

FORAGE SUITABILITY GROUP

WET, 15-19" ppt/ >90 Freeze Free Days

FSG No.: G046XK034MT

Major Land Resource Area: 046X - Northern Rocky Mountain Foothills

Physiographic Features

MLRA 46, Northern Rocky Mountain Foothills, is characterized by rugged hills and low mountains cut by many narrow valleys that have steep gradients. A few of the major rivers are bordered by broad flood plains and fans. Elevation ranges from 3600 to 5900 feet in the north and gradually increases to 5900 to 7800 feet in the south. About one-fifth of this area is federally owned and the remainder of it is in farms or ranches. Many of the valleys are irrigated, but they make up only 1 or 2 percent of the total area. Grain and livestock forage are the main crops, but potatoes, sugar beets, peas, and other crops are grown in the warmer valleys.

The Wet FSGs occur mainly on alluvial fans, stream terraces, floodplains, flood plain steps, drainage ways swales and overflow areas.

	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Maximum</u>
Elevation (feet):	3600	7800
Slope (percent):	0	4
Flooding:		
Frequency:	Rare	Frequent
Duration:	Brief	Brief
Ponding:		
Depth (inches):	0	6
Frequency:	None	Rare
Duration:	None	Brief
Runoff Class:	Low	Medium

Climatic Features

MLRA 46 lies in a semi-arid temperate climate. Annual precipitation ranges from 11 to 20 inches, but can be as much as 29 inches in the highest elevations and as little as 9 inches in some basins. In the north minimum precipitation is in spring, and in the south it is early in summer. Winter precipitation is snow. Precipitation is too low for good growth of crops in some parts of the area, but in others it is adequate for growing small grains and forage. Most of the water for irrigation is supplied by the major rivers, with some small streams providing local supplies.

Average annual snowfall ranges from 23" at Babb to 96" at Nye. Snow cover depths greater than 1 inch range from 0 days at Judith Gap to 93 days at Lewistown FAA airport.

Average July temperatures are about 65 degrees F., and average January temperatures are about 24 degrees F. Recorded temperature extremes in the MLRA during the data years are a low of -50 at Denton, and a high of 107 at Yellowtail Dam.

MLRA 46 lies in USDA Plant Hardiness Zones 3b, 4a, and 4b.

Detailed information, which describes the physiography, groundwater, soils drainage and climate is available by referring to the local USDA-NRCS County Soil Survey. Site specific climatic data within MLRA 46X can be found at the following web

site; <http://www.wrcc.sage.dri.edu/> OR <http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/cgibin/state.pl?state=mt>.

Numerous climate stations are located within this MLRA. With such wide variations in climate information, the user should access the station closest to the site being evaluated.

Freeze-free period (28 deg)(days): 90 120
(9 years in 10 at least)

Last Killing Freeze in Spring (28 deg):
(1 year in 10 later than)

Last Frost in Spring (32 deg):
(1 year in 10 later than)

First Frost in Fall (32 deg):
(1 year in 10 earlier than)

First Killing Freeze in Fall (28 deg):
(1 year in 10 earlier than)

Length of Growing Season (32 deg)(days): 54 131
(9 years in 10 at least)

Growing Degree Days (40 deg):

Growing Degree Days (50 deg):

Mean annual precipitation (inches): 15 19

Monthly precipitation (inches) and temperature (F):

2 years in 10: Precip. Less Than Precip. More Than	<u>Jan</u>	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Apr</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>Jun</u>	<u>Jul</u>	<u>Aug</u>	<u>Sep</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Dec</u>
Monthly Average:	0.69	0.52	1.05	1.63	2.92	2.74	1.84	1.59	1.49	1.17	0.71	0.68
Temp. Min.												
Temp. Max.												
Temp. Avg.	23.7	27.9	34.1	42.7	51.4	59.3	65.4	65.1	55.3	45.6	32.7	25.4

<u>Climate Station</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>
MT1552	Cascade 5 S, MT	1971	2000
MT0392	Babb 6 NE, MT	1971	2000
MT2347	Denton 1 NNE, MT	1948	2005
MT7864	Stanford, MT	1971	2000
MT7159	Rogers Pass 9 NNE, MT	1964	2005
MT6190	Nye 2, MT	1971	2000
MT5603	Melville 4 W, MT	1971	2000
MT0780	Big Timber, MT	1971	2000
MT4545	Judith Gap 13 E, MT	1971	2000
MT5761	Moccasin Experiment Station, MT	1971	2000
MT9240	Yellowtail Dam, MT	1971	2000
MT3727	Grass Range, MT	1971	2000

MT4985	Lewistown FAA AP, MT	1971	2000
MT6747	Pryor, MT	1971	2000

Soil Interpretations

This FSG consists of very deep, well drained slowly permeable to very poorly drained, medium to moderately fine textured soils on flood plains and along drainage ways. They are ponded during a portion of the year or have a seasonal water table at or near the surface during part of the growing season. Sodium absorption ratio is <13, and calcium carbonate equivalent is <15 percent. Electrical conductivity ranges anywhere from 0 to 8 mmhos/cm

Drainage Class:	Very poorly drained	To	Well drained
Permeability Class: (0 - 40 inches)	Slow	To	Moderately rapid
Frost Action Class:	Low	To	High

	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Maximum</u>
Depth:	60	72
Surface Fragments >3" (% Cover):		
Organic Matter (percent): (surface layer)	2.0	95.0
Electrical Conductivity (mmhos/cm): (0 - 24 inches)	0	8
Sodium Absorption Ratio: (0 - 12 inches)	0	13
Soil Reaction (1:1) Water (pH): (0 - 12 inches)	6.1	8.4
Available Water Capacity (inches): (0 - 60 inches)	6	21
Calcium Carbonate Equivalent (percent): (0 - 12 inches)	0	0

Adapted Species List

The following forage species have been separated by common grouping methods which relate to principle growth period or taxonomic differences. Within these categories a further subdivision has been provided denoting whether the plant is native (N) or introduced (I) and recommended for dryland or irrigated conditions. Since some forages can be valuable when grown under dryland conditions but provide enhanced yield or additional cuttings when irrigated they may appear under both categories. Some species are more or less exclusive to only one management system and are represented as such.

<u>Cool Season Grasses</u>	<u>Scientific Symbol</u>	<u>Dryland</u>	<u>Irrigated</u>
Creeping meadow foxtail (I)	ALAR	YES	NO
Tall wheatgrass (I) 1/	THPO7	YES	NO
Western wheatgrass (N) 1/	PASM	YES	NO

Legumes

Alsike clover (I)

Scientific Symbol
 TRHY

Dryland
 YES

Irrigated
 NO

Adaptation of forages to this Forage Suitability Group (FSG) covers a relatively wide range of potentials from highly adapted to moderately well adapted. Since various cultivars within a specie can be more or less productive on a particular site within this FSG the species in general will be listed if it will thrive on one or more of these sites. It is up to the FSG (user) to determine the appropriate scope of adaptation the listed species (or their cultivars) have which will lead to their successful establishment and acceptable yields.

*These species only recommended for components of native mixtures.

1/ Recommended for higher EC levels (8-16 mmhos/cm)

Production Estimates

The following data represents "best available estimates" from many sources on representative species adapted to this FSG. In time and as documented data acquisition allows, specific plot, field trial or field clipping information will be incorporated into this document.

All pasture production estimates are determined as initial stocking rates and developed by multiplying a predicted forage yield times an expected harvest efficiency of 30%, then dividing that value by 1 animal unit month's "consumption" (915 lbs air dry).

Production estimates represent total annual production.

Forage Crop	<u>Dryland</u>		<u>Irrigated</u>	
	<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>
	(lbs/ac/yr)	(lbs/ac/yr)	(lbs/ac/yr)	(lbs/ac/yr)
Alfalfa	3700	6300	0	0
Introduced cool season grasses	2400	5300	0	0
Native cool season grasses	2700	4900	0	0
Warm season grasses	1800	2400	0	0

Pasture	<u>Dryland</u>		<u>Irrigated</u>	
	<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>High</u>
	(AUMs/ac)	(AUMs/ac)	(AUMs/ac)	(AUMs/ac)
Alfalfa	1.2	2.1	0.0	0.0
Introduced cool season grasses	0.8	1.7	0.0	0.0
Native cool season grasses	0.9	1.6	0.0	0.0
Warm season grasses	0.6	0.8	0.0	0.0

1 AUM = 915 lbs air-dry

Forage Growth Curves

Growth Curve Number: MT46XY01
Growth Curve Name: 10-19" subirrigated
Growth Curve Description:

<u>Percent Production by Month</u>											
<u>Jan</u>	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Mar</u>	<u>Apr</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>Jun</u>	<u>Jul</u>	<u>Aug</u>	<u>Sep</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Dec</u>
0	0	0	5	20	40	20	10	5	0	0	0

Soil Limitations

The primary limitation for these soils is wetness, which may severely limit species selection, delay planting and harvesting of forage crops, or result in wheel ruts or livestock hoof marks. This could result in soil compaction, plant injuries, poor soil aeration affecting plant growth, and problems moving livestock and machinery. Many of the soils in this group are subject to flooding or ponding that will adversely impact forage production if it occurs during the growing season. The time frame plants are under water and the soil temperature while it occurs can affect the survival of forage crops. Elevated salinity levels may also be present in the soil profile, which will greatly limit species selection and production potentials.

Management Interpretations

Soils in this group are prone to flooding, which can negatively impact plant growth if it occurs in the spring or during growing season. Flooding duration, or how long the plant is under water, will have a greater impact on the plant than flooding frequency. When establishing new stands or renovating older ones, select plant species that are tolerant of poorly drained soils. Machinery and livestock also need to be excluded during these times to prevent wheel ruts, soil compaction, and trampling. Facilitating practices such as salting, water developments, fencing, trails, and herding can often be used effectively to change livestock behavior and use patterns.

The solution to salinity problems lies in the prevention of upward salt movement, which includes utilizing existing moisture, preventing additional water moving into the system, and/or site drainage. Using deep-rooted, saline tolerant perennial crops will also slow or prevent moisture movement into affected areas. Irrigation water management is critical on irrigated sites. Timing, duration, and wastewater disposal all influence the movement of salts.

Management can include considerations for wildlife. Timing of haying and livestock grazing can avoid peak nesting and fawning periods. Consider planting species with later maturity to allow nests to fledge before harvesting. Avoid mowing around the field; mow back and forth or from the inside to the outside of the field.

For detailed descriptions of management guidelines, refer to the NRCS Prescribed Grazing (528), and Pasture and Hay Planting (512) specifications.

Site Documentation

Similar Sites:

Inventory Data References:

Inventory Data References:

- Agriculture Handbook 296 - Land Resource Regions and Major Land Resource Areas
- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) National Water and Climate Center
- National Soil Survey Information System (NASIS) for soil surveys in Montana
- NRCS National Range and Pasture Handbook
- NRCS Field Office Technical Guides
- Various Agricultural Research Service, Cooperative Extension Service, and NRCS research trials for plant adaptation and production
- Central Agri. Research Center, Moccasin MT Production and Yield Trials
- "Dryland Pastures in Montana and Wyoming" Species and Cultivars, Seeding Techniques and Grazing Management, Montana State University, EB19
- "Salinity and Sodicity and North Dakota Soils", North Dakota State University, EB57
- USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Maps

State Correlation:

This site has been correlated with the following states:

Forage Suitability Group Approval:

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