

## **Ecological site R024XY017NV SANDY 8-10 P.Z.**

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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.

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Approved by	Kendra Moseley
Approval date	
Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on	Annual Production

### **Indicators**

- 1. Number and extent of rills:** None
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- 2. Presence of water flow patterns:** None
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- 3. Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:** Pedestals are none or rare in areas that are wind scoured.
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4. **Bare ground from Ecological Site Description or other studies (rock, litter, lichen, moss, plant canopy are not bare ground):** Bare Ground up to 50-60%
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5. **Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies:** None
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6. **Extent of wind scoured, blowouts and/or depositional areas:** Soils derived from aeolian material may develop wind scoured and depositional areas around bases of shrubs.
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7. **Amount of litter movement (describe size and distance expected to travel):** Fine litter (foliage from grasses and annual & perennial forbs) expected to move distance of slope length during intense summer convection storms or rapid snowmelt events. Persistent litter (large woody material) will remain in place except during large rainfall events.
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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):** Soil stability values average from 1 to 2 with no canopy cover and 2 to 5 with canopy cover.
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9. **Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness):** Structure of soil surface is typically weak medium platy structure. Soil surface colors are pale browns or grays and soils are typified by ochric epipedon. Organic matter of the surface 2 to 3 inches is typically less than to 1.5 percent.
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10. **Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:** Perennial herbaceous plants (especially deep-rooted bunchgrasses [i.e., needleand thread, Indian ricegrass]) slow runoff and increase infiltration. Shrub canopy and associated litter break raindrop impact and provide opportunity for snow catch and accumulation on site.
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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):** Compacted layers are none.

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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: Reference Plant Community: Deep-rooted, cool season, perennial bunchgrasses (i.e., Indian ricegrass, needleandthread)

Sub-dominant: tall shrubs (big sagebrush) > associated shrubs > perennial forbs > shallow-rooted, cool season, perennial bunchgrasses > annual forbs

Other:

Additional:

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13. **Amount of plant mortality and decadence (include which functional groups are expected to show mortality or decadence):** Dead branches within individual shrubs common and standing dead shrub canopy material may be as much as 25% of total woody canopy; mature bunchgrasses may have dead centers.
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14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth ( in):** Under canopy and between plant interspaces (10-20%) and depth ( $\pm$  ¼-inch)
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15. **Expected annual annual-production (this is TOTAL above-ground annual-production, not just forage annual-production):** For normal or average growing season (February thru April [May])  $\pm$ 700 lbs/ac. Favorable years 900 lbs/ac and unfavorable years 500 lbs/ac.
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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:** Potential invaders include halogeton, Russian thistle, annual mustards, and cheatgrass.

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17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:** All functional groups should reproduce in average and above average growing season years. Little growth or reproduction occurs in severe drought years.
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