

Table of Contents

(i) Table of Contents	1
(ii) List of Figures	2
(iii) List of Tables	3
(iv) List of Acronyms	4
(v) Abstract	5
(vi) Introduction	6
1. Sample Design, Stratification, and Plots Weights	3
2. Ecological Side Descriptions Completion Assessment	pp
3. Increase Range around Narrow Ecological Site Benchmarks	pp
4. Ecological Site Description and Ecological Site Group Comparison - Vegetation 'Benchmarks'	pp
5. An Assessment of Drought Conditions	pp
6. An Overview of the Analytical Sections	pp
7. Bare ground	pp
8. Soil Stability	pp
9. Noxious Species	pp
10. Plant Functional Diversity - Cover	pp
11. Plant Functional Diversity - Species	pp
12. Rare Species	pp
13. Floristic Quality Index	pp
14. Glossary	pp
15. Acknowledgements	pp

List of Figures

1. Figure 1.1 All AIM plots sampled in the field office	xx
2. Figure 1.2 AIM plots sampled near Dominguez-Escalante NCA	xx
3. Figure 1.3 AIM plots sampled near Gunnison-Gorge NCA	xx
4. Figure 1.4 Summary of Plot Sampling Effort and Plot Fates	xx
5. Figure 2.1 Number of AIM plots per Ecological Site	xx
6. Figure 2.2 Number of plots which have Quantitative Benchmarks	xx
7. Figure 3.1 Imputed Ranges Around Mean Values	xx
8. Figure 3.2 Estimates of Ranges of Quantitative Benchmarks	xx
9. Figure 4.1 Proportion of Plots mapped to their Ecological Site Groups	xx
10. Figure 4.2 Initial Relationship Between Field Verified ESD and ESG extracted from the gridded surface	xx
11. Figure 4.3 Relationships Between ESDs and ESGs midway through the cleaning process	xx
12. Figure 4.4 Relationship between ESDs and ESGs at end of classification process	xx
13. Figure 4.5 Mean Benchmarks ESD and ESG	xx
14. Figure 4.6 Distribution of Percent Covers	xx
15. Figure 5.1 Stylized topographic map of the area of analysis	xx
16. Figure 5.2 SPEI of the Uncompahgre Field Office Area	xx
17. Figure 5.3 Drought Status of the Uncompahgre Field Office Area	xx
18. Figure 7.1 Predicting Bare ground from Foliar Cover	xx
19. Figure 7.2 ESD and ESG derived Benchmarks [bare ground]	xx
20. Figure 7.3 Bare ground	xx
21. Figure 7.4 Land Meeting Benchmarks (Bare Ground)	xx
22. Figure 8.1 Estimates of Median Soil Stability	xx
23. Figure 8.2 Land Meeting Benchmarks (Soil Stability)	xx
24. Figure 9.1 Composite "Invasive Index"	xx
25. Figure 9.2 Invasive Species Index	xx
26. Figure 9.3 Invasive Species in the NE Field Office	xx
27. Figure 9.4 Land Meeting Benchmarks (Invasive Species)	xx
28. Figure 10.1 Validation of Calculations	xx
29. Figure 10.2 Forb Cover [Benchmarks]	xx
30. Figure 10.3 Shrub Cover [Benchmarks]	xx
31. Figure 10.4 Tree Cover [Benchmarks]	xx

32. Figure 10.5 Grass Cover [Benchmarks]	xx
33. Figure 10.6 Proportion of Plots Meeting Benchmark	xx
34. Figure 10.7 Total area of each stratum and the overall status of benchmarks	xx
35. Figure 11.1 Number of Species per Functional Group across ESD	xx
36. Figure 11.2 Species Observed per AIM Plot	xx
37. Figure 12.1 Species Occurrences	xx
38. Figure 13.1 Comparison of Median Values by Stratum	xx
39. Figure 13.2 Measured and Predicted Floristic Quality	xx
40. Figure 14.1 A Sample Frame with Five Panels	xx

Note, digits refer to the section which the figure is located in, and the decimal to the figures number within that section.

List of Tables

1. Table 1.1 Original Sample Design for the Entire Sample Frame	xx
2. Table 1.2 Realized Weighted Sample Design for the Entire Sample Frame	xx
3. Table 1.3 Original Sample Design for Areas of Critical Environmental Concern and Wilderness Study Areas	xx
4. Table 1.4 Number of Plots Drawn per ACEC	xx
5. Table 1.5 Realized Weighted Sample Design for the Entire Sample Frame	xx
6. Table 1.6 Original Sample Design for Dominguez-Escalante National Monument	xx
7. Table 1.7 Realized Weighted Sample Design for the Entire Sample Frame	xx
8. Table 1.8 Original Sample Design for Gunnison Gorge National Monument	xx
9. Table 3.1 Variation of Benchmarks	xx
10. Table 5.1 Variables to calculate Potential Evaporation via the Penman-Montieth equation	xx
11. Table 5.2 SPI Values Interpretation	xx
12. Table 10.1 Land Meeting Benchmarks by Administrative Unit	xx
13. Table 12.1 Seven Forms of Rarity - Conceptual	xx
14. Table 12.2 Seven Forms of Rarity - Examples	xx

List of Acronyms

ACEC Area of Critical Environmental Concern

AIM Terrestrial Assess, Inventory, and Monitor

BLM Bureau of Land Management

DEM Digital Elevation Model

ES Ecological Site

ESD Ecological Site Description

ESG Ecological Site Group

MLRA Major Land Resource Area

NCA National Conservation Area

NOC National Operations Center

NGO Non-Governmental Organization

NPS National Park Service

NRCS National Resource Conservation Service

RMP Resource Management Plan

USFS United States Forest Service

USGS United States Geological Survey

WSA Wilderness Study Area

Abstract

The Uncompahgre Field office completed the first Terrestrial Assess, Inventory, and Monitor panel which it initiated in summer of 2022. This report summarizes the status and conditions of several key indicators from the AIM data set, in comparison to the reference conditions contained in Ecological Site Descriptions, or when required Ecological Site Groups. All comparisons are made using spatially explicit inferential statistics which allow for the interpretation of the percent of the field office falling into different categories which are meeting management conditions as specified in the Resource Management Plan (RMP).

Virtually all work was conducted in the statistical Programming language R, with occasional use of ‘bash’ and python. Most project ‘styling’ and report elements were designed using Latex in an Rmarkdown/Rstudio environment. All work was tracked using the version control software ‘git’ and is stored on a website known as Github, which contains logs of all major incremental changes in the sections. We hope that these steps make it easy for others to replicate our work, and in short order build upon, and then readily surpass it.

Introduction

This document can be considered in two parts. The first four sections, i.e. the sections up to ‘*An Assessment of Drought Conditions*’ are materials which do not *directly* relate to the analyses in the remaining portion of the document. Rather they reflect import processes in establishing the framework which we used to compare plots, and interpret results. The first section, ‘*Sample Design, Stratification, and Plots Weights*’, relates to an initial oversight regarding the sample design which made us very slightly re-assign the weights of plots associated with the three different areas of the field office which have different management objectives under the Resource Management Plan. The section ‘*Ecological Site Descriptions Completion Assessment*’ was essential to evaluate the progress made, and remaining to be made, regarding the establishment of Ecological Sites, and their documentation via the formal Ecological Site Description process. Many of the plots had benchmarks which were very narrow, and did not reflect either uncertainty associated with sampling errors, or natural variation, we slightly adjusted the range of these benchmarks in ‘*Increase Range around Narrow Ecological Site Benchmarks*’. While we intended to use benchmarks directly from Ecological Site Descriptions, the Natural Resource Conservation Service still has many to complete in our area, largely focused in a Major Land Resource Area which contains most of our higher elevation lands. In order to utilize benchmarks across the entirety of the field office, we turned to Ecological Site Groups, a framework recently developed by the United State Geological Survey for the Colorado Plateau. We had to undertake multiple steps to ensure that the NRCS and USGS approaches would be congruent for the report which are detailed in ‘*Ecological Site Description and Ecological Site Group Comparison - Vegetation ‘Benchmarks*’. The final section ‘*An Assessment of Drought Conditions*’ relates to an aspect of the AIM sample design regarding time series data. Some other AIM analysts have made note of using time as a predictor of variation in responses within a single 5-year panel, which allows them to weight plots sampled in years with normal of above normal precipitation more than plots in drier years. However, we believed that the drought conditions over the sample period were too great to consider years in isolation, and pooled these data. These sections all served to inform how we carried out the analysis of the AIM indicators in the remaining work.

The second part, the next several sections, up to ‘*Plant Functional Diversity - Species*’, form the main body of work, and deal with a number of the Assess, Inventory, and Monitor, Indicators, for which we had enough data to investigate in a meaningful manner. These sections proceed in fashion of increasing ecological and biological complexity, but are written to *largely* be independent of each other; i.e. modular. Notably, the earlier sections refer to more detailed phenomena which are described in the introductions to the later sections. The first section ‘*Bareground*’ documents how much soil across the field office is exposed to wind and precipitation. ‘*Soil Stability*’ contextualizes how these soils, based on their aggregate stability, have different potential to soil erosion, and the effects of this process on the field office and adjacent areas. ‘*Noxious Species*’ investigates the distribution of weeds across the field office, the taxonomic identities of them, and identifies areas with considerable presence of invasive species. We next turn to investigating the cover of each of the major plant functional types in comparison to reference conditions in ‘*Plant Functional Diversity - Cover*’, and believe this to be the most integral portion of the document. We then identify the number of species in the major, and some finer resolution, functional groups in ‘*Plant Functional Diversity - Species*’.

The remaining sections, ‘*Rare Species*’ and ‘*Floristic Quality Index*’, show opportunistic applications of the AIM data set outside of the realm of Ecological Sites. In ‘*Rare Species*’ we identify the species of conservation concern, across a variety of agencies and Non-Governmental Organizations, as well as species rare under two other non-conservation related metrics. Finally we compute the ‘*Floristic Quality Index*’ and model it across the field office using Species Richness data, this metric is commonly used in Midwestern and Eastern states, and we believed it’s results were largely congruent to the efforts from the combined AIM indicators.