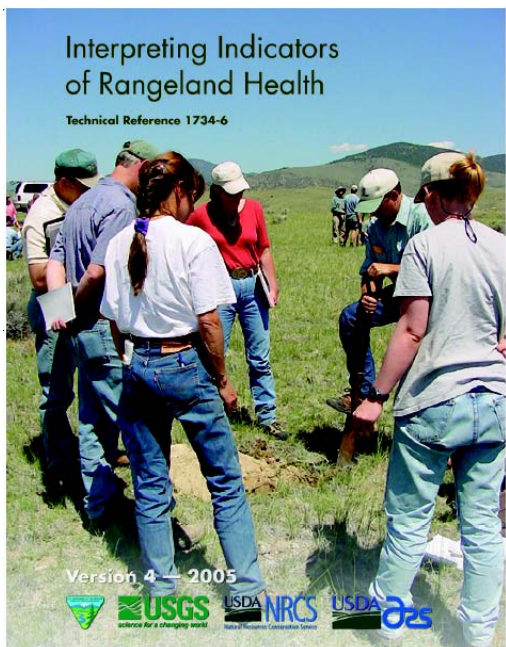


Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health Version 4.0



What is it? A 17-indicator system used to qualitatively assess the status of 3 rangeland attributes:

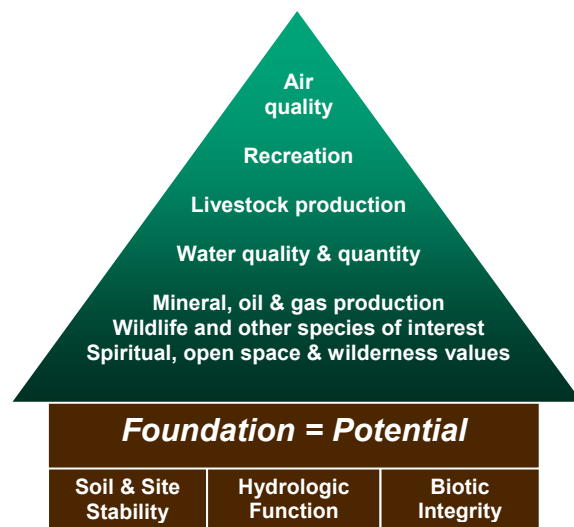
- Soil and site stability (integrates past, current and susceptibility to future erosion).
- Hydrologic function (capacity to capture, retain & release water).
- Biotic integrity (health of the plant and soil community, capacity to resist and recover from degradation).

What's the reference? The reference is the potential (including normal range of variability) for each ecological site (similar soils, topography, climate). It is described for each indicator in a "Reference Sheet".

What is it to be used for?

- Provide a cost-effective preliminary evaluation of the 3 attributes listed above.
- Help understand how and why rangeland ecosystems are/are not functioning as well as they can.
- Improve communication and consensus among interest groups by focusing discussion on critical ecosystem properties and processes.
- Identify appropriate monitoring indicators.
- Select monitoring sites.
- Provide early warning of potential problems and opportunities for recovery.
- Help decide where to locate activities (e.g. oil and gas production).

Who developed it? An interagency team of BLM, NRCS, USGS, and ARS with input from hundreds of individuals and organizations, including land managers, scientists, private consultants, non-profit organizations & members of the public. The system integrates rangeland research from a number of countries, including Australia, Mexico, Canada and South Africa.



Electronic copy, dataforms and a related monitoring manual and database:

http://usda-ars.nmsu.edu/JER/Monit_Assess/monitoring.htm. Draft Chinese, Spanish and Mongolian translations available on request.