



## Enhancing Knowledge of Rangeland Ecological Processes with Benchmark Ecological Sites

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A benchmark ecological site is one that has the greatest potential to yield data and information about ecological functions, processes, and the effects of management or climate changes on a broad area or critical ecological zone. A benchmark ecological site represents other similar sites in a major land resource area. Information gathered about benchmark ecological sites can address many different ecological, social, and resource management issues. One of the purposes of designating benchmark ecological sites is to promote greater understanding of the potential effects of management, natural disturbance, and climate change on rangeland ecosystem dynamics and soils. This will allow land managers to use adaptive management to provide for sustainability of natural resources on these landscapes. Examples of resource issues that could be addressed include the effects of management actions, disturbance, and climate change on livestock management; threatened, endangered, and other plant and animal species of concern; spread of invasive species; soil erosion, sedimentation, and runoff; soil ecology; plant community composition and productivity; and habitat reclamation potential.

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