# Classification and Inventory of Low-elevation Shrub-steppe and Grassland Vegetation on Boise National Forest

**INTERIM REPORT** 

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## Introduction

Upland non-forest vegetation within the Boise and Salmon River mountains of west-central and southwestern Idaho has received relatively little systematic inventory and classification attention. Classification studies which have occurred within the region include Mueggler and Harris (1969) and Roberts (1971). A number of other vegetation and community classification studies are potentially applicable to shrubland and grassland vegetation within the mountains of central Idaho (e.g., Hironaka et al. 1983; Tisdale 1986; Johnson and Simon 1987; Rust et al. 2000). These studies, however, are limited in terms of their geographic relevance. The similarity of shrub-steppe and grassland vegetation, for example, of the Snake River Plain or Hells Canyon to the mountains of central Idaho has not been investigated. These shrubland and grassland plant communities represent important plant and animal species habitats, provide basic natural resource commodities, and constitute important components of biological diversity. A systematic classification of shrub-steppe and grassland vegetation is needed to assist management. A classification of natural shrub-steppe and grassland vegetation within the mountains of central Idaho will provide consistent information on composition and structure of this vegetation; provide a basis for understanding the influence of fire, grazing, and exotic species introductions in this vegetation; developing plans for restoration of degraded sites; and provide a basis for assessing potential for key species habitats.

Nearly 25 percent of Boise National Forest is upland non-forested potential natural vegetation (Boise, Payette, and Sawtooth National Forests 2000). The objective of this study is to document the composition, structure, and ecological condition of upland perennial grass- and shrub-dominated plant associations that occur at, or below, lower-treeline on Boise National Forest and assess the habitat potential of these communities for key rare plant species. An additional objective is to provide management and conservation recommendations for grassland and shrubland plant associations on the Forest. This is a two year study. The objective of this interim report is to summarize work completed in the first year - to provide a summary of methods and list sites sampled, plant associations encountered, and vascular plant species observed.

### Methods

The study area consists of low-elevation non-forest habitats on Boise National Forest. Plant community classification and inventory study sites were identified through environmental stratification and expert opinion processes. Areas of non-forest vegetation were selected using Idaho GAP Program vegetation coverage (Landscape Dynamics Lab 1999). A subsequent stratification of areas of non-forest vegetation based on major lithology (Bond and Wood 1978), elevation, and watershed was completed (Figure 1). Areas of non-forest vegetation that occur at less than 5900 feet elevation were selected for study. From these results twenty potential study sites were identified using the following criteria: (1) representation of the range of strata, (2) the number of strata present, and (3) on proximity to road accessibility (Figure 2). The suitability of these sites was verified or alternative sites were identified through discussion with Boise National Forest staff.

Vegetation data were collected on 0.1 acre fixed-area plots using standard plant community ecology methods (Bourgeron et al. 1992; USDA Forest Service 1992). Plots were located to represent the range in composition and structure observed within each survey site. The location plots was recorded in the field using navigation grade geographical positioning system (GPS) units (e.g., Garmin 12XL) and by hand on 1:24,000 USGS quadrangles. Data cards and data dictionaries for field sampling methods are available upon request.

A list of sensitive plant species that may occur within the study area was compiled based an initial broad assessment of the habitats and the geographic range of known populations (Idaho Conservation Data Center 2003). Existing plant community ecology data were evaluated for incorporation within the study.

## **Results and Discussion**

Thirty-one sensitive plant species were identified as potentially occurring within low-elevation shrub-steppe and grassland habitats on Boise National Forest (Table 1). Habitat associations and the phenology of these species is summarized by Lind (2000) and others.

Plant community composition data from seven sites were collected during the 2002 field season or acquired from other sources (Miller and Rust 2002; Rust 1995a; Rust 1995b) (Table 2). The data represent eleven plant associations and seven series in which associations will be developed through additional analysis.

The vascular plant species observed on ecology plots within the study area are listed in Table 3. One-hundred, seventy-six species were observed. No sensitive plant species were encountered.

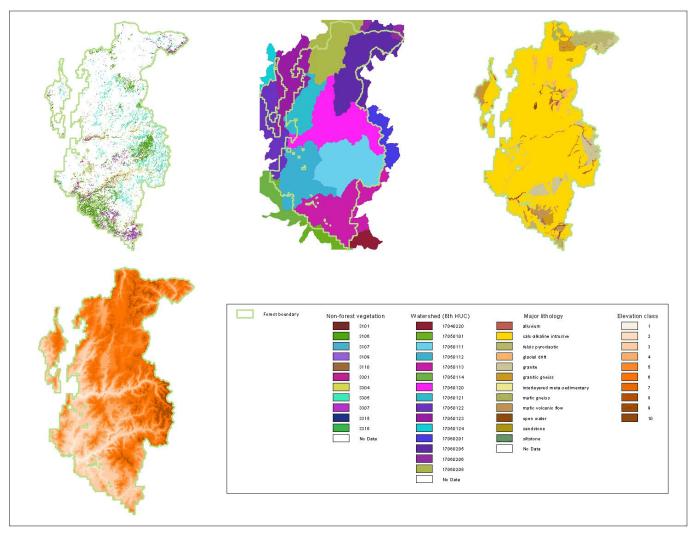
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## **Figures**

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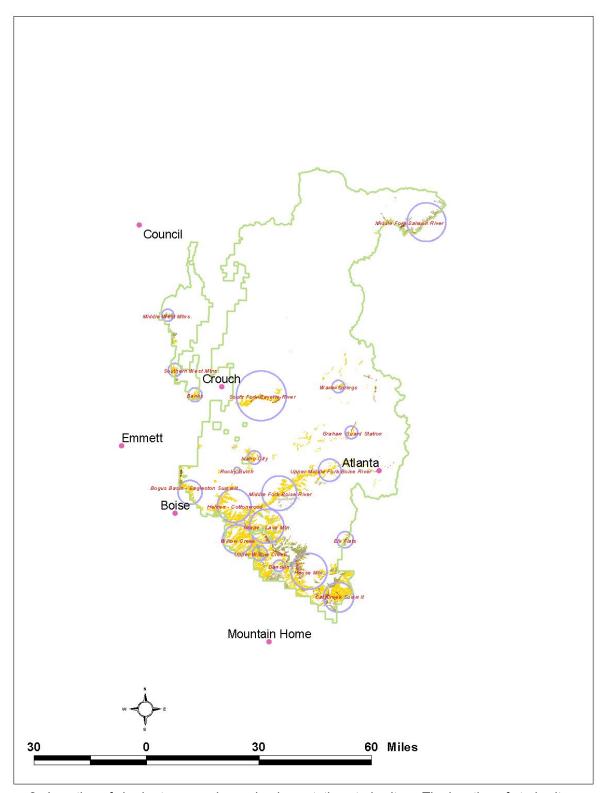
- Figure 1. Summary of study site selection.
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**Figure 1**. Summary of study site selection. Spatial data layers employed in the selection and stratification of areas of non-forest vegetation are shown (clockwise: non-forest vegetation, watershed (sixth hydrological unit code), major lithology, and elevation class). Class values for vegetation, watershed, and elevation class are listed in the accompanying table. Vegetation coverage taken from Landscape Dynamics Lab (1999). Major lithology adapted from Bond and Wood (1978).

Figure 1 (continued). Summary of codes. Data values for vegetation, watershed, and elevation coverages are listed. The vegetation coverage is from Landscape Dynamics Lab (1999).

Data Layer	Code	Description
Vegetation (label)	3101	Foothill Grassland
	3106	Herbaceous Burn
	3107	Shrub/Steppe Annual Grass-Forb
	3109	Perennial Grassland
	3110	Perennial Grass Slope
	3301	Curlleaf Mountain Mahogany
	3304	Bitterbrush
	3305	Mountain Big Sagebrush
	3307	Basin and Wyoming Big Sagebrush
	3315	Low Sagebrush
	3316	Mountain Low Sagebrush
Watershed (watershed name)	17060208	South Fork Salmon
	17060206	Lower Middle Fork Salmon
	17050123	North Fork Payette
	17060205	Upper Middle Fork Salmon
	17060201	Upper Salmon
	17050121	Middle Fork Payette
	17050120	South Fork Payette
	17050111	North and Middle Fork Boise
	17050112	Boise-Mores
	17050113	South Fork Boise
	17040220	Camas
	17050101	C. J. Strike Reservoir
	17050124	Weiser
	17050122	Payette
	17050114	Lower Boise
Elevation (range)	1	2778 - 3552
	2	3555 - 4329
	3	4332 - 5106
	4	5110 - 5881
	5	5884 - 6658
	6	6661 - 7435
	7	7439 - 8209
	8	8213 - 8987
	9	8990 - 9764
	10	9771 - 10532



**Figure 2**. Location of shrub-steppe and grassland vegetation study sites. The location of study sites selected through an environmental stratification of areas of non-forest vegetation are shown in relation to Boise National Forest boundary and key towns.

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**Table 1**. Sensitive plant species with potential for occurrence within the study area. Sensitive plant species that may occur in low-elevation nonforest habitats on Boise National Forest are listed with global, state, and Idaho Native Plant Society (INPS) ranking. The element code (a unique key identifier) used by Idaho Conservation Data Center (2003) is also shown.

Species	Common Name	Global Rank	State Rank	INPS Rank	Element Code
Allium madidum	swamp onion	G3	S3	GP3	PMLIL021E0
Allium aaseae	Aase's onion	G3	S3	GP3	PMLIL02010
Allium tolmiei var persimile	Tolmie's onion	G4T3	S3	GP3	PMLIL022C1
Astragalus cusickii var packardiae	Packard's milkvetch	G5T1	S1	GP1	PDFAB0F2N3
Astragalus purshii var ophiogenes	Snake River milkvetch	G5T3	S3	S	PDFAB0F7A5
Astragalus mulfordiae	Mulford's milkvetch	G2	S2	GP2	PDFAB0F5Q0
Astragalus atratus var inseptus	mourning milkvetch	G4G5T3	S3	GP3	PDFAB0F0Z2
Bryum calobryoides	beautiful bryum	G3	SH	GP3	NBMUS1A1W0
Calamagrostis tweedyi	Cascade reedgrass	G3	S2	GP3	PMPOA17150
Camassia cusickii	Cusick's camas	G4	S2	М	PMLIL0E010
Catapyrenium congestum		G4	S2	S	NLTEST91A0
Ceanothus prostratus	mahala-mat ceanothus	G5?	S1	1	PDRHA04140
Cladonia luteoalba	reindeer lichen	G2	S1	GP2	NLTEST6460
Erigeron salmonensis	Salmon River fleabane	G3	S3	GP3	PDAST3M4Q0
Eriogonum ochrocephalum var calcareum	calcareous buckwheat	G5T3	S2	GP3	PDPGN084C2
Glyptopleura marginata	white-margined wax plant	G4	S3	S	PDAST43010
Hackelia davisii	Davis' stickseed	G3	S3	GP3	PDBOR0G0A0
Haplopappus insecticruris	bugleg goldenweed	G3	S3	GP3	PDASTDT080
Lepidium papilliferum	slick spot peppergrass	G2	S2	GP2	PDBRA1M140
Lewisia kelloggii	Idaho bitterroot	G4	S2	1	PDPOR04070
Mimulus clivicola	bank monkeyflower	G4	S3	М	PDSCR1B0S0
Phacelia minutissima	least phacelia	G3	S2	GP3	PDHYD0C300
Sanicula graveolens	Sierra sanicle	G4	S1	S	PDAPI1Z070
Sedum borschii	Borsch's stonecrop	G4?	S2	М	PDCRA0A070

Species	Common Name	Global Rank	State Rank	INPS Rank	Element Code
Sphaeromeria potentilloides	cinquefoil tansy	G5	S1	2	PDAST8S060
Stylocline filaginea	stylocline	G4	S2	М	PDASTD5010
Sullivantia hapemanii var hapemanii	Hapeman's sullivantia	G3T3	S2	GP3	PDSAX0X012
Texosporium sancti-jacobi	wovenspore lichen	G2	S2	GP2	NLTEST7980
Thamnolia subuliformis		G3G5	S1	1	NLT0000290
Trifolium douglasii	Douglas' clover	G3	S2	GP3	PDFAB400T0

### Global Rank (GRANK) and State Rank (SRANK) - Components of Ranks:

- G = Global rank indicator; denotes rank based on rangewide status.
- T = Trinomial rank indicator; denotes rangewide status of infraspecific taxa.
- S = State rank indicator; denotes rank based on status within Idaho.
- 1 = Critically imperiled because of extreme rarity or because some factor of its biology makes it especially vulnerable to extinction (typically 5 or fewer occurrences).
- 2 = Imperiled because of rarity or because other factors demonstrably make it very vulnerable to extinction (typically 6 to 20 occurrences).
- 3 = Rare or uncommon but not imperiled (typically 21 to 100 occurrences).
- 4 = Not rare and apparently secure, but with cause for long-term concern (usually more than 100 occurrences).
- 5 = Demonstrably widespread, abundant, and secure.
- E = Exotic or introduced.
- U = Unknown.
- H = Historical occurrence (i.e., formerly part of the native biota with the implied expectation that it might be rediscovered).
- X = Presumed extinct or extirpated.
- Q = Indicates uncertainty about taxonomic status.
- ? = Not yet ranked.

#### Idaho Native Plant Society (INPS) Rank

#### Globally Rare Species

- GP1 = Global Priority 1. Taxa with a GRANK of G1 or T1.
- GP2 = Global Priority 2. Taxa with a GRANK of G2 or T2.
- GP3 = Global Priority 3. Taxa with a GRANK of G3 or T3
- GX = Taxa thought to be globally extinct (i.e., GRANK = GX).

#### State Rare Species

1 = State Priority Taxa in danger of becoming extinct or extirpated from Idaho in the foreseeable future if identifiable factors contributing to their decline continue to operate; these are taxa whose populations are present only at critically low levels or whose habitats have been degraded or depleted to a significant degree.

- 2 = State Priority Taxa likely to be classified as Priority 1 within the foreseeable future in Idaho, if factors contributing to their population decline or habitat degradation or loss continue.
- S = Sensitive Taxa with small populations or localized distributions within Idaho that presently do not meet the criteria for classification as Priority 1 or 2 but whose populations and habitats might be jeopardized without active management or removal of threats.
- M = Monitor Taxa that are common within a limited range as well as those taxa which are uncommon but have no identifiable threats.

#### Review Species

R = Review. Defined above.

**Table 2**. Summary of plant associations sampled. The number of plots sampled (during 2002 or in previous years) is summarized by site and plant association (or series).

Site	Series	Association	Count
Boise Basin - Eagleston Summit	Artemisia tridentata wyomingensis	Artemisia tridentata wyomingensis/Festuca idahoensis	1
Summe	Purshia tridentata	Purshia tridentata/Festuca idahoensis	1
Cat Creek Summit	Artemisia tridentata vaseyana	Artemisia tridentata vaseyana-Purshia tridentata/Agropyron spicatum	2
	Agropyron spicatum	Agropyron spicatum-Poa secunda, Balsamorhiza sagittata	1
	Artemisia arbuscula		2
Danskin	Artemisia tridentata vaseyana	Artemisia tridentata vaseyana- Symphoricarpos oreophilus/Festuca idahoensis	1
	Festuca idahoensis		2
	Purshia tridentata		1
Heinen - Cottonwood	Artemisia tridentata vaseyana	Artemisia tridentata vaseyana/Festuca idahoensis	1
	Festuca idahoensis	Festuca idahoensis-Carex geyeri/Lupinus argenteus	1
House Mountain	Festuca idahoensis	Festuca idahoensis/Lupinus argenteus	1
	Stipa occidentalis	Stipa occidentalis/Lupinus argenteus	1
Rocky Gulch	Purshia tridentata	Purshia tridentata/Agropyron spicatum	2
South Fork Payette River	Agropyron spicatum		4
	Agropyron spicatum	Agropyron spicatum-Melica bulbosa	2
	Rosa woodsii		1
	Prunus emarginata		1
	Prunus virginiana		2

Table 3. Vascular plant species observed on Boise National Forest low-elevation shrub-steppe and grassland ecology plots. Species are listed by physiognomic group with common name. Nomenclature follows (for the most part) Hitchcock and Cronquist (1973).

Pinus ponderosa Pseudotsuga menziesii ponderosa pine Douglas-fir

Shrubs

Acer glabrum Amelanchier alnifolia Artemisia arbuscula Artemisia longiloba

Artemisia tridentata ssp. vasevana Berberis repens Ceanothus velutinus Chrvsothamnus nauseosus Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus Haplopappus suffruticosus Holodiscus dumosus Prunus emarginata Prunus virginiana Purshia tridentata Ribes aureum

Ribes cereum Rosa woodsii Sambucus cerulea Spiraea betulifolia

Symphoricarpos oreophilus

Rocky Mountain maple Saskatoon serviceberry

little sagebrush early sagebrush

mountain big sagebrush

Oregon grape

snowbrush ceanothus green rabbit-brush yellow rabbitbrush shrubby goldenweed

rockspirea bitter cherry chokecherry antelope bitterbrush

golden currant wax currant Woods' rose blue elderberry white spirea

mountain snowberry

Herbs

Achillea millefolium Agastache urticifolia Agoseris glauca Agoseris grandiflora Agoseris retrorsa

Allium sp.

Amsinckia retrorsa Antennaria microphylla Antennaria stenophylla Apocynum androsaemifolium

Arabis sp. Arabis holboellii Arabis sparsiflora Arenaria aculeata Arenaria congesta Arenaria macrophylla Arenaria serpyllifolia

Asclepias sp. Aster perelegans Astragalus eremiticus Astragalus purshii Balsamorhiza sagittata Blepharipappus scaber

common yarrow nettleleaf giant hyssop pale agoseris bigflower agoseris

spearleaf agoseris onion fiddleneck

littleleaf pussytoes narrowleaf pussytoes spreading dogbane

rockcress

Holboell's rockcress sicklepod rockcress prickly sandwort ballhead sandwort bigleaf sandwort thymeleaf sandwort

milkweed elegant aster hermit milkvetch woollypod milkvetch arrowleaf balsamroot rough eyelashweed

Calochortus sp.

Calochortus eurycarpus Calochortus macrocarpus

Castilleja sp.

Castilleja pallescens

Chaenactis sp.

Chaenactis douglasii Chenopodium album Chondrilla juncea

Cirsium sp.

Cirsium canovirens
Clarkia rhomboidea
Collinsia parviflora
Collomia grandiflora
Collomia linearis

Crepis sp.

Crepis acuminata Crepis modocensis Cryptantha sp. Cryptantha sobolifera Delphinium sp.

Deipninium s Draba verna

Epilobium paniculatum Erigeron caespitosus

Erigeron chrysopsidis var. austiniae

Erigeron pumilus
Eriogonum sp.
Eriogonum elatum
Eriogonum flavum
Eriogonum heracleoides
Eriogonum umbellatum

Eriogonum vimineum var. shoshonense

Fritillaria atropurpurea
Galium bifolium
Gayophytum diffusum
Geranium viscosissimum
Grindelia squarrosa
Hackelia micrantha
Haplopappus acaulis
Haplopappus carthamoides

Helianthus cusickii Heuchera cylindrica Hieracium albertinum Hieracium cynoglossoides Hydrophyllum capitatum

Lactuca serriola Lewisia rediviva Lithophragma sp. Lithophragma bulbifera Lithophragma parviflorum Lithospermum ruderale

Lomatium sp.

Lomatium dissectum Lomatium macrocarpum mariposa lily white mariposa lily sagebrush mariposa lily Indian paintbrush pale Indian paintbrush

pincushion

Douglas' dustymaiden

lambsquarters hogbite thistle

graygreen thistle diamond clarkia maiden blue eyed Mary

grand collomia tiny trumpet

hawksbeard tapertip hawksbeard

Modoc hawksbeard

cryptantha

Waterton Lakes cryptantha

larkspur spring draba parched fireweed tufted fleabane dwarf yellow fleabane shaggy fleabane

buckwheat tall woolly buckwheat

alpine golden buckwheat parsnipflower buckwheat sulphur-flower buckwheat broom buckwheat

spotted fritillary twinleaf bedstraw spreading groundsmoke sticky purple geranium curlycup gumweed Jessica sticktight stemless goldenweed

large-flowered goldenweed Cusick's sunflower roundleaf alumroot western hawkweed houndstongue hawkweed

ballhead waterleaf prickly lettuce bitter root woodland-star prairiestar

smallflower woodland-star

western stoneseed desertparsley fernleaf biscuitroot bigseed biscuitroot Lomatium triternatum

Lupinus sp. Lupinus arbustus Lupinus argenteus

Machaeranthera canescens

Madia sp.
Madia exigua
Mentzelia albicaulis
Mertensia longiflora
Mertensia oblongifolia
Microseris nutans
Microseris troximoides
Microsteris gracilis
Navarretia breweri
Nemophila sp.

Osmorhiza occidentalis

Paeonia brownii

Penstemon acuminatus Penstemon globosus Perideridia gairdneri Phacelia hastata Phacelia heterophylla Phacelia linearis Phlox longifolia Phlox hoodii

Plectritis macrocera Polemonium sp. Polygonum sp. Polygonum douglasii

Potentilla sp.

Potentilla glandulosa Potentilla gracilis Rumex crispus Sanguisorba minor Saxifraga sp.

Scutellaria angustifolia Senecio integerrimus

Senecio serra Silene sp. Silene douglasii

Sisymbrium altissimum Thalictrum occidentale Tragopogon dubius Verbascum blattaria Verbascum thapsus

Viola sp. Viola purpurea

Wyethia amplexicaulis

Zigadenus elegans Zigadenus venenosus nineleaf biscuitroot

lupine

longspur lupine silvery lupine hoary tansyaster

tarweed small tarweed

whitestem blazingstar small bluebells oblongleaf bluebells nodding microceris false-agoseris

microsteris

Brewer's navarretia baby blue eyes western sweetroot Brown's peony sharpleaf penstemon globe penstemon Gardner's yampah silverleaf phacelia varileaf phacelia threadleaf phacelia longleaf phlox

phlox

longhorn plectritis Jacob's-ladder knotweed

Douglas' knotweed

cinquefoil sticky cinquefoil slender cinquefoil curly dock small burnet saxifrage

narrowleaf skullcap lambstongue ragwort

tall ragwort catchfly

seabluff catchfly tall tumblemustard western meadow-rue

yellow salsify moth mullein common mullein

violet

goosefoot violet mule-ears

mountain deathcamas meadow deathcamas Grasses, rushes, and sedges

Agropyron intermedium Agropyron spicatum Agropyron trachycaulum Bromus briziformis Bromus carinatus Bromus japonicus Bromus tectorum Carex douglasii Carex geyeri

Danthonia unispicata Elymus cinereus Elymus glaucus Festuca idahoensis Festuca occidentalis

Juncus tenuis Koeleria cristata Melica bulbosa

Oryzopsis hymenoides

Poa bulbosa Poa pratensis Poa secunda Sitanion hystrix Stipa columbiana Stipa occidentalis Stipa thurberiana

intermediate wheatgrass bluebunch wheatgrass slender wheatgrass rattlesnake brome California brome Japanese brome cheatgrass Douglas' sedge Geyer's sedge onespike danthonia giant wildrye

blue wildrye Idaho fescue western fescue poverty rush prairie junegrass oniongrass Indian ricegrass bulbous bluegrass Kentucky bluegrass Sandberg bluegrass squirreltail grass western needlegrass

needlegrass

Thurber's needlegrass