10110

Rocky Mountain Aspen Forest and Woodland

BpS Model/Description Version: Aug. 2020

Vegetation Type

Forest and Woodland

Map Zone

7

Geographic Range

Aspen occur in scattered small patches of <10ac, with somewhat more extensive areas in riparian zones. Extensive areas of aspen (100s of acres) in this zone are rare. Steens Mountain provides an example of an extensive area, as well as the Unity District of the Wallowa Whitman National Forest.

Biophysical Site Description

Commonly on moderate, mid-elevation slopes as small, scattered inclusions in the Douglas-Fir-Ponderosa Pine Biophysical Setting (BpS). Also in riparian zone at lower elevations. Primarily occurs in the mid-elevation zone (3,000-5,000ft).

Vegetation Description

Small, scattered patches of aspen. In the existing vegetation condition, Douglas-fir, grand fir, and ponderosa pine are common in the stands because of fire exclusion, and aspen is often decadent.

BpS Dominant and Indicator Species

Species names are from the NRCS PLANTS database. Check species codes at http://plants.usda.gov.

Disturbance Description

Historically burned as part of a mixed-severity vegetation mosaic with Douglas-fir-ponderosa pine.

Fire Frequency

Fire interval is expressed in years for each fire severity class and for all types of fire combined (All Fires). Average FI is the central tendency modeled. Percent of all fires is the percent of all fires modeled in that severity class. Minimum and Maximum FIs show the relative range of fire intervals as estimated by model contributors, if known.

Scale Description

Primarily at fine scale (<10ac) in this map zone. A few areas in the hundreds of acres. This is a rare map unit in this zone. Normally, aspen are a fine-scale component mapped as part of other BpSs.

Adjacency or Identification Concerns

Issues or Problems

Map only where aspen occur in large enough areas to represent a range of aspen seral stages.

Native Uncharacteristic Conditions

Comments

During the 2017 BpS Review Kori Blankenship found that the reported fire frequency and succession class percents did not match the modeled results. It was unclear why the results differed. Blankenship was able to produce similar results by changing the modeled Alt Succession probability from .25 to .0125.

Model review resulted in reducing the frequency of fire. Darren Johnson changed upper layer lifeform minimum canopy closure in Class A from 51% to 0%.

Succession Classes

**Mapping Rules**

Succession class letters A-E are described in the Succession Class Description section. Some classes use a leafform distinction where a qualifier is added to the class letter: Brdl (broadleaf), Con (conifer), or Mix (mixed conifer and broadleaf). UN refers to uncharacteristic native or a combination of height and cover that would not be expected under the reference condition. NP refers to not possible or a combination of height and cover which is not physiologically possible for the species in the BpS.

**Description**

Class A 28 Early Development 1 - All Structures

Indicator Species

Description

Aspen suckers and saplings. Grass and forbs present. Mixed-severity fire does not change vegetation dynamics.

*Maximum Tree Size Class*  
Seedling <4.5ft

Class B 18 Mid Development 1 - Closed

Indicator Species

Description

Aspen >6ft dominate. Canopy cover highly variable. Mixed-severity fire does not change the successional age of these stands, although this fire consumes litter and woody debris and may stimulate suckering.

*Maximum Tree Size Class*  
Sapling >4.5ft; <5" DBH

Class C 18 Mid Development 2 - Closed

Indicator Species

Description

True, stable aspen 5-16in DBH. No evergreens are present. Canopy cover is highly variable. The mean fire return interval of mixed-severity fire does not change with age. Insects/diseases affect older trees.

*Maximum Tree Size Class*  
Medium 9-21" DBH

Class D 24 Late Development 1 - All Structures

Indicator Species

Description

Aspen 5-16in dominate with conifer understory up to co-dominance: 80% aspen overstory. Conifers (e.g., Douglas-fir) are assumed more resistant to fire than aspen and likely cause the progressive suppression of aspen. Mixed-severity fire keeps this stand open, kills young conifers, and maintains aspen.

*Maximum Tree Size Class*  
Large 21-33" DBH

Class E 12 Late Development 1 - Closed

Indicator Species

Description

Large-diameter Conifers dominate. Aspen >16in, mixed conifers/mixed sizes, main overstory is conifers. More than 50% conifer in the overstory. Succession maintains conifer dominance.

*Maximum Tree Size Class*  
Large 21-33" DBH

Model Parameters

Deterministic Transitions

Probabilistic Transitions

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