrace Southern Loess Low Terrace is Similar in landscape position and wetness, however is found in the Baton Rouge Terrace Portion of the MLRA to the south of this site.
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Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	Not specified
Shrub	Not specified
Herbaceous	Not specified

Physiographic features

The Bluff Hills and the Southern Rolling Plains (EPA Level IV Ecoregions 74A and 74C, respectively) of the Southern Mississippi Valley Loess (MLRA 134) are located in southwest Mississippi and southeast Louisiana. The areas lie within the Coastal Plain Province of the Atlantic Plain. The underlying geology consists of marine deposits of sand, silt, clay, and lignite of the Pascagoula, Hattiesburg, Catahoula and Citronelle formations. The Bluff Hills, which bound the Mississippi River floodplain, are capped by loess deposits often greater than 50 feet thick (Chapman et al., 2004). The adjacent terraces of the Southern Rolling Plain are loess mantled as well.

“Loess” is the geologic term of German origin that refers to widespread deposits of homogeneous layers of friable, porous silt mixed with minor amounts of clay or fine sand (Heinrich, 2008). The loess mantle, created by well-sorted windblown silt, was deposited during the Pleistocene age. Its source was glacial sediment from glacial meltwater that was flowing down an extensive braided stream system depositing large volumes of silt over the floodplain of the Mississippi River (Heinrich, 2008). Glacial meltwater ceased flowing when southern edges of ice sheets stopped melting in fall and winter, thereby creating dry conditions on the previously flooded Mississippi River Valley. Strong seasonal winds blew across dry floodplains and eroded large quantities of silt-sized sediment, and transported it out of the Mississippi alluvial valley and deposited it on adjacent uplands and terraces (Heinrich, 2008). Over thousands of years, the silt accumulations created loess deposits that are many feet thick (Heinrich, 2008). The Bluff Hills and Southern Rolling Plains are covered mainly with 2 separate layers (and ages) of loess deposits, the older and lower Sicily Island loess and the younger Peoria loess at the soil surface.

Where blankets of loess are thicker than 6 feet, the soils formed entirely in loess. Where loess deposits are less than 6 feet thick, soils reflect the nature of the underlying parent material (McDaniel, 2001). Thick loess areas produce intensely dissected terrain with excessively steep slopes and ridge and ravine topography (McDaniel, 2001). The Bluff Hills tend to have deeper, calcareous loess and steeper, much more dissected topography than the Southern Rolling Plains to the east. The loess mantle on the Southern Rolling Plains begins to thin and become more acid in the east as it transitions to the Southeastern Plains. Stream gradients in the Bluff Hills are high with narrow drainageways and floodplains, while the stream gradients become lower with broader floodplains in the Southern Rolling Plains.

This Site occurs mainly on stream terraces of large creeks and rivers and their tributaries draining the Southern Rolling Plains in Mississippi and Louisiana. This site also occurs on broad flats and depressions in the uplands. Slopes are nearly level to gently sloping (0 to 5 percent). These sites include the terraces of the Homochitto River and its tributaries, such as Sandy Creek and East Field Creek; the Big Black River, Bayou Pierre and its tributaries, such as Little Bayou Pierre, White Oak Creek; Foster Creek, Bahala Creek, the North Fork and South Fork of Coles Creek, McCall Creek, McGehee Creek; the Bogue Chitto, Buffalo River; the Pearl river, the Amite River and its tributaries; and the West Fork of Little Comite Creek.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Stream terrace (2) Flat (3) Depression
Flooding duration	Brief (2 to 7 days) to very long (more than 30 days)
Flooding frequency	None to frequent
Ponding duration	Brief (2 to 7 days) to very long (more than 30 days)

Ponding frequency	None to frequent
Elevation	40 – 150 m
Slope	0 – 10 %
Water table depth	20 – 60 cm
Aspect	Aspect is not a significant factor

Climatic features

The Southern Rolling Plains portions of MLRA 134 in Mississippi and Louisiana has a warm, humid climate, with fairly long summers and relatively short winters. The result is a long growing season and abundant plant growth. As you move northward in this region temperature trends lower and Precipitation is not as well distributed. This change in distribution does not imply that there is a rainy season and dry season, however there is a change in distribution. Water is a definitive part of this landscape, largely due to the combination of low elevation and fairly abundant rainfall in most years. Mean annual precipitation ranges from 50 to 70 inches over this region, and is fairly well distributed throughout the year. There have been very few years when less than 50 inches of precipitation has fallen. Snow is a rarity, however chances increase as you move Northward through the region. Growing seasons are long, typically from late February to late November. Hurricanes and tropical storms impact the climate of this region predominately in the southern areas, with some impact occurring nearly every year in some areas. However, devastating storms do not occur too often, and heavy rain is usually the biggest concern compared to wind damage. The following climatic data are averages from the ten weather stations listed below. Temperature and precipitation may vary considerably from that listed for each month. Site specific weather data should be used for land management decisions. For site specific weather conditions, obtain data from a weather station close to the site. Information can be accessed from specific weather stations at <http://www.wrcc.dri.edu/coopmap/> or <http://www.wrcc.dri.edu/summary/climsm1a.html>.

Table 3 Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (average)	230 days
Freeze-free period (average)	270 days
Precipitation total (average)	1,580 mm

- (1) MEADVILLE [USC00225704], Bude, MS
- (2) PORT GIBSON 1 NE [USC00227132], Port Gibson, MS
- (3) BROOKHAVEN CITY [USC00221094], Brookhaven, MS
- (4) CRYSTAL SPGS EXP STN [USC00222094], Crystal Springs, MS
- (5) OAKLEY EXP STN [USC00226476], Raymond, MS
- (6) NATCHEZ [USC00226177], Natchez, MS
- (7) CLINTON 5 SE [USC00161899], Clinton, LA
- (8) HAZLEHURST 5 SW [USC00223920], Hazlehurst, MS
- (9) WOODVILLE 4 ESE [USC00229793], Centreville, MS
- (10) MCCOMB/PIKE CO/JOHN E LEWIS AP [USW00093919], McComb, MS

Influencing water features

This site is influenced by both surface and sub-surface hydrology. It is subject to surface run in and sub surface flow from adjacent parts of the landscape. Several inches of standing water can be found in the winter months and soils may be saturated into early spring. Wetness is a dominate driver of this system and in Alternative States it will be a limiting factor.

Soil features

Soils are somewhat poorly drained Aquic Fraglossudalfs (Calloway, Fluker), somewhat poorly drained Aquic Fragiudalfs (Bude), somewhat poorly drained Albic Glossic Natraqualfs (Deerford), poorly drained Typic Glossaqualfs (Calhoun, Frost), and poorly drained Typic Fragiaqualfs (Henry). These soils formed in thick water-reworked loess deposits and thin loess deposits over loamy coastal plain sediments in the eastern portion of the Southern Rolling Plains in the Southern Mississippi Valley Loess (MLRA 134). Slopes range from 0 to 5 percent, but are mainly below 2 percent. These deep, slowly to moderately permeable soils are found on stream terraces, broad flats and depressions on the uplands. Many of the soils have fragipans and perched water tables. All these soil have a seasonal high water table within 0.5 to 2 feet of the surface during winter and spring months in normal years. Many of these soils are subject to occasional to frequent flooding of brief to very long duration, and rare to frequent ponding of brief to very long duration.

The soils listed in this section of the description may not be all inclusive. There may be other soils that fit this site concept, as well as in some areas where the listed soils are mapped they may not fit the site concept. Some soil map units and soil series included in this Provisional Ecological Site grouping were used as "best fit" for a particular soil-landscape catena during a specific era of soil mapping, regardless of origin of parent material or Major Land Resource Area. Therefore, these soil series may not be typical for MLRA 134, and those soil map units deserve further investigation in a joint ecological-soil survey project. When utilizing this description verify it is the correct site utilizing multiple parameters, the soils, the physiography and the location. If the site does not fit the particular location well utilize the Similar or Associated Sites listed in the Supporting Information section of this description to determine if another site may be a better fit to your location.

Table 4. Representative soil features

Surface texture	(1) Silt loam (2) Silt
Family particle size	(1) Loamy
Drainage class	Poorly drained to somewhat poorly drained
Permeability class	Slow to moderate
Soil depth	150 – 200 cm
Surface fragment cover <=3"	Not specified
Surface fragment cover >3"	Not specified
Available water capacity (0-101.6cm)	0.03 – 0.61 cm
Calcium carbonate equivalent (0-101.6cm)	Not specified
Electrical conductivity (0-101.6cm)	Not specified

Sodium adsorption ratio (0-101.6cm)	0 – 20
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (0-101.6cm)	4.5 – 8.4
Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (Depth not specified)	Not specified
Subsurface fragment volume >3" (Depth not specified)	Not specified

Ecological dynamics

The pre settlement plant community of this site would have been dominated by bottomland hardwood species. Within this site there will be a gradient of wetness from no to frequent flooding and the potential for frequent ponding. The wetness variations will dictate the species that are present and the composition of them within an area.

Due to wetness, rooting depths of some species will be limited and due to this and there is a potential for some trees to be uprooted by climatic events, such as strong winds or floods. With these events, openings in the canopy can occur which will set back succession and allow herbaceous and woody shrub species to colonize, these low stature communities are generally short lived and the upper canopy will close as tall growing trees mature. There is generally an age gradient within a forest stand from the herbaceous openings to mature bottomland hardwoods.

Another historical ecological process that drove the system was fire, on this site due to wetness the vegetative production would have provided fuel, the lessening of flooding potential would have allowed fire to burn across this site or may have created a mosaic pattern of unburned portions that had wetness at a given time. Adjacent drier sites would have carried a fire and if conditions were adequate the fire would have burned through this site setting back succession of the herbaceous layer. Fire intensity could have been variable depending on conditions at the time on the site and would have impacted the species composition and stature of the site. Historically the region experienced a fire return interval of 2 to 4 years.

This site has been altered by human activity and is utilized for multiple production systems such as Cropland, Pasture and Tree Farms, for all of these alternative states wetness is a limitation for this site for productivity and management activities. Within the alternative uses of the site the transitions will be very similar and require the input of resources such as installation of infrastructure needs and establishment of the desired species.

State and transition model

Figure 5. 134XY103 Southern Loess Wet Terrace PES STM

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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Table 6. Community 2.1 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 7. Community 3.1 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Grass/Grasslike					
1	Warm Season Grasses			2130-5044	
	Bermudagrass	CYDA	<i>Cynodon dactylon</i>	2130-5044	–

Table 8. Community 4.1 plant community composition

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

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Hydrological functions

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Recreational uses

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Wood products

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Other products

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Other information

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Other references

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Contributors

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Approval

Matthew Duvall, 3/24/2025

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	08/31/2026
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:
