

# Ecological site F149BY008MA

## Very Wet Outwash

Last updated: 9/17/2024  
Accessed: 08/26/2026

### 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): 149B—Long Island-Cape Cod Coastal Lowland

**149B—Long Island-Cape Cod Coastal Lowland** This area is in the Embayed Section of the Coastal Plain Province of the Atlantic Plain. It is part of the partially submerged coastal plain of New England. It is mostly an area of nearly level to rolling plains, but it has some steeper hills (glacial moraines). Ridges border the lower plains. The Peconic and Carmans Rivers are on the eastern end of Long Island. The parts of this area in Massachusetts and Rhode Island have no major rivers. This entire area is made up of deep, unconsolidated glacial outwash deposits of sand and gravel. A thin mantle of glacial till covers most of the surface. Some moraines form ridges and higher hills in this area of generally low relief. Sand dunes and tidal marshes are extensive along the coastline.

### Classification relationships

USDA-NRCS (USDA, 2006): Land Resource Region (LRR): S—Northern Atlantic Slope Diversified Farming Region Major Land Resource Area (MLRA): 149B—Long Island-Cape Cod Coastal Lowland USDA-FS (Cleland et al., 2007): Province: 221 Eastern Broadleaf Forest Province Section: 221A Lower New England Subsection: 221Ab Cape Cod Coastal Lowland and Islands Subsection: 221An Long Island Coastal Lowland and Moraine

### Ecological site concept

This site consists of very deep, very poorly drained soils that formed in sandy and gravelly glaciofluvial deposits. They are on toeslopes in wet depressions on outwash plains and deltas, along drainage ways. Representative soils are Rainberry and Wareham. Many of the plant communities are considered maritime if influenced by salt spray from coastal storms or coastal if only influenced by the coastal climate. The representative plant communities are dominated by more open plant communities e.g., "shrub swamps" (Swain and Kearsley 2001); and "shallow/deep emergent marshes" (Swain and Kearsley 2001). Eutrophication can convert these sites to common reed marshes.

### Associated sites

|             |                                    |
|-------------|------------------------------------|
| F149BY007NY | Moist Outwash<br><br>Moist Outwash |
|-------------|------------------------------------|

### Similar sites

|             |                                      |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| F149BY004NY | Wet Lake Plain<br><br>Wet Lake Plain |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|

Table 1. Dominant plant species

|      |               |
|------|---------------|
| Tree | Not specified |
|------|---------------|

|            |                                                                         |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Shrub      | (1) <i>Vaccinium corymbosum</i><br>(2) <i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i> |
| Herbaceous | Not specified                                                           |

### Physiographic features

The site occurs in wet landforms occurring in till and outwash plains, and may be subject to frequent flooding/ponding.

**Table 2. Representative physiographic features**

|                    |                                                                                             |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Landforms          | (1) Outwash plain > Kettle<br>(2) Till plain > Depression<br>(3) Drainageway<br>(4) Terrace |
| Runoff class       | Negligible to very high                                                                     |
| Flooding frequency | None to very frequent                                                                       |
| Ponding frequency  | None to frequent                                                                            |
| Elevation          | 0 – 310 m                                                                                   |
| Slope              | 0 %                                                                                         |
| Water table depth  | 0 – 30 cm                                                                                   |
| Aspect             | Aspect is not a significant factor                                                          |

### Climatic features

Coastal regions' climate generally considered maritime, experiences a more moderate climate than inland, i.e., cooler summers and warmer winters and delayed onset of spring. However, coastal regions do experience the brunt of extreme weather such as nor'easters and tropical storms, e.g., hurricanes. Occupying a low position in the landscape, depressions may experience cold air pockets.

**Table 3 Representative climatic features**

|                                           |              |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Frost-free period (characteristic range)  | 160-200 days |
| Freeze-free period (characteristic range) | 210-220 days |

|                                            |                |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Precipitation total (characteristic range) | 1,090-1,250 mm |
| Frost-free period (actual range)           | 160-200 days   |
| Freeze-free period (actual range)          | 200-220 days   |
| Precipitation total (actual range)         | 1,090-1,270 mm |
| Frost-free period (average)                | 180 days       |
| Freeze-free period (average)               | 210 days       |
| Precipitation total (average)              | 1,170 mm       |

- (1) HYANNIS [USC00193821], Hyannis, MA
- (2) EAST WAREHAM [USC00192451], East Wareham, MA
- (3) WANTAGH CEDAR CREEK [USC00308946], Seaford, NY
- (4) OCEANSIDE [USC00306138], Oceanside, NY
- (5) SETAUKET STRONG [USC00307633], East Setauket, NY

### Influencing water features

The Wet outwash Ecological Site are typified generally as wet depressions.

### Wetland description

National Wetland Inventory would classify Wet Outwash Ecological Site as Palustrine with a seasonally saturated water regime (Cowardin et. 1979)

### Soil features

The site consists of moderately to very deep, somewhat to very poorly drained soils that formed in glacially deposited parent materials. The representative soils are Berryland, Brockton, Rainberry, Walpole, and Wareham.

**Table 4. Representative soil features**

|                 |                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Parent material | (1) Glaciofluvial deposits – igneous, metamorphic and sedimentary rock<br>(2) Glaciolacustrine deposits<br>(3) Till |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                             |                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Surface texture                                             | (1) Loamy sand<br>(2) Mucky loamy sand<br>(3) Mucky loamy coarse sand<br>(4) Mucky sand<br>(5) Sandy loam<br>(6) Coarse sand |
| Family particle size                                        | (1) Coarse-loamy<br>(2) Sandy                                                                                                |
| Drainage class                                              | Very poorly drained to somewhat poorly drained                                                                               |
| Permeability class                                          | Very slow to moderate                                                                                                        |
| Depth to restrictive layer                                  | 50 – 180 cm                                                                                                                  |
| Surface fragment cover <=3"                                 | Not specified                                                                                                                |
| Surface fragment cover >3"                                  | 0 – 10 %                                                                                                                     |
| Available water capacity<br>(Depth not specified)           | 5.08 – 17.78 cm                                                                                                              |
| Soil reaction (1:1 water)<br>(0-101.6cm)                    | 3.5 – 7.3                                                                                                                    |
| Subsurface fragment volume<br><=3"<br>(Depth not specified) | 0 – 30 %                                                                                                                     |
| Subsurface fragment volume<br>>3"<br>(Depth not specified)  | 0 – 20 %                                                                                                                     |

#### 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 (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; USNVC 2017). Each association will be named by the diagnostic and often dominant species that occupy the different height strata (tree, 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).

[\*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.

The Very Wet Outwash ecological site, set in wet basins with saturated hydrologic conditions, is characterized by wetland plant communities with coastal affinities from Long Island, New York, north to Cape Cod, Massachusetts. These plant communities are mostly within the Northern Atlantic Coastal Plain Basin Peat Swamp system (CES203.522). The prevailing ecological processes are related to wetness, but also coastal influences, such as a coastal climate and storms, and if within close proximity to the coast, maritime effects of wind exposure, salt spray, and sand movement. These wetlands are quite varied and may be wet thickets dominated by highbush blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*), swamp azalea (*Rhododendron viscosum*), and sweet pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*) or buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) and swamp loosestrife (*Decodon verticillatus*) or marshes of cattails (*Typha* spp.). Other swamp dominants may be red maple (*Acer rubrum*) and/or Atlantic white cedar (*Chamaecyparis thyoides*). Threats include drainage and conversion to developed land, invasives such as common reed (*Phragmites australis*). (Source: NatureServe 2018 [accessed 2019], USNVC 2017 [accessed 2019]).

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 2.1 plant community composition

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

Table 8. Community 2.2 plant community composition

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

Table 9. Community 3.1 plant community composition

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

Inventory data references

Site Development and Testing Plan Future work is needed, as described in a 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.

## References

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## Other references

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## Contributors

Approval

Nels Barrett, 9/17/2024

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                                        | 05/23/2020        |
| 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:

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7. Amount of litter movement (describe size and distance expected to travel):

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8. Soil surface (top few mm) resistance to erosion (stability values are averages - most sites will show a range of values):

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9. Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness):

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10. Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:

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11. Presence and thickness of compaction layer (usually none; describe soil profile features which may be mistaken for compaction on this site):

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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:

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13. Amount of plant mortality and decadence (include which functional groups are expected to show mortality or decadence):

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14. Average percent litter cover (%) and depth ( in):

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15. Expected annual annual-production (this is TOTAL above-ground annual-production, not just forage annual-production):

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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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