

# Ecological site R150AY013LA

## Clayey Terrace Prairie

Last updated: 9/22/2023  
Accessed: 09/17/2026

### 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): 150A–Gulf Coast Prairies

MLRA 150A is in the West Gulf Coastal Plain Section of the Coastal Plain Province of the Atlantic Plain in Texas (83 percent) and Louisiana (17 percent). It makes up about 16,365 square miles (42,410 square kilometers). It is characterized by nearly level plains that have low local relief and are dissected by rivers and streams that flow toward the Gulf of Mexico. Elevation ranges from sea level to about 165 feet (0 to 50 meters) along the interior margin. It includes the towns of Crowley, Eunice, and Lake Charles, Louisiana, and Beaumont, Houston, Bay City, Victoria, Corpus Christi, Robstown, and Kingsville, Texas. Interstates 10 and 45 are in the northeastern part of the area, and Interstate 37 is in the southwestern part. U.S. Highways 90 and 190 are in the eastern part, in Louisiana. U.S. Highway 77 passes through Kingsville, Texas. The Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge and the Fannin Battleground State Historic Site are in the part of the area in Texas.

### Classification relationships

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, 2006. -Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) 150A

### Ecological site concept

These sites are low broad flats having clayey-textured soils in MLRA 150A. This site was historically tallgrass prairie but is now predominantly utilized for pasture and cropland. This area is in the thermic soil temperature regime.

### Associated sites

|             |                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| R150AY012LA | <b>Loamy Terrace Prairie</b><br><br>The Loamy Terrace Prairie Site has lighter surface textures.                                                                                                     |
| R150AY014LA | <b>Loamy Terrace Ridge</b><br><br>The Loamy Terrace Ridge Site has lighter surface textures and will be found on higher elevations. Mima or Pimple Mounds may be present on the Clayey Prairie Site. |

### Similar sites

|             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| R150AY740TX | <b>Northern Blackland</b><br><br>This site shows an intact grass community with small clumped dispersal of woody species. The soils are very deep, richly black in color, and characterized by their shrink-swell nature. The sites are widely distributed across the uplands and terraces throughout the region. |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Table 1. Dominant plant species

|            |                                                                      |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tree       | Not specified                                                        |
| Shrub      | Not specified                                                        |
| Herbaceous | (1) <i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i><br>(2) <i>Andropogon gerardii</i> |

### Physiographic features

This area is in the West Gulf Coastal Plain Section of the Coastal Plain Province of the Atlantic Plain. It is characterized by nearly level plains that have low local relief and are dissected by rivers and streams that flow toward the Gulf of Mexico, consisting of Pleistocene age deposits of deltaic and lagoonal clays and loams. At the eastern edge, a cap of mixed loess and alluvium occurs on most soils. The loess was derived from the flood plain along the Mississippi River. Areas of this site may contain remnant mima, or pimple mounds, which are characterized by low circular or oval domes composed of coarser-textured material. The basal diameter varies from 10 to more than 100 feet and the height from 1 to about 6 feet. Most of these mounds have been leveled to improve production efficiencies however, there are areas where they still exist.

**Table 2. Representative physiographic features**

|                    |                                    |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| Landforms          | (1) Coastal plain > Terrace        |
| Runoff class       | High                               |
| Flooding duration  | Brief (2 to 7 days)                |
| Flooding frequency | Rare to occasional                 |
| Elevation          | 0 – 20 m                           |
| Slope              | 0 %                                |
| Water table depth  | 20 – 180 cm                        |
| Aspect             | Aspect is not a significant factor |

### Climatic features

The climate of MLRA 150A is humid subtropical with mild winters. The average annual precipitation in the northern two-thirds of this area is 45 to 63 inches. It is 28 inches at the extreme southern tip of the area and 30 to 45 inches in the southwestern third of the area. The precipitation is fairly evenly distributed, but it is slightly higher in late summer and midsummer in the western part of the area and slightly higher in winter in the eastern part. Rainfall typically occurs as moderate intensity, tropical storms that produce large amounts of rain during the winter. The average annual temperature is 66 to 72 degrees F. The freeze-free period averages 325 days and ranges from 290 to 365 days, increasing in length to the southwest.

**Table 3 Representative climatic features**

|                                          |              |
|------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Frost-free period (characteristic range) | 240-240 days |
|------------------------------------------|--------------|

|                                            |                |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Freeze-free period (characteristic range)  | 270-310 days   |
| Precipitation total (characteristic range) | 1,500-1,550 mm |
| Frost-free period (actual range)           | 230-240 days   |
| Freeze-free period (actual range)          | 270-350 days   |
| Precipitation total (actual range)         | 1,470-1,550 mm |
| Frost-free period (average)                | 240 days       |
| Freeze-free period (average)               | 300 days       |
| Precipitation total (average)              | 1,520 mm       |

- (1) EUNICE [USC00162981], Eunice, LA
- (2) CROWLEY 2 NE [USC00162212], Crowley, LA
- (3) JENNINGS [USC00164700], Jennings, LA
- (4) LAKE CHARLES [USW00003937], Lake Charles, LA

### Influencing water features

Water table depths will fluctuate according to season. Typically the water table will be highest during the winter and early spring when warm-season vegetation is not drawing moisture from the soil. Although ponding is not shown as a characteristic for the soils of this site, ponding may occur for brief to long periods during the growing season on micro-lows and influence the plant community. Some soils associated with this site are hydric or have hydric inclusions and may be wetlands.

Soil layers at 6 to 20 inches from the surface exhibit an increase in finer soil particle size percentage (clay), which can form an impermeable layer. This reduces infiltration and percolation of water. The inhibition of water movement through the soil results in wetter soil surface conditions and poor drainage. Originally, the reference plant community consisted of tallgrass species with deep roots that penetrate the soil when the soil dries and cracks during normal dry cycles. Once the roots have formed in the cracks they provide continuous pore spaces to provide internal drainage of the soil.

### Wetland description

This site has hydric soils. Onsite investigation is necessary to determine exact local conditions.

### Soil features

The representative soil features of this site are characterized by soils that have a very-dark, grayish-brown to black loamy or clayey noneffervescent surface from 18 to 30 inches thick over grayish, very slowly permeable clayey subsoils found on flat coastal plains. These soils hold moderate amounts of water and are moderately fertile. Runoff is high and erosion is negligible. These soils are poorly drained. Soils correlated to this site include: Judice, Midland, and Mowata.

**Table 4. Representative soil features**

|                                             |                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Parent material                             | (1) Alluvium – igneous, metamorphic and sedimentary rock<br>(2) Fluvio-marine deposits – igneous, metamorphic and sedimentary rock |
| Surface texture                             | (1) Silty clay<br>(2) Silty clay loam                                                                                              |
| Family particle size                        | (1) Fine                                                                                                                           |
| Drainage class                              | Poorly drained                                                                                                                     |
| Permeability class                          | Very slow                                                                                                                          |
| Soil depth                                  | 200 cm                                                                                                                             |
| Surface fragment cover ≤3"                  | Not specified                                                                                                                      |
| Surface fragment cover >3"                  | Not specified                                                                                                                      |
| Available water capacity<br>(0-152.4cm)     | 25.4 – 30.48 cm                                                                                                                    |
| Calcium carbonate equivalent<br>(0-152.4cm) | 0 – 10 %                                                                                                                           |
| Electrical conductivity<br>(0-152.4cm)      | Not specified                                                                                                                      |
| Sodium adsorption ratio<br>(0-152.4cm)      | 0 – 10                                                                                                                             |
| Soil reaction (1:1 water)<br>(0-61cm)       | 5.1 – 7.3                                                                                                                          |

|                                                  |               |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Subsurface fragment volume<br>≤3"<br>(0-152.4cm) | Not specified |
| Subsurface fragment volume<br>>3"<br>(0-152.4cm) | Not specified |

## Ecological dynamics

The pre-settlement plant community of the Clayey Terrace Prairie was a tallgrass prairie. Soils, climate, fire, and grazing by native wild herbivores were the major influences on the plant community. Historically, bison were the primary large ungulates that grazed the site. There are historic records that fires commonly occurred, but none that definitively describe the frequency, timing, or intensity of fires. It has been postulated fires occurred as frequent as every 2 to 5 years.

Under the influences mentioned above, this prairie was dominated by tallgrasses. Major tallgrass species include little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), yellow Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*), and eastern gamagrass (*Tripsacum dactyloides*). Perennial forbs are an important part of the composition and include ash sunflower (*Helianthus mollis*), button snake root (*Eryngium yuccifolium*), gayfeather (*Liatris* spp.), and goldenrod (*Solidago* spp.). The species composition varies to include species from several families and will vary along the moisture gradient. The micro-highs and lows contribute to the diverse plant community; the micro-highs are slightly drier and the micro-lows slightly wetter. Elevation differences between highs and lows range from 6 to 15 inches. Vegetation tolerant of moist soil grows on the lower elevations of the while less water-tolerant vegetation grows on the higher elevations.

Excessive grazing by domestic livestock contributes to the reduction or elimination of eastern gamagrass, big bluestem, yellow Indiangrass, switchgrass, and little bluestem. As the site transitions, species such as brownseed paspalum (*Paspalum plicatulum*), bushy bluestem (*Andropogon glomeratus*), knotroot bristlegrass (*Setaria parviflora*), smutgrass (*Sporobolus indicus*), and shorter-stature species increase. In addition to site transition due to excessive grazing, farming has had a significant influence. Not only has the site changed through the loss of native plant communities from cultivation, but also through the change in soils, hydrology, and topography by land leveling, ditching, and leveeing. Continued overuse by livestock, lack of fire, or abandonment of cropping allows woody plants to invade. These woody pioneers include eastern baccharis (*Baccharis halimifolia*), hackberry (*Celtis* sp.), ash (*Fraxinus* sp.), and Chinese tallow (*Triadica sebifera*).

As the plant community transitions from the Tallgrass Prairie Community (1.1) to the other states, changes occur in plant composition, biomass production, litter accumulation, and water infiltration and storage. These changes influence most treatment alternatives including the ability to use fire as a management tool. The resulting increase in woody plant density signifies that a threshold has been crossed. Once this threshold is crossed, restoration back towards the reference plant community becomes much more difficult and expensive. Even though a plant community similar can establish, the reference community may never be fully restored. Although a combination of practices such as brush management, re-seeding, prescribed grazing, and fire are required for restoration. Also, the expansive soil disturbance associated with transition to a converted state removes soil microenvironmental factors that can prevent total restoration.

## 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 (%) |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------|----------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| <b>Grass/Grasslike</b> |                                      |        |                                        |                      |                  |
| 1                      | <b>Warm Season perennial Grasses</b> |        |                                        | 2214-5313            |                  |
|                        | bahiagrass                           | PANO2  | <i>Paspalum notatum</i>                | 3011-5313            | –                |
|                        | Bermudagrass                         | CYDA   | <i>Cynodon dactylon</i>                | 2214-3896            | –                |
| 2                      | <b>Cool Season Grasses</b>           |        |                                        | 4250-6110            |                  |
|                        | common oat                           | AVSA   | <i>Avena sativa</i>                    | 4250-6110            | –                |
|                        | Italian ryegrass                     | LOPEM2 | <i>Lolium perenne ssp. multiflorum</i> | 4250-6110            | –                |
| 3                      | <b>Warm Season Annual Grasses</b>    |        |                                        | 1121-3630            |                  |
|                        | pearl millet                         | PEGL2  | <i>Pennisetum glaucum</i>              | 1121-3630            | –                |
| <b>Forb</b>            |                                      |        |                                        |                      |                  |
| 5                      | <b>Cool Season Legume</b>            |        |                                        | 1682-2302            |                  |
|                        | white clover                         | TRRE3  | <i>Trifolium repens</i>                | 1682-2302            | –                |

Table 10. Community 3.2 plant community composition

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

## Animal community

The Coastal Prairie communities support a wide array of animals. Cattle and many species of wildlife make extensive use of the site. White-tailed deer may be found scattered across the prairie and are found in heavier concentrations where woody cover exists. Feral hogs are present and at times abundant. Coyotes are abundant and fill the mammalian predator niche. Rodent populations rise during drier periods and fall during periods of inundation. Attwater's pocket gophers are abundant and have an important impact on the ecology of the site. The badger is present but not abundant in locations at the southern extent of the site. Locally unique species alligators and bullfrogs. The region is a major flyway for waterfowl and migrating birds. Hundreds of thousands of ducks, geese, and sandhill cranes abound during winter. Two important endangered species occur in the area, the whooping crane and Attwater's prairie chicken. Many other species of avian predators including northern harriers, ferruginous hawks, red-tailed hawks, white-tailed kites, kestrels, and, occasionally, swallow-tailed kites utilize the vast grasslands. Many species of grassland birds use the site, including blue grosbeaks, dickcissels, eastern meadowlarks, several sparrows, including, vesper sparrow, lark sparrow, savannah sparrow, grasshopper sparrow, and Le Conte's sparrow.

## Inventory data references

This site description was developed as part of the provisional ecological site initiative using historic soil survey manuscripts, available range site descriptions, and low intensity field sampling

## Other references

Allain, L., L. Smith, C. Allen, M. Vidrine, and J. B. Grace. 2006. A floristic quality assessment system for the Coastal Prairie of Louisiana. North American Prairie Conference, 19.

Allain, L., M. Vidrine, V. Grafe, C. Allen, and S. Johnson. 2000. Paradise lost: The coastal prairie of Louisiana and Texas. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Lafayette, LA.

Archer, S. 1994. Woody plant encroachment into southwestern grasslands and savannas: rates, patterns and proximate causes. Ecological implications of livestock herbivory in the West, 13-68.

Archer, S. 1995. Herbivore mediation of grass-woody plant interactions. Tropical Grasslands, 29:218-235.

Archer, S. 1995. Tree-grass dynamics in a Prosopis-thornscrub savanna parkland: reconstructing the past and predicting the future. Ecoscience, 2:83-99.

Archer, S. and F. E. Smeins. 1991. Ecosystem-level processes. Grazing Management: An Ecological Perspective. Edited by R.K. Heischmidt and J.W. Stuth. Timber Press, Portland, OR.

- Baen, J. S. 1997. The growing importance and value implications of recreational hunting leases to agricultural land investors. *Journal of Real Estate Research*, 14:399-414.
- Bailey, V. 1905. North American Fauna No. 25: Biological Survey of Texas. United States Department of Agriculture Biological Survey. Government Printing Office, Washington D. C.
- Baldwin, H. Q., J. B. Grace, W. C. Barrow, and F. C. Rohwer. 2007. Habitat relationships of birds overwintering in a managed coastal prairie. *The Wilson Journal of Ornithology*, 119(2):189-198.
- Beasom, S. L, G. Proudfoot, and J. Mays. 1994. Characteristics of a live oak-dominated area on the eastern South Texas Sand Plain. In the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute Annual Report, 1-2.
- Berlandier, J. L. 1980. Journey to Mexico during the years 1826 to 1834: translated. Texas State Historical Association and the University of Texas. Austin, TX.
- Bestelmeyer, B. T., J. R. Brown, K. M. Havstad, R. Alexander, G. Chavez, and J. E. Herrick. 2003. Development and use of state-and-transition models for rangelands. *Journal of Range Management*, 56(2):114-126.
- Bollaert, W. 1956. William Bollaert's Texas. Edited by W. E. Hollon and R. L. Butler. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, OK.
- Bonnell, G. W. 1840. Topographical description of Texas: To which is added, an account of the Indian tribes. Clark, Wing, and Brown, Austin, TX.
- Box, T. W. 1960. Herbage production on four range plant communities in South Texas. *Journal of Range Management*, 13:72-76.
- Box, T. W. and A. D. Chamrad. 1966. Plant communities of the Welder Wildlife Refuge.
- Briske, B. B, B. T. Bestelmeyer, T. K. Stringham, and P. L. Shaver. 2008. Recommendations for development of resilience-based State-and-Transition Models. *Rangeland Ecology and Management*, 61:359-367.
- Brite, T. R. 1860. Atascosa County. The Texas Almanac for 1861. Richardson and Co., Galveston, TX.
- Brown, J. R. and S. Archer. 1999. Shrub invasion of grassland: recruitment is continuous and not regulated by herbaceous biomass or density. *Ecology*, 80(7):2385-2396.
- Chamrad, A. D. and J. D. Dodd. 1972. Prescribed burning and grazing for prairie chicken habitat manipulation in the Texas coastal prairie. Tall Timbers Fire Ecology Conference Proceedings, 12:257-276.
- Crawford, J. T. 1912. Correspondence from the British archives concerning Texas, 1837-1846. Edited by E. D. Adams. The Southwestern Historical Quarterly, 15:205-209.
- Davis, R. B. and R. L. Spicer. 1965. Status of the practice of brush control in the Rio Grande Plain. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Bulletin, 46.
- Davis, W. B. 1974. The Mammals of Texas. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Bulletin, 41.
- Diamond, D. D. and T. E. Fulbright. 1990. Contemporary plant communities of upland grasslands of the Coastal Sand Plain, Texas. *Southwestern Naturalist*, 35:385-392.
- Dillehay, T. 1974. Late quaternary bison population changes on the Southern Plains. *Plains Anthropologist*, 19:180-96.
- Drawe, D. L., A. D. Chamrad, and T. W. Box. 1978. Plant communities of the Welder Wildlife Refuge.
- Drawe, D. L. and T. W. Box. 1969. High rates of nitrogen fertilization influence Coastal Prairie range. *Journal of Range Management*, 22:32-36.
- Edward, D. B. 1836. The history of Texas; or, the immigrants, farmers, and politicians guide to the character, climate, soil and production of that country. Geographically arranged from personal observation and experience. J. A. James and Co., Cincinnati, OH.
- Everitt, J. H. and M. A. Alaniz. 1980. Fall and winter diets of feral pigs in south Texas. *Journal of Range Management*, 33:126-129.
- Everitt, J. H. and D. L. Drawe. 1993. Trees, shrubs and cacti of South Texas. Texas Tech University Press, Lubbock, TX.
- Everitt, J. H., D. L. Drawe, and R. I. Lonard. 1999. Field guide to the broad-leaved herbaceous plants of South Texas used by livestock and wildlife. Texas Tech University Press, Lubbock, TX.

- Foster, J. H. 1917. Pre-settlement fire frequency regions of the United States: A first approximation. Tall Timbers Fire Ecology Conference Proceedings, 20.
- Foster, W. C. 2010. Spanish Expeditions into Texas 1689-1768. University of Texas Press, Austin, TX.
- Frost, C. C. 1995. Presettlement fire regimes in southeastern marshes, peatlands, and swamps. Tall Timbers Fire Ecology Conference Proceedings, 19:39-60.
- Frost, C. C. 1998. Presettlement fire frequency regimes of the United States: A first approximation. Fire in ecosystem management: Shifting the paradigm from suppression to prescription. Tall Timbers Fire Ecology Conference Proceedings, 20:70-81.
- Fulbright, T. E. and S. L. Beasom. 1987. Long-term effects of mechanical treatment on white-tailed deer browse. Wildlife Society Bulletin, 15:560-564.
- Fulbright, T. E., D. D. Diamond, J. Rappole, and J. Norwine. 1990. The Coastal Sand Plain of Southern Texas. Rangelands, 12:337-340.
- Fulbright, T. E., J. A. Ortega-Santos, A. Lozano-Cavazos, and L. E. Ramirez-Yanez. 2006. Establishing vegetation on migrating inland sand dunes in Texas. Rangeland Ecology and Management, 59:549-556.
- Gould, F. W. 1975. The Grasses of Texas. Texas A&M University Press, College Station, TX.
- Grace, J. B., T. M. Anderson, M. D. Smith, E. Seabloom, S. J. Andelman, G. Meche, E. Weiher, L. K. Allain, H. Jutila, M. Sankaran, J. Knops, M. Ritchie, and M. R. Willig. 2007. Does species diversity limit productivity in natural grassland communities? Ecology Letters, 10(8):680-689.
- Grace, J. B., L. K. Allain, H. Q. Baldwin, A. G. Billock, W. R. Eddleman, A. M. Given, C. W. Jeske, and R. Moss. 2005. Effects of prescribed fire in the coastal prairies of Texas. USGS Open File Report, 2005-1287.
- Grace, J. B., L. Allain, C. Allen. 2000. Factors associated with plant species richness in a coastal tall-grass prairie. Journal of Vegetation Science, 11:443-452.
- Graham, D. 2003. Kings of Texas: The 150-year saga of an American ranching empire. John Wiley & Sons, New York, NY.
- Hamilton, W. and D. Ueckert. 2005. Rangeland woody plant control: Past, present, and future. Brush management: Past, present, and future, 3-16.
- Hansmire, J. A., D. L. Drawe, B. B. Wester, and C. M. Britton. 1988. Effect of winter burns on forbs and grasses of the Texas Coastal Prairie. The Southwestern Naturalist, 33(3):333-338.
- Harcombe, P. A. and J. E. Neaville. 1997. Vegetation types of Chambers County, Texas. The Texas Journal of Science, 29:209-234.
- Hatch, S. L., J. L. Schuster, and D. L. Drawe. 1999. Grasses of the Texas Gulf Prairies and Marshes. Texas A&M University Press, College Station, TX.
- Heitschmidt, R. K. and J. W. Stuth. 1991. Grazing management: An ecological perspective. Timberline Press, Portland, OR.
- Hughes, G.U. 1846. Memoir Description of a March of a Division of the United States Army under the Command of Brigadier General John E. Wool, From San Antonio de Bexar, in Texas to Saltillo, in Mexico. Senate Executive Document, 32.
- Inglis, J. M. 1964. A history of vegetation of the Rio Grande Plains. Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Bulletin, 45.
- Jenkins, J. H. 1973. The Papers of the Texas Revolution, 1835-1836. Presidential Press, Austin, TX.
- Johnson, M. C. 1963. Past and present grasslands of southern Texas and northeastern Mexico. Ecology 44(3):456-466.
- Joutel, H. 1906. Joutel's journal of La Salle's last voyage, 1686-1687. Edited by H. R. Stiles. Joseph McDonough, Albany, NY.
- Kennedy, W. 1841. Texas: The rise, progress, and prospects of the Republic of Texas. Lincoln's Inn, London, England.
- Kimmel, F. 2008. Louisiana's Cajun Prairie: An endangered ecosystem. Louisiana Conservationist, 61(3):4-7.
- Le Houerou, H. N. and J. Norwine. 1988. The ecoclimatology of South Texas. In Arid lands: today and tomorrow. Edited by E. E. Whitehead, C. F. Hutchinson, B. N. Timmesman, and R. G. Varady, 417-444. Westview Press, Boulder, CO.
- Lehman, V. W. 1965. Fire in the range of Attwater's prairie chicken. Tall Timbers Fire Ecology Conference Proceedings, 4:127-143.

- Lehman, V. W. 1969. *Forgotten Legions: Sheep in the Rio Grande Plain of Texas*. Texas Western Press, El Paso, TX.
- Lusk, R. M. 1917. *A history of Constantine Lodge, No. 13, ancient free, and accepted Masons, Bonham, Texas*. Favorite Printing Co., Hilbert, WI.
- McDaniel, H. F. and N. A. Taylor. 1877. *The coming empire, or, two thousand miles in Texas on horseback*. A. S. Barnes & Company, New York, NY.
- McGinty A. and D. N. Ueckert. 2001. The brush busters success story. *Rangelands*, 23:3-8.
- McLendon, T. 1991. Preliminary description of the vegetation of south Texas exclusive of coastal saline zones. *Texas Journal of Science*, 43:13-32.
- Mutz, J. L., T. J. Greene, C. J. Scifres, and B. H. Koerth. 1985. Response of Pan American balsamscale, soil, and livestock to prescribed burning. *Texas Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin*, B-1492.
- Norwine, J. 1978. Twentieth-century semiarid climates and climatic fluctuations in Texas and northeastern Mexico. *Journal of Arid Environments*, 1:313-325.
- Norwine, J. and R. Bingham. 1986. Frequency and severity of droughts in South Texas: 1900-1983, 1-17. *Livestock and wildlife management during drought*. Edited by R. D. Brown. Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, Kingsville, TX.
- Olmsted, F. L. 1857. *A journey through Texas, or a saddle trip on the Southwest frontier: with a statistical appendix*. Dix, Edwards, and co., New York, London.
- Palmer, G. R., T. E. Fulbright, and G. McBryde. 1995. Inland sand dune reclamation on the Coastal Sand Plain of Southern Texas. *Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute Annual Report*, 30-31.
- Pickens, B., S. L. King, B. Vermillion, L. M. Smith, and L. Allain. 2009. *Conservation Planning for the Coastal Prairie Region of Louisiana. A final report from Louisiana State University to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*.
- Prichard, D. 1998. *Riparian area management: A user guide to assessing proper functioning condition and the supporting science for lotic areas*. Bureau of Land Management, Denver, CO.
- Rappole, J. H. and G. W. Blacklock. 1994. *A field guide: Birds of Texas*. Texas A&M University Press, College Station, TX.
- Rappole, J. H. and G. W. Blacklock. 1985. *Birds of the Texas Coastal Bend: Abundance and distribution*. Texas A&M University Press, College Station, TX.
- Rhyne, M. Z. 1998. *Optimization of wildlife and recreation earnings for private landowners*. M. S. Thesis, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, Kingsville, TX.
- Schindler, J. R. and T. E. Fulbright. 2003. Roller chopping effects on Tamaulipan scrub community composition. *Journal of Range Management*, 56:585-590.
- Schmidley, D. J. 1983. *Texas mammals east of the Balcones Fault zone*. Texas A&M University Press. College Station, TX.
- Scifres C. J., W. T. Hamilton, J. R. Conner, J. M. Inglis, and G. A. Rasmussen. 1985. *Integrated Brush Management Systems for South Texas: Development and Implementation*. Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, College Station, TX.
- Scifres, C. J. 1975. Systems for improving McCartney rose infested coastal prairie rangeland. *Texas Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin*, MP 1225.
- Scifres, C. J. and W. T. Hamilton. 1993. *Prescribed burning for brushland management: The South Texas example*. Texas A&M Press, College Station, TX.
- Shelby, C. 1933. *Letters of an early American traveler: Mary Austin Holley, her life and her works, 1784-1846*. Southwest Press, Dallas, TX.
- Siemann, E., and W. E. Rogers. 2007. The role of soil resources in an exotic tree invasion in Texas coastal prairie. *Journal of Ecology*, 95(4):689-697.
- Smith, L. M. 1996. *The rare and sensitive natural wetland plant communities of interior Louisiana*. Louisiana Natural Heritage Program, Baton Rouge, LA.

Smeins, F. E., D. D. Diamond, and W. Hanselka. 1991. Coastal prairie, 269-290. *Ecosystems of the World: Natural Grasslands*. Edited by R. T. Coupland. Elsevier Press, Amsterdam, Netherlands.

Stringham, T. K., W. C. Krueger, and P. L. Shaver. 2001. State and transition modeling: An ecological process approach. *Journal of Range Management*, 56(2):106-113.

Stutzenbaker, C. D. 1999. *Aquatic and wetland plants of the Western Gulf Coast*. University of Texas Press, Austin, TX.

Tharp, B. C. 1926. Structure of Texas vegetation east of the 98th meridian. *University of Texas Bulletin*, 2606.

Urbatsch, L. 2000. Chinese tallow tree *Triadica sebifera* (L.) Small. USDA-NRCS, National Plant Center, Baton Rouge, LA.

Van't Hul, J. T., R. S. Lutz, and N. E. Mathews. 1997. Impact of prescribed burning on vegetation and bird abundance on Matagorda Island, Texas. *Journal of Range Management*, 50:346-360.

Vidrine, M. F. 2010. *The Cajun Prairie: A natural history*. Cajun Prairie Habitat Preservation Society, Eunice, LA.

Vines, R. A. 1984. *Trees of Central Texas*. University of Texas Press, Austin, TX.

Vines, R. A. 1977. *Trees of Eastern Texas*. University of Texas Press, Austin, TX.

Warren, W. S. 1998. *The La Salle Expedition to Texas: The journal of Henry Joutel, 1684-1687*. Edited by W. C. Foster. Texas State Historical Association, Austin, TX.

Wade, D. D., B. L. Brock, P. H. Brose, J. B. Grace, G. A. Hoch, and W. A. Patterson III. 2000. Fire in Eastern ecosystems. *Wildland fire in ecosystems: effects of fire on flora*. Edited by J. K. Brown and J. Kaplers. United States Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station, Ogden, UT.

Weaver, J. E. and F. E. Clements. 1938. *Plant ecology*. McGraw-Hill, New York, NY.

Whittaker, R. H., L. E. Gilbert, and J. H. Connell. 1979. Analysis of a two-phase pattern in a mesquite grassland, Texas. *Journal of Ecology*, 67:935-52.

Wilbarger, J. W. 1889. *Indian depredation in Texas*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, Scotts Valley, CA.

Williams, L. R. and G. N. Cameron. 1985. Effects of removal of pocket gophers on a Texas coastal prairie. *The American Midland Naturalist Journal*, 115:216-224.

Woodin, M. C., M. K. Skoruppa, and G. C. Hickman. 2000. Surveys of night birds along the Rio Grande in Webb County, Texas. Final Report, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Corpus Christi, TX.

Wright, H.A. and A.W. Bailey. 1982. *Fire Ecology: United States and Southern Canada*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, NJ.

## Contributors

Ken Spaeth, RMS, NRCS, Fort Worth, TX  
Stuart Gardner, RMS, NRCS, Lafayette, LA  
D. Charles Stemmans II, ESI, NRCS, Opelousas, LA  
Johanna Pate, RMS, NRCS, Fort Worth, TX  
Jon Wiedenfeld, SS, NRCS, Rosenberg, TX

## Approval

Bryan Christensen, 9/22/2023

## 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                                        | 09/17/2026        |
| 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:

---