

## **Ecological site R028BY066NV LIMESTONE HILL**

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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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Date	04/02/2014
Approved by	
Approval date	
Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on	Annual Production

### **Indicators**

1. **Number and extent of rills:** Rills are none to rare. Rock fragments armor the surface.  

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2. **Presence of water flow patterns:** Water flow patterns are none to rare. A few may occur after summer convection storms or rapid snow melt. These will be short (<2m), meandering and not connected. They are interrupted by rock fragments and plant bases.  

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3. **Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:** Pedestals are none to rare. A few may occur in flow paths.

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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 to 5-15%. Surface rock fragments up to 85%.
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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:** None - rock fragments protect soil surface.
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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 should be 4 to 6 on most soil textures found on this site. (To be field tested.)
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9. **Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness):** Surface structure is typically medium platy. Soil surface colors are browns and soils are typified by an ochric epipedon. Surface textures are loams. Organic matter of the surface 2 to 3 inches is 1 to 3 percent.
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10. **Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:** Shrub canopy and associated litter break raindrop impact and allow for snow capture on the site. Deep-rooted perennial grasses increase infiltration and reduce 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):** None. The soil is very

shallow to bedrock. Subsurface subangular blocky structure should not be mistaken for compaction.

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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 State: evergreen tall shrubs (littleleaf mountain mahogany)

Sub-dominant: associated shrubs > deep-rooted, cool-season, perennial grasses > deep-rooted cool season perennial forbs > > shallow-rooted, cool-season perennial grasses > annual forbs

Other: evergreen trees

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 commonly (<20%) have dead centers.
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14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth ( in):** Between plant interspaces 25-35% and depth <1/4-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  $\pm$  1000 lbs/ac. Favorable years  $\pm$  1300 lbs/ac and unfavorable years  $\pm$  800 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 on this site include cheatgrass and annual mustards.

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17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:** All functional groups should reproduce in above average and average growing season years. Reduced growth and reproduction occur during drought years.
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