Ecological Site Concepts

Homer Sanchez
Range Management Specialist
National Grazing Lands Team
Fort Worth, TX
USDA-NRCS

Interagency Ecological Site



Handbook for Rangelands

21 July 2011





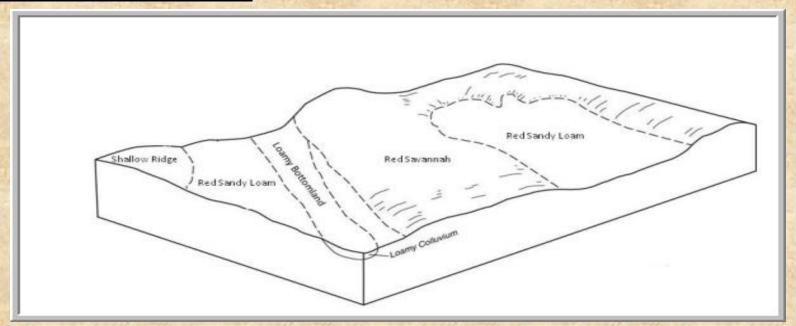


Current Ecological Site Definition

A distinctive kind of land with specific physical characteristics that differs from other kinds of land in its ability to produce a distinctive kind and amount of vegetation

New Interagency Definition

An **Ecological Site (ES)** is a conceptual division of the landscape that is defined as a distinctive kind of land based on recurring soil, landform, geological, and climate characteristics that differs from other kinds of land in its ability to produce distinctive kinds and amounts of vegetation and in its ability to respond similarly to management actions and natural disturbances.



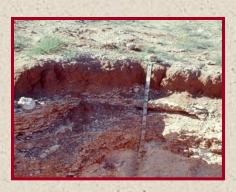
Each <u>Ecological Site</u> is the product of <u>all</u> the Environmental Factors responsible for its development.



Climate



Geomorphology



Soils

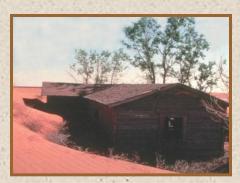
These abiotic factors interact to govern how plant species are distributed along environmental gradients, and how they respond to other factors such as <u>disturbances and management</u>:



Fire



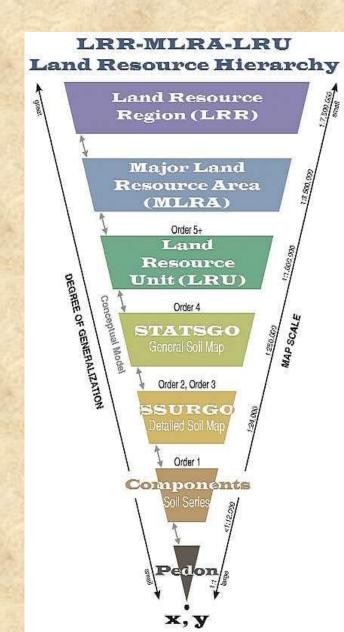
Herbivory



Drought

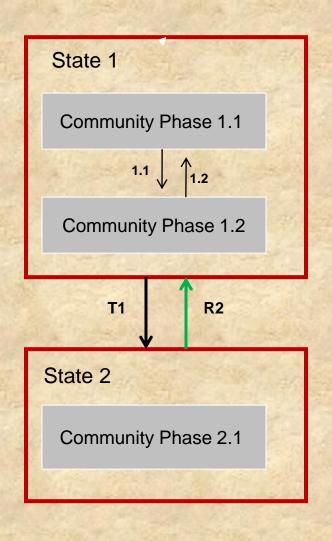
Defining the Site Concept

- The composition, structure, and function of plant communities are governed by energy, moisture, and nutrient gradients, as well as disturbance regimes.
- In decreasing order of scale, these gradients vary due to differences in macroclimate, geology, lithology, topography (elevation, slope, aspect, and landform position), and soil physical and chemical characteristics.



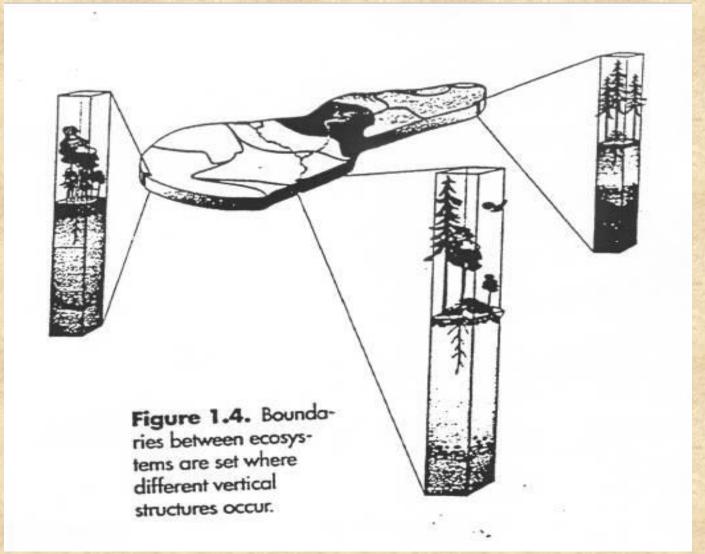
- The ecological site concept is defined based on reference conditions representing natural states, with state changes and transitions subsequently estimated based on our understanding of succession and ecological thresholds.
- Reference states and their component community phases represent the historical range of variability due to successional dynamics following disturbances. Within this natural, historical, or reference state, the community phase used to define an ecological site is termed the reference community phase.
- The reference community phase is identified as that community phase which exhibits the characteristics of the reference state, and contains the full complement of plant species that historically occupied the site (Bestelmeyer et al. 2010, Briske et al. 2008).

Standard State and Transition Diagram

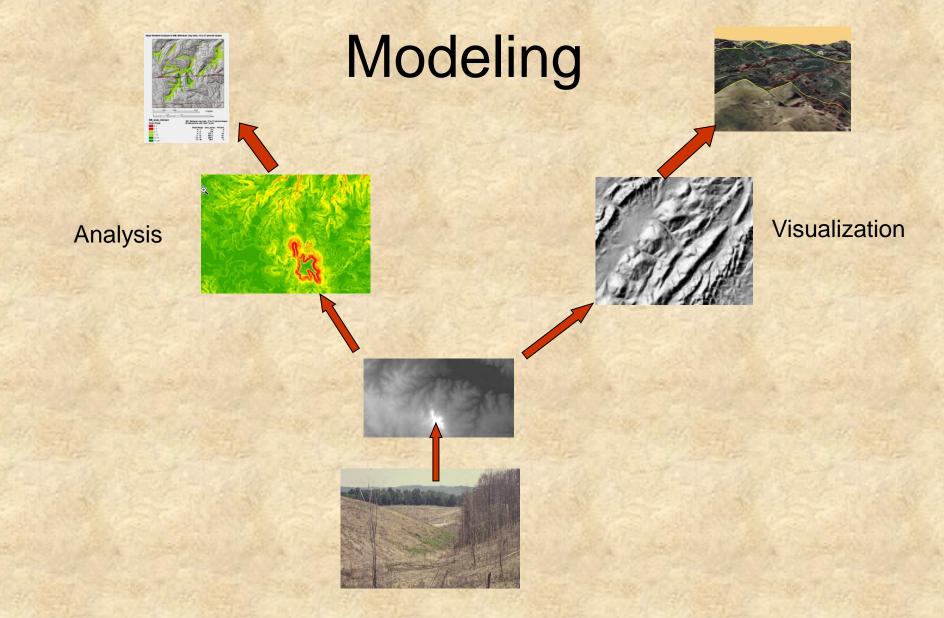


- States
- Communities phases
- Transitions
- RestorationPathways

Ecological Sites

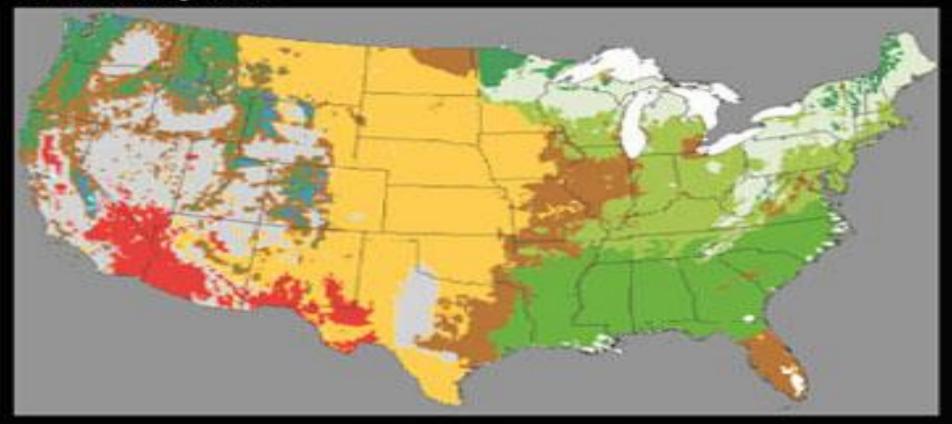


So, how are ecological sites modeled?

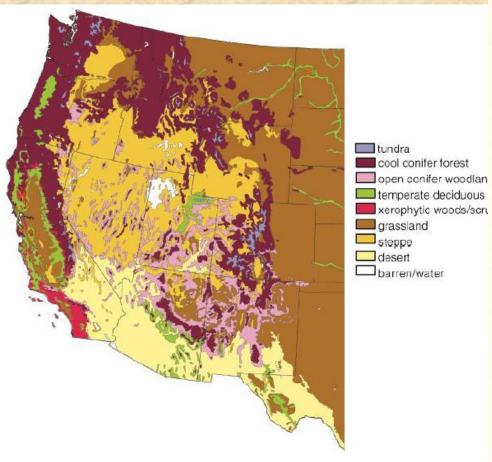


Ecosystem Models

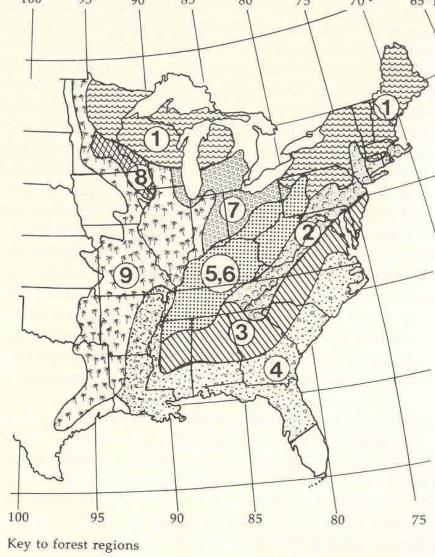
Current Ecosystems



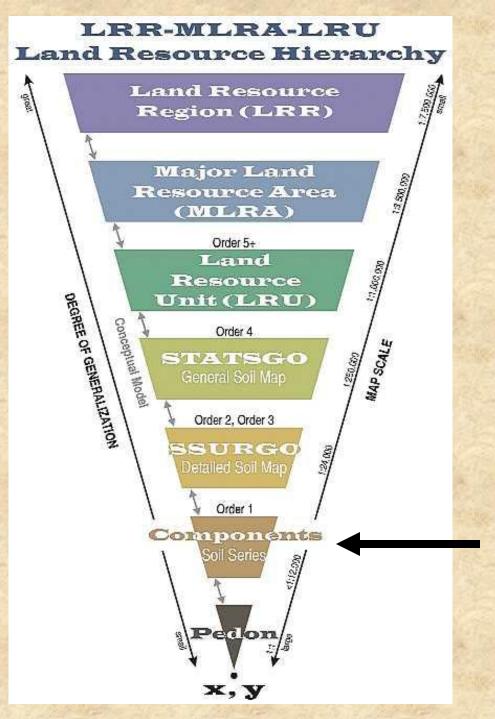




getation of the western United States based on the Küchler (1964) map of potential natural vegetation. The cates been grouped to approximate the biomes used by Prentice et al. (1996) and this paper (with the exception of the gories, which can be differentiated here but are more difficult to discriminate in pollen and macrofossil data).

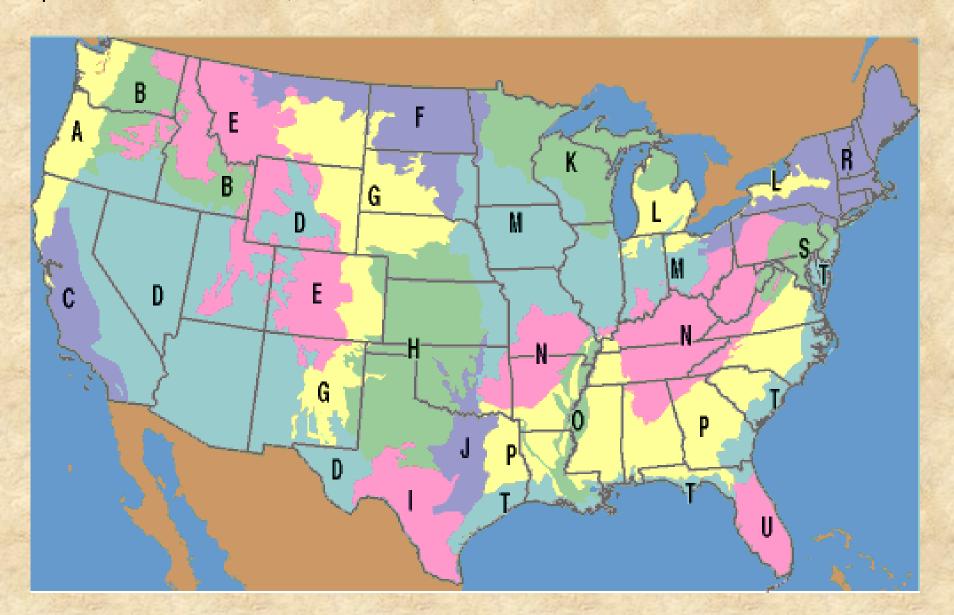


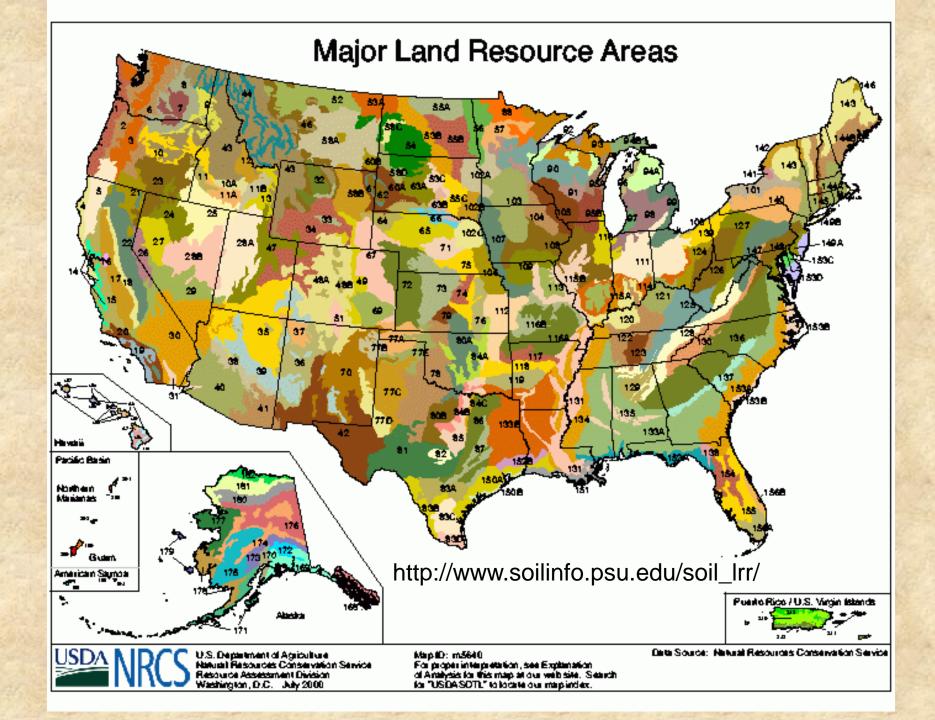
- Hemlock-white pine-northern hardwoods forest
 - Oak-chestnut forest
 - Oak-pine forest
- Southeastern evergreen forest
- Mixed and western mesophytic forests
 - Beech-maple forest
 - Maple-basswood forest
- Oak-hickory forest



 Ecological sites are characterized and ESDs are developed utilizing the NRCS Land Resource Hierarchical System

 ESD – developed at the soil component level Land resource regions (LRR) are geographically associated groups of major land resource areas and consist mainly of areas that have very broadly related patterns of soil, climate, water resources, and land use.



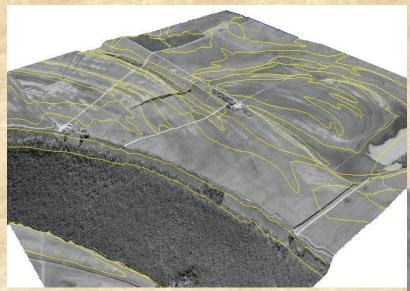


Landscapes



Landscape contains Multiple Landforms

Landform units delineated as soil map unit

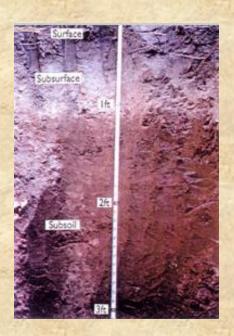


Single Map Unit delineation contains Single or Multiple Components

Spatial Data Structure

- Landscape
- Map Unit
- Component





Utilize the National Cooperative Soil Survey/NASIS as the framework



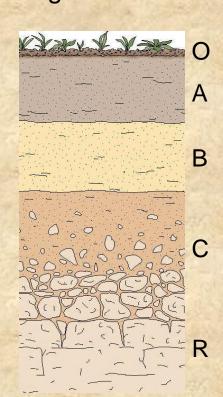
- A good soil survey complements the site concept effort
- Soil properties effectively explain significant variations in vegetation.

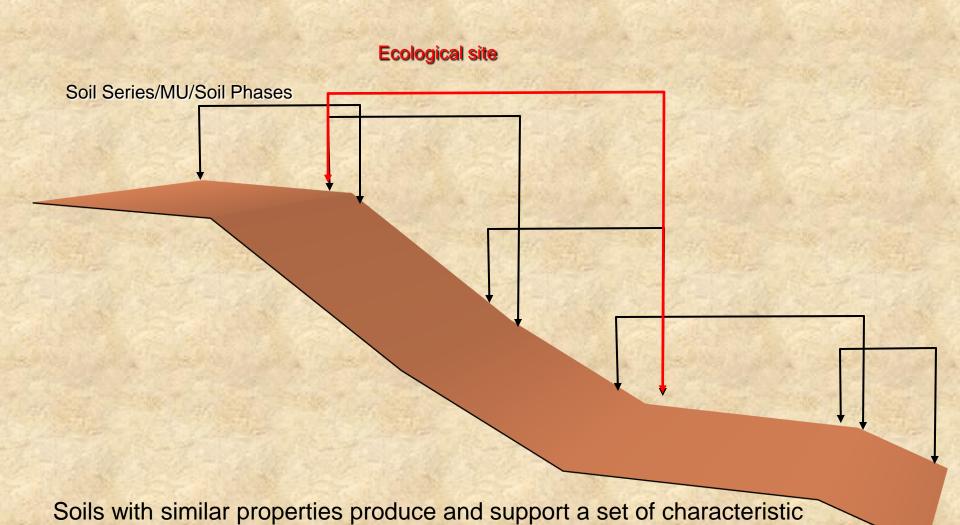
Select the most <u>essential soil properties</u> that have significant

influence on vegetation. For Example;

- 1) Landform
- 2) Parent Materials
- 3) Root Restriction
- 4) Base Saturation
- 5) Drainage
- 6) Texture
- 7) Flooding
- 8) Ponding

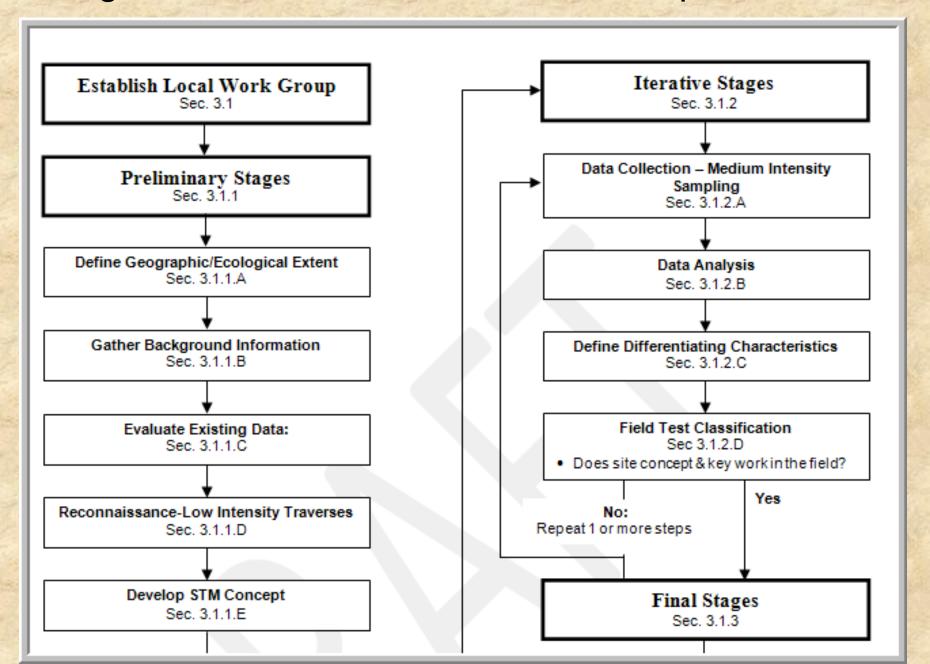
A MONUMENTAL EFFORT!





native plant communities and are grouped into the same ecological site.

Ecological Site Classification and Development Process



Establishing the preliminary principles for ecological sites based on;

- Referenced Literature
 - Historical Records
 - University Press
 - Scientific Journals
- Vegetation Classification Systems and Floristic Assessment Methods and review point or plot data from sources such as
 - Nature Conservancy
 - Department of Natural Resources
 - Forest Service, BLM
 - Nature Conservancy NatureServe
 - State Department of Natural Resources
 - Forest Service, BLM
 - NRCS

- Coordinate ESD efforts through locally-lead workshops involving all partners.
- Create the initial Ecological Site concepts based on literature reviews, and existing data.
- Sort soils based on key soil and physiographic features and/or develop a spatial hierarchy for sampling
- Conduct extensive, low intensity traverses
 (Tier 1) to refine initial concepts and to plan inventory procedures

(Tier 1) Conduct extensive, low intensity traverses to refine initial concepts and to plan inventory procedures

- Review existing GIS layers where possible
- Target relic areas, potential reference areas
- Dig shallow soil pits, classify the soil pedon
- Take digital Photos, GPS, do ocular estimates
- Concept is to cover broad areas within the MLRA
- Sampling occurs across the extent of the area
- Confirm and validate

(Tier 2). Medium intensity transects across broad extents with large number of samples

- Designed to investigate interrelationships of ecological sites, states and communities
- Data provides the bulk of quantitative data used to test the concepts for the site and state differentiation, as well as defining the mapping unit,
- Simple soil pedon descriptions distinguish key characteristics (e.g., soil horizons, soil structure, rock fragments)
- Should be conducted by soils and vegetation specialist

 At the local scale, soil temperature, moisture, and nutrient regimes are characterized based on key soil physical and chemical properties that are used as differentiating criteria in defining an ecological site.

Key soil properties are identified using direct measures of edaphic conditions including soil morphology, depth, texture, water holding capacity, pH, and so forth.



(Tier 3) High-intensity characterization and monitoring of states.

- Conducted once the site concepts are well established
- Intensive measurements to understand how states function by quantifying feedback mechanisms
- Inventory techniques to measure

Basal Cover

Canopy Cover

Production

Soil Stability



What are the Benifits?

Hands-on Training Workshops by MLRA/eco-region



Landscapes are Divided Into Ecological Sites

for the Purposes of:



- Inventory
- Evaluation
- Management









Potential Uses for ESDs

 Standard reference for natural resource information for all federal agencies and other interested groups/organizations

Training tool and information source

 Tool to assess lands for potential or resource specific concerns

- wildlife habitat
- carbon sinks
- vulnerability to loss or degradation
- Site restoration



What are the Products?

1. Ecological Site Descriptions



2. Web Soil Survey Mapping with hyperlinks to ELT/ESD



The characteristics differentiating ecological sites and their abiotic and biotic features are documented in ecological site descriptions (ESD).

Data Access

> Return to Reports Selection Screen

Report Selection

- > General
- > Physiographic Featur
- > Climate Features
- > Water Features
- > Soil Features
- > Plant Communities
- > Site Interpretations
- > Supporting Informati
- > Rangeland Health Reference Sheet

Complete Report

> HTML Printable Forn

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

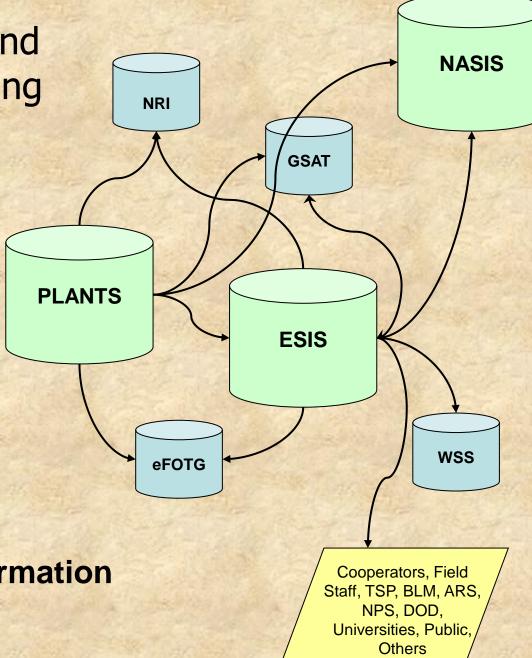
ECOLOGICAL SITE DESCRIPTION (New Format Report)

ECOLOGICAL SITE CHARACTERISTICS

Site Type: Rangeland

An ESD provides interpretations about the land uses and ecosystem services that a particular ecological site can support and management alternatives for achieving land management objectives.

Where are ESDs and how does everything link together?



Ecological Site Information (ESIS) Flow Chart



ecological site descriptions

Advanced search Language tools

Google Search

I'm Feeling Lucky



ecological site descriptions

Search

About 1,650,000 results

Advanced search

🛂 Everything

- Images
- Videos
- News
- Shopping
- ▼ More

Show search tools

ESD - Ecological Site Description System

The Ecological Site Description (ESD) application provides the capability to enter, edit, and view reports of rangeland and forest land ecological site descriptions ... esis.sc.egov.usda.gov/Welcome/pgESDWelcome.aspx - Cached - Similar

Ecological Site Information System

ESIS is the NRCS repository for **ecological site descriptions** and for ... esis.sc.egov.usda.gov/ - Cached - Similar

Approved ESD Reports - Ecological Site Description System

Anyone may view reports of approved **Ecological Site Descriptions**. To view ...

esis.sc.egov.usda.gov/Welcome/pgReportLocation.aspx?type=ESD - Cached - Similar

Ecological Site Descriptions | Montana NRCS

Jun 16, 2005 ... Montana's Ecological Site Descriptions are in the process ... www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/ecs/range/ecolsites/ - Cached - Similar

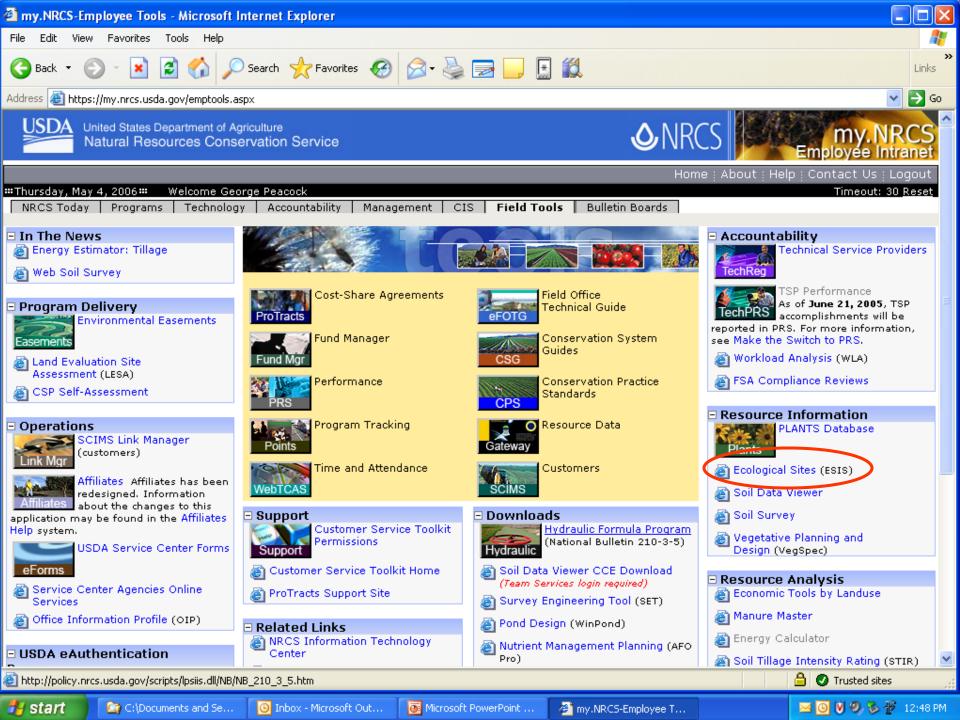
Ecological Sites

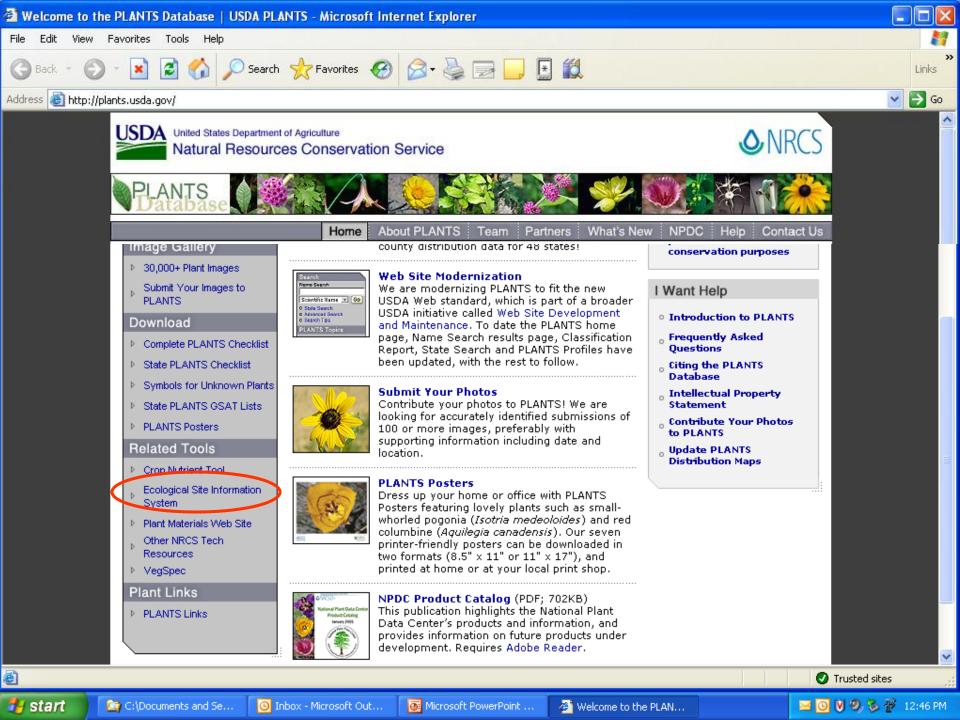
What is an Ecological Site Description? By Tracey Jean Wolfe. SRM Certified Professional in Rangeland Management. During the first part of the century farms ... nevada.rangelands.org/.../2008-10%20What%20is%20an%20Ecological%20Site% 20Description.pdf - Cached - Similar

Ecological Site Descriptions | The Jornada

This page provides some definitions for **ecological site descriptions** (ESDs) and provides tools and literature pertaining to their development. A comprehensive ... iornada.nmsu.edu/esd - Cached - Similar

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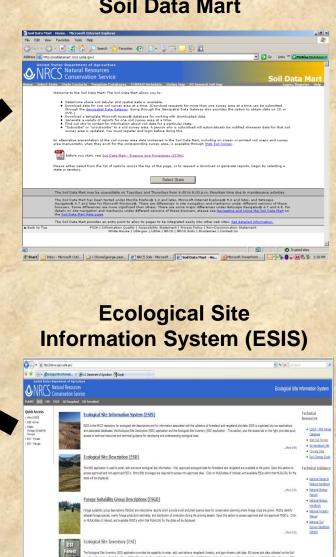


Accessing ecological sites through WSS

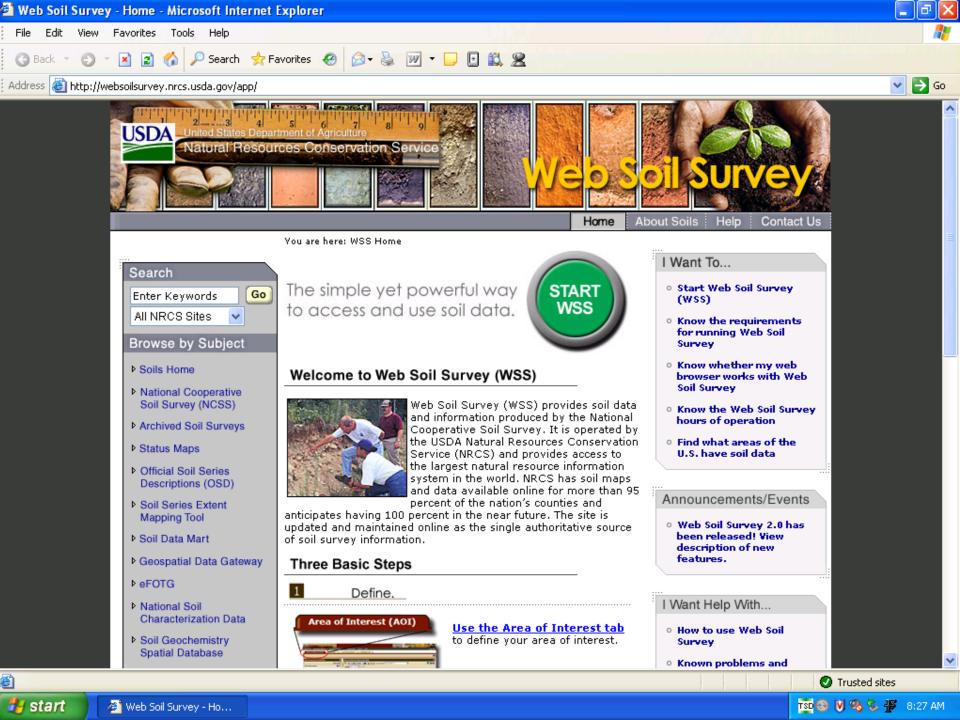


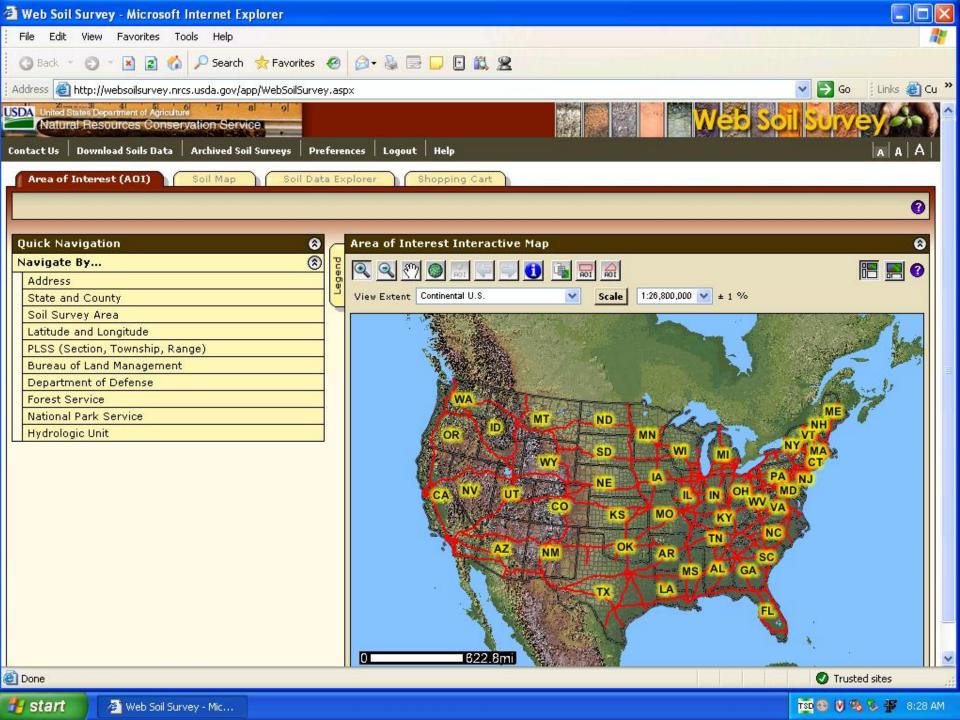
Web Soil Survey

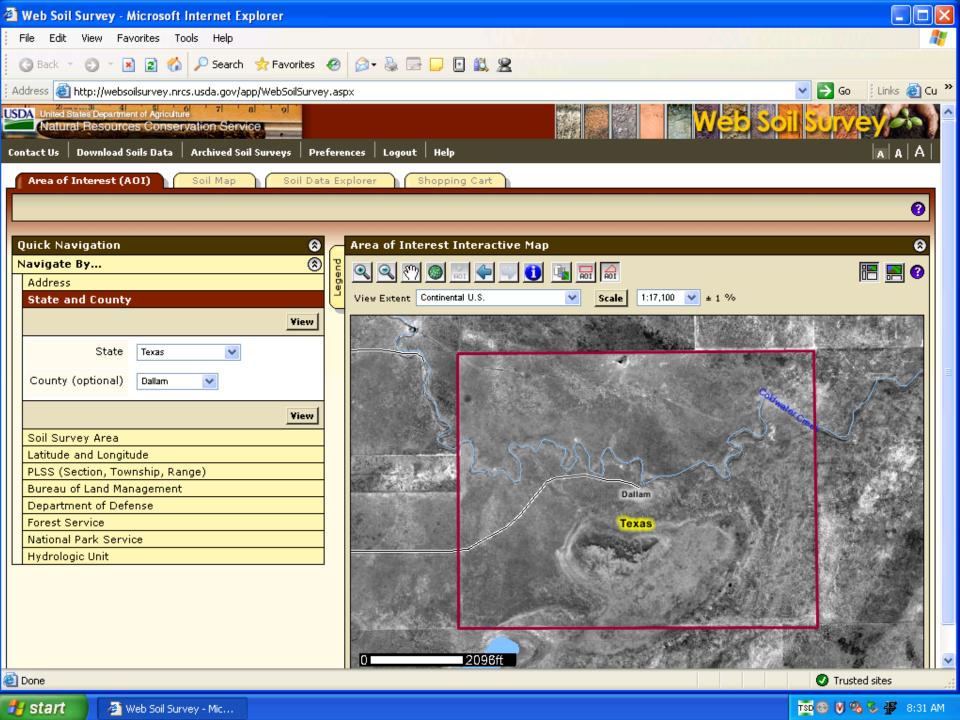
Soil Data Mart

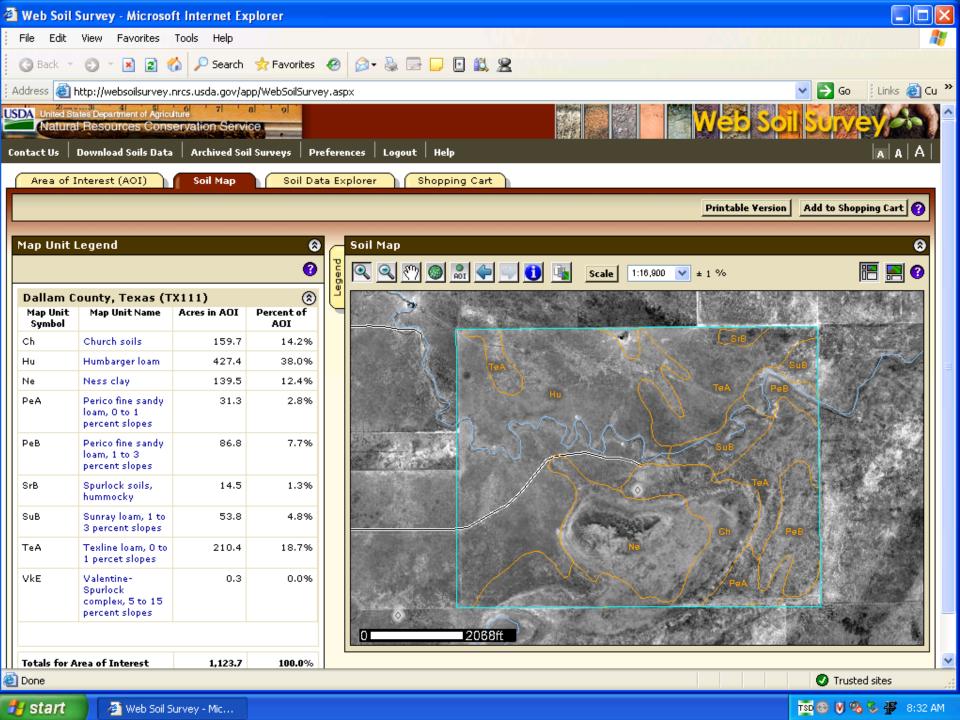


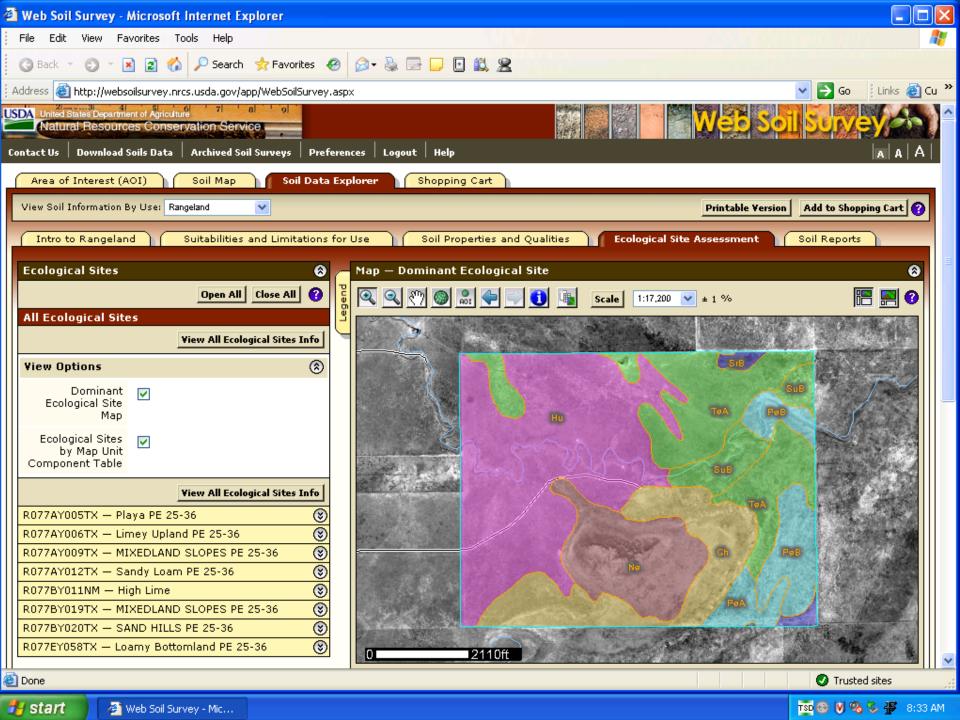
mation, open this section or click on either the Forest or the Rangeland, "button" to the left.

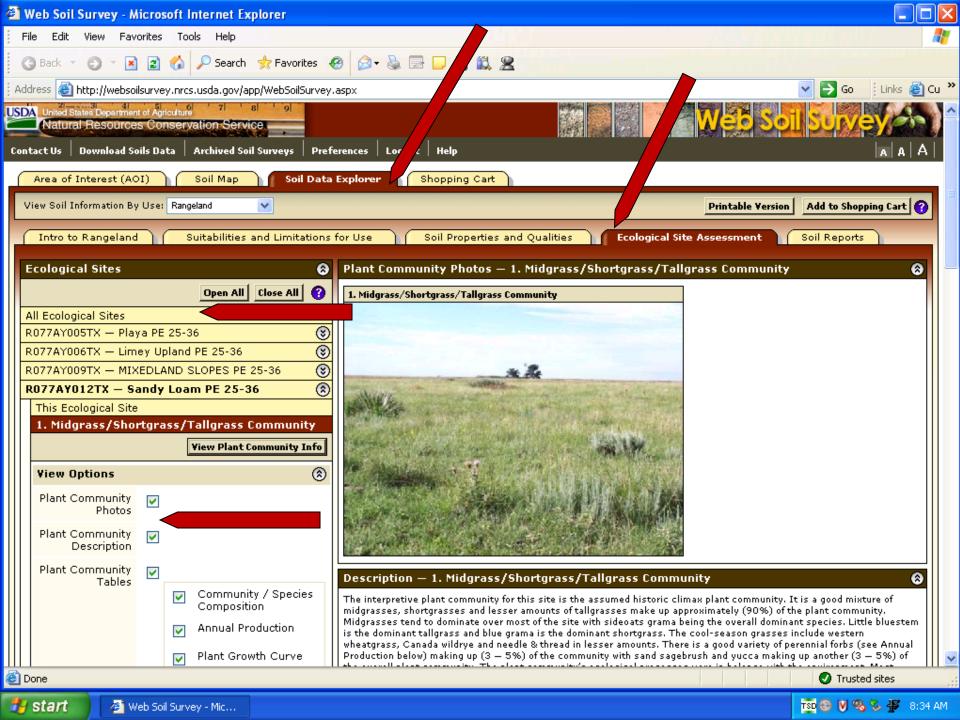


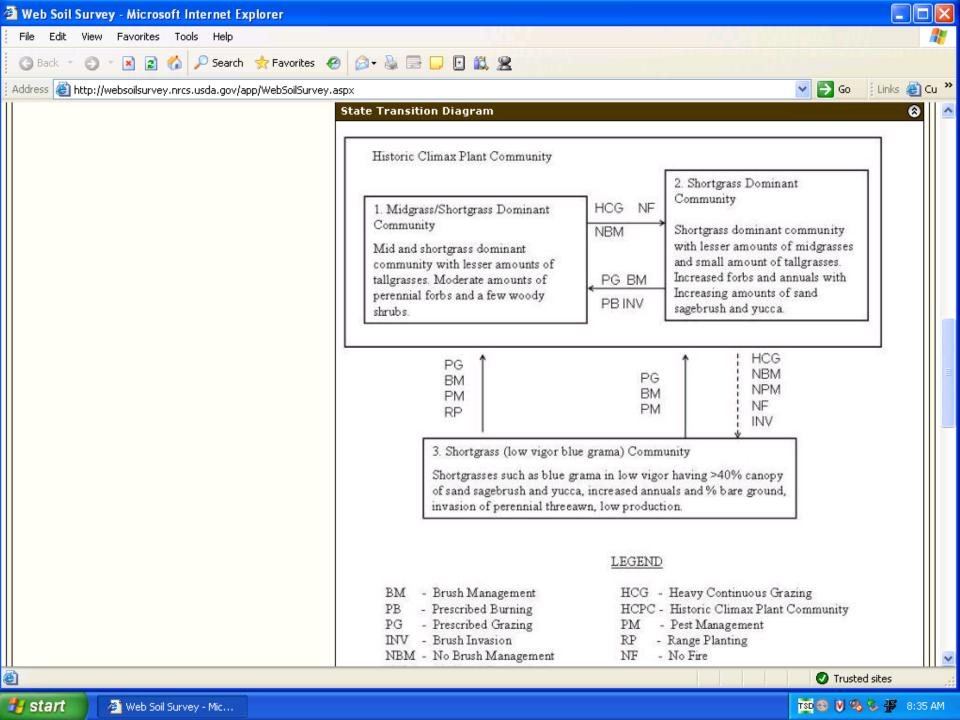


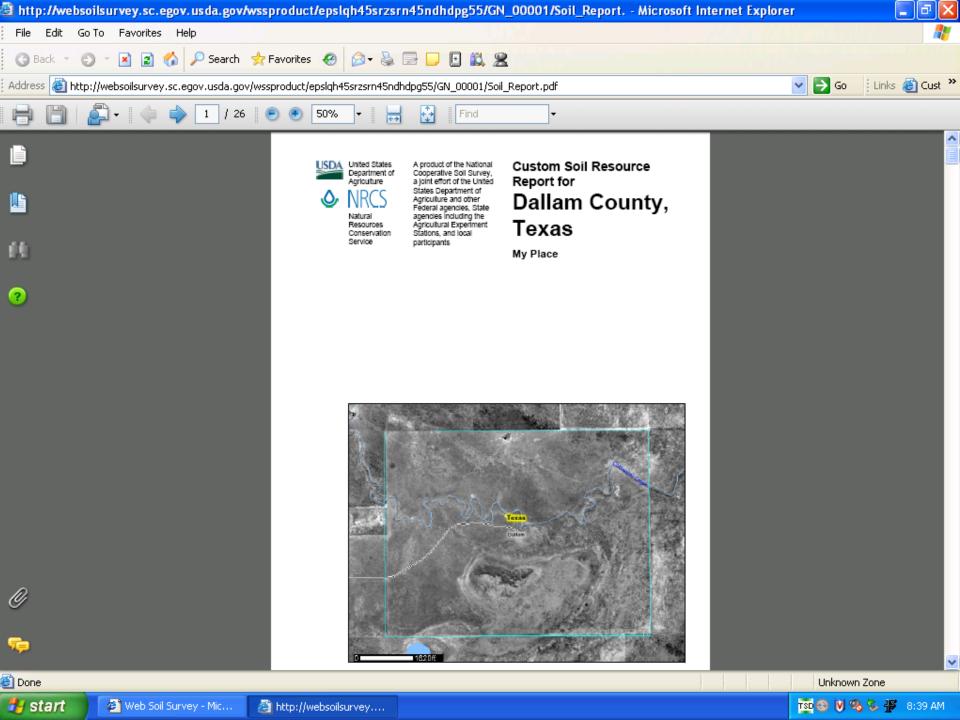


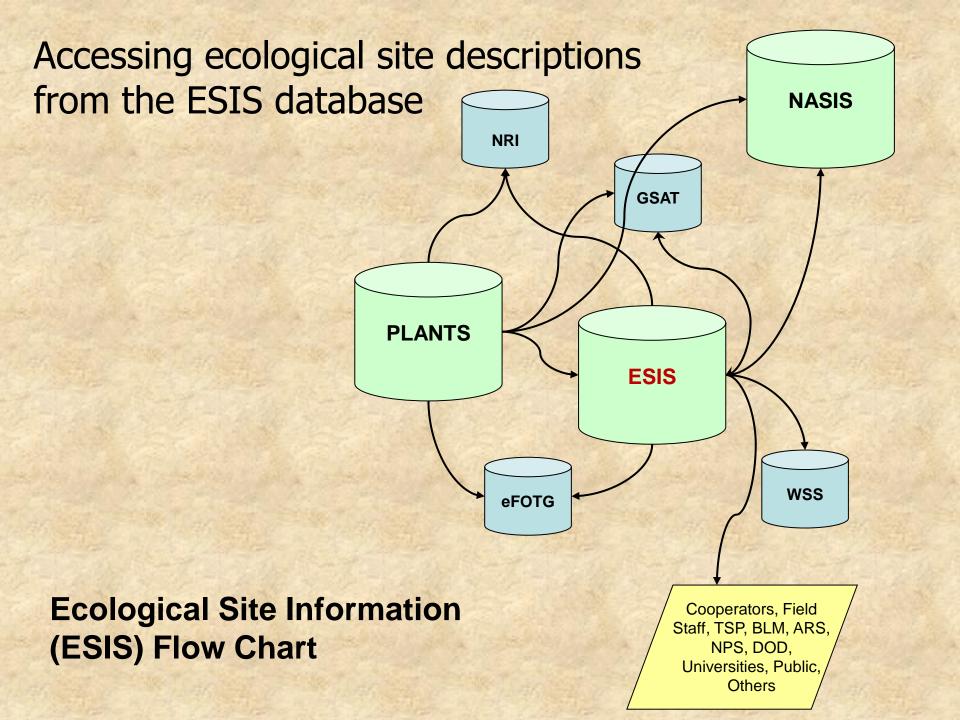












ESIS- ESD Ecological Site Description



Quick Access

- About ESIS
- ESD Home
- Forage Suitability
 Groups
- ESI Forest
- ▶ ESI Range



Ecological Site Information System (ESIS)

ESIS is the NRCS repository for ecological site descriptions and associated with the collection of forestland and rangeland plot data. ESIS is organized into two applications and associated databases; the Ecological Site Description and the Ecological Site Inventory (ESI) application. This section, plus the access tab on the right, provides quick access to technical resources and technical guidance upon and understanding ecological sites.

...More Info



Ecological Site Description (ESD)

The ESD application is used to enter, edit and store ecological site information. Only approved ecological sites for forestland and rangeland are available to the public. Open this section to access approved and non-approved ESD's. Entry/Edit privileges are required to access non-approved sites. Click on MLRA/state of interest, and available ESDs within that MLRA/LRU for the state will be displayed.

...More Info



Forage Suitability Group Descriptions (FSGD)

Forage suitability group descriptions (FSGDs) are interpretive reports which provide a soil and plant science basis for conservation planning where forage crops are grown. FSGDs identify adapted forage species, yearly forage production estimates, and distribution of production during the growing season. Open this section to access approved and non-approved FSGD's. Click on MLRA/state of interest, and available FSGD's within that MLRA/LRU for the state will be displayed.

...More Info



Ecological Site Inventory (ESI)

The Ecological Site Inventory (ESI) application provides the capability to enter, edit, and retrieve rangeland, forestry, and agro-forestry plot data. ESI stores plot data collected via the Soil-Woodland Correlation Field Data Sheet (ECS-005), the Windbreak-Soil-Species Evaluation Data Sheet (ECS-004) and the Production and Composition Record (RANGE-417). To access ESI information, open this section or click on either the Forest or the Rangeland, "button" to the left.

Technical Resources

- USDA ARS Range
 Database
- Web Soil Survey
 An Handbook 296
- ...
- Climate Data
- Soil Change Guide

Technical Guidance

- National Range & Pasture Handbook
- <u>National Biology</u>
 Manual
- National Biology Handbook
- National Forestry Manual
- <u>National Soil</u>
 <u>Survey Handbook</u>
 (NSSH)

Ecological Site Description

ESI Forestland ESI Rangeland ESIS User Guide

Reports

- > Approved ESD Reports Approved Reference

Data Access

- > Data Edit/Entry, Download, Reports
- > GSAT Downloads

Welcome to the Ecological Site Description (ESD) System for Rangeland and Forestland

The Ecological Site Description (ESD) application provides the capability to enter, edit, and view reports of rangeland and forest land ecological site descriptions. Anyone may view reports of approved Ecological Site Descriptions. Data entry, edit, download, and viewing draft reports is for authorized users only.

ESIS User Guide

For questions about this database as a whole, contact:

Rangeland:

Forestland:

Ray Stoner

Forester

Homer Sanchez

Rangeland Management Specialist

National Grazing Lands Team

Central National Technology Support Center Fort Worth, Texas

Phone: 817-509-3227

Fax: 817-509-3336

Central National Technology Support Center Fort Worth, Texas

Phone: 817-509-3215 Fax: 817-509-3336

For questions pertaining to an individual state's data, contact:

NRCS State Range Specialist or Forester for that state.

Please address all comments and suggestions about the contents of this Web page to homer.sanchez@ftw.usda.gov

If you are having problems with this Web page, please let us know at plantswebmaster@plants.usda.gov

Updated May 10, 2010

Ecological Site Description



lants

ESIS

ESD

ESI Forestland ESI Rangeland

Reports

- > Approved ESD Reports
- > Approved Reference Sheets

Data Access

- > Data Edit/Entry, Download, Reports
- > GSAT Downloads

Welcome to the Ecological Site Description (ESD) System for Rangeland and Forestland Data

Anyone may view reports of approved Ecological Site Descriptions. To view the various reports select a State or MLRA or both and Submit. From the subsequent list, select the ESD you wish to view.

Major Land Resource Areas (MLRA) are a portion of the spatial framework utilized by the Natural Resources Conservation Service in the planning, design, implementation, and evaluation of natural resource management activities. MLRA boundaries reflect nearly homogenous areas of landuse, elevation, topography, climate, water resources, potential vegetation, and soils.

If you need assistance in locating the MLRA, click on the MLRA Explorer link below The MLRA Explorer is an interactive map-based application of USDA Agriculture Handbook 296. With the tools in this application, you can:

- (1) search for your MLRA by entering your State and County,
- (2) search for LRRs and MLRAs using a variety of geographical and textual queries.

MLRA Information

MLRA Explorer

None Selected

MLRA

None Selected

Submit



MLRA 154 - South-Central Florida Ridge

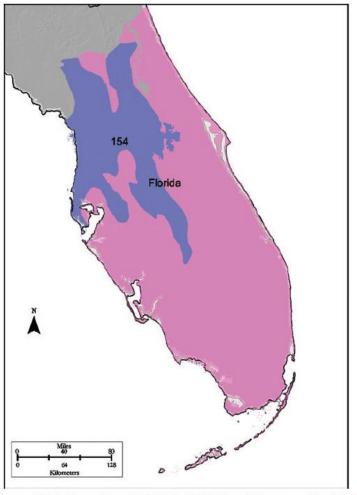


Figure 154-1: Location of MLRA 154 in Land Resource Region U

Introduction

This area is entirely in Florida (fig. 154-1). It makes up about 8,285 square miles (21,470 square kilometers). Parts of the east side of the city of Tampa Bay and the west half of Orlando are in this area. Interstate 75 parallels the north-south axis of the northern half of this MLRA, and Interstate 4 crosses the southern tip. The Ocala National Forest and the Withlacoochee State Forest are in this area.



Ecological Site Description

Reports

Sheets Data Access > Data Edit/Entry, Download, Reports > GSAT Downloads

> Approved ESD Reports > Approved Reference ESI Forestland ESI Rangeland ESIS User Guide

Ecological Site Description Selection

Select a site to view Report

ID	Туре	MLRA	Site Name	Biotic Name
R077DY038TX	R	077D	Clay Loam 12-17" PZ	
R077DY039TX	R	077D	Draw 12-17" PZ	
R077DY040TX	R	077D	High Lime 12-17" PZ	
R077DY041TX	R	077D	Lakebed 12-17" PZ	
R077DY042TX	R	077D	Limy Upland 12- 17" PZ	
R077DY045TX	R	077D	Sand Hills 12-17" PZ	
R077DY046TX	R	077D	Sandy 12-17" PZ	
R077DY047TX	R	077D	Sandy Loam 12- 17" PZ	
R077DY048TX	R	077D	Shallow 12-17" PZ	
R077DY049TX	R	077D	Very Shallow 12- 17" PZ	
R077DY591TX	R	077D	Gyp 12-17" PZ	

For questions about this database as a whole, contact:

Rangeland:

Homer Sanchez

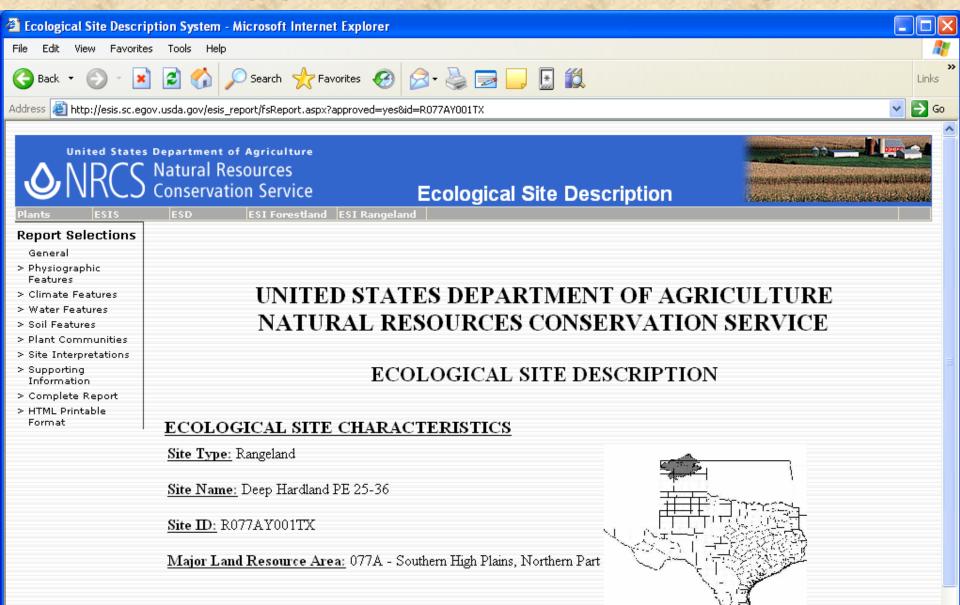
Rangeland Management Specialist National Grazing Lands Team Central National Technology Support Center

Fort Worth, Texas Phone: 817-509-3227 Forestland:

Ray Stoner Forester

Central National Technology Support Center Fort Worth, Texas Phone: 817-509-3215

An Approved ESD Example



Questions, Comments, .. Thank you



- The Web Soil Survey: <u>http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/</u>
- The Ecological Site Information System (ESIS): http://esis.sc.egov.usda.gov/

I'm done here...thanks

