

**Forest Service Handbook  
National Headquarters - Washington Office  
Washington, DC**

**Forest Service Handbook 2090.11 – Ecological Classification and Inventory Handbook**

**Zero Code**

**Amendment:** 2090.11-1991-1

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**Duration:** This amendment is effective until superseded or removed.

**Approved by:** F. Dale Robertson, Chief

**Date approved:**

**Responsible Staff:**

**Last Change:** This amendment is the first in a new numbering series corresponding to the year in which material was amended. Since this amendment replaces all text except Interim Directives (ID), do not check for the last transmittal received for this title. Replace the entire title text except ID's.

**Superseded Document(s):** Entire Title except ID's, 00--1 thru 2.81; Amendments Covered New, February 1986 and 1, May 1986

**Digest:** Following is an explanation of the changes throughout the directive by section.

This amendment changes the title of the handbook to include direction for inventory, eliminates the reserved chapter for field procedures, renames and rewrites the text for chapter 1 (formerly chapter 2) on Classification of Ecological Types, retitles chapter 2 (formerly chapter 1) Classification of Potential Natural Communities and deletes section on interrelationships and making interpretations. It also adds text for chapter 3 (Ecological Unit Inventories) and chapter 4 (Interpretations and Applications). It also incorporates direction previously issued in FSM 2060.5 through 2062.9.

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This handbook is designed to supplement the direction in FSM 2060 and provide broad guidance to the Regions for Ecosystem Classification and application of these classifications for field use. It also provides guidance and direction for the development of Regional FSH 2090.22 Ecosystem Classification and Inventory Handbooks.

## 02 - Objectives

FSM 2060.2.

## 03 - Policy

FSM 2060.3.

## 05 - Definitions

Correlation. The process of maintaining consistency in naming, classifying, and interpreting ecological types and ecological units.

Desired Future Vegetation. The composition and structural characteristics of the plant community on a site or an ecological unit which meets forest plan or other management objectives.

Desired Soil Condition. The soil condition which meets forest plan or other management objectives for maintaining soil quality, soil productivity potential, and hydrologic function.

Ecological Site. A specific location on the land, that is representative of an ecological type.

Ecological Status. The degree of similarity between the existing vegetation (all components and their characteristics) and existing soil conditions compared to the potential natural community and the desired soil condition on a site.

Ecological Type. A category of land having a unique combination of potential natural community, soil, landscape features, climate, and differing from other ecological types in its ability to produce vegetation and respond to management. Lacking potential natural community vegetation, ecological types can be developed with a provisional potential natural community based upon the present plant community and abiotic environmental factors. Categories of ecological types include all sites that have this unique combination of components with the defined ranges of properties.

Ecological Unit. A mapped landscape unit designed to meet management objectives, comprised of one or more ecological types.

Ecosystem. A complete interacting system of organisms and their environment.

Ecosystem Management. Use of ecosystem concepts to predict effects of management actions on the ecosystem and to guide management planning and actions.

Plant Association. A potential natural plant community of definite floristic composition and uniform appearance.

Plant Community. An assemblage of plants living and interacting together in a specific location. No particular ecological status is implied.

Potential Natural Community. The biotic community that would be established if all successional sequences of its ecosystem were completed without additional human-caused disturbance under present environmental conditions. Grazing by native fauna, natural disturbances such as drought, floods, wildfire, insects, and disease, are inherent in the development of potential natural communities which may include naturalized nonnative species.

Primary Succession. Succession beginning on a bare area such as a lava flow, not previously occupied by plants or animals.

Reference Site. A site permanently established and sampled to provide a standard baseline which can be used for the study of natural ecosystems and to evaluate and extrapolate the effects of management activities.

Resource Value. The value of an ecosystem for a particular use or benefit on an ecological type. This value may be expressed as the actual amount or as a relative rating, when compared to the maximum value for an ecological type.

Resource Values-Vegetation. The values of the plant community for particular uses or benefits on a site.

Resource Values-Soil. The values of soil to produce vegetation and maintain its production potential and hydrologic function.

Secondary Succession. The kind of succession which takes place following the destruction of part or all of the vegetation in an area.

Seral Community. Any community that is not at potential.

Sere. The series of stages that follow one another in an ecologic succession.

Site. A single, specific location on the land.

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Vegetation. Plants in general, or the sum total of plant life in an area. (A plant community.)