

Ecological site F144AY006CT

High Floodplain Levee

Last updated: 5/20/2025
Accessed: 09/02/2026

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): 144A–New England and Eastern New York Upland, Southern Part

MLRA 144A: New England and Eastern New York Upland, Southern Part The eastern half of the eastern part of this MLRA is in the Seaboard Lowland Section of the New England Province of the Appalachian Highlands. The western half of the eastern part and the southeastern half of the western part are in the New England Upland Section of the same province and division. The northwestern half of the western part is in the Hudson Valley Section of the Valley and Ridge Province of the Appalachian Highlands. This MLRA is a very scenic area of rolling to hilly uplands that are broken by many gently sloping to level valleys that terminate in coastal lowlands. Elevation ranges from sea level to 1,000 feet (0 to 305 meters) in much of the area, but it is 2,000 feet (610 meters) on some hills. Relief is mostly about 6 to 65 feet (2 to 20 meters) in the valleys and about 80 to 330 feet (25 to 100 meters) in the uplands. This area has been glaciated and consists almost entirely of till hills, drumlins, and bedrock-controlled uplands with a mantle of till. It is dissected by narrow glacio-fluvial valleys. The southernmost boundary of the area marks the farthest southward extent of Wisconsinian glaciation on the eastern seaboard. The river valleys and coastal plains are filled with glacial lake sediments, marine sediments, and glacial outwash. The bedrock in the eastern half of the area consists primarily of igneous and metamorphic rocks of early Paleozoic age. Granite is the most common igneous rock, and gneiss, schist, and slate are the most common metamorphic rocks. In the parts of the MLRA in eastern and southeastern New York, Devonian- to Pennsylvanian-age sandstone, shale, and limestone are dominant. Carbonate rocks, primarily dolomite and limestone, are the dominant kinds of bedrock in the part of this MLRA in northwestern Connecticut.

Classification relationships

USDA-NRCS (USDA 2006): Land Resource Region (LRR): N—East and Central Farming and Forest Region Major Land Resource Area (MLRA): 144A— New England and Eastern New York Upland, Southern Part. USDA-FS (Cleland et al. 2007) Province: 221 - Eastern Broadleaf Province Section: 221A - Lower New England Subsection: 221Aa – Boston Basin 221Ac – Narragansett-Bristol Lowland and Islands 221Ad – Southern New England Coastal Lowland 221Ae – Hudson Highlands 221Ag - Southeast New England Coastal Hills and Plains 221Ah - Worcester-Monadnock Plateau 221Ai – Gulf of Maine Coastal Plain 221Ak - Gulf of Maine Coastal Lowland Section: 221B – Hudson Valley Subsection: 221Ba – Hudson Limestone Valley 221Bb - Miami – Taconic Foothills 221Bc – Hudson Glacial Lake Plains

Ecological site concept

The ecological site concept consists of floodplains formed in deep, sandy, excessively drained alluvial soils occurring on high river levees. Representative soils are Suncook. The reference plant community is classified as the Silver Maple Floodplain Levee Forest, characterized by silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*), eastern cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*), American elm (*Ulmus americana*), ostrich fern (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*), and Canadian woodnettle (*Laportia cnadensis*).

Associated sites

F144AY010NH	Sandy High Floodplain
F144AY012CT	Sandy Low Floodplain Associated floodplain site on large to medium sized rivers

Similar sites

F144AY014CT	Wet Sandy Low Floodplain
F144AY016MA	Very Wet Low Floodplain

Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	(1) <i>Acer saccharinum</i> (2) <i>Populus deltoides</i>
Shrub	(1) <i>Lindera benzoin</i> (2) <i>Cornus amomum</i>
Herbaceous	(1) <i>Ageratina altissima</i> (2) <i>Ambrosia trifida</i>

Physiographic features

The site occurs on floodplain and levees subject to frequent or occasional flooding.

Figure 1. High Floodplain Levee ecological site (Suncook soi

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Natural levee (2) Flood plain
Runoff class	Negligible
Flooding duration	Brief (2 to 7 days)
Flooding frequency	Occasional
Ponding frequency	None
Elevation	10 – 240 m
Slope	0 %
Water table depth	140 cm

Aspect	Aspect is not a significant factor
--------	------------------------------------

Climatic features

The Koppen-Geiger climate classification of the area in which this MLRA occurs varies between Dfb (Warm-summer humid continental) in the North, and Dfa (Hot-summer humid continental) in the southern portion of the MLRA. Precipitation is usually uniformly distributed throughout the year. Near the coast, however, it is slightly lower in summer. Precipitation is slightly higher in spring and fall in inland areas. Rainfall occurs as high-intensity, convective thunderstorms during the summer. During the winter, most of the precipitation occurs as moderate-intensity storms (northeasters) that produce large amounts of rain or snow. The freeze-free period increases in length to the south.

Table 3 Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (characteristic range)	120-150 days
Freeze-free period (characteristic range)	170-180 days
Precipitation total (characteristic range)	1,140-1,320 mm
Frost-free period (actual range)	110-170 days
Freeze-free period (actual range)	140-200 days
Precipitation total (actual range)	1,020-1,350 mm
Frost-free period (average)	140 days
Freeze-free period (average)	170 days
Precipitation total (average)	1,220 mm

- (1) DANBURY [USC00061762], Bethel, CT
- (2) MASSABESIC LAKE [USC00275211], Manchester, NH
- (3) CHARLOTTEBURG RESERVE [USC00281582], Newfoundland, NJ
- (4) STORRS [USC00068138], Storrs Mansfield, CT
- (5) WEST POINT [USC00309292], Cold Spring, NY
- (6) WOONSOCKET [USC00379423], Manville, RI
- (7) WORCESTER RGNL AP [USW00094746], Leicester, MA
- (8) ALBANY AP [USW00014735], Latham, NY

Influencing water features

NONE

Wetland description

NONE

Soil features

Suncook soils represent the High Floodplain Levee ecological site.

The site consists of very deep, excessively drained sandy soils formed in alluvial sediments. They are nearly level soils on flood plains, subject to frequent or occasional flooding. Slope ranges from 0 to 3 percent. Saturated hydraulic conductivity is high or very high in the surface layer and underlying strata.

Table 4. Representative soil features

Parent material	(1) Alluvium – schist (2) Granite and gneiss (3) Conglomerate (4) Sandstone (5) Quartzite
Surface texture	(1) Loamy fine sand (2) Loamy sand (3) Sandy loam
Drainage class	Excessively drained
Permeability class	Moderate to rapid
Depth to restrictive layer	180 cm
Surface fragment cover <=3"	Not specified
Surface fragment cover >3"	Not specified
Available water capacity (Depth not specified)	7.62 – 10.16 cm
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (Depth not specified)	3.6 – 6.5
Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (Depth not specified)	0 – 10 %

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

Ecological dynamics

[Caveat: The vegetation information contained in this section and is only provisional, based on concepts, not yet validated with field work.*]

The vegetation groupings described in this section are based on the terrestrial ecological system classification and vegetation associations developed by NatureServe (Comer 2003). Terrestrial ecological SYSTEMS are specifically defined as a group of plant community-types called ASSOCIATIONS that tend to [co-]occur within landscapes with similar ecological processes, substrates, and/or environmental gradients. They are intended to provide a classification unit that is readily mappable, often from terrain and remote imagery, and readily identifiable by conservation and resource managers in the field. A given system will typically manifest itself in a landscape at intermediate geographic scales of tens-to-thousands of hectares and will persist for 50 or more years. A vegetation association is a plant community that is much more specific to a given soil, geology, landform, climate, hydrology, and disturbance history. It is the basic unit for vegetation classification and recognized by the US National Vegetation Classification (US FDGC 2008). Each association will be named by the diagnostic and often dominant species that occupy the different height strata (tree, sapling, shrub, and herb). Within the NatureServe Explorer database, ecological systems are numbered by a Community Ecological System Code (CES) and individual vegetation associations are assigned an identification number called a Community Element Global Code (CEGL).

Additional and more localized vegetation information is provided by the State Natural Heritage Programs of Connecticut (Metzler and Barrett 2001) and Massachusetts (Swain and Kearsley 2001), New Hampshire (Sperduto and Nichols, 2011), and New York (Edinger et al., 2014).

The High Floodplain Levee ecological site is characteristic of the Laurentian-Acadian Floodplain Forest system (CES201.587) and to a lesser the extent the Central Appalachian River Floodplain Forest system (CES201.587) (NatureServe 2015). This floodplain forest develops along medium to large river systems with a medium to low gradient. Disturbances are related to the magnitude, frequency, and seasonal timing of flooding. At higher elevations in the floodplains and floodplain terraces, much of this ecological site has been converted to agriculture. The vegetation is often a mosaic of forest, woodland, shrub land, and herbaceous communities. However, due to flooding, shrubs are typically less developed and vines more developed. The characteristic trees are *Acer saccharinum* (silver maple) and *Populus deltoides* (eastern cottonwood), but *Acer saccharum* (sugar maple) may occur on slightly elevated river terraces undisturbed by agriculture.

[*Caveat] The information presented is representative of very complex vegetation communities. Key indicator plants and ecological processes are described to help inform land management decisions. Plant communities will differ across the MLRA because of the naturally occurring variability in weather, soils, and geography. The reference plant community is not necessarily the management goal. The drafts of species lists are merely representative and are not botanical descriptions of all species occurring, or potentially occurring, on this site. They are not intended to cover every situation or the full range of conditions, species, and responses for the site.

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 1.3 plant community composition

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

Table 8. Community 2.1 plant community composition

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

Table 9. Community 2.2 plant community composition

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

Table 10. Community 3.1 plant community composition

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

Table 11. Community 3.2 plant community composition

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

Table 12. Community 3.3 plant community composition

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

Inventory data references

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.

Other references

REFERENCES

Cleland, D.T., J.A. Freeouf, J.E. Keys, G.J. Nowacki, C.A. Carpenter, and W.H.McNab. 2007. Ecological Subregions: Sections and Subsections for the conterminous United States. [Map. presentation scale 1:3,500,000, colored; A.M. Sloan, cartographer] Gen. Tech. Report WO-76D. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Washington, DC. (<https://www.fs.fed.us/research/publications/misc/73326-wo-gtr-76d-cleland2007.pdf>)

Comer, P., D. Faber-Langendoen, R. Evans, S. Gawler, C. Josse, G. Kittel, S. Menard, M. Pyne, M. Reid, K. Schulz, K., Snow, and J.Teague. 2003. Ecological Systems of the United States: A Working Classification of U.S. Terrestrial Systems. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia.

Cowardin, L.M. et. al. 1979. Classification of Wetlands and Deepwater habitats of the United States. FWS/OBS-79/31, U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, DC.

Edinger, G.J., Evans, D.J., Gebauer, S., Howard, T.G., Hunt, D.M., and A.M. Olivero, A.M. (eds.). 2014. Ecological Communities of New York State, Second Edition: A revised and expanded edition of Carol Reschke's Ecological Communities of New York State. New York Natural Heritage Program, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Albany, NY.

Metzler, K.J. and Barrett, J.P., 2006. The Vegetation of Connecticut, a Preliminary Classification. Department of Environmental Protection, State Geological and Natural History Survey of Connecticut. Rpt of Investigations No. 12.

NatureServe. 2009. International Ecological Classification Standard: Terrestrial Ecological Classifications. NatureServe Central Databases. Arlington, VA, U.S.A. Data current as of 06 February 2009.

NatureServe 2015. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://explorer.natureserve.org>. (Accessed: December 2015).

PRISM Climate Group, Oregon State University. Available <http://prism.oregonstate.edu>, (created February 26, 2013).

Soil Survey Staff, Natural Resources Conservation Service, United States Department of Agriculture. 2006. Land Resource Regions and Major Land Resource Areas of the United States, the Caribbean, and the Pacific Basin. Agricultural Handbook 296

Soil Survey Staff-USDA-NRCS [United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service] 2016. National Soils Information Service (NASIS Data Model Version 7.3.4) Lincoln, NE. Available description: https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/soils/survey/tools/?cid=nrcs142p2_053552 (Accessed January 2015).

Sperduto, D.D., & Nichols, W.F. 2011. Natural Communities of New Hampshire, Second Ed. NH Natural Heritage Bureau, Concord, NH. Publ. UNH Cooperative Extension.

Swain, P.C. and Kearsley, J.B., 2001. Classification of the natural communities of Massachusetts. Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife.

United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2013. Level III ecoregions of the continental United States. Corvallis, Oregon, U.S. EPA-National health and Environmental Effects Research Laboratory, map scale 1:7,500,000, http://www.epa.gov/wed/pages/ecoregions/level_iii_iv.htm.

Woods, A.J., J.O. Omernik, D.D. Brown, C.W. Kiilsgaard. 1996. Level IV Ecoregions of EPA Region 3. US Environmental Protection Agency National Health and Environmental Effects Research Laboratory, Corvallis, Oregon. Map scale 1:250,000.

Contributors

Nels Barrett, Ph.D. (vegetation)

Approval

Greg Schmidt, 5/20/2025

Acknowledgments

Michael Margo and tech team provided earlier drafts. Josh Hibit made compliance updates w/ 2021 Checklist V.2

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	02/18/2025
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:
-