

Ecological site F144BY602ME

Sandy Toeslope

Last updated: 9/27/2024
Accessed: 08/29/2026

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 Saprist. 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 on somewhat poorly- to moderately well-drained sandy soils in low-lying areas associated with eskers, deltas, kame terraces, outwash plains, or sandy till deposits. Soils are typically very deep with a seasonally-high water table within 18-36 inches of the soil surface. Slopes are usually less than 8 percent. Conifers are abundant and diverse, including white pine, red spruce, balsam fir, and eastern hemlock. Paper birch, red maple, bigtooth aspen, black cherry and yellow birch are common hardwood associates. This site is often downslope of the Dry Sands site, which occurs on better drained soils lacking a seasonally-high water table.

Associated sites

F144BY601ME	Dry Sand The Sandy Toeslope site may occur in wetter areas downslope of the Dry Sand site, which may shed water and nutrients downslope to the Sandy Toeslope. Similar Sites
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Similar sites

F144BY601ME	Dry Sand The Sandy Toeslope site is somewhat poorly-to moderately well-drained and produces more diverse species, whereas the Dry Sand site is well- to excessively-drained and produces mostly pine and other softwood species.
F144BY505ME	Loamy over Sandy The Loamy over Sandy site is moderately well- to well-drained, whereas the Sandy Toeslope site is somewhat poorly- to moderately well-drained.

Figure 1.

Table 2. Dominant plant species

Tree	(1) <i>Pinus strobus</i> (2) <i>Betula papyrifera</i>
Shrub	Not specified
Herbaceous	Not specified

Physiographic features

This site occurs on outwash plains and terraces, and at the base of eskers. Slopes are typically less than 8 percent but may be as high as 15 percent. Elevations range from sea level to 3810 feet. A seasonally-high water table is between 18 and 36 inches in depth from November to May.

Table 3. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Outwash plain > Outwash delta (2) Upland > Till plain (3) Upland > Ridge (4) Outwash terrace (5) Terrace
Runoff class	Very low to low
Flooding frequency	None
Ponding frequency	None
Elevation	0 – 680 m

Slope	0 – 20 %
Ponding depth	0 – 20 cm
Water table depth	10 – 110 cm
Aspect	Aspect is not a significant factor

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 4 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) CORINNA [USC00171628], Corinna, ME
- (2) DOVER-FOXCROFT WWTP [USC00171975], Dover Foxcroft, ME
- (3) FARMINGTON [USC00172765], Farmington, ME
- (4) GARDINER [USC00173046], Gardiner, ME

- (5) JONESBORO [USC00174183], Addison, ME
- (6) LEWISTON [USC00174566], Auburn, ME
- (7) MADISON [USC00174927], Anson, ME
- (8) NEWCASTLE [USC00175675], Newcastle, ME
- (9) ORONO [USC00176430], Old Town, ME
- (10) WATERTOWN TRTMT PLT [USC00179151], Waterville, ME
- (11) WEST ROCKPORT 1 NNW [USC00179593], Rockport, ME
- (12) AUGUSTA STATE AP [USW00014605], Augusta, ME
- (13) BANGOR INTL AP [USW00014606], Bangor, ME
- (14) PORTLAND INTL JETPORT [USW00014764], Portland, ME
- (15) BELFAST [USC00170480], Belfast, ME
- (16) ACADIA NP [USC00170100], Bar Harbor, ME

Influencing water features

This site is not influenced by streams or wetlands.

Soil features

The soils of this site formed in sandy outwash and till deposits from melting glaciers. These soils occur in low-lying areas and are somewhat poorly- to moderately well-drained. Soil textures are sandy throughout and may have a thin sandy loamy surface horizon. Rock fragments may or may not be abundant in throughout the profile.

Representative soils are Naskeag, Croghan, Waumbek, Duane, Acton, Deerfield, Skowhegan, Udipsamments, and Naumburg.

Table 5. Representative soil features

Parent material	(1) Supraglacial meltout till – granite and gneiss (2) Glaciofluvial deposits – granite and gneiss (3) Glaciofluvial deposits – quartzite (4) Glaciofluvial deposits – slate (5) Till (6) Outwash
Surface texture	(1) Sand (2) Fine sandy loam (3) Loamy fine sand (4) Sand
Drainage class	Somewhat poorly drained to moderately well drained
Permeability class	Moderately slow to very rapid
Soil depth	150 cm
Surface fragment cover <=3"	Not specified

Surface fragment cover >3"	Not specified
Available water capacity (2.5-12.7cm)	Not specified
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (8.1-19.8cm)	Not specified
Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (5.1-104.1cm)	Not specified
Subsurface fragment volume >3" (2.5-43.2cm)	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).

This site typically supports a mixedwood community with white pine, red spruce, balsam fir, eastern hemlock, paper birch, red maple, bigtooth aspen, black cherry and yellow birch common in various combinations.

This site has been cleared and cultivated for pasture/hayland or crop production. Blueberries are particularly suited to these sandy soils.

Gravel and sand mining are common on this site, and often accompanied by heavy logging to remove timber prior to soil excavation. Following cutting, early successional species such as fir, white birch, pin cherry, and aspen may enter the community, but they die out as the forest reaches maturity within about 80 years.

Further study is required to understand plant community dynamics on this site.

Relationship to Other Classification Systems

This site includes the following state natural heritage program types:

- Spruce – Northern Hardwoods Forest (Gawler and Cutko 2010)
- Lower Elevation Spruce-Fir Forests (Gawler and Cutko 2010)

State and transition model

Additional community tables

Table 6. Community 1.1 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 7. Community 1.2 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 8. Community 1.3 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 9. Community 1.4 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 10. Community 1.5 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 11. Community 2.1 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 12. Community 3.1 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 13. Community 4.1 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 14. 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

Christopher Mann

Approval

Nels Barrett, 9/27/2024

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Nels Barrett and Nick Butler provided considerable review of this ecological site concept.

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:
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17. Perennial plant reproductive capability:
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