

Ecological site F145XY009CT

Well Drained Outwash

Last updated: 9/27/2024
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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): 145X–Connecticut Valley

Major Land Resource Area (MLRA): 145 – Connecticut Valley (USDA-NRCS, 2006). The nearly level floor of the Connecticut Valley makes up most of the area. Nearly level to sloping lowlands are at the outer edges of the river valley. These lowlands are broken by isolated, north- to south-trending trap-rock ridges that are hilly and steep. Elevation ranges from sea level to 100 meters (330 feet) in the lowlands and from 50 to 100 meters (650 to 1,000 feet) on ridges. The geology of this rift valley is a late Triassic and early Jurassic sandstone, shale, and conglomerate sequence. Tilted basalt flows along rift zones form the trap rock ridges exhibiting the greatest landscape relief. Glaciation accounts for glacial lake deposits, outwash, and till. Following glacial retreat, wind-deposited loess caps some areas. Recent alluvium deposits form well-developed flood plain along the Connecticut River. These deposits created some of the most productive agricultural soils in New England. The dominant soils are entisols and inceptisols with a mesic temperature regime in combination with parent materials such as glacial lakebeds, glacial outwash, glacial till, and recent alluvium. From north-to-south within the Connecticut Valley, the climate transitions from humid-continental to humid temperate with pronounced seasons and frequent storms. The forests are predominately central hardwoods to the south and transition hardwoods to the north. Significant habitats include trap rock ridges, sandplains, and floodplains of the Connecticut River and major tributaries. Much of the area is currently in residential and urban development and agriculture. While much of the areas is also forested, habitat loss and fragmentation are widespread throughout the Connecticut Valley.

Classification relationships

USDA-NRCS (USDA, 2006): Land Resource Region (LRR): R – Northeastern Forage and Forest Region Major Land Resource Area (MLRA): 145 – Connecticut Valley USDA-FS (Cleland et al, 2007): Province: 221 – Eastern Broadleaf Forest Section: 221A – Lower New England Subsection: 221Af –Lower Connecticut River Valley Province: M211 – Adirondack New England Mixed Forest – Coniferous Forest – Alpine Meadow (in part) Section: M211B– New England Piedmont (in part) Subsection: 211Bb – Southern Piedmont (in part)

Ecological site concept

This site consists of very deep, well drained soils formed in loamy over sandy and gravelly outwash. They are nearly level to strongly sloping soils on outwash plains and terraces. Representative soils include Branford, Pollux, Poocham. The representative plant communities are varied but consist largely of oaks (chestnut, black, scarlet, and white), and pines (pitch, white) e.g., “red oak / mapleleaf viburnum forest” (Metzler and Barrett 2006); “white pine - oak forest” (Swain and Kearsley 2001); “mixed oak forest/woodlands” (Swain and Kearsley 2001); “mixed pine red oak woodland” (Sperduto and Nichols 2011); “white pine red - oak black - oak forest” (Sperduto and Nichols 2011); plus open sites include big bluestem - indian grass (Metzler and Barrett 2006) or “cultural grassland” (Swain and Kearsley 2001). These sites are very similar to the well-drained counterpart, but have a more diverse understory. These well-drained sites are subject to many disturbances including conversion by agricultural cropping - particularly turf farms, plantations, as well as development, burning, cutting from occasional tree harvests, and invasive species such as tree-of-heaven and black locust.

Associated sites

F145XY002MA	Silty Low Floodplain
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F145XY010CT	Moist Outwash
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Similar sites

F145XY008MA	Dry Outwash
F145XY010CT	Moist Outwash

Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	(1) <i>Quercus velutina</i> (2) <i>Pinus strobus</i>
Shrub	(1) <i>Gaylussacia baccata</i> (2) <i>Corylus cornuta</i>
Herbaceous	(1) <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> (2) <i>Aralia nudicaulis</i>

Physiographic features

The site occurs on nearly level to steeply sloping soils on terraces and outwash plains and is not subject to flooding.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) River valley > Outwash terrace (2) Valley > Outwash plain (3) Terrace
Runoff class	Very low to high
Flooding frequency	None
Ponding frequency	None
Elevation	0 – 550 m
Slope	0 – 50 %
Water table depth	180 cm

Aspect	Aspect is not a significant factor
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Climatic features

The regional climate of the Connecticut Valley transitions north to south, from humid-continental to humid temperate, respectively, with pronounced seasons and frequent storms. (Beck et al., 2018; Bailey, 2014). Locally, the Silty High Floodplain ecological site is dependent upon extreme flood events coinciding with freshets in the early spring due to snowmelt and heavy precipitation events within the watershed at any time (Metzler and Damman 1985).

Climate change is occurring, and the resiliency of any ecological site will depend upon the direct and indirect effects upon component species and shifting atmospheric and soil conditions. On these ecological sites, xeric pine forests/woodland/scrub are at a low vulnerability risk to climate change with impacts considered to be neutral. Tolerances to drought and fire, as well as tolerance some disturbance allows these forest/woods/scrub to be moderately adaptive. However, warmer seasonal temperatures may amplify effects of insect pests and diseases. Several invasive species will continue to be a threat. (Janowiak et al, 2018).

Table 3 Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (characteristic range)	130-140 days
Freeze-free period (characteristic range)	150-190 days
Precipitation total (characteristic range)	1,170-1,300 mm
Frost-free period (actual range)	110-150 days
Freeze-free period (actual range)	150-190 days
Precipitation total (actual range)	1,120-1,320 mm
Frost-free period (average)	140 days
Freeze-free period (average)	170 days
Precipitation total (average)	1,220 mm

- (1) MIDDLETOWN 4 W [USC00064767], Middlefield, CT
- (2) MT CARMEL [USC00065077], Hamden, CT
- (3) AMHERST [USC00190120], Amherst, MA
- (4) HARTFORD BRADLEY INTL AP [USW00014740], Suffield, CT
- (5) VERNON [USC00438600], Vernon, VT
- (6) HARTFORD BRAINARD FLD [USW00014752], Wethersfield, CT

Influencing water features

NONE

Wetland description

NONE

Soil features

This site consists of moderately to very deep, well drained soils formed in wind and water deposited parent materials. Representative soils are Agawam, Branford, Enfield, Groveton, Haven, and Unadilla.

Table 4. Representative soil features

Parent material	(1) Glaciofluvial deposits – granite and gneiss (2) Eolian deposits – schist (3) Outwash – phyllite (4) Sandstone and shale (5) Basalt
Surface texture	(1) Fine sandy loam (2) Silt loam (3) Very fine sandy loam
Family particle size	(1) Coarse-loamy (2) Coarse-loamy over sandy or sandy-skeletal (3) Coarse-silty (4) Coarse-silty over sandy or sandy-skeletal
Drainage class	Well drained
Permeability class	Slow to moderate
Depth to restrictive layer	60 – 180 cm
Surface fragment cover <=3"	Not specified
Surface fragment cover >3"	Not specified
Available water capacity (Depth not specified)	7.62 – 17.78 cm
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (0-101.6cm)	4.4 – 7.8

Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (Depth not specified)	0 – 40 %
Subsurface fragment volume >3" (Depth not specified)	0 – 10 %

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. Any 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 (NatureServe, 2015), 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 can be provided by the various State Heritage Programs. Additional insights to the vegetation were provided by: "The Vegetation of Connecticut: A Preliminary Classification" (Metzler and Barrett, 2006), "Classification of the Natural Communities of Massachusetts" (Swain and Kersley 2011), "Wetland, Woodland, Wildland" (Thompson and Sorenson 2000), and "Natural Communities of New Hampshire, 2nd Ed." (Spurduto and Nichols, 2011).

The Well Drained ecological site is widely distributed and characteristic of the Northeastern Interior Pine Barrens system (CES202.590), the Central Appalachian Dry Oak-Pine Forest system (CES202.591), the Northeastern Interior Dry-Mesic Forest system (CES202.592), the Laurentian-Acadian Pine-Hemlock-Hardwood Forest system (CES201.563), , and the Northern Atlantic Coastal Plain Pitch Pine Barrens system (CES203.269). The representative plant communities are highly varied but generally consist of pines (pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*), eastern white pine (*P. strobus*)) which may be also mixed with oaks (chestnut oaks (*Quercus montana*), black oak (*Q. velutina*), scarlet oak (*Q. prinus*) and , bear oak (*Q. ilicifolia*). Natural disturbances in lude climate extremes such as, excessive droughts, or storm activity ranging from windthrows to downbursts to ice-storms. Atmospheric deposition may effect trees at high elevations. Wildfires do happen but are largely suppressed. Other agents-of-change include land conversions and fragmentation by agricultural cropping, development, tree harvests, and disease white pine blister rust (*Cronartium ribicola*) and southern pine bark beetle (*Dendroctonus frontalis*). Non-native pines include the Austrian pine (*Pinus nigra*), Japanese black pine (*Pinus thunbergia*), mugo pine (*Pinus mugo*), and Scotch pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) Austrian pine. A non-native deciduous tree threat is Tree-of-Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*).

Other ecological states, a Semi-natural State and a Cultural State are recognized. The Semi-natural State would expect plant communities where ecological processes primarily operate with some conditioning by land management, e.g., managed forests, or plant communities that are an artifact of land management e.g., predominately invasive plants. The Cultural State is a completely converted or transformed state heavily or completely conditioned by land management, e.g., cultivated lands, pasture/haylands, vineyards, and plantations, etc. Generally, the form of vegetation in the Semi-natural State or the Cultural State is not able to be specified until field work is conducted.

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 2.1 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 7. Community 2.2 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 8. Community 3.1 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 9. Community 3.2 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production ()	Foliar Cover (%)
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Table 10. Community 3.3 plant community composition

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

Site Development and Testing Plan 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.

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Contributors

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Approval

Nels Barrett, 9/27/2024

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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	08/20/2026
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:
