

Ecological site F144BY506ME

Semi-rich Till Slope

Last updated: 9/27/2024
Accessed: 09/01/2026

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): 144B—New England and Eastern New York Upland, Northern Part

This major land resource area (MLRA) is in Maine (56 percent), New Hampshire (22 percent), Vermont (14 percent), Massachusetts (6 percent), Connecticut (1 percent), and New York (1 percent). It makes up about 22,728 square miles (58,864 square kilometers). The MLRA consists of a relatively young landscape shaped by the Laurentide Ice Sheet, which covered the region from 35,000 to 10,000 years ago. Rolling hills of dense basal till converge on ridges of shallow bedrock that were scoured by glacial ice. River valleys that were flooded by melting glacial water or seawater house large expanses of glacial outwash and stratified drift in inland areas and, to a lesser extent, glaciomarine and glaciolacustrine sediment deposits in coastal areas. Organic bogs, ablation till, and alluvial flood plains make up the remaining portions of the MLRA. The soils in this region are dominantly Entisols, Spodosols, and Inceptisols. They commonly have a fragipan. The dominant suborders are Ochrepts, Orthods, Aquepts, Fluvents, and Sapristis. The soils in the region dominantly have a frigid soil temperature regime with some cryic areas at higher elevation, a udic soil moisture regime, and mixed mineralogy. Most of the land is forested, and 98 percent is privately owned. Significant amounts of forest products are produced including lumber, pulpwood, Christmas trees, and maple syrup. Principal agricultural crops include forage and grains for dairy cattle, potatoes, apples, and blueberries. Wildlife habitat and recreation are important land uses. Stoniness, steep slopes, and poor drainage limit the use of many of the soils.

Classification relationships

NRCS: Land Resource Region: R—Northeastern Forage and Forest Region MLRA: 144B—New England and Eastern New York Upland, Northern Part

Ecological site concept

This site occurs mostly on well- to moderately well-drained loam soils and associated somewhat poorly-drained soils. Bedrock is greater than 20 inches below the mineral soil surface. Soils are semi-rich due to calcareous bedrock material from which they are derived. This site is commonly found on backslope and footslope positions but may occur on flats or any number of landforms. The vegetation is characterized by northern hardwoods, particularly sugar maple, yellow birch, and beech, with basswood, ash, and northern white cedar as less-abundant indicators of these semi-rich soils. Shallower and wetter inclusions in this site typically produce more of these indicator species. On gentler slopes, these soils are often farmed.

Associated sites

F144BY507ME	Semi-rich Till Toeslope The Semi-rich Till Toeslope site usually occurs downslope, on wetter, richer soils than the Semi-rich Till Slope.
F144BY705ME	Shallow and Mod-deep Semi-rich Till The Shallow and Moderately Deep Semi-rich Till site often occurs upslope of the Semi-rich Till Slope site, where much of the soil area is less than 20 inches deep to calcareous bedrock.

Similar sites

F144BY504ME	Enriched Loamy Cove The Semi-rich Till Slope site is very similar to the Enriched Loamy Cove site, but it derives its nutrients primarily from calcareous parent material and does not accumulate nutrients due to its more exposed landscape position. Therefore it tends to be less rich than the Enriched Loamy Cove.
F144BY501ME	Loamy Slope (Northern Hardwoods) The Loamy Slope site occurs in a similar landscape position to the Semi-rich Till Slope, but on more acidic soils derived from non-calcareous bedrock.

Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	(1) <i>Acer saccharum</i> (2) <i>Fraxinus americana</i>
Shrub	Not specified
Herbaceous	Not specified

Physiographic features

This site occurs mostly on moderate slopes on till landforms, especially hills. It may also be found on somewhat flatter till plains and ground moraine landforms. Slopes are typically 0-35%, sometimes up to 60%. Elevations range from 0-2500 feet above sea level. This site may have a seasonally-high water table.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Upland > Hill (2) Till plain > Ground moraine (3) Upland > Drumlinoid ridge
Runoff class	Low to high
Flooding frequency	None
Ponding frequency	None
Elevation	0 – 760 m
Slope	0 – 40 %
Water table depth	0 – 80 cm

Aspect	Aspect is not a significant factor
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Climatic features

The climate is humid and temperate and is characterized by warm summers and cold winters. Precipitation generally is evenly distributed throughout the year. Near the coast, it is slightly lower in summer. In inland areas, it is slightly higher in spring and fall. Rainfall occurs during high-intensity, convective thunderstorms in summer. In winter, most of the precipitation occurs as moderate-intensity storms (northeasters) that produce large amounts of rain or snow. Heavy snowfalls commonly occur late in winter. Temperatures and the length of the freeze-free period increase from north to south and closer to the coast.

This major land resource area (MLRA) covers four states and may have substantial climate variability among locations: Maine (56 percent), New Hampshire (22 percent), Vermont (14 percent), Massachusetts (6 percent), Connecticut (1 percent), and New York (1 percent).

Table 3 Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (characteristic range)	120-140 days
Freeze-free period (characteristic range)	140-170 days
Precipitation total (characteristic range)	1,070-1,220 mm
Frost-free period (actual range)	100-150 days
Freeze-free period (actual range)	130-180 days
Precipitation total (actual range)	1,020-1,370 mm
Frost-free period (average)	130 days
Freeze-free period (average)	160 days
Precipitation total (average)	1,170 mm

- (1) BELFAST [USC00170480], Belfast, ME
- (2) CORINNA [USC00171628], Corinna, ME
- (3) DOVER-FOXCROFT WWTP [USC00171975], Dover Foxcroft, ME
- (4) FARMINGTON [USC00172765], Farmington, ME
- (5) GARDINER [USC00173046], Gardiner, ME
- (6) JONESBORO [USC00174183], Addison, ME
- (7) LEWISTON [USC00174566], Auburn, ME
- (8) MADISON [USC00174927], Anson, ME
- (9) NEWCASTLE [USC00175675], Newcastle, ME
- (10) ORONO [USC00176430], Old Town, ME
- (11) WATERVILLE TRTMT PLT [USC00179151], Waterville, ME
- (12) WEST ROCKPORT 1 NNW [USC00179593], Rockport, ME
- (13) AUGUSTA STATE AP [USW00014605], Augusta, ME
- (14) BANGOR INTL AP [USW00014606], Bangor, ME

- (15) PORTLAND INTL JETPORT [USW00014764], Portland, ME
- (16) ACADIA NP [USC00170100], Bar Harbor, ME

Influencing water features

This site is not typically influenced by streams or wetlands.

Soil features

The soils of this site are deep, well- and moderately well-drained. They formed in semi-rich till characterized by circumneutral pH, the lack of a densely compacted subsurface horizon, and few rocks. When present, rock fragments are usually soft, and easy to break with your fingers.

Soil textures are loams to sandy loams throughout the profile. Soil pH increases with depth and ranges from 4.5 to 7.3. Often the soil surface is bare of leaf litter.

This site may include patches of moderately deep soils, with lithic bedrock within 20 to 40 inches of the soil surface. In these areas, as well as in wetter drainageways, cedar tends to be more abundant in the plant community. These patches tend to be embedded within a larger matrix of soils that are more typical of this ecological site.

Representative soils are Pittsfield, Colrain, Buckland, Lombard, Vershire, Dummerston, Penobscot, Wassookeag, and Seabasticook.

Table 4. Representative soil features

Parent material	(1) Supraglacial till – metamorphic rock (2) Residuum – metamorphic rock (3) Supraglacial till – schist (4) Till – phyllite
Surface texture	(1) Loam (2) Loam (3) Very fine sandy loam (4) Loam
Drainage class	Moderately well drained to well drained
Permeability class	Very slow to moderate
Soil depth	60 – 180 cm
Surface fragment cover <=3"	Not specified
Surface fragment cover >3"	0 – 10 %
Available water capacity (10.2-17.8cm)	Not specified

Soil reaction (1:1 water) (8.1-18.8cm)	Not specified
Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (12.7-38.1cm)	Not specified
Subsurface fragment volume >3" (5.1-104.1cm)	Not specified

Ecological dynamics

[Caveat: The vegetation information contained in this section and is only provisional, based on concepts, and future projects support validation through field work. *] The vegetation groupings described in this section are based on the terrestrial ecological system classification and vegetation associations developed by NatureServe (Comer et al., 2003) and localized associations provided by the New York Natural Heritage Program (Edinger et al., 2014), Maine Natural Areas Program (Gawler and Cutko, 2010), New Hampshire Natural Heritage Program (Sperduto and Nichols, 2011), and Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (Swain, 2020).

The vegetation is characterized by northern hardwoods, particularly sugar maple, yellow birch, and beech, with basswood, ash, and northern white cedar as less-abundant indicators of these semi-rich soils. Christmas fern is often present in the understory. Wetter inclusions in this site typically produce more of these indicator species. Historically, American chestnut would also be dominant on this site, but currently it has been all but eliminated from the region by chestnut blight.

When forested, treethrow and logging are the most common disturbances on this site. The site is resilient following these disturbances and succeeds through an herbaceous and shrubby phase prior to tree establishment and eventual return to the reference community. On gentler slopes, this site is often cultivated for crop or pasture given the richness of the soil. When cropland or pastureland management ceases, as occurred across most of the area in the late 19th century, the site either returns to hardwoods or may transition to a white pine forest. Once white pine is established, it tends to form a single age stand with low diversity and little understory.

This site includes the following state natural heritage program types:

- Semi-rich mesic sugar maple forests (Sperduto and Nichols 2004)
- Enriched Northern Hardwoods Forest (Gawler and Cutko 2010)
- Sugar Maple Forest (Gawler and Cutko 2010)
- Semi-rich mesic sugar maple forests (Thompson and Sorenson 2000)

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 (%)
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Table 6. Community 1.2 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 7. Community 1.3 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 8. Community 1.4 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 9. Community 2.1 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 10. Community 3.1 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 11. Community 4.1 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 12. Community 4.2 plant community composition

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

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Contributors

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Approval

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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	06/29/2020
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:
