

## **Ecological site R029XY087NV GRAVELLY LOAM 5-8 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	Curtis Talbot
Approval date	
Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on	Annual Production

### **Indicators**

1. **Number and extent of rills:** Rills are rare. A few can be expected on steeper slopes in areas subjected to summer convection storms or rapid spring snowmelt.

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2. **Presence of water flow patterns:** Water flow patterns are often numerous in areas subjected to summer convection storms. Flow patterns short and stable.

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3. **Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:** Pedestals are rare with occurrence typically limited to area within water flow patterns. Frost heaving of shallow rooted

plants should not be considered as normal condition.

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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  $\pm$  35 to 50%; surface rock fragments <35%; shrub canopy to 25%; basal area for perennial herbaceous plants <5%.

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5. **Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies:** Gullies are rare in areas of this site that occur on stable landforms. Where this site occurs on inset fans, gullies and head cuts associated with ephemeral channel entrenchment are common. Gullies and head cuts should be healing or stable.

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6. **Extent of wind scoured, blowouts and/or depositional areas:** None to slight

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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) is expected to move the distance of slope length during intense summer convection storms or rapid snowmelt events. Persistent litter (large woody material) will remain in place except during catastrophic 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 2 to 4 on most soil textures found on this site. Areas of this site occurring on soils that have a physical crust will probably have stability values less than 3. Soils having thin surface sand sheet will have lower stability values. (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 fine to medium platy or prismatic. Soil surface colors are light and the soils are typified by an ochric epipedon. Organic carbon of the surface 2 to 3 inches is less than 1 percent.

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

associated litter break raindrop impact. Medium to fine textured surface soils have moderate to slow infiltration and medium 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):** Compacted layers are not typical. Platy or massive sub-surface horizons, subsoil argillic horizons or hardpans shallow to the surface are not to be interpreted as compacted layers.
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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: Low-statured salt desert shrubs (Bailey's greasewood, shadscale & bud sagebrush) > deep-rooted, cool season, perennial bunchgrasses. (By above ground production)

Sub-dominant: Associated shrubs > shallow-rooted, bunchgrasses = rhizomatous grasses = deep-rooted, cool season, perennial forbs = fibrous, shallow-rooted, perennial forbs = annual forbs. (By above ground production)

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 are common and standing dead shrub canopy material may be as much as 35% of total woody canopy; mature bunchgrasses commonly ( $\pm 25\%$ ) have dead centers.
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14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth ( in):** Between plant interspaces (<5%) and depth of litter is  $\pm \frac{1}{4}$  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 (February thru April [May])  $\pm 450$ bs/ac; Spring moisture significantly affects total 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: Cheatgrass, horsebrush, burrobrush, snakeweed, halogeton, Russian thistle, and annual mustards are invaders on this site. Galleta and Douglas' rabbitbrush are increasers on this site.
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17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:** All functional groups should reproduce in above average growing season years.
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