

Ecological site R086BY002TX Claypan Prairie

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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	Bryan Christensen
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:** Some water flow patterns are normal for this site due to landscape position and slopes.
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3. **Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:** Pedestals or terracettes are uncommon for this site when occupied by the reference community.

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4. **Bare ground from Ecological Site Description or other studies (rock, litter, lichen, moss, plant canopy are not bare ground):** Expect no more than 20 percent bare ground randomly distributed throughout.
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5. **Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies:** Some gullies associated with seeps, springs and intermittent streams may be present. Head and side slopes should be stable and covered with vegetation.
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6. **Extent of wind scoured, blowouts and/or depositional areas:** None.
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7. **Amount of litter movement (describe size and distance expected to travel):** This site has slowly permeable soils. On sloping sites, small to medium-sized litter will move short distances with intense storms.
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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 surface is resistant to erosion.
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9. **Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness):** The soil surface is less than 10 inches thick with colors from dark brown sandy loam to dark grayish brown sandy loam and generally weak fine granular structure. SOM is 0.5 to 2.0 percent.
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10. **Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:** The savannah of trees, shrubs, vines, grasses, and forbs with adequate litter and little bare ground provides for maximum infiltration and little runoff under normal rainfall events.
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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.

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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: Warm-season tallgrasses >>

Sub-dominant: Warm-season midgrasses > Forbs >

Other: Shrubs/Vines = Trees

Additional:

13. **Amount of plant mortality and decadence (include which functional groups are expected to show mortality or decadence):** There should be little mortality or decadence for any functional groups.
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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):** 3,000 pounds per acre for below average moisture years to 6,000 pounds per acre for above average moisture years.
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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 invasive species include yellow bluestems, common Bermudagrass, bahiagrass, mesquite, huisache, elm, eastern red cedar, post oak, and yaupon.
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17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:** All perennial plants should be capable of reproducing, except for periods of prolonged drought conditions, heavy natural herbivory, and intense wildfires.
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