

# United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service

## Ecological Site Description

**Site Type:** Rangeland

**Site Name:** Loamy

**Site ID:** R055CY010SD

**Major Land Resource Area (MLRA):** 55C – Southern Black Glaciated Plains

### Physiographic Features

This site occurs on nearly level to steeply sloping uplands.

**Landform:** lake plain, till plain, outwash plain    **Aspect:** N/A



	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Maximum</u>
<b>Elevation (feet):</b>	1,300	2,000
<b>Slope (percent):</b>	0	15
<b>Water Table Depth (inches):</b>	80	80
<b>Flooding:</b>		
<b>Frequency:</b>	None	None
<b>Duration:</b>	None	None
<b>Ponding:</b>		
<b>Depth (inches):</b>	None	None
<b>Frequency:</b>	None	None
<b>Duration:</b>	None	None
<b>Runoff Class:</b>	Low	Very high

### Climatic Features

MLRA 55C is considered to have a continental climate – cold winters and hot summers, low humidity, light rainfall, and much sunshine. Extremes in temperature may also abound. The climate is the result of this MLRA's location near the geographic center of North America. There are few natural barriers on the Northern Great Plains and air masses move freely across the plains and account for rapid changes in temperature.

Annual precipitation typically ranges from 19 to 25 inches per year. The average annual temperature is about 47°F. January is the coldest month with average temperatures ranging from about 15°F (Howard, South Dakota (SD)), to about 20°F (Wagner, SD). July is the warmest month with temperatures averaging from about 73°F (Howard, SD), to about 77°F (Wagner, SD). The range of normal average monthly temperatures between the coldest and warmest months is about 58°F. This large annual range attests to the continental nature of this area's climate. Hourly winds are estimated to average about 12 miles per hour (mph) annually, ranging from about 13 mph during the spring to about 11 mph during the summer. Daytime winds are generally stronger than nighttime and occasional strong storms may bring brief periods of high winds with gusts to more than 50 mph.

Growth of cool-season plants begins in early to mid-March, slowing or ceasing in late June. Warm-season plants begin growth about mid-May and continue to early or mid-September. Greenup of cool-season plants may occur in September and October when adequate soil moisture is present.

	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Maximum</u>
<b>Frost-free period (days):</b>	137	159
<b>Freeze-free period (days):</b>	156	180
<b>Mean Annual Precipitation (inches):</b>	19	25

**Average Monthly Precipitation (inches) and Temperature (°F):**

	Precip. Min.	Precip. Max	Temp. Min.	Temp. Max.
January	0.42	0.54	3.4	31.0
February	0.51	0.81	8.1	36.3
March	1.00	1.61	20.5	47.7
April	2.05	2.50	33.6	62.7
May	2.85	3.47	44.8	74.6
June	3.35	4.15	54.9	84.1
July	2.38	2.97	59.9	91.1
August	2.23	2.87	57.7	88.8
September	1.61	2.71	48.2	79.4
October	1.39	1.76	36.1	65.9
November	0.62	1.09	21.7	47.4
December	0.42	0.65	9.4	34.8

Climate Stations		Period	
Station ID	Location or Name	From	To
SD4037	Howard	1893	2008
SD5228	Marion	1901	2008
SD5561	Miller	1902	2008
SD8767	Wagner	1916	2008

For local climate stations that may be more representative, refer to <http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov>.

## Riparian and Wetland Features

No riparian areas or wetland features are directly associated with this site.

## Representative Soil Features

The common features of soils in this site are loam to silty clay loam textured subsurface soils (occasionally clay), with slopes ranging from 0 to 15 percent. The soils in this site are well-drained and formed in till and loess. The loam to silty clay loam surface layer is 6 to 15 inches thick. The soils have a moderate to slow infiltration rate. Some soils crack when dry. When these soils are wet, surface compaction can occur with heavy traffic. This site typically should show slight to no evidence of rills, wind scoured areas, or pedestalled plants. If present, water flow paths are broken, irregular in appearance, or discontinuous. The soil surface is stable and intact. Subsurface soil layers are nonrestrictive to water movement and root penetration.

These soils are mainly susceptible to water erosion. The hazard of water erosion increases on slopes greater than about nine percent. Loss of 50 percent or more of the surface layer of the soils on this site can result in a shift in species composition and/or production.

Access Web Soil Survey (<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/HomePage.htm>) for specific local soils information.

**Parent Material Kind:** till, unspecified, and loess

**Parent Material Origin:**

**Surface Texture:** loam, silt loam, silty clay loam

**Surface Texture Modifier:** none

**Subsurface Texture Group:** loamy

**Surface Fragments ≤3” (% Cover):** 0-10

**Surface Fragments >3” (%Cover):** 0-5

**Subsurface Fragments ≤3” (% Volume):** 0-50

**Subsurface Fragments >3” (% Volume):** 0-15

	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Maximum</u>
<b>Drainage Class:</b>	well	well
<b>Permeability Class:</b>	slow	moderate
<b>Depth (inches):</b>	80	80
<b>Electrical Conductivity (mmhos/cm)*:</b>	0	4
<b>Sodium Absorption Ratio*:</b>	0	3
<b>Soil Reaction (1:1 Water)*:</b>	6.1	8.4
<b>Soil Reaction (0.1M CaCl<sub>2</sub>)*:</b>	NA	NA
<b>Available Water Capacity (inches)*:</b>	6	8
<b>Calcium Carbonate Equivalent (percent)*:</b>	0	25

\*These attributes represent from 0-40 inches or to the first restrictive layer.

## Plant Communities

### Ecological Dynamics of the Site

This site developed under Northern Great Plains climatic conditions, light to severe grazing by bison and other large herbivores, sporadic natural or man-caused wildfire (often of light intensities), and other biotic and abiotic factors that typically influence soil/site development. Changes will occur in the plant communities due to short-term weather variations, impacts of native and/or exotic plant and animal species, and management actions. While the following plant community descriptions describe more typical transitions that will occur, severe disturbances, such as periods of well below average precipitation, can cause significant shifts in plant communities and/or species composition.

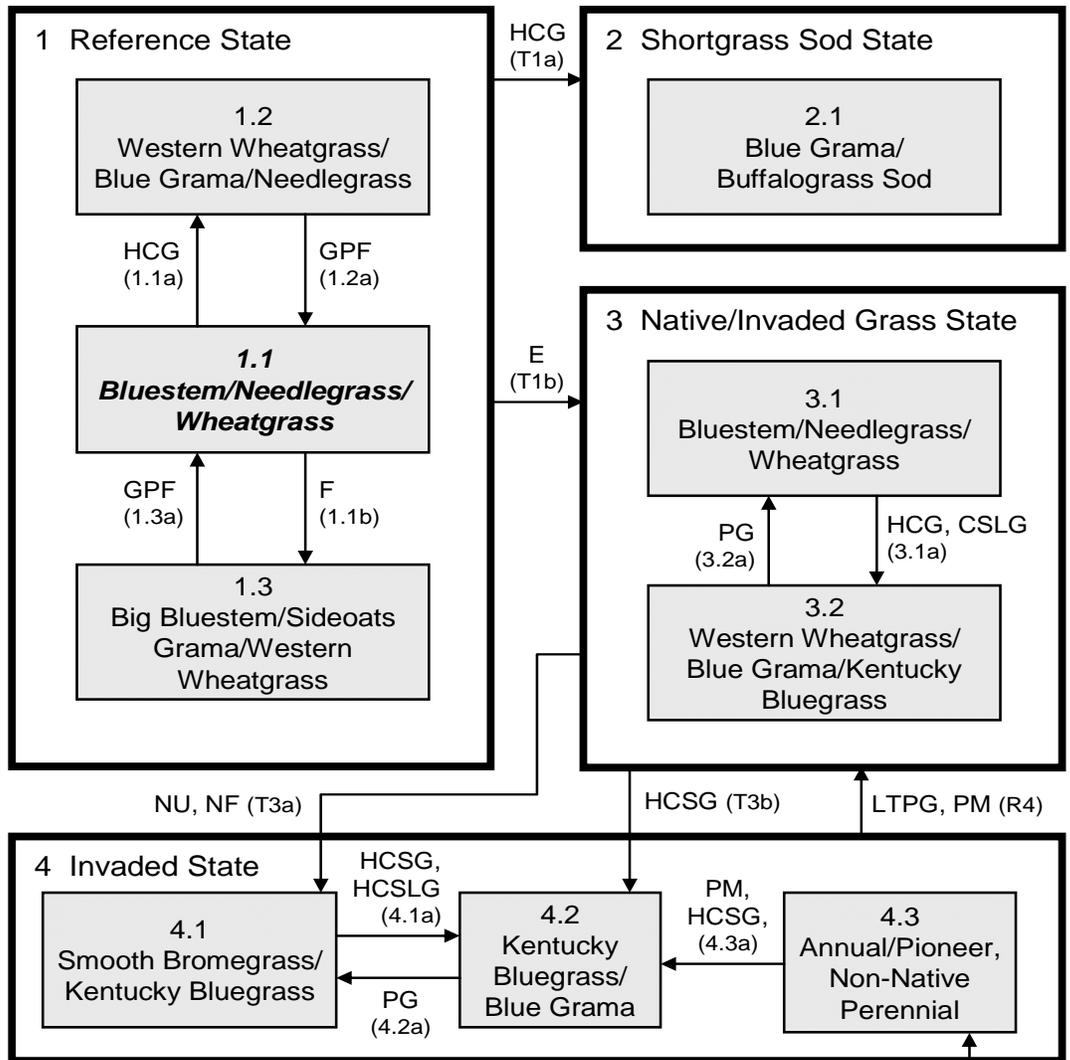
Continuous season-long grazing (during the typical growing season of May through October) and/or repeated seasonal grazing (e.g., every spring, every summer) without adequate recovery periods following grazing events causes departure from the 3.1 Bluestem/Needlegrass/Wheatgrass Plant Community. Blue grama will increase and eventually develop into a sod. Western wheatgrass will increase initially and then begin to decrease. Green needlegrass, needleandthread, porcupine grass, sideoats grama, big bluestem, and little bluestem will decrease in frequency and production. Extended periods of nonuse and/or lack of fire will result in excessive litter and a plant community dominated by cool-season grasses such as Kentucky bluegrass, smooth brome grass, green needlegrass, and cheatgrass.

Interpretations are primarily based on the 1.1 Bluestem/Needlegrass/Wheatgrass Plant Community Phase. It has been determined by study of rangeland relic areas, areas protected from excessive disturbance, and areas under long-term rotational grazing regimes. Trends in plant community dynamics ranging from heavily grazed to lightly grazed areas, seasonal use pastures, and historical

accounts also have been used. Plant community phases, states, transitional pathways, and thresholds have been determined through similar studies and experience.

The following is a diagram that illustrates the common plant community phases that can occur on the site and the transition pathways between communities. These are the most common plant community phases based on current knowledge and experience, and changes may be made as more data is collected. Narratives following the diagram contain more detail pertaining to the ecological processes.

## Plant Communities and Transitional Pathways



Refer to narrative for details on pathways: **C** – Cropped, abandoned; **CSLG** – Continuous season-long grazing; **E** – Encroachment of introduced species; **F** – Fire; **GPF** – Grazing, precipitation, and/or fire returning to more normal disturbance regime levels and frequencies; **HCG** – Heavy continuous grazing; **HCSG** – Heavy continuous seasonal grazing; **HCSLG** – Heavy continuous season-long grazing; **LTPG** – Long-term prescribed grazing; **NU, NF** – Non-use, no fire; **PG** – Prescribed grazing; **PM** – Pest management (herbicide); **S** – Seeding.

**Any Plant  
 Community**

Plant Community Composition and Group Annual Production

			1.1 Bluestem/Needlegrass/Wheatgrass		
COMMON/GROUP NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	SYMBOL	Group	lbs./acre	% Comp
<b>GRASSES &amp; GRASS-LIKES</b>				2560 - 2880	80 - 90
<b>TALL WARM-SEASON GRASSES</b>			<b>1</b>	<b>480 - 960</b>	<b>15 - 30</b>
big bluestem	Andropogon gerardii	ANGE	1	320 - 800	10 - 25
Indiangrass	Sorghastrum nutans	SONU2	1	64 - 320	2 - 10
switchgrass	Panicum virgatum	PAVI2	1	64 - 320	2 - 10
tall dropseed	Sporobolus compositus var. compositus	SPCOC2	1	0 - 160	0 - 5
<b>NEEDLEGRASS</b>			<b>2</b>	<b>480 - 960</b>	<b>15 - 30</b>
green needlegrass	Nassella viridula	NAVI4	2	160 - 800	5 - 25
porcupine grass	Hesperostipa spartea	HESP11	2	160 - 800	5 - 25
needleandthread	Hesperostipa comata ssp. comata	HECOC8	2	64 - 320	2 - 10
<b>WHEATGRASS</b>			<b>3</b>	<b>320 - 640</b>	<b>10 - 20</b>
western wheatgrass	Pascopyrum smithii	PASM	3	320 - 640	10 - 20
slender wheatgrass	Elymus trachycaulus	ELTR7	3	64 - 320	2 - 10
<b>MID WARM-SEASON GRASSES</b>			<b>4</b>	<b>160 - 480</b>	<b>5 - 15</b>
little bluestem	Schizachyrium scoparium	SCSC	4	160 - 480	5 - 15
sideoats grama	Bouteloua curtipendula	BOCU	4	64 - 320	2 - 10
prairie dropseed	Sporobolus heterolepis	SPHE	4	32 - 160	1 - 5
<b>SHORT WARM-SEASON GRASSES</b>			<b>5</b>	<b>32 - 160</b>	<b>1 - 5</b>
blue grama	Bouteloua gracilis	BOGR2	5	32 - 160	1 - 5
buffalograss	Bouteloua dactyloides	BODA2	5	0 - 96	0 - 3
<b>OTHER NATIVE GRASSES</b>			<b>6</b>	<b>32 - 160</b>	<b>1 - 5</b>
prairie junegrass	Koeleria macrantha	KOMA	6	32 - 96	1 - 3
Scribner panicum	Dichanthelium oligosanthes var. scribnerianum	DIOLS	6	0 - 32	0 - 1
other grasses		2GRAM	6	0 - 160	0 - 5
<b>GRASS-LIKES</b>			<b>7</b>	<b>32 - 160</b>	<b>1 - 5</b>
sedge	Carex spp.	CAREX	7	32 - 160	1 - 5
other grass-likes		2GL	7	0 - 96	0 - 3
<b>FORBS</b>			<b>9</b>	<b>160 - 320</b>	<b>5 - 10</b>
American vetch	Vicia americana	VIAM	9	0 - 32	0 - 1
catclaw sensitive briar	Mimosa nuttallii	MINU6	9	32 - 64	1 - 2
cudweed sagewort	Artemisia ludoviciana	ARLU	9	32 - 64	1 - 2
dotted gayfeather	Liatris punctata	LIPU	9	32 - 64	1 - 2
false boneset	Brickellia eupatorioides	BREU	9	0 - 64	0 - 2
goldenrod	Solidago spp.	SOLID	9	32 - 64	1 - 2
groundplum milkvetch	Astragalus crassicaulus	ASCR2	9	0 - 32	0 - 1
heath aster	Symphyotrichum ericoides	SYER	9	32 - 64	1 - 2
Illinois bundleflower	Desmanthus illinoensis	DEIL	9	0 - 64	0 - 2
Maximilian sunflower	Helianthus maximiliani	HEMA2	9	32 - 64	1 - 2
penstemon	Penstemon spp.	PENST	9	32 - 64	1 - 2
prairie coneflower	Ratibida columnifera	RACO3	9	32 - 64	1 - 2
purple coneflower	Echinacea angustifolia	ECAN2	9	0 - 64	0 - 2
purple prairie clover	Dalea purpurea	DAPU5	9	32 - 64	1 - 2
rush skeletonweed	Lygodesmia juncea	LYJU	9	0 - 32	0 - 1
scarlet gaura	Gaura coccinea	GACO5	9	32 - 64	1 - 2
scurfpea	Psoraleum spp.	PSORA2	9	32 - 64	1 - 2
stiff sunflower	Helianthus pauciflorus	HEPA19	9	32 - 64	1 - 2
western ragweed	Ambrosia psilostachya	AMPS	9	0 - 32	0 - 1
western yarrow	Achillea millefolium var. occidentalis	ACMIO	9	0 - 32	0 - 1
woolly verbena	Verbena stricta	VEST	9	0 - 32	0 - 1
native forbs		2FN	9	32 - 128	1 - 4
<b>SHRUBS</b>			<b>10</b>	<b>160 - 320</b>	<b>5 - 10</b>
leadplant	Amorpha canescens	AMCA6	10	32 - 160	1 - 5
rose	Rosa spp.	ROSA5	10	32 - 64	1 - 2
snowberry	Symphoricarpos spp.	SYMPH	10	64 - 256	2 - 8
other shrubs		2SHRUB	10	0 - 96	0 - 3

Annual Production lbs./acre	LOW	RV	HIGH
<b>GRASSES &amp; GRASS-LIKES</b>	2110 -	2720	3260
<b>FORBS</b>	145 -	240	370
<b>SHRUBS</b>	145 -	240	370
<b>TOTAL</b>	2400 -	3200	4000

This list of plants and their relative proportions are based on near normal years. Fluctuations in species composition and relative production may change from year to year dependent upon precipitation or other climatic factors. RV = Representative value.

Plant Community Composition and Group Annual Production

COMMON/GROUP NAME	SYMBOL	1.1 Bluestem/Needlegrass/ Wheatgrass			3.2 Western Wheatgrass/Blue Grass/Kentucky Bluegrass			4.1 Smooth Bromegrass/ Kentucky Bluegrass			4.2 Kentucky Bluegrass/ Blue Grass			
		Grp	lbs./acre	% Comp	Grp	lbs./acre	% Comp	Grp	lbs./acre	% Comp	Grp	lbs./acre	% Comp	
<b>GRASSES &amp; GRASS-LIKES</b>														
			2560 - 2880	80 - 90		2125 - 2375	85 - 95		2400 - 2720	75 - 85		1500 - 1800	75 - 90	
<b>TALL WARM-SEASON GRASSES</b>														
big bluestem	ANGE	1	320 - 800	10 - 25	1	50 - 250	2 - 10	1	0 - 64	0 - 2				
Indiangrass	SONU2	1	64 - 320	2 - 10	1	0 - 75	0 - 3							
switchgrass	PAVI2	1	64 - 320	2 - 10	1	0 - 75	0 - 3							
tall dropseed	SPCOC2	1	0 - 160	0 - 5	1	0 - 75	0 - 3	1	0 - 64	0 - 2				
<b>NEEDLEGRASS</b>														
		2	480 - 960	15 - 30	2	50 - 250	2 - 10	2	0 - 320	0 - 10	2	0 - 100	0 - 5	
green needlegrass	NAVI4	2	160 - 800	5 - 25	2	50 - 250	2 - 10	2	0 - 320	0 - 10	2	0 - 100	0 - 5	
porcupine grass	HESP11	2	160 - 800	5 - 25	2	0 - 125	0 - 5							
needleandthread	HECOC8	2	64 - 320	2 - 10	2	0 - 125	0 - 5							
<b>WHEATGRASS</b>														
		3	320 - 640	10 - 20	3	250 - 750	10 - 30	3	0 - 320	0 - 10	3	0 - 100	0 - 5	
western wheatgrass	PASM	3	320 - 640	10 - 20	3	250 - 750	10 - 30	3	0 - 320	0 - 10	3	0 - 100	0 - 5	
slender wheatgrass	ELTR7	3	64 - 320	2 - 10	3	0 - 125	0 - 5							
<b>MID WARM-SEASON GRASSES</b>														
		4	160 - 480	5 - 15	4	0 - 125	0 - 5	4			4			
little bluestem	SCSC	4	160 - 480	5 - 15	4	0 - 125	0 - 5							
sideoats grama	BOCU	4	64 - 320	2 - 10	4	0 - 125	0 - 5							
prairie dropseed	SPHE	4	32 - 160	1 - 5	4	0 - 25	0 - 1							
<b>SHORT WARM-SEASON GRASSES</b>														
		5	32 - 160	1 - 5	5	250 - 500	10 - 20	5	0 - 96	0 - 3	5	200 - 700	10 - 35	
blue grama	BOGR2	5	32 - 160	1 - 5	5	250 - 500	10 - 20	5	0 - 96	0 - 3	5	200 - 700	10 - 35	
buffalograss	BODA2	5	0 - 96	0 - 3	5	0 - 125	0 - 5				5	0 - 100	0 - 5	
<b>OTHER NATIVE GRASSES</b>														
		6	32 - 160	1 - 5	6	25 - 125	1 - 5	6	32 - 160	1 - 5	6	20 - 100	1 - 5	
prairie junegrass	KOMA	6	32 - 96	1 - 3	6	25 - 75	1 - 3	6	32 - 64	1 - 2	6	0 - 20	0 - 1	
Scribner panicum	DIOLS	6	0 - 32	0 - 1	6	0 - 50	0 - 2	6	0 - 32	0 - 1	6	0 - 40	0 - 2	
other grasses	2GRAM	6	0 - 160	0 - 5	6	0 - 125	0 - 5	6	0 - 160	0 - 5	6	0 - 100	0 - 5	
<b>GRASS-LIKES</b>														
		7	32 - 160	1 - 5	7	50 - 250	2 - 10	7	32 - 160	1 - 5	7	40 - 200	2 - 10	
sedge	CAREX	7	32 - 160	1 - 5	7	50 - 250	2 - 10	7	32 - 160	1 - 5	7	40 - 200	2 - 10	
other grass-likes	2GL	7	0 - 96	0 - 3	7	0 - 75	0 - 3	7	0 - 96	0 - 3	7	0 - 60	0 - 3	
<b>NON-NATIVE GRASSES</b>														
		8			8	250 - 625	10 - 25	8	960 - 2080	30 - 65	8	500 - 1000	25 - 50	
annual bromegrass	BROMU	8			8	0 - 125	0 - 5	8	0 - 160	0 - 5	8	20 - 160	1 - 8	
Kentucky bluegrass	POPR	8			8	125 - 500	5 - 20	8	320 - 800	10 - 25	8	400 - 900	20 - 45	
quackgrass	ELRE4	8			8	0 - 250	0 - 10	8	0 - 480	0 - 15	8	40 - 300	2 - 15	
smooth bromegrass	BRIN2	8			8	0 - 250	0 - 10	8	640 - 1920	20 - 60	8	0 - 200	0 - 10	
<b>FORBS</b>														
		9	160 - 320	5 - 10	9	125 - 250	5 - 10	9	160 - 480	5 - 15	9	200 - 400	10 - 20	
absinth sagewort	ARAB3				9	0 - 75	0 - 3	9	0 - 96	0 - 3	9	20 - 160	1 - 8	
American vetch	VIAM	9	0 - 32	0 - 1										
catclaw sensitive briar	MINU6	9	32 - 64	1 - 2										
cutweed sagewort	ARLU	9	32 - 64	1 - 2	9	25 - 75	1 - 3	9	32 - 128	1 - 4	9	20 - 100	1 - 5	
dotted gayfeather	LIPU	9	32 - 64	1 - 2	9	0 - 25	0 - 1							
false boneset	BREU	9	0 - 64	0 - 2										
goldenrod	SOLID	9	32 - 64	1 - 2	9	25 - 75	1 - 3	9	32 - 160	1 - 5	9	20 - 100	1 - 5	
groundplum milkvetch	ASCR2	9	0 - 32	0 - 1										
heath aster	SYER	9	32 - 64	1 - 2	9	25 - 75	1 - 3	9	32 - 128	1 - 4	9	20 - 60	1 - 3	
Illinois bundleflower	DEIL	9	0 - 64	0 - 2										
Maximilian sunflower	HEMA2	9	32 - 64	1 - 2										
penstemon	PENST	9	32 - 64	1 - 2	9	0 - 25	0 - 1							
prairie coneflower	RACO3	9	32 - 64	1 - 2	9	0 - 25	0 - 1	9	0 - 32	0 - 1				
prickly lettuce	LASE	9	32 - 64	1 - 2	9	0 - 50	0 - 2	9	0 - 96	0 - 3	9	20 - 80	1 - 4	
purple coneflower	ECAN2	9	0 - 64	0 - 2										
purple prairie clover	DAPU5	9	32 - 64	1 - 2	9	0 - 25	0 - 1							
rush skeletonweed	LYJU	9	0 - 32	0 - 1	9	0 - 25	0 - 1	9	0 - 32	0 - 1	9	0 - 20	0 - 1	
scarlet gaura	GACO5	9	32 - 64	1 - 2	9	0 - 25	0 - 1							
scurfpea	PSORA2	9	32 - 64	1 - 2	9	25 - 50	1 - 2	9	32 - 64	1 - 2	9	20 - 60	1 - 3	
stiff sunflower	HEPA19	9	32 - 64	1 - 2										
sweetclover	MELIL				9	0 - 100	0 - 4	9	32 - 256	1 - 8	9	20 - 240	1 - 12	
western ragweed	AMPS	9	0 - 32	0 - 1	9	25 - 50	1 - 2	9	32 - 128	1 - 4	9	20 - 100	1 - 5	
western salsify	TRDU				9	0 - 50	0 - 2	9	0 - 96	0 - 3	9	20 - 60	1 - 3	
western yarrow	ACMIO	9	0 - 32	0 - 1	9	25 - 50	1 - 2	9	32 - 64	1 - 2	9	20 - 60	1 - 3	
woolly verbena	VEST	9	0 - 32	0 - 1	9	0 - 50	0 - 2	9	0 - 96	0 - 3	9	0 - 60	0 - 3	
native forbs	2FN	9	32 - 128	1 - 4	9	25 - 75	1 - 3	9	0 - 64	0 - 2	9	0 - 40	0 - 2	
introduced forbs	2FI				9	0 - 125	0 - 5	9	32 - 160	1 - 5	9	20 - 200	1 - 10	
<b>SHRUBS</b>														
		10	160 - 320	5 - 10	10	25 - 125	1 - 5	10	64 - 320	2 - 10	10	0 - 100	0 - 5	
leadplant	AMCA6	10	32 - 160	1 - 5	10	0 - 25	0 - 1							
rose	ROSA5	10	32 - 64	1 - 2	10	0 - 50	0 - 2	10	32 - 64	1 - 2	10	0 - 20	0 - 1	
snowberry	SYMPH	10	64 - 256	2 - 8	10	25 - 125	1 - 5	10	32 - 320	1 - 10	10	0 - 100	0 - 5	
other shrubs	2SHRUB	10	0 - 96	0 - 3	10	0 - 50	0 - 2	10	0 - 64	0 - 2				
<b>Annual Production lbs./acre</b>			LOW	RV	HIGH	LOW	RV	HIGH	LOW	RV	HIGH	LOW	RV	HIGH
<b>GRASSES &amp; GRASS-LIKES</b>			2110	2720	3260	1670	2238	2675	1995	2688	3260	1225	1650	2015
<b>FORBS</b>			145	240	370	110	188	285	145	320	570	175	300	475
<b>SHRUBS</b>			145	240	370	20	75	140	60	192	370	0	50	110
<b>TOTAL</b>			2400	3200	4000	1800	2500	3100	2200	3200	4200	1400	2000	2600

This list of plants and their relative proportions are based on near normal years. Fluctuations in species composition and relative production may change from year to year dependent upon precipitation or other climatic factors. RV = Representative value. Refer to PLANTS database for scientific names and codes: <http://plants.usda.gov>

## Plant Community and Vegetation State Narratives

### Reference State (State 1)

This state represents the natural range of variability that dominated the dynamics of this ecological site (ES). This state was codominated by cool- and warm-season grasses. In pre-European times, the primary disturbance mechanisms for this site in the reference condition included periods of below and/or above average precipitation, periodic fire, and herbivory by insects and large ungulates. Timing of fires and herbivory coupled with weather events dictated the dynamics that occurred within the natural range of variability. Cool-season and taller warm-season grasses would have declined and a corresponding increase in short, warm-season grasses would have occurred. Today, a similar state can be found on areas that are properly managed with grazing and/or prescribed burning and sometimes on areas receiving occasional short periods of rest.

### 1.1 Bluestem/Needlegrass/Wheatgrass Plant Community Phase

Interpretations are based primarily on the Bluestem/Needlegrass/Wheatgrass Plant Community Phase (this is also considered to be climax). The potential vegetation was about 80 percent grasses or grass-like plants, 10 percent forbs, and 10 percent shrubs. The community was codominated by cool- and warm-season grasses. The major grasses included western wheatgrass, green needlegrass, big bluestem, porcupine grass, needleandthread, Indiangrass, switchgrass, and little bluestem. Other grass or grass-like species included sideoats grama, blue grama, slender wheatgrass, prairie dropseed, tall dropseed, and sedges. This plant community was resilient and well adapted to the Northern Great Plains climatic conditions. The diversity in plant species allowed for high drought tolerance. This was a sustainable plant community in regards to site/soil stability, watershed function, and biologic integrity.

The following growth curve is an estimate of the monthly percentages of total annual growth of the dominant species expected during an average year:

Growth curve number: SD5503

Growth curve name: Southern Black Glaciated Plains, cool-season/warm-season codominant.

Growth curve description: Cool-season, warm-season codominant.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
0	0	3	10	20	28	21	10	5	3	0	0

Transitions or pathways leading to other plant communities were as follows:

- 1.1a – Heavy continuous grazing which included herbivory at moderate to heavy levels at the same time of year each year without adequate recovery periods or a combination of disturbances such as extended periods of below average precipitation coupled with periodic or chronic heavy grazing will shift this community to the *1.2 Western Wheatgrass/Blue Grama/Needlegrass Plant Community Phase*.
- 1.1b – Fire occurring at relatively frequent intervals and occasional grazing events immediately following early season fire caused a reduction in cool-season grasses and an increase in warm-season grasses. The warm-season grasses were more tolerant of shorter return intervals of fire and would increase in vigor and production leading to a temporary shift to the *1.3 Big Bluestem/Sideoats Grama/Western Wheatgrass Plant Community Phase*.

### 1.2 Western Wheatgrass/Blue Grama/Needlegrass Plant Community Phase

This plant community evolved under heavy continuous grazing or from over utilization during extended drought periods. The potential plant community was made up of approximately 85 percent

grasses and grass-like species, 10 percent forbs, and 5 percent shrubs. Dominant grasses included western wheatgrass, blue grama, green needlegrass, and needleandthread. Grasses of secondary importance included sideoats grama, little bluestem, porcupine grass, big bluestem, and sedge. Forbs commonly found in this plant community included cudweed sagewort, prairie coneflower, and western yarrow. This plant community had similar plant composition to the 3.2 Western Wheatgrass/Blue Grama/Kentucky Bluegrass Plant Community Phase (refer to the plant composition tables). The main difference is that this plant community phase did not have the presence of nonnative invasive species such as Kentucky bluegrass and smooth brome grass.

When compared to the Bluestem/Needlegrass/Wheatgrass Plant Community Phase (1.1), blue grama and sedges increased. Green needlegrass and sideoats grama decreased and production of mid- and tall warm-season grasses were also reduced. This plant community was moderately resistant to change. The herbaceous species present were well adapted to grazing; however, species composition could be altered through long-term overgrazing. If the herbaceous component was intact, it tended to be resilient if the disturbance was not long-term.

The following growth curve is an estimate of the monthly percentages of total annual growth of the dominant species expected during an average year:

Growth curve number: SD5502

Growth curve name: Southern Black Glaciated Plains, cool-season dominant, warm-season subdominant.

Growth curve description: Cool-season dominant, warm-season subdominant.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
0	0	3	10	23	34	15	6	5	4	0	0

Transitions or pathways leading to other plant communities are as follows:

- T1a – Heavy continuous grazing (stocking levels well above carrying capacity for extended portions of the growing season, and often at the same time of year each year, typically beginning early in the season) will convert this plant community to the *2.1 Blue Grama/Buffalograss Sod Plant Community Phase* and the *Shortgrass Sod State*.
- 1.2a – Grazing, precipitation, and/or fire returned to normal disturbance regime levels and frequencies or periodic light to moderate grazing possibly including periodic rest will convert this plant community to the *1.1 Bluestem/Needlegrass/Wheatgrass Plant Community Phase*.

## 2.1 Blue Grama/Buffalograss Sod Plant Community

This plant community evolved under heavy continuous season grazing or from over utilization during extended drought periods. The potential plant community was made up of approximately 85 percent grasses and grass-like species, 10 percent forbs, and 5 percent shrubs. Dominant grasses typically included blue grama and buffalograss. Grasses of secondary importance included sedge and western wheatgrass. Forbs commonly found in this plant community included cudweed sagewort, green sagewort, and western yarrow. When compared to the Bluestem/Needlegrass/Wheatgrass Plant Community Phase (1.1), blue grama and buffalograss were dominant on this plant community. Cool-season grasses decreased significantly. This vegetation state was very resistant to change. The herbaceous species present were well adapted to grazing. This plant community was less productive than other phases. The thick sod prevented other species from getting established.

The following growth curve is an estimate of the monthly percentages of total annual growth of the dominant species expected during an average year:

Growth curve number: SD5505

Growth curve name: Southern Black Glaciated Plains, warm-season dominant.

Growth curve description: Warm-season dominant.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
0	0	2	5	15	25	30	15	7	1	0	0

### 1.3 Bluestem/Sideoats Grama/Western Wheatgrass Plant Community Phase

This plant community was a result of fire occurring at relatively frequent intervals. This phase could have also resulted from a combination of grazing events immediately following early season fire (i.e., large ungulates attracted to highly nutritious vegetative growth following a fire). These events would have caused a reduction in cool-season grasses and an increase in warm-season grasses. The warm-season grasses were more tolerant of shorter return intervals of fire and would have increased in vigor and production leading to a temporary shift to this phase. Needlegrasses would have decreased most significantly amongst the cool-season grasses. The potential vegetation was about 80 percent grasses or grass-like plants, 15 percent forbs, and 5 percent shrubs. The community was dominated by warm-season grasses. The major grasses included big bluestem, Indiangrass, switchgrass, sideoats grama, little bluestem, and western wheatgrass. Other grass or grass-like species included green needlegrass, porcupine grass, needleandthread, blue grama, slender wheatgrass, tall dropseed, and sedges. This plant community was not resistant to change and would have readily shifted back to the 1.1 Bluestem/Needlegrass/Wheatgrass Plant Community Phase with a return of more normal fire return intervals.

The following growth curve is an estimate of the monthly percentages of total annual growth of the dominant species expected during an average year:

Growth curve number: SD5504

Growth curve name: Southern Black Glaciated Plains, warm-season dominant, cool-season subdominant.

Growth curve description: Warm-season dominant, cool-season subdominant.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
0	0	3	7	18	25	25	15	7	1	0	0

Transitions or pathways leading to other plant communities were as follows:

- 1.3a – Grazing, precipitation, and/or fire returned to normal disturbance regime levels and frequencies or periodic light to moderate grazing possibly including periodic rest will convert this plant community to the *1.1 Bluestem/Needlegrass/Wheatgrass Plant Community Phase*.

### Transition from Reference State (State 1) to the Native/Invaded Grass State (State 3)

- T1b – Encroachment of non-native grasses such as Kentucky bluegrass and smooth bromegrass, and disruption of natural disturbance regimes (typically as a result of fire suppression following settlement) led this state over a threshold to the *Native/Invaded Grass State (State 3)*.

### Native/Invaded Grass State (State 3)

This state represents the more common range of variability that exists with higher levels of grazing management but in the absence of periodic fire due to fire suppression. This state is dominated by cool- and warm-season grasses. It can be found on areas that are properly managed with grazing

and/or prescribed burning, and sometimes on areas receiving occasional short periods of rest. Taller cool-season species can decline and a corresponding increase in short statured grass will occur.

### 3.1 Bluestem/Needlegrass/Wheatgrass Plant Community Phase

This plant community phase is similar to the 1.1 Bluestem/Needlegrass/Wheatgrass Plant Community Phase but it also contains minor amounts of nonnative invasive grass species such as Kentucky bluegrass and smooth brome grass (up to about 15 percent by air-dry weight). The potential vegetation is about 80 percent grasses or grass-like plants, 10 percent forbs, and 10 percent shrubs. The community is codominated by cool- and warm-season grasses. The major grasses include western wheatgrass, green needlegrass, big bluestem, porcupine grass, needleandthread, Indiangrass, switchgrass, and little bluestem. Other grass or grass-like species include sideoats grama, blue grama, slender wheatgrass, prairie dropseed, tall dropseed, and sedges. This plant community is resilient and well adapted to the Northern Great Plains climatic conditions. The diversity in plant species allows for high drought tolerance. This is a sustainable plant community in regards to site/soil stability, watershed function, and biologic integrity.

The following growth curve is an estimate of the monthly percentages of total annual growth of the dominant species expected during an average year:

Growth curve number: SD5503

Growth curve name: Southern Black Glaciated Plains, cool-season/warm-season codominant.

Growth curve description: Cool-season, warm-season codominant.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
0	0	3	10	20	28	21	10	5	3	0	0

Transitions or pathways leading to other plant communities are as follows:

- 3.1a – Heavy continuous grazing (stocking levels well above carrying capacity for extended portions of the growing season, and often at the same time of year each year), or continuous season-long grazing, or a combination of disturbances such as extended periods of below average precipitation coupled with periodic heavy grazing will shift this community to the 3.2 *Western Wheatgrass/Blue Grama/Kentucky Bluegrass Plant Community Phase*.

### 3.2 Western Wheatgrass/Blue Grama/Kentucky Bluegrass Plant Community Phase

This plant community is a result of heavy continuous grazing, continuous season-long grazing or from over utilization during extended drought periods. The potential plant community is made up of approximately 85 percent grasses and grass-like species, 10 percent forbs, and 5 percent shrubs. Dominant grasses include western wheatgrass, blue grama, and Kentucky bluegrass. Grasses of secondary importance include sideoats grama, little bluestem, green needlegrass, needleandthread, porcupine grass, big bluestem, buffalograss, smooth brome grass, and sedge. Forbs commonly found in this plant community include cudweed sagewort, prairie coneflower, and western yarrow.

When compared to the Bluestem/Needlegrass/Wheatgrass Plant Community Phase (1.1), blue grama has increased. Green needlegrass and sideoats grama have decreased and production of mid- and tall warm-season grasses has also been reduced. This plant community is moderately resistant to change. The herbaceous species present are well adapted to grazing; however, species composition can be altered through long-term overgrazing. If the herbaceous component is intact, it tends to be resilient if the disturbance is not long-term.

The following growth curve is an estimate of the monthly percentages of total annual growth of the dominant species expected during an average year:

Growth curve number: SD5502

Growth curve name: Southern Black Glaciated Plains, cool-season dominant, warm-season subdominant.

Growth curve description: Cool-season dominant, warm-season subdominant.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
0	0	3	10	23	34	15	6	5	4	0	0

Transitions or pathways leading to other plant communities are as follows:

- T3b – Heavy continuous seasonal grazing (stocking levels well above carrying capacity for extended portions of the growing season, and at the same time of year each year, typically beginning early in the season) will cause a shift across a threshold leading to the *4.2 Kentucky Bluegrass/Blue Grama Plant Community Phase* within the *Invaded State (State 4)*.
- 3.2a – Prescribed grazing (alternating season of use and providing adequate recovery periods) or periodic light to moderate grazing possibly including periodic rest will convert this plant community to the *3.1 Bluestem/Needlegrass/Wheatgrass Plant Community Phase*.

#### Transitions from Native/Invaded Grass State (State 3) to the Invaded State (State 4)

- T2b – Non-use and no fire for extended periods of time (typically for 10 or more years) will likely lead this state over a threshold resulting in the *4.1 Smooth Bromegrass/Kentucky Bluegrass Plant Community Phase* within the *4.0 Invaded State*.

#### Invaded State (State 4)

This state is the result of invasion and dominance of introduced species. This state is characterized by the dominance of Kentucky bluegrass and smooth bromegrass and an increasing thatch layer that effectively blocks introduction of other plants into the system. Plant litter accumulation tends to favor the more shade tolerant introduced grass species. The nutrient cycle is also impaired and the result is typically a higher level of nitrogen which also favors the introduced species. Increasing plant litter decreases the amount of sunlight reaching plant crowns thereby shifting competitive advantage to shade tolerant introduced grass species. Studies indicate that soil biological activity is altered and this shift apparently exploits the soil microclimate and encourages growth of the introduced grass species. Once the threshold is crossed, a change in grazing management alone cannot cause a reduction in the invasive grass dominance. Preliminary studies would tend to indicate this threshold may exist when Kentucky bluegrass exceeds 30 percent of the plant community and native grasses represent less than 40 percent of the plant community composition.

Once the state is well established, even drastic events such as high intensity fires driven by high fuel loads of litter and thatch will not result in more than a very short-term reduction of Kentucky bluegrass. These events may reduce the dominance of Kentucky bluegrass, but due to the large amount of rhizomes in the soil, there is no opportunity for the native species to establish and dominate before Kentucky bluegrass rebounds and again dominates the system.

#### 4.1 Smooth Bromegrass/Kentucky Bluegrass Plant Community Phase

This plant community phase is a result of extended periods of nonuse and no fire. It is characterized by a dominance of smooth bromegrass and Kentucky bluegrass. The dominance is at times so

complete that other species are difficult to find on the site. A thick duff layer also accumulates at or above the soil surface. Nutrient cycling is greatly reduced and native plants have great difficulty becoming established. When dominated by smooth brome grass, infiltration is moderately reduced and runoff is moderate. Production can be equal to or higher than the interpretive plant community. However, when dominated by Kentucky bluegrass, infiltration is greatly reduced and runoff is high. Production in this case will likely be significantly less. In either case, the period that palatability is high is relatively short, as these cool-season species mature rapidly. Energy capture is also reduced.

The following growth curve is an estimate of the monthly percentages of total annual growth of the dominant species expected during an average year:

Growth curve number: SD5501

Growth curve name: Southern Black Glaciated Plains, cool-season dominant.

Growth curve description: Cool-season dominant.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
0	0	4	12	25	36	10	5	4	4	0	0

Transitions or pathways leading to other plant communities are as follows:

- 4.1a – Heavy continuous seasonal grazing (stocking levels well above carrying capacity for extended portions of the growing season, and at the same time of year each year) or heavy continuous season-long grazing will convert this plant community to the *4.2 Kentucky Bluegrass/Blue Grama Plant Community Phase*.

#### 4.2 Kentucky Bluegrass/Blue Grama Plant Community Phase

This plant community phase is a result of heavy, continuous seasonal grazing or heavy, continuous season-long grazing. It is characterized by a dominance of Kentucky bluegrass and blue grama. The dominance is at times so complete that other species are difficult to find on the site. A relatively thick duff layer can sometimes accumulate at or above the soil surface. Nutrient cycling is greatly reduced and native plants have great difficulty becoming established. Infiltration is greatly reduced and runoff is high. Production will be significantly reduced when compared to the interpretive plant community. The period that palatability is high is relatively short as Kentucky bluegrass matures rapidly. Energy capture is also reduced. Biological activity in the soil is likely reduced significantly in this phase.

The following growth curve is an estimate of the monthly percentages of total annual growth of the dominant species expected during an average year:

Growth curve number: SD5502

Growth curve name: Southern Black Glaciated Plains, cool-season dominant, warm-season subdominant.

Growth curve description: Cool-season dominant, warm-season subdominant.

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
0	0	3	10	23	34	15	6	5	4	0	0

Transitions or pathways leading to other plant communities are as follows:

- 4.2a – Prescribed grazing (alternating season of use and providing adequate recovery periods) or periodic light to moderate grazing possibly including periodic rest may convert this plant community to the *4.1 Smooth Brome grass/Kentucky Bluegrass Plant Community Phase*.

## Transition Pathway from Any Plant Community to the 4.3 Annual/Pioneer, Non-Native Perennial Plant Community Phase within the Invaded State (State 4)

- T5 – Encroachment of non-native invasive/noxious species, abandonment of cropping, or seeding of introduced and/or native improved varieties of forage species may lead this plant community phase over a threshold to the *Invaded State (State 4)* and more specifically to the *4.3 Annual/Pioneer, Non-native Perennial Plant Community Phase*. In the case of a seeding, refer to the corresponding Forage Suitability Group (FSG) description for adapted species and expected production (production estimates in the FSG description may be unrealistically high due to the degraded condition of the site at this phase).

### 4.3 Annual/Pioneer, Non-Native Perennial Plant Community Phase

This plant community developed under continuous heavy grazing or other excessive disturbances (e.g., heavy use areas, defoliation by rodents, etc.). The potential plant community is made up of approximately 40 to 80 percent grasses and grass-like species, 20 to 60 percent forbs, and 0 to 5 percent shrubs. The species present in this phase are highly variable but often include nonnative invasive and/or early seral species. Plant diversity is low (plant richness may be high but areas are often dominated by a few species). The ecological processes are difficult to restore because of the loss of plant diversity and overall soil disturbance. Soil erosion is potentially very high because of the bare ground and shallow rooted herbaceous plant community. Water runoff will increase and infiltration will decrease due to animal related soil compaction and loss of root mass due to low plant diversity and vigor. This plant community will require significant economic inputs and time to move towards another plant community. This movement is highly variable in its succession. This is due to the loss of diversity (including the loss of the seed bank) within the existing plant community and the plant communities on adjacent sites.

Transitions or pathways leading to other states are as follows:

- 4.3a – Pest management (herbicides) and often heavy continuous seasonal grazing will likely result in an eventual dominance by Kentucky bluegrass which will lead to the *4.2 Kentucky Bluegrass/Blue Grama Plant Community Phase*.

## Restoration Pathway from the Invaded State (State 4) to the Native/Invaded Grass State (State 3)

- R4 - Long-term prescribed grazing (moderate stocking levels coupled with adequate recovery periods, or other grazing systems such as high-density, low-frequency intended to treat specific species dominance, or periodic light to moderate stocking levels possibly including periodic rest) may lead this plant community phase over a threshold to the *Native/Invaded Grass State (State 3)*. Pest management (i.e., herbicide) may also be needed to suppress cool-season invasive grasses. This will likely take a long period of time, possibly up to 10 years or more, and recovery may not be attainable. Success depends on whether native reproductive propagules remain intact on the site.

## **Ecological Site Interpretations**

### **Animal Community – Wildlife Interpretations**

-- Under Development --

**Bluestem/Needlegrass/Wheatgrass Plant Community Phases (1.1 & 3.1):**

**Western Wheatgrass/Blue Grama/Needlegrass Plant Community Phases (1.2):**

**Bluestem/Sideoats Grama/Western Wheatgrass Plant Community Phase (1.3):**

**Blue Grama/Buffalograss Sod Plant Community Phase (2.1):**

**Western Wheatgrass/Blue Grama/Kentucky Bluegrass Plant Community Phase (3.2):**

**Smooth Bromegrass/Kentucky Bluegrass Plant Community Phase (4.1):**

**Kentucky Bluegrass/Blue Grama Plant Community Phase (4.2):**

**Annual/Pioneer, Non-native Perennial Plant Community Phase (4.3):**

## Animal Preferences (Quarterly – 1,2,3,4<sup>†</sup>)

Common Name	Cattle	Sheep	Horses	Deer	Antelope	Bison	Elk
<b>Grasses and Grass-likes</b>							
big bluestem	U D P D	U D U U	U D P D	U D U U	U D U U	U D P D	U D P D
blue grama	U D P U	D P P D	U D P U	D P P D	D P P D	U D P U	U D P U
buffalograss	U U D U	N U D U	U U D U	N U D U	N U D U	U U D U	U U D U
green needlegrass	U P U D	N P N P	U P U D	N P N P	N P N P	U P U D	U P U D
Indiangrass	U D P D	U D U U	U D P D	U D U U	U D U U	U D P D	U D P D
little bluestem	U D D U	N D N N	U D D U	N D N N	N D N N	U D D U	U D D U
needleandthread	U D U D	N D N U	U D U D	N D N U	N D N U	U D U D	U D U D
porcupine grass	U P U D	N D N U	U P U D	N D N U	N D N U	U P U D	U P U D
prairie dropseed	N U P U	N U D U	N U P U	N U D U	N U D U	N U P U	N U P U
prairie junegrass	U D U D	N D N U	U D U D	N D N U	N D N U	U D U D	U D U D
Scribner panicum	U U D U	N U N N	U U D U	N U N N	N U N N	U U D U	U U D U
sedge	U D U D	U P N D	U D U D	U D U D	U D U D	U D U D	U D U D
sideoats grama	U D P U	U P D U	U D P U	U P D U	U P D U	U D P U	U D P U
slender wheatgrass	U P U U	N D U N	U P U U	N D U N	N D U N	U P U U	U P U U
switchgrass	U D D U	U D U U	U D D U	N N N N	N N N N	U D D U	U D D U
tall dropseed	N U N N	N U N N	N U N N	N U N N	N U N N	N U N N	N U N N
western wheatgrass	U P D U	N D N N	U P D U	N D N N	N D N N	U P D U	U P D U
<b>Forbs</b>							
American vetch	U D P U	U P P U	U D P U	U P P U	U P P U	U D P U	U P P U
catclaw sensitive briar	U D P U	U P P U	U D P U	U P P U	U P P U	U D P U	U P P U
cudweed sagewort	U U U U	U U D U	U U U U	U U D U	U U D U	U U U U	U U D U
dotted gayfeather	U U D U	U P P U	U U D U	U P P U	U P P U	U U D U	U P P U
false boneset	U U D U	N D U N	U U D U	N D U N	N D U N	U U D U	N D U N
goldenrod	U U D U	N U U N	U U D U	N U U N	N U U N	U U D U	N U U N
groundplum milkvetch	U D U U	U D D U	U D U U	U D D U	U D D U	U D U U	U D D U
heath aster	U U D U	U U P U	U U D U	U U P U	U U P U	U U D U	U U P U
Illinois bundleflower	U D U U	U D D U	U D U U	U D D U	U D D U	U D U U	U D D U
Maximilian sunflower	U D P U	U D P U	U D P U	U D P U	U D P U	U D P U	U D P U
penstemon	U U U U	U P P U	U U U U	U P P U	U P P U	U U U U	U P P U
prairie coneflower	U U D U	U P P U	U U D U	U P P U	U P P U	U U D U	U P P U
purple coneflower	U U D U	U P P U	U U D U	U P P U	U P P U	U U D U	U P P U
purple prairie clover	U D P U	U P P U	U D P U	U P P U	U P P U	U D P U	U P P U
rush skeletonweed	U U U U	N N N N	U U U U	N N N N	N N N N	U U U U	N N N N
scarlet gaura	U U U U	N U U N	U U U U	N U U N	N U U N	U U U U	N U U N
scurfpea	U U U U	N U U N	U U U U	N U U N	N U U N	U U U U	N U U N
stiff sunflower	U D P U	U D P U	U D P U	U D P U	U D P U	U D P U	U D P U
western ragweed	U U U U	N N N N	U U U U	N N N N	N N N N	U U U U	N N N N
western yarrow	U U U U	N U U N	U U U U	N U U N	N U U N	U U U U	N U U N
woolly verbena	U U U U	N N N N	U U U U	N N N N	N N N N	U U U U	N N N N
<b>Shrubs</b>							
leadplant	U P D U	U P D U	U P D U	U P D U	U P D U	U P D U	U P D U
rose	U D D U	U D D U	U D D U	U D D U	U D D U	U D D U	U D D U
snowberry	U U U U	U U U U	U U U U	D U D D	U U U U	U U U U	D U U U

**N** = not used; **U** = undesirable; **D** = desirable; **P** = preferred; **T** = toxic

<sup>†</sup> Quarters: 1 – Jan., Feb., Mar.; 2 – Apr., May, Jun.; 3 – Jul., Aug., Sep.; 4 – Oct., Nov., Dec.

## Animal Community – Grazing Interpretations

The following table lists annual, suggested initial stocking rates with average growing conditions. These are conservative estimates that should be used only as guidelines in the initial stages of conservation planning. Often, the current plant composition does not entirely match any particular plant community (as described in this ES description). Because of this, a resource inventory is necessary to document plant composition and production. More accurate carrying capacity estimates should eventually be calculated using the following stocking rate information along with animal preference data and actual stocking records, particularly when grazers other than cattle are involved. With consultation of the land manager, more intensive grazing management may result in improved harvest efficiencies and increased carrying capacity.

Plant Community	Average Annual Production (lbs./acre, air-dry)	Stocking Rate* (AUM/acre)
Bluestem/Needlegrass/Wheatgrass (1.1 & 3.1)	3,200	0.88
Western Wheatgrass/Blue Grama/Kentucky Bluegrass (3.2)	2,500	0.69
Smooth Bromegrass/Kentucky Bluegrass (4.1)	3,200	0.88
Kentucky Bluegrass/Blue Grama (4.2)	2,000	0.55
Annual/Pioneer, Non-Native Perennial (4.3)	900	0.25

\*Based on 912 lbs./acre (air-dry weight) per Animal Unit Month and on 25 percent harvest efficiency (refer to United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), National Range and Pasture Handbook).

Grazing by domestic livestock is one of the major income-producing industries in the area. Rangeland in this area may provide yearlong forage. During the dormant period, the forage for livestock will likely be lacking protein to meet livestock requirements, and added protein will allow ruminants to better utilize the energy stored in grazed plant materials. A forage quality test (either directly or through fecal sampling) should be used to determine the level of supplementation needed.

## Hydrology Functions

Water is the principal factor limiting forage production on this site. This site is dominated by soils in hydrologic group B, with localized areas in hydrologic group C. Infiltration and runoff potential for this site varies from moderate to high depending on soil hydrologic group, slope, and ground cover. In many cases, areas with greater than 75 percent ground cover have the greatest potential for high infiltration and lower runoff. An example of an exception would be where shortgrasses form a strong sod and dominate the site. Dominance by blue grama, buffalograss, bluegrass, and/or smooth bromegrass will result in reduced infiltration and increased runoff. Areas where ground cover is less than 50 percent have the greatest potential to have reduced infiltration and higher runoff (refer to Section 4, NRCS National Engineering Handbook for runoff quantities and hydrologic curves).

## Recreational Uses

This site provides hunting, hiking, photography, bird watching, and other opportunities. The wide varieties of plants that bloom from spring until fall have an esthetic value that appeals to visitors.

## Wood Products

No appreciable wood products are typically present on this site.

## Other Products

Seed harvest of native plant species can provide additional income on this site.

## Supporting Information

### Associated Sites

Clayey (R055CY011SD), Thin Upland (R055CY012SD), Loamy Overflow (R055CY020SD)

### Similar Sites

(R055CY020SD) – Loamy Overflow [more big bluestem; higher production]

(R055CY011SD) – Clayey [more green needlegrass; less needleandthread, and big bluestem]

### Inventory Data References

Information presented here has been derived from NRCS clipping data and other inventory data. Field observations from range-trained personnel were also used. Those involved in developing this site include: Stan Boltz, Range Management Specialist, NRCS.

<u>Data Source</u>	<u>Number of Records</u>	<u>Sample Period</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>County</u>
SCS-RANGE-417	9	1985 – 1987	SD	Aurora, Charles Mix, Hand

### State Correlation

This site has been correlated in SD in MLRA 55C.

### Field Offices/Counties

Armour	Douglas	Huron	Beadle	Plankinton	Aurora
Chamberlain	Brule	Lake Andes	Charles Mix	Redfield	Spink
Clark	Clark	Madison	Lake	Salem	McCook
De Smet	Kingsbury	Miller	Hand	Tyndall	Bon Homme
Faulkton	Faulk	Mitchell	Davison/Hanson	Wessington Springs	Jerauld
Highmore	Hyde	Parker	Turner	Woonsocket	Sanborn
Howard	Miner	Parkston	Hutchinson	Yankton	Yankton

### Relationship to Other Established Classifications

Level IV Ecoregions of the Conterminous United States: 42e – Southern Missouri Coteau, 42f – Southern Missouri Coteau Slope, 46n – James River Lowland.

### Other References

High Plains Regional Climate Center, University of Nebraska, 830728 Chase Hall, Lincoln, NE 68583-0728. (<http://www.hprcc.unl.edu/>)

USDA, NRCS. National Water and Climate Center, 101 SW Main, Suite 1600, Portland, OR 97204-3224. (<http://wcc.nrcs.usda.gov>)

USDA, NRCS. National Range and Pasture Handbook, September 1997

USDA, NRCS. National Soil Information System, Information Technology Center, 2150 Centre Avenue, Building A, Fort Collins, CO 80526. (<http://nasis.nrcs.usda.gov>)

USDA, NRCS. 2001. The PLANTS Database, Version 3.1 (<http://plants.usda.gov>). National Plant Data Center, Baton Rouge, LA 70874-4490 USA.

### Site Description Approval

\_\_\_\_\_  
SD, State Range Management Specialist

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date