

Physiography, Soil, and Native Vegetation of the Northern Plains

Llewellyn L. Manske PhD
Range Scientist
North Dakota State University
Dickinson Research Extension Center

Land resources of the Northern Plains are the source of new wealth generated by livestock agriculture. The land natural resources consist of complex ecosystems with several trophic layers of living organisms that have individual biological requirements and nonliving (abiotic) components that have changeable characteristics. Biologically effective management benefits all living and nonliving ecosystem components by meeting the biological requirements of the plants and soil organisms and by fostering the characteristics of the soil resulting in continuation of ecosystem production at potential sustainable levels. The potential productivity of healthy ecosystems are effected by the same environmental and biological factors that cause changes in physiographic landform characteristics, soil characteristics, and native vegetation types. The characteristics and relationships of the physiography, soil, and native vegetation of the Northern Plains are described in this report.

Physiographic Regions

The Northern Plains are part of the North American Interior Plains that extend from the foot of the Rocky Mountains eastward to the Canadian Shield and Appalachian Provinces and extend from the Athabasca River on the Alberta Plateau southward to the Gulf Coastal Plains (Fenneman 1931, 1946; Hunt 1974; Goodin and Northington 1985). The Interior Plains are divided east and west into the Great Plains and the Central Lowland Physiographic Provinces (Fenneman 1931, 1946). The Northern Plains are separated from the Southern Plains by the North Platte-Platte-Missouri River Valleys (Raisz 1957). The portions of the Great Plains and Central Lowland Provinces that exist in the Northern Plains are separated in North and South Dakota and Saskatchewan by an eroded east facing escarpment at the eastern extent of the Tertiary sedimentary deposits of material eroded from the Rocky Mountains that form a fluvial plain overlaying the Cretaceous bedrock (Hunt 1974). The surface landform feature that shows the location of this boundary is the east escarpment of the Missouri Coteau (Fenneman 1931). In eastern Nebraska, the separation of the Great Plains and Central Lowland

Provinces is the western limit of older pre-Wisconsin glacial drift which has a mantle of loess (wind deposited silt) (Fenneman 1931).

Great Plains Province

The Missouri Plateau Section and the northern portion of the High Plains Section of the Great Plains Province are separated in southern and eastern South Dakota by the north facing Pine Ridge Escarpment and the southern bluffs of the Missouri River Valley (Fenneman 1931). The portion of the High Plains that extends into the Northern Plains is divided into Pine Ridge, Sand Hills region, Loess Plain, and Goshen Hole Lowland landscape features. The Missouri Plateau, including the Alberta Plain, is divided into three sections: Glaciated, Unglaciated, and Black Hills, along with smaller domed mountains (Fenneman 1931, 1946; Hunt 1974).

Missouri Plateau Section

The Unglaciated section of the Missouri Plateau is north of the Pine Ridge Escarpment in South Dakota, south of the Missouri River in Montana, and west of the Missouri River in North and South Dakota (Fenneman 1931, 1946; Hunt 1974). Portions of this section were undoubtedly glaciated during glacial advances earlier than Wisconsin Age. However, there is little geologic evidence of older glaciation. The important distinction between the Unglaciated and Glaciated sections is the type and age of parent material from which the soil develops. The landscape surface of the Unglaciated section is highly eroded fluvial sedimentary deposits of material removed from the uplifted Rocky Mountains. Most of the deposition occurred from slow meandering streams during the Laramide Orogeny, that formed the mountains, and during the 20 to 30 million years of the late Cretaceous and early Tertiary Periods following the uplift. Intense widespread erosion of these sediments occurred from about 5 to 3 million years ago during the late Pliocene Epoch (Bluemle 2000). The extensive erosion during this period removed about 500 to 1000 feet of sediments (Fenneman 1931). These fluvial Tertiary sediments had great differences

in hardness and durability. The soft and unconsolidated material was easily removed and the harder coherent material had greater resistance to weathering and to erosional forces of wind and running water. Differential erosion formed a landscape with well developed integrated drainage systems of broad mature valleys and gently rolling uplands containing widely spaced large hills and buttes with erosion resistant caps raising 500 to 650 feet above the plain (Bluemle 2000).

In addition to the high relief from erosion resistant capped remnant hills and buttes on the landscape, several isolated domed mountain groups with 1500 to 2000 foot rise formed on the Missouri Plateau. These laccolithic mountains developed from the upward push of rising igneous intrusions (molten magma) that did not penetrate through to the surface but caused a diastrophic bulge with a single fold in the uplifted sediments. Differential erosion has since exposed the underlying tilted strata (Froiland and Weedon 1990) and sometimes the intrusive rock (Robinson and Davis 1995). Along with the large dome uplifted Black Hills in South Dakota and Wyoming, which is treated as a separate section, the Sweetgrass Hills, and the Highwood, Bearpaw, Little Rocky, Moccasin, Judith, and Big Snowy mountains in Montana are smaller domed mountain groups (Fenneman 1931, Hunt 1974). The Highwood and Bearpaw domed mountains include extinct volcanoes (Fenneman 1931).

Drainage of the Missouri Plateau during the highly erosional period of the Pliocene (5 to 3 million years ago) was primarily north and northeast towards the Hudson Bay area. The climate became cooler about 2.6 million years ago and, about 700,000 years ago, the climate was cold enough to produce continental glaciers (Bluemle 2000). Early glacial advances blocked the northward paths of the rivers draining the Unglaciated section and diverted water flow into steeper southern routes. The increased gradient of several rivers caused drastic downcutting through areas of poorly consolidated, soft, fine textured sediments resulting in formation of badland regions (Fenneman 1931).

The Glaciated section of the Missouri Plateau is north of the Missouri River in Montana, including the Alberta Plain between the foot of the Rocky Mountains and the Missouri Coteau Escarpment in Canada, and extends southward between the Missouri River and the east escarpment of the Missouri Coteau in North and South Dakota (Fenneman 1931, Hunt 1974). The section has a

mantle of glacial and glacier related drift deposited between 70,000 and 10,000 years ago during the Wisconsin Age. The Missouri Coteau has 500 to 600 feet of terminal moraine deposits. The thick deposits of unsorted glacial sediment are a result of the large quantities of additional rock and sediments picked up from beneath the ice and forced upward into the glacier along shear planes that were generated by great internal stress (Bluemle 2000) when the advances of numerous glaciers were forced to progress up the steep escarpment of Tertiary deposited fluvial sediments. Large masses of stagnant ice remained buried under debris on the Coteau area for about 3000 years following the northern retreat of the last continental glacier. As the stagnant blocks of ice melted, the overlying material slumped down forming depressions (Bluemle 2000). The resulting topography is an irregular surface with closely spaced hills of 100 to 150 feet in height enclosing basins, or kettles, that usually contain ponds (Fenneman 1931). The drainage is local and completely unintegrated with only a few short streams.

The glaciated areas north of the Missouri River and on the Alberta Plain have a mantle of till and outwash. The topography is generally rough. The plain is dissected by broad river valleys that have entrenched 200 to 400 feet. The upland areas contain several erosional remnants that have local relief of about 1000 to 2000 feet. The Cypress Hills in Saskatchewan are the highest and have a height tall enough that they were not overridden by glacial ice. The gravel capped Cypress Hills were part of an ancient valley where a thick layer of rock from the Rocky Mountains was deposited by rivers. This heavy gravel layer protected the surface during the severe erosional period of the late Pliocene, while surrounding higher areas were eroded down to levels below the gravel layer forming an inverted topography (Fenneman 1931).

High Plains Section

A small portion of the High Plains Section of the Great Plains Province exists between the Pine Ridge Escarpment in South Dakota and the North Platte-Platte River Valley in Nebraska and is included within the Northern Plains (Fenneman 1931, 1946; Hunt 1974). Contrary to the erosional surface of the Unglaciated section of the Missouri Plateau north of Pine Ridge, the northern portion of the High Plains is primarily a depositional surface. The uplands of Pine Ridge north of the Niabrara River are exposed Tertiary fluvial sediments of the Arikaree Formation

deposited during the Miocene and have a gently rolling to nearly flat topography. The Goshen Hole Lowland located in western Nebraska south of the west end of Pine Ridge is a landform about 50 miles wide and 150 miles long where the North Platte River removed about 700 feet of fine textured clay Tertiary sediments during a period when the river had a relatively steep gradient. The Sand Hills region in Nebraska is located south of the Niobrara River and north of the Platte River. Wind deposited sand covers the Tertiary sediments of the region and forms a sand dune topography. Small areas have active dune movement, however, most of the region has been stabilized by grassland vegetation. Some of the sand hills are several hundred feet high. Lakes, ponds, or wetlands form in the depressions. The Loess Plain in north central Nebraska is located east of the Sand Hills region. Wind deposited silt (loess) about 100 feet thick covers the Tertiary sediments of the area and forms a gently rolling topography (Fenneman 1931).

Central Lowland Province

The Small Lakes Section and the Dissected Till Plains Section of the Central Lowland Province are separated by the age of the glacial till and the degree of development of integrated drainage systems. The Small Lakes Section is located in the northwestern part of the Central Lowland Province and extends eastward from the escarpment of the Missouri Coteau to the Great Lakes Section (Hunt 1974). However, for this report, the Small Lakes Section description extends eastward only to the transition between the Tall Grass Prairie and the Oak Forest in western Minnesota.

Small Lakes Section

The Small Lakes Section has a mantle of Wisconsin Age glacial till and glacial lake deposits. The Saskatchewan Plain between the Missouri Coteau Escarpment and the Manitoba Escarpment in Canada and the Glaciated Plains (Drift Prairie) east of the Missouri Coteau in North and South Dakota extending into western Minnesota are an undulating plain of ground moraine forming a knob and kettle topography with low to moderate relief (Hunt 1974). Water collects in the lower portions of the landscape forming lakes and ponds or marshes with the size decreasing westward with the decrease in annual precipitation (Hunt 1974). The Small Lakes Section does have a few river systems, however, these rivers are still at the early stages of developing complex integrated drainage systems.

Thick glacial deposits forming a hummocky collapsed topography (Bluemle 2000) cover Moose Mountain in Saskatchewan and the Turtle Mountains in Manitoba and North Dakota as a result of shear stress planes developing in the ice as the glaciers advanced over preexisting high relief erosional remnant hills.

Glacial Lake Plains of relatively flat fine sediments and reworked till were formed by glacial lakes that developed when meltwater collected in landscape depressions, along the edge of receding glaciers, or as a result from ice damming drainage routes (Ojakangas and Matsch 1982, Bluemle 2000). Lakes Agassiz, Aitkin, Dakota, Duluth, Minnewaukan, Regina, Souris, and Upham were major glacial lakes that existed for periods sometime between 12,200 and 7,500 years ago. Lake Agassiz was, by far, the largest of the glacial lakes and its western edge is defined by the Manitoba-Pembina Escarpment. This escarpment was formed during the highly erosional period of the Pliocene when artesian ground water from the Cretaceous Dakota sandstone formation and overland water from the Grand, Cheyenne, and White Rivers flowed into the ancestral Red River, cut through the relatively soft Cretaceous sediments down to the west sloping Precambrian igneous rock of the Canadian Shield, and progressively shifted the erosional face westward (Bluemle 2000). These erosional surfaces were later covered with thick layers of glacial till and lake sediments during the Pleistocene glaciation. The exceptionally flat surface of Glacial Lake Agassiz sediments east of the Manitoba-Pembina Escarpment form the Manitoba Plain in Canada and the Red River Valley Plain in eastern North Dakota and western Minnesota.

Dissected Till Plains Section

The Dissected Till Plains Section was not glaciated during the Wisconsin Age. The glacial till of this section is from older glacial advances. The old dissected till deposits extend westward from the Mississippi River across southern Iowa and northern Missouri and narrows northward into southwestern Minnesota and southeastern South Dakota (Fenneman 1946, Raisz 1957). The western limit of the old glacial till occurs in eastern Nebraska. The drainage systems on older till have had longer to develop a complex integrated pattern with closely spaced deep valleys and rounded uplands. There are few lakes and ponds in this section and a younger mantle of about 30 feet of wind blown loess (silt) covers the region (Hunt 1974).

Soil Characteristics

Soil development is effected by climate, parent material, topography, living organisms, and time (Brady 1974). The main climatic factors that affect soil development are temperature and precipitation. Climate determines the type and rate of weathering that occurs. The rates of biogeochemical processes in soil are effected by soil temperature and soil moisture. Climate determines the type of native vegetation and the quantity of biomass production. There is a relationship between the type of native vegetation and the kind of soil that develops. Increases in soil moisture, increase the biomass production and tend to increase organic content of soils. Increases in soil temperature, increase the rate of decomposition and tend to decrease organic content of soils (Brady 1974).

The Northern Plains has a continental climate with cold winters and hot summers. Mean air temperatures increase from north to south changing from about 35° - 40° F (1.7° - 4.4° C) in the north to about 48° - 51° F (8.9° - 10.6° C) in the south. Most of the precipitation occurs during the early portion of the growing season. Total annual precipitation fluctuates greatly from year to year. Periods of water deficiency during the growing season occur more frequently than growing seasons without deficiencies. Drought conditions are common. Mean annual precipitation increases from west to east and increases from north to south. In the northern portion, precipitation ranges from about 12 inches (304.8 mm) in the west to about 24 inches (609.6 mm) in the east. In the southern portion, precipitation ranges from about 14 inches (355.6 mm) in the west to about 32 inches (812.8 mm) in the east.

Evapotranspiration affects the quantity of moisture in the soil and the duration infiltrated water remains available for plant growth. The potential evapotranspiration for most of the Northern Plains is greater than annual precipitation. Potential evapotranspiration demand increases from north to south, and increases from east to west. Along the eastern edge of the Northern Plains, the precipitation is greater than potential evapotranspiration during most years. The region also has several local areas where the combination of stored soil water, precipitation, plus water runoff is greater than evapotranspiration. Subirrigated soils where the rooting zone is moist for most of the growing season would be comparable to conditions with greater precipitation than evapotranspiration.

The properties of the parent material that affect soil development include texture and structure, and chemical and mineral composition. The texture and structure of parent material varies from fine to coarse and is related to the type of source material and the degree of weathering. The texture of the parent material determines the texture of the soil and the relative content of clay, silt, sand, and gravel. The texture of the soil controls the downward movement of water. The chemical and mineral composition of the parent material strongly influences the growth of the native vegetation and determines the effectiveness of the weathering forces. Parent material influences the quantity and type of clay minerals that develop (Brady 1974). The parent material on the Northern Plains is eroded Tertiary fluvial sedimentary deposits, unsorted glacial till, sorted glacier related deposits of outwash and lake sediments, and wind deposited sand and silt.

Landform topography modifies soil development by influencing the quantity of precipitation absorbed and retained in the soil, determines aspect to solar radiation, and influences the rate of soil removal by erosion. Water, organic matter, mineral matter, and soluble salts move down slope, whether over the surface or internally. The steeper the gradient, the greater the movement. Soil temperature changes with slope aspect. Increases in soil temperature, increase evapotranspiration and decomposition rates. Upper slope soils tend to have lower soil moisture, less organic matter, and thinner horizon development than lower slope soils from similar parent material (Brady 1974).

Living organisms (including plants, animals, and soil microorganisms) affect soil development by influencing organic matter accumulation, profile mixing, nutrient cycling, and structural stability. The source of soil organic matter is the dead tissue and waste from organisms, decomposition is performed by soil organisms, nutrient cycles are complex processes involving living organisms, burrowing critters mix soil material, and soil aggregation is a result of soil organism secretions (Brady 1974).

Time is required for soils to develop and mature. However, soils do not all develop at the same rate. Conditions that increase soil development are warm humid climate, parent material highly permeable by water, unconsolidated material, low lime content, depression or level topography, good drainage, and forest vegetation. Conditions that retard soil development are cold dry climate, parent material not permeable by water, consolidated

material, high lime content, steeply sloping topography, poor drainage, and grassland vegetation (Brady 1974). Some very old soils in the Northern Plains show little or no evidence of horizon development because they exist in dry regions, on steep, actively eroding slopes where the rate of soil removal is as great or greater than the rate of soil development.

The soils that are developing in the Northern Plains fit into the order classification descriptions of Mollisols, Aridisols, and Entisols.

Mollisols are mineral soils that develop under grassland vegetation with a thick mollic epipedon that is "soft", high in organic matter, and dark colored. The limited leaching results in a high base saturation with a concentration of positively charged exchangeable cations other than hydrogen. Most Mollisols in the Northern Plains have, or are developing, an argillic (clay) layer in an upper subhorizon and have an accumulation of calcium carbonate (lime) at some level of the profile (Soil Survey Staff 1975).

Aridisols are mineral soils that develop in aridic (dry) or torric (hot and dry) climates with a thin ochric epipedon that is low in organic matter and light colored. Soil water is not available to plants for long periods during the growing season. In the Northern Plains, the Aridisols have an argillic (clay) layer in an upper subhorizon and as a result of limited leaching, soluble salts, like calcium carbonate, accumulate in a zone that marks the average depth of moisture penetration (Soil Survey Staff 1975).

Entisols are mineral soils that show little or no evidence of horizon development and have a thin ochric epipedon that is low in organic matter and light colored. In the Northern Plains, considerable retardation of soil development produces Entisols where dry and/or salty medium to fine textured sediments with sparse grass or shrub vegetation are located on gentle to steep, actively eroding slopes with the rate of soil removal as great as the rate of soil development, or where coarse textured, well sorted, wind deposited sand with low water holding capacity and thin grass vegetation become dry and are easily moved by wind (Soil Survey Staff 1975).

Classification of soils into principal suborders is based on differences caused by climate and associated native vegetation. The biological processes in soil are effected by soil temperature and soil moisture. The different climatic characteristics

important in soil development are separated into specific soil temperature regimes and soil moisture regimes.

The Northern Plains has two soil temperature regimes based on mean annual soil temperature. The mean annual soil temperature is considered to be the mean annual air temperature plus 1.8° F (1° C) (Soil Survey Staff 1975). The Frigid soil temperature regime has mean annual soil temperatures of less than 47° F (8° C). The Mesic soil temperature regime has mean annual soil temperatures higher than 47° F (8° C) and lower than 59° F (15° C) (Soil Survey Staff 1975). The separation between the Frigid and Mesic soil temperature regimes occurs along a wide irregular belt that extends eastward from central Wyoming along its north border with Montana and continues to north central South Dakota just south of its north border with North Dakota, then extends at a southeasterly diagonal to about the center of South Dakota's east border with Minnesota, and then extends at a northeasterly angle to the boundary of the Oak Forest.

Soil moisture regimes are based on the soil moisture conditions in the soil. The Northern Plains has four north-south zones of soil moisture regimes that increase in soil moisture from west to east. The soils in the Aridic and Torric soil moisture regime, typically of arid climates, are dry in all parts for more than half the time and the soils are never moist for as long as 90 days during the growing season (Soil Survey Staff 1975). The soils in the Ustic soil moisture regime, typically of semi arid climates, are dry in some or all parts for 90 or more days in most years, but not dry in all parts for more than half the time, and are not dry for as long as 45 days during the 4 months that follow the summer solstice in 6 or more years out of 10 years (Soil Survey Staff 1975). The soils in the Udic soil moisture regime, typically of sub humid climates, are not dry for as long as 90 days. During the summer, the amount of stored moisture plus rainfall is approximately equal to or exceeds the amount of evapotranspiration (Soil Survey Staff 1975). The soils in the Perudic soil moisture regime, typically of humid climates, are rarely dry. During the summer, the precipitation is greater than the evapotranspiration (Soil Survey Staff 1975).

The combination of four soil moisture regimes (Aridic, Ustic, Udic, and Perudic) and two soil temperature regimes (Frigid and Mesic) results in eight distinct soil moisture-temperature regimes in the

Northern Plains. The soils in the Aridic-Frigid soil moisture-temperature regime are primarily Aridic Borolls (arid cool Mollisols) and Torriorthents (hot dry recently eroded medium to fine textured Entisols) and support vegetation of short grasses with some mid grasses. The soils in the Ustic-Frigid soil moisture-temperature regime are primarily Typic Borolls (semi arid cool Mollisols) and support vegetation of mid and short grasses. The soils in the Udic-Frigid soil moisture-temperature regime are primarily Udic Borolls (sub humid cool Mollisols) and support vegetation of mid grasses with some tall grasses. The soils in the Perudic-Frigid soil moisture-temperature regime are primarily Aquolls (humid cool Mollisols that are saturated and absent of oxygen at times for unknown lengths) and support vegetation of tall grasses. The soils in the Aridic-Mesic soil moisture-temperature regime are primarily Argids (arid warm Aridisols with thin horizons, dry for long periods, and have a clay layer) and Aridic Ustolls (arid warm Mollisols) and support vegetation of short grasses. The soils in the Ustic-Mesic soil moisture-temperature regime are primarily Ustipsamments (semi arid warm Entisols that are well sorted wind deposited sands) and Typic Ustolls (semi arid warm Mollisols) and support vegetation of mid and short grasses with lower topographic slopes supporting tall grasses. The soils in the Udic-Mesic soil moisture-temperature regime are primarily Udic Ustolls (sub humid warm Mollisols) and support vegetation of mid grasses and tall grasses. The soils in the Perudic-Mesic soil moisture-temperature regime are primarily Udolls (humid warm Mollisols that do not have a calcium carbonate layer) and support vegetation of tall grasses.

Native Vegetation Types

Development of plant communities and vegetation types is effected by the climatic characteristics of temperature, precipitation, and evapotranspiration demand; the soil characteristics of texture, structure, and chemical and mineral composition; and the landform topographic characteristics of slope, aspect, and elevation. Vegetation of the Northern Plains separates into 10 grassland vegetation types and 7 grassland with woodland or forest vegetation types. The vegetation of the Northern Plains map (figure 1) developed by Dr. W.C. Whitman (Barker and Whitman 1989) is a compilation of information from several sources supplementary to the basic map of potential natural vegetation by Kuchler (1964). Modifications to vegetation type designations, distributions, and boundaries were conflated into the base map from

state vegetation maps for Montana (Ross and Hunter 1976, Hacker and Sparks 1977), Nebraska (Kaul 1975, Bose 1977), North Dakota (Shaver 1977), South Dakota (Baumberger 1977), and Wyoming (Shrader 1977). Vegetation type designations and distributions from scientific papers were added for Canada (Clarke, Campbell, and Campbell 1942; Moss and Campbell 1947; Coupland and Brayshaw 1953; Coupland 1950, 1961). A new concept of a plains rough fescue mixture along a portion of the northern border of North Dakota was introduced to the map details by Whitman and Barker (1989).

No living plant species are known to have originated in the Northern Plains. All plant species considered to be native to the Northern Plains originated and developed in other regions and sometime later migrated into the Northern Plains. The plant communities and vegetation types, however, are relatively young and began development in place about 5,000 years ago when the current climate with cycles of wet and dry periods began. Nomenclature of plants in the vegetation types of the Northern Plains followed Flora of the Great Plains (1986) in Barker and Whitman (1989) and, in addition, nomenclature of grass plants follows Flora of North America (2003, 2007) in this report.

Tall Grass Prairie

The Tall Grass Prairie, Bluestem-Switchgrass-Indiangrass Type, exists on the eastern margin of the Northern Plains Grasslands and extends from southern Manitoba through eastern North and South Dakota and western Minnesota southward into northwestern Iowa and northeastern Nebraska to the Platte River. The physiography of the region consists of the Manitoba Plain and the Red River Valley Plain of the Small Lakes Section and extends into the Dissected Till Plains Section of the Central Lowland Province. The climate is humid with evapotranspiration lower than precipitation. The soil moisture regime is Perudic and the soil temperature regime is Frigid in the north and Mesic in the south. The soils are primarily Aquolls in the north and Udolls in the south. The major grasses of the Bluestem-Switchgrass-Indiangrass Type of the Tall Grass Prairie (table 1) are big bluestem, porcupinegrass, switchgrass, prairie dropseed, and indiangrass. Cool-season grass species increase towards the northern portions and warm-season grass species increase towards the southern portions. Big bluestem occupies the lower slopes and subirrigated soils in the north and increases in dominance in the south. Prominent forbs are prairie clover, tall blazing

star, large beardtongue, stiff sunflower, scurf pea, white prairie aster, white sage, prairie goldenrods, and violets. Major shrubs are leadplant, white spiraea, wild roses, western snowberry, and willows. Most of this vegetation type has been converted to cropland, and only fragments of tall grass prairie vegetation remain. Plant communities with tall grass species exist in several other vegetation types where near equivalent environmental conditions develop from combinations of precipitation, stored soil water, and water runoff that are greater than evapotranspiration.

Transition Mixed Grass Prairie

The Transition Mixed Grass Prairie, Wheatgrass-Bluestem-Needlegrass Type (figure 1), exists between the Tall Grass Prairie on the east and the Mixed Grass Prairie on the west and extends from east central Saskatchewan and southwestern Manitoba through east central North and South Dakota and east central Nebraska to the Platte River. The physiography of the region consists of the Saskatchewan Plain and the Glaciated Plains (Drift Prairie) of the Small Lakes Section of the Central Lowland Province and extends into the eastern portion of the High Plains Section of the Great Plains Province. The climate is sub humid with evapotranspiration greater than precipitation over most of the area except for subirrigated soils and topographic slope positions with water runoff. The soil moisture regime is Udic and the soil temperature regime is Frigid in the north and Mesic in the south. The soils are primarily Udic Borolls in the north and Udic Ustolls in the south. The major grasses of the Wheatgrass-Bluestem-Needlegrass Type of the Transition Mixed Grass Prairie (table 2) are western wheatgrass, thickspike (northern) wheatgrass, little bluestem, porcupinegrass, needle and thread, and green needlegrass. Cool-season grass species increase towards the northern portions and warm-season grass species increase towards the southern portions. The needlegrasses and thickspike wheatgrass increase in the north. Little bluestem increases in the south. Prominent forbs are white prairie aster, scurf peas, prairie coneflower, purple coneflower, milkvetches, dotted blazing star, white sage, soft goldenrod, curlycup gumweed, hairy golden aster, and stiff sunflower. Major shrubs are wild roses, western snowberry, silverberry, leadplant, white spiraea, and willows. Plant communities change with topographic position. Wetland communities develop in nearly concentric rings around depressions. The salt-affected "pot holes" support saline plant communities. Wet meadow

communities develop on subirrigated soils. Upland communities develop on well drained soils and xeric communities develop on shallow soils. Kentucky bluegrass and western snowberry communities have greatly increased in this region as a result of high stocking rates and too early of grazing starting dates.

Mixed Grass Prairie

The Mixed Grass Prairie has a high mid grass component with some short grasses and some tall grasses present and is separated into three vegetation types based on differences resulting from soil texture and soil temperature regime.

The Mixed Grass Prairie, Wheatgrass-Needlegrass Type (figure 1), exists on semi arid cool soils between the Transition Mixed Grass Prairie on the east and the Short Grass Prairie on the west and extends from mid Saskatchewan through western North Dakota and eastern Montana to north central and northwestern South Dakota. The physiography of the region consists of the eastern portions of the Glaciated and Unglaciated sections of the Missouri Plateau Section, including the Alberta Plain, of the Great Plains Province. The climate is semi arid with evapotranspiration greater than precipitation. The soil moisture regime is Ustic and the soil temperature regime is Frigid. The soils are primarily Typic Borolls. The major grasses of the Wheatgrass-Needlegrass Type of the Mixed Grass Prairie (table 3) are western wheatgrass, needle and thread, blue grama, prairie Junegrass, and green needlegrass. Prominent forbs are white prairie aster, scarlet gaura, scarlet globemallow, purple prairie clover, dotted blazing star, purple locoweed, fringed sage, white sage, hairy golden aster, curlycup gumweed, Hood's spiny phlox, prairie smoke, green sage, and prairie chickweed. Major shrubs are silver sagebrush, buffaloberry, wild roses, western snowberry, broom snakeweed, and creeping juniper. This vegetation type grows in soils developed from glacial till north and east of the Missouri River and grows in soils developed from Tertiary sedimentary deposits south and west of the Missouri River. Soils in the unglaciated section are developing an argillic (clay) layer and accumulating soluble salts in a subhorizon at decreasing depths from east to west.

The Mixed Grass Prairie, Wheatgrass-Grama Type (figure 1), exists on semi arid warm clay soils south of the Wheatgrass-Needlegrass Type and is in southwestern South Dakota. The physiography of the region consists of the southeastern portion of the Unglaciated section of the Missouri Plateau

Section of the Great Plains Province. The climate is semi arid with evapotranspiration greater than precipitation. The soil moisture regime is Ustic and the soil temperature regime is Mesic. The soils are primarily clay textured Typic Ustolls. The major grasses of the Wheatgrass-Grama Type of the Mixed Grass Prairie (table 4) are western wheatgrass, blue grama, and buffalograss. This vegetation type is separated from the Wheatgrass-Needlegrass Type because the clay textured soils and warmer soil temperature regime result in near removal of needle and thread and in greatly increasing blue grama and buffalograss.

The Mixed Grass Prairie, Wheatgrass Type (figure 1), exists on semi arid warm dense clay soils south of the Wheatgrass-Needlegrass Type and is in northwestern South Dakota. The physiography of the region consists of the central portion of the Unglaciaded section of the Missouri Plateau Section of the Great Plains Province. The climate is semi arid with evapotranspiration greater than precipitation. The soil moisture regime is Ustic and the soil temperature regime is Mesic. The soils are primarily dense clay textured Typic Ustolls. The major grasses of the Wheatgrass Type of the Mixed Grass Prairie (table 5) are western wheatgrass, green needlegrass, and thickspike wheatgrass. This vegetation type is separated from the Wheatgrass-Needlegrass Type because the dense clay textured soils and warmer soil temperature regime result in removal of blue grama and near removal of needle and thread.

Short Grass Prairie

The Northern Short Grass Prairie, Grama-Needlegrass-Wheatgrass Type (figure 1), exists on the western side of the Northern Plains Grasslands and extends from southeastern Alberta and southwestern Saskatchewan through central Montana and southward into northeastern Wyoming. The physiography of the region consists of the western portions of the Glaciaded and Unglaciaded sections of the Missouri Plateau Section of the Great Plains Province. The climate is arid with evapotranspiration greater than precipitation. The soil moisture regime is Aridic and the soil temperature regime is Frigid in the north and Mesic in the south. The soils are primarily Aridic Borolls and Torriorthents in the north and Aridic and Aridic Ustolls in the south. The major grasses of the Grama-Needlegrass-Wheatgrass Type of the Northern Short Grass Prairie (table 6) are blue grama, needle and thread, small needlegrass, western wheatgrass, thickspike wheatgrass, green needlegrass, and buffalograss. Prominent forbs are

fringed sage, green sage, milkvetches, Hood's spiny phlox, curlycup gumweed, and prairie chickweed. Major shrubs are big sagebrush, silver sagebrush, rabbitbrush, broom snakeweed, plains prickly pear, greesewood, shadescale, saltbush, and winterfat. Dr. Whitman (Barker and Whitman 1989) continued the separation of this vegetation type from the Wheatgrass-Needlegrass Type because of the notable increase in the shortgrass component and the relative decrease of western wheatgrass and needle and thread. Cool-season grass species increase towards the northern portions and warm-season grass species increase towards the southern portions. The needlegrasses increase in the north. Blue grama and buffalograss increase in the south. Because of the presence of mid cool-season grasses, the Northern Shortgrass Prairie has sometimes been combined with the Northern Mixed Grass Prairie. However, these two vegetation types are distinct and should remain separated. The Grama-Needlegrass-Wheatgrass Type has the appearance of a shortgrass prairie and has an arid soil moisture regime, less soil horizon development, shallower soil depth to the accumulating soluble salts and developing argillic (clay) layer, shallower rooting depth, lower soil water holding capacity, greater evapotranspiration potential, and generally more xeric than the Wheatgrass-Needlegrass Type.

The Northern Short Grass Prairie, Saltgrass Type, exists on salt affected soils distributed in local areas across the Northern Short Grass Prairie region. The major grasses of the Saltgrass Type of the Northern Short Grass Prairie (table 7) are saltgrass, alkali cordgrass, basin wildrye, foxtail barley, little barley, and Nuttall's alkali grass. Few plant species can tolerate the harsh environmental conditions of salt-affected areas. The tolerant species have mechanisms to exclude uptake of salts, or physiologically separate and discharge the undesired salts.

The Southern Short Grass Prairie, Blue grama-Buffalograss Type (figure 1), exists in northwestern Nebraska and extends into east central Wyoming north of the North Platte River. The physiography of the region consists of a small western portion of the High Plains Section of the Great Plains Province. The climate is arid with evapotranspiration greater than precipitation. The soil moisture regime is Aridic and the soil temperature regime is Mesic. The soils are primarily Aridic and Aridic Ustolls. The major grasses of the Blue grama-Buffalograss Type of the Southern Short Grass Prairie (table 8) are blue grama and

buffalograss. This vegetation type is separated from the Grama-Needlegrass-Wheatgrass Type because the arid soil moisture regime and mesic soil temperature regime severely reduce the mid cool-season grasses and greatly increase the short warm-season grasses. Only a small area of the Southern Short Grass Prairie extends into the Northern Plains.

Sandhills Prairie

The Sandhills Prairie, Bluestem-Sandreed-Grama-Needlegrass Type (figure 1), exists in the north central portion of Nebraska south of the Niobrara River and north of the Platte River. Other Sandhills Prairie areas exist scattered throughout the Northern Plains. Many areas are too small to map. A large area of Sandhills Prairie exists along the Sheyenne River in southeastern North Dakota and another large area exists near Swift Current, Saskatchewan. The physiography of the Nebraska Sandhills consists of the Sand Hills region of the High Plains Section of the Great Plains Province. The climate is semi arid with evapotranspiration greater than precipitation. The soil moisture regime is Ustic and the soil temperature regime is Mesic. The soils are primarily Ustipsamments. The major grasses of the Bluestem-Sandreed-Grama-Needlegrass Type of the Sandhills Prairie (table 9) are big bluestem, little bluestem, sand bluestem, prairie sandreed, sideoats grama, needle and thread, and switchgrass. Prominent forbs are purple prairie clover, silky prairie clover, scurf peas, goldenrods, sunflowers, white camas, and wild lily. Major shrubs are leadplant, wild roses, western snowberry, willows, creeping juniper, common juniper, eastern red cedar, and yucca. This vegetation type is fundamentally the Tall Grass Prairie vegetation on sand soils. The tall grass species occupy the lower slopes and subirrigated soils while the mid and short grasses occupy the dryer upper slopes. A unique assemblage of grasses grow in blowout areas with active wind erosion and deposition and are blowout grass, sandhill muhly, sand dropseed, indian ricegrass, and Schweinitz cyperus.

Foothills Prairie

The Foothills Prairie, Plains Rough Fescue Type (figure 1), exists as a fringe along the montane forest of the Rocky Mountain foothills from Alberta to south central Montana and along the aspen groveland and aspen parkland bordering the boreal forest zone in Alberta and Saskatchewan and the type mingles with the Wheatgrass-Bluestem-Needlegrass Type extending across Saskatchewan and

southwestern Manitoba and into northern North Dakota. The physiography of the region consists of the northern portion of the Glaciated section of the Missouri Plateau Section of the Great Plains Province and the northern portion of the Small Lakes Section of the Central Lowland Province. The major grasses of the Plains Rough Fescue Type of the Foothills Prairie (table 10) are plains rough fescue, Parry's oatgrass, timber oatgrass, bluebunch wheatgrass, slender wheatgrass, western wheatgrass, thickspike wheatgrass, Nelson's needlegrass, and Richardson's needlegrass. Prominent forbs are lupines, tall larkspur, sticky-leaved geranium, and arrowleaf balsamroot. Major shrubs are shrubby cinquefoil and big sagebrush. This vegetation type consists of a high proportion of tussock-forming grass species that are now known to develop on other landforms than Rocky Mountain foothills.

Grassland with Woodland or Forest

The Pacific Bunchgrass Prairie, Bluebunch-Fescue Type (figure 1), exists in the south central portion of Montana. Numerous other areas too small to map exist within the Great Plains. The physiography of the region consists of the Unglaciated section of the Missouri Plateau Section of the Great Plains Province. The major grasses of the Bluebunch-Fescue Type of the Pacific Bunchgrass Prairie (table 11) are bluebunch wheatgrass, Idaho fescue, western wheatgrass, sideoats grama, and little bluestem. Prominent forbs are white prairie aster, western yarrow, American vetch, scarlet gaura, and fringed sage. Major shrubs are western snowberry, silver sagebrush, rabbitbrush, broom snakewood, and plains prickly pear. This vegetation type is commonly associated with big sagebrush and exists as open grasslands between savanna stands of ponderosa pine or Rocky Mountain juniper.

The Badlands and River Breaks, Woody Draw and Savanna Types (figure 1), exist in central Montana along the Missouri and Musselshell Rivers, in western North Dakota along the Little Missouri River, and in southwestern South Dakota along the White River. The physiography of the region consists of the Unglaciated section of the Missouri Plateau Section of the Great Plains Province. The major grasses of the Woody Draw and Savanna Types of the Badlands and River Breaks (table 12) are western wheatgrass, needle and thread, blue grama, green needlegrass, and prairie Junegrass. The grassland communities of this vegetation type exist as open grasslands or understory grasslands associated

with thin stands of trees growing in highly eroded badland areas, on steep east and north facing slopes, or in steep, sharply eroded breaks along streams and rivers. The woodlands and savannas consist primarily of ponderosa pine and Rocky Mountain juniper, and the hardwood draws consist of green ash, American elm, boxelder, and hawthorn. Major shrubs are wild roses, Juneberry, chokecherry, skunk bush, western snowberry, and shrubby cinquefoil.

The Pine Savanna, Pine-Juniper-Bluebunch Type (figure 1), exists on rough uplands in south central and southeastern Montana, north central Wyoming, western South Dakota, and southwestern North Dakota. The physiography of the region is the Unglaciaded section of the Missouri Plateau Section of the Great Plains Province. The major grasses of the Pine-Juniper-Bluebunch Type of the Pine Savanna (table 13) are bluebunch wheatgrass, western wheatgrass, thickspike wheatgrass, needle and thread, blue grama, green needlegrass, and little bluestem. The grassland communities of this vegetation type exist as open grasslands or understory grasslands associated with numerous disconnected savanna stands of ponderosa pine and Rocky Mountain juniper growing on eroded uplands with thin soils. Major shrubs are big sagebrush, bitterbrush, western snowberry, skunk bush, rabbitbrush, and common juniper.

The Black Hills Pine Forest, Pine-Spruce-Aspen Type (figure 1), exists in southwestern South Dakota and northeastern Wyoming. The physiography of the region consists of the Black Hills section of the Missouri Plateau Section of the Great Plains Province. The major grasses of the Pine-Spruce-Aspen Type of the Black Hills Pine Forest (table 14) are western wheatgrass, bluebunch wheatgrass, needle and thread, green needlegrass, prairie Junegrass, and blue grama. The grassland communities of this vegetation type exist as open grasslands or understory grasslands associated with the open park stands of ponderosa pine in the higher hills and with the savanna stands of ponderosa pine in the lower hills. Grassland communities are not important in the deep cool canyons with dense, nearly closed stands of white spruce and paper birch, in the dense secondary growth of aspen and paper birch, or in the dense deciduous forest stands of green ash, bur oak, American elm, boxelder, and hackberry along streams. Important shrubs are beaked hazelnut, Juneberry, chokecherry, willows, big sagebrush, sand sagebrush, and mountain mahogany.

The Montane Forest, Pine-Fir-Spruce Type (figure 1), exists on the Sweetgrass Hills, and the Highwood, Bearpaw, Little Rocky, Moccasin, Judith, and Big Snowy mountains in Montana and the Cypress Hills in Saskatchewan. The physiography of the region consists of the laccolithic domed mountains in the Unglaciaded section and the erosional upland remnant in the Glaciaded section of the Missouri Plateau Section of the Great Plains Province. The major grasses of the Pine-Fir-Spruce Type of the Montane Forest (table 15) are bluebunch wheatgrass, Idaho fescue, Nelson's needlegrass, spike fescue, prairie Junegrass, needle and thread, and spike oatgrass. The grassland communities of this vegetation type exist as open grasslands and understory grasslands associated with open stands of ponderosa pine and Douglas fir on the lower elevations of the domed mountains. Prominent forbs are arrowleaf balsamroot, lupine, sticky-leaved geranium, bluebells, and prairie smoke. Major shrubs are western snowberry, white spiraea, and bearberry. Grassland communities are not important at the higher elevations with closed forest stands of subalpine fir, Douglas fir, and Engelmann spruce. Grassland communities are associated with the open forest stands of lodgepole pine, white spruce, paper birch, and aspen on the Cypress Hills.

The Upland Woodlands, Aspen-Ash-Oak-Juniper Types (figure 1), exist as scattered areas with various types of trees, shrubs, and grasses in North Dakota, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan. The physiography of the region consists of upland positions of the Small Lakes Section of the Central Lowland Province and of upland positions of the Unglaciaded section of the Missouri Plateau Section of the Great Plains Province. The major grasses of the Aspen-Ash-Oak-Juniper Types of the Upland Woodlands (table 16) are roughleaf ricegrass, little ricegrass, and long-beaked sedge. Grass plants of these vegetation types are part of the understory community. Prominent forbs are northern bedstraw, wild strawberry, violets, anise root, and black snakeroot. Major shrubs are beaked hazelnut, western snowberry, Juneberry, chokecherry, red raspberry, bittersweet, gooseberry, wild plum, and northern hawthorn. The aspen woodlands contain trembling aspen, balsam poplar, paper birch, green ash, and sometimes bur oak. The ash woodlands contain green ash, American elm, boxelder, and occasionally hackberry. The oak woodlands contain bur oak, green ash, American elm, boxelder, aspen, and occasionally ironwood. The juniper woodlands contain Rocky Mountain juniper.

The Riparian Woodlands, Cottonwood-Ash-Elm Type (figure 1), exists along the floodplains of the larger rivers and streams and as small groves along minor drainage ways located throughout the Northern Plains. The major grasses of the Cottonwood-Ash-Elm Type of the Riparian Woodlands (table 17) are Canada wildrye, slender wheatgrass, Virginia wildrye, prairie sandreed, needle and thread, green needlegrass, marsh muhly, reed canarygrass, prairie cordgrass, bottlebrush grass, and mountain ricegrass. The grassland communities of this vegetation type exist as understory grasslands associated with open woodlands and sometimes fairly dense forest stands of cottonwood, green ash, boxelder, American elm, hackberry, peach-leaved willow, and occasionally bur oak. Prominent forbs are false solomon's seal, dogbane, wild licorice, fringed loosestrife, and meadow rue. Major shrubs are western snowberry, wild roses, skunk bush, golden currant, gooseberry, dogwood, poison ivy, bittersweet, wild grape, thicket creeper, and western clematis.

The environmental and biological factors that affect development of plant communities and vegetation types are the same factors that affect soil development. Soil moisture regimes affect distribution of plant species affiliations. The species affiliations that are the major vegetation types in the Northern Plains; Tall Grass Prairie, Transition Mixed Grass Prairie, Mixed Grass Prairie, and Short Grass Prairie; coincide with the four soil moisture regimes; Perudic, Udic, Ustic, and Aridic; respectively. The four soil moisture regimes are further separated into two soil temperature regimes; Frigid in the northern portions and Mesic in the southern portions. Soil temperature regimes affect composition and distribution of cool-season and warm-season grasses within the vegetation types. In the northern Frigid temperature regime, warm-season grass species decrease and cool-season grass species increase. In the southern Mesic temperature regime, cool-season grass species decrease and warm-season grass species increase.

Changes in elevation, slope, and aspect resulting from the various physiographic landforms in the Northern Plains affect plant species topographic distribution and plant community productivity by causing differential distribution and retention of soil water. Lower slopes have greater soil water than upper slopes. East and north facing slopes retain more soil water longer than south and west facing slopes. Lowland landscape slopes have soil water in amounts greater than precipitation levels because of

water runoff from upper slopes. Upland landscape slopes have soil water in amounts similar to precipitation levels because water runoff and water runoff occur in low quantities and are about the same. Xeric landscape slopes have soil water in amounts less than precipitation levels because of restricted water infiltration, low water holding capacity, high evapotranspiration demand, and/or high water runoff.

Some slope positions have sufficiently low evapotranspiration demand and/or receive sufficient quantities of water runoff for woodland and forest plant communities to develop. Woodlands and forests also develop along rivers and streams and at higher elevation positions that receive greater quantities of precipitation.

Enhancement of the Land Natural Resources

Generating greater new wealth with livestock agriculture requires enhancement of the land natural resources. These essential changes are doable and not the herculean task that they first appear to be. A few small catalyzing changes correctly timed can have remarkable effects.

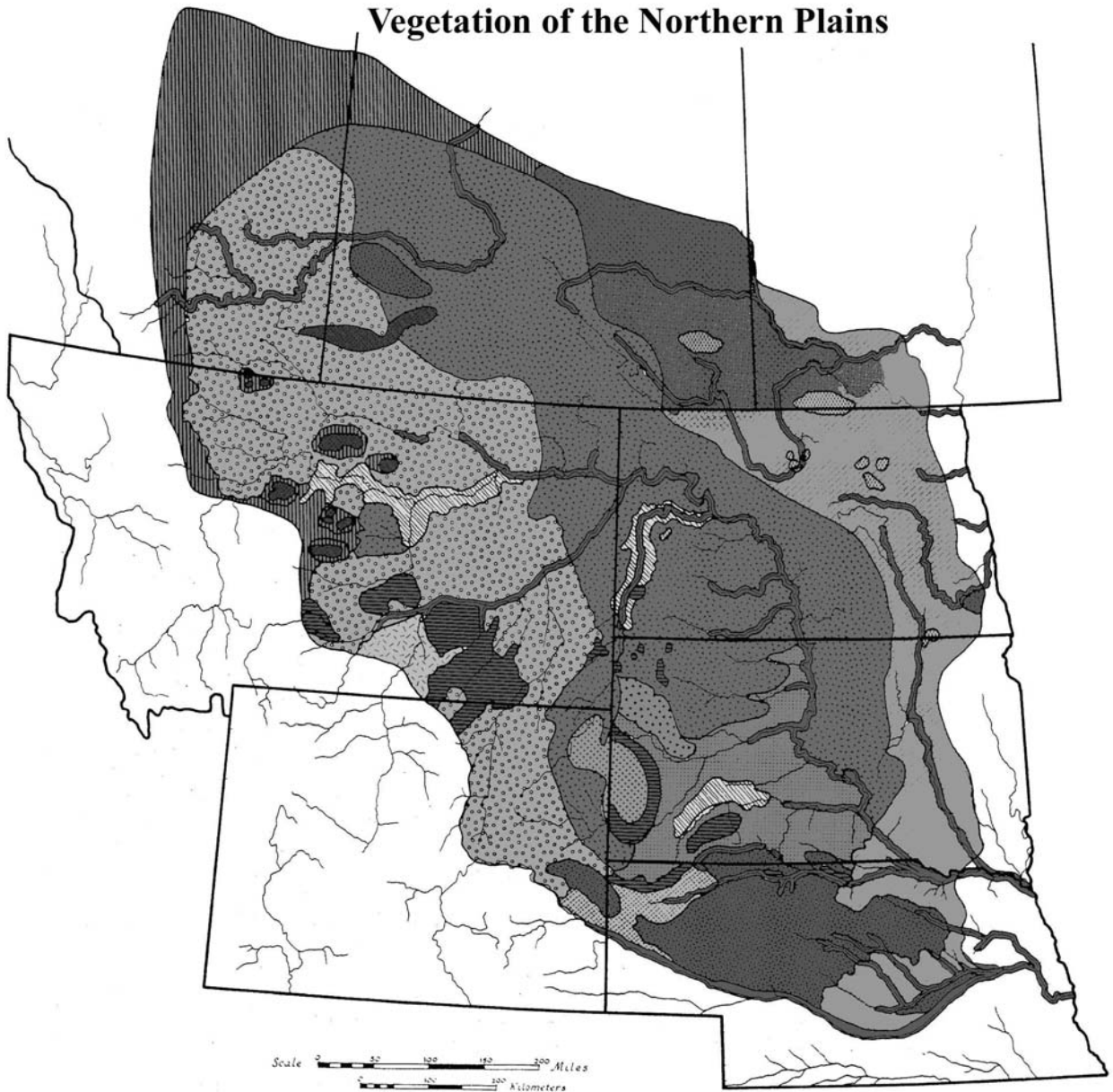
The forces that change hills into valleys, rocks into clay, and forests into grasslands work slowly over thousands and millions of years. The physiographic landform characteristics have changed little during the past 10,000 years. The current climate with wet and dry periods, and the current soil moisture and soil temperature regimes have been operational for about 5,000 years. The native plant species completed development of their physiological processes and defoliation resistance mechanisms in conjunction with early herbivore evolution millions of years ago.

By contrast, the soils, plant communities, and vegetation types in the Northern Plains are relatively young and their development is still ongoing. These developmental processes can be manipulated through implementation of biologically effective management that benefits all living and nonliving ecosystem components by meeting the biological requirements of the plants and soil organisms which causes improvements in the biogeochemical processes, ecosystem health, soil quality, plant community composition, and vegetation type affiliations. These important improvements enhance the quality and productivity of the land natural resources and result in generation of greater new wealth.

Acknowledgment

I am grateful to Sheri Schneider for assistance in production of this manuscript and for development of the tables.

Vegetation of the Northern Plains



map from Barker and Whitman 1989

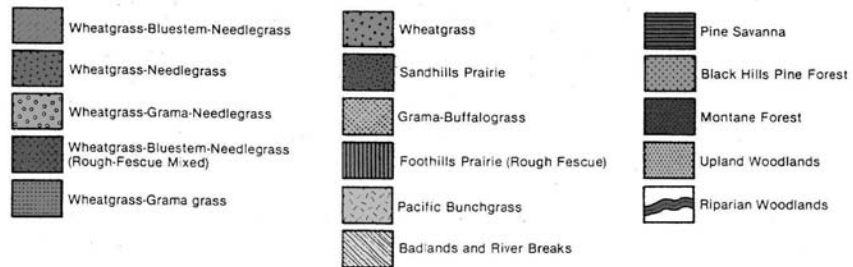


Table 1. Major Grasses of the Tall Grass Prairie; Bluestem-Switchgrass-Indiangrass Type.

Standardized Common Name	Flora of the Great Plains 1986	Flora of North America 2003, 2007
Big bluestem	<i>Andropogon gerardii</i>	<i>Andropogon gerardii</i>
Porcupinegrass	<i>Stipa spartea</i>	<i>Hesperostipa spartea</i>
Switchgrass	<i>Panicum virgatum</i>	<i>Panicum virgatum</i>
Prairie dropseed	<i>Sporobolus heterolepis</i>	<i>Sporobolus heterolepis</i>
Indiangrass	<i>Sorghastrum nutans</i>	<i>Sorghastrum nutans</i>
Northern reedgrass	<i>Calamagrostis stricta</i>	<i>Calamagrostis stricta inexpansa</i>
Prairie cordgrass	<i>Spartina pectinata</i>	<i>Spartina pectinata</i>
Sideoats grama	<i>Bouteloua curtipendula</i>	<i>Bouteloua curtipendula</i>
Slender wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron caninum majus majus</i>	<i>Elymus trachycaulus trachycaulus</i>
Bearded wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron caninum majus unilaterale</i>	<i>Elymus trachycaulus subsecundus</i>
Kentucky bluegrass	<i>Poa pratensis</i>	<i>Poa pratensis</i>
Needle and thread	<i>Stipa comata</i>	<i>Hesperostipa comata</i>
Little bluestem	<i>Andropogon scoparius</i>	<i>Schizachyrium scoparium scoparium</i>
Mat muhly	<i>Muhlenbergia richardsonis</i>	<i>Muhlenbergia richardsonis</i>
Needleleaf sedge	<i>Carex eleocharis</i>	<i>Carex duriuscula</i>
Sun sedge	<i>Carex heliophila</i>	<i>Carex inops heliophila</i>
Woolly sedge	<i>Carex lanuginosa</i>	<i>Carex pellita</i>

Table 2. Major Grasses of the Transition Mixed Grass Prairie; Wheatgrass-Bluestem-Needlegrass Type.

Standardized Common Name	Flora of the Great Plains 1986	Flora of North America 2003, 2007
Western wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron smithii</i>	<i>Pascopyrum smithii</i>
Thickspike wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron dasystachyum</i>	<i>Elymus lanceolatus</i>
Little bluestem	<i>Andropogon scoparius</i>	<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i> <i>scoparium</i>
Porcupinegrass	<i>Stipa spartea</i>	<i>Hesperostipa spartea</i>
Needle and thread	<i>Stipa comata</i>	<i>Hesperostipa comata</i>
Green needlegrass	<i>Stipa viridula</i>	<i>Nassella viridula</i>
Bearded wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron caninum</i> <i>majus unilaterale</i>	<i>Elymus trachycaulus</i> <i>subsecundus</i>
Slender wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron caninum</i> <i>majus majus</i>	<i>Elymus trachycaulus</i> <i>trachycaulus</i>
Sideoats grama	<i>Bouteloua curtipendula</i>	<i>Bouteloua curtipendula</i>
Blue grama	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>
Prairie Junegrass	<i>Koeleria pyramidata</i>	<i>Koeleria macrantha</i>
Prairie sandreed	<i>Calamovilfa longifolia</i>	<i>Calamovilfa longifolia</i>
Big bluestem	<i>Andropogon gerardii</i>	<i>Andropogon gerardii</i>
Kentucky bluegrass	<i>Poa pratensis</i>	<i>Poa pratensis</i>
Needleleaf sedge	<i>Carex eleocharis</i>	<i>Carex duriuscula</i>
Threadleaf sedge	<i>Carex filifolia</i>	<i>Carex filifolia</i>
Sun sedge	<i>Carex heliophila</i>	<i>Carex inops heliophila</i>

Table 3. Major Grasses of the Mixed Grass Prairie; Wheatgrass-Needlegrass Type.

Standardized Common Name	Flora of the Great Plains 1986	Flora of North America 2003, 2007
Western wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron smithii</i>	<i>Pascopyrum smithii</i>
Needle and thread	<i>Stipa comata</i>	<i>Hesperostipa comata</i>
Blue grama	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>
Prairie Junegrass	<i>Koeleria pyramidata</i>	<i>Koeleria macrantha</i>
Green needlegrass	<i>Stipa viridula</i>	<i>Nassella viridula</i>
Plains reedgrass	<i>Calamagrostis montanensis</i>	<i>Calamagrostis montanensis</i>
Little bluestem	<i>Andropogon scoparius</i>	<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i> <i>scoparium</i>
Prairie sandreed	<i>Calamovilfa longifolia</i>	<i>Calamovilfa longifolia</i>
Sandberg bluegrass	<i>Poa sandbergii</i>	<i>Poa secunda</i>
Thickspike wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron dasystachyum</i>	<i>Elymus lanceolatus</i>
Slender wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron caninum</i> <i>majus majus</i>	<i>Elymus trachycaulus</i> <i>trachycaulus</i>
Small needlegrass	<i>Stipa curtiseta</i>	<i>Hesperostipa curtiseta</i>
Bluebunch wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron spicatum</i>	<i>Pseudoroegneria spicata</i>
Buffalograss	<i>Buchloe dactyloides</i>	<i>Buchloe dactyloides</i>
Kentucky bluegrass	<i>Poa pratensis</i>	<i>Poa pratensis</i>
Threadleaf sedge	<i>Carex filifolia</i>	<i>Carex filifolia</i>
Sun sedge	<i>Carex heliophila</i>	<i>Carex inops heliophila</i>

Table 4. Major Grasses of the Mixed Grass Prairie on Clay Soils; Wheatgrass-Grama Type.		
Standardized Common Name	Flora of the Great Plains 1986	Flora of North America 2003, 2007
Western wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron smithii</i>	<i>Pascopyrum smithii</i>
Blue grama	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>
Buffalograss	<i>Buchloe dactyloides</i>	<i>Buchloe dactyloides</i>
Thickspike wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron dasystachyum</i>	<i>Elymus lanceolatus</i>
Green needlegrass	<i>Stipa viridula</i>	<i>Nassella viridula</i>

Table 5. Major Grasses of the Mixed Grass Prairie on Dense Clay Soils; Wheatgrass Type.		
Standardized Common Name	Flora of the Great Plains 1986	Flora of North America 2003, 2007
Western wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron smithii</i>	<i>Pascopyrum smithii</i>
Green needlegrass	<i>Stipa viridula</i>	<i>Nassella viridula</i>
Thickspike wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron dasystachyum</i>	<i>Elymus lanceolatus</i>
Associated Grass		
Needle and thread	<i>Stipa comata</i>	<i>Hesperostipa comata</i>

Table 6. Major Grasses of the Northern Short Grass Prairie; Grama-Needlegrass-Wheatgrass Type.		
Standardized Common Name	Flora of the Great Plains 1986	Flora of North America 2003, 2007
Blue grama	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>
Needle and thread	<i>Stipa comata</i>	<i>Hesperostipa comata</i>
Small needlegrass	<i>Stipa curtisetata</i>	<i>Hesperostipa curtisetata</i>
Western wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron smithii</i>	<i>Pascopyrum smithii</i>
Thickspike wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron dasystachyum</i>	<i>Elymus lanceolatus</i>
Green needlegrass	<i>Stipa viridula</i>	<i>Nassella viridula</i>
Buffalograss	<i>Buchloe dactyloides</i>	<i>Buchloe dactyloides</i>
Associated Grasses		
Red threeawn	<i>Aristida purpurea robusta</i>	<i>Aristida purpurea longiseta</i>
Indian ricegrass	<i>Oryzopsis hymenoides</i>	<i>Achnatherum hymenoides</i>
Plains muhly	<i>Muhlenbergia cuspidata</i>	<i>Muhlenbergia cuspidata</i>
Bluebunch wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron spicatum</i>	<i>Pseudoroegneria spicata</i>
Threadleaf sedge	<i>Carex filifolia</i>	<i>Carex filifolia</i>
Deteriorated Grassland		
Cheatgrass	<i>Bromus tectorum</i>	<i>Bromus tectorum</i>
Japanese brome	<i>Bromus japonicus</i>	<i>Bromus japonicus</i>

Table 7. Major Grasses of the Northern Short Grass Prairie on Salty Soils; Saltgrass Type.		
Standardized Common Name	Flora of the Great Plains 1986	Flora of North America 2003, 2007
Saltgrass	<i>Distichlis spicata stricta</i>	<i>Distichlis spicata</i>
Alkali cordgrass	<i>Spartina gracilis</i>	<i>Spartina gracilis</i>
Basin wildrye	<i>Elymus cinereus</i>	<i>Leymus cinereus</i>
Foxtail barley	<i>Hordeum jubatum</i>	<i>Hordeum jubatum jubatum</i>
Little barley	<i>Hordeum pusillum</i>	<i>Hordeum pusillum</i>
Nuttall's alkali grass	<i>Puccinellia nuttalliana</i>	<i>Puccinellia nuttalliana</i>
Common squirreltail	<i>Sitanion hystrix</i>	<i>Elymus elymoides elymoides</i>
Tumblegrass	<i>Schedonnardus paniculatus</i>	<i>Schedonnardus paniculatus</i>

Table 8. Major Grasses of the Southern Short Grass Prairie; Blue grama-Buffalograss Type.		
Standardized Common Name	Flora of the Great Plains 1986	Flora of North America 2003, 2007
Blue grama	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>
Buffalograss	<i>Buchloe dactyloides</i>	<i>Buchloe dactyloides</i>
Associated Grasses		
Western wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron smithii</i>	<i>Pascopyrum smithii</i>
Needle and thread	<i>Stipa comata</i>	<i>Hesperostipa comata</i>

Table 9. Major Grasses of the Sandhills Prairie; Bluestem-Sandreed-Grama-Needlegrass Type.

Standardized Common Name	Flora of the Great Plains 1986	Flora of North America 2003, 2007
Big bluestem	<i>Andropogon gerardii</i>	<i>Andropogon gerardii</i>
Little bluestem	<i>Andropogon scoparius</i>	<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i> <i>scoparium</i>
Sand bluestem	<i>Andropogon hallii</i>	<i>Andropogon hallii</i>
Prairie sandreed	<i>Calamovilfa longifolia</i>	<i>Calamovilfa longifolia</i>
Sideoats grama	<i>Bouteloua curtipendula</i>	<i>Bouteloua curtipendula</i>
Needle and thread	<i>Stipa comata</i>	<i>Hesperostipa comata</i>
Switchgrass	<i>Panicum virgatum</i>	<i>Panicum virgatum</i>
Blue grama	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>
Blowout Areas		
Blowout grass	<i>Redfieldia flexuosa</i>	<i>Redfieldia flexuosa</i>
Sandhill muhly	<i>Muhlenbergia pungens</i>	<i>Muhlenbergia pungens</i>
Sand dropseed	<i>Sporobolus cryptandrus</i>	<i>Sporobolus cryptandrus</i>
Indian ricegrass	<i>Oryzopsis hymenoides</i>	<i>Achnatherum hymenoides</i>
Schweinitz cyperus	<i>Cyperus schweinitzii</i>	<i>Cyperus schweinitzii</i>

Table 10. Major Grasses of the Foothills Prairie; Plains Rough Fescue Type.		
Standardized Common Name	Flora of the Great Plains 1986	Flora of North America 2003, 2007
Plains rough fescue	<i>Festuca scabrella</i>	<i>Festuca hallii</i>
Parry's oatgrass	<i>Danthonia parryi</i>	<i>Danthonia parryi</i>
Timber oatgrass	<i>Danthonia intermedia</i>	<i>Danthonia intermedia</i>
Bluebunch wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron spicatum</i>	<i>Pseudoroegneria spicata</i>
Slender wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron caninum</i> <i>majus majus</i>	<i>Elymus trachycaulus</i> <i>trachycaulus</i>
Western wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron smithii</i>	<i>Pascopyrum smithii</i>
Thickspike wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron dasystachyum</i>	<i>Elymus lanceolatus</i>
Nelson's needlegrass	<i>Stipa columbiana</i>	<i>Achnatherum nelsonii nelsonii</i>
Richardson's needlegrass	<i>Stipa richardsonii</i>	<i>Achnatherum richardsonii</i>
Needle and thread	<i>Stipa comata</i>	<i>Hesperostipa comata</i>
Prairie Junegrass	<i>Koeleria pyramidata</i>	<i>Koeleria macrantha</i>
Idaho fescue	<i>Festuca idahoensis</i>	<i>Festuca idahoensis</i>
Spike oatgrass	<i>Helictotrichon hookeri</i>	<i>Avenula hookeri</i>
Kentucky bluegrass	<i>Poa pratensis</i>	<i>Poa pratensis</i>
Threadleaf sedge	<i>Carex filifolia</i>	<i>Carex filifolia</i>
Deteriorated Grassland		
Cheatgrass	<i>Bromus tectorum</i>	<i>Bromus tectorum</i>
Japanese brome	<i>Bromus japonicus</i>	<i>Bromus japonicus</i>

Table 11. Major Grasses of the Pacific Bunchgrass Prairie; Bluebunch-Fescue Type.

Standardized Common Name	Flora of the Great Plains 1986	Flora of North America 2003, 2007
Bluebunch wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron spicatum</i>	<i>Pseudoroegneria spicata</i>
Idaho fescue	<i>Festuca idahoensis</i>	<i>Festuca idahoensis</i>
Western wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron smithii</i>	<i>Pascopyrum smithii</i>
Sideoats grama	<i>Bouteloua curtipendula</i>	<i>Bouteloua curtipendula</i>
Little bluestem	<i>Andropogon scoparius</i>	<i>Schizachyrium scoparium scoparium</i>
Red threeawn	<i>Aristida purpurea robusta</i>	<i>Aristida purpurea longiseta</i>
Needle and thread	<i>Stipa comata</i>	<i>Hesperostipa comata</i>
Plains muhly	<i>Muhlenbergia cuspidata</i>	<i>Muhlenbergia cuspidata</i>
Prairie Junegrass	<i>Koeleria pyramidata</i>	<i>Koeleria macrantha</i>
Blue grama	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>
Thickspike wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron dasystachyum</i>	<i>Elymus lanceolatus</i>

Table 12. Major Grasses of the Badlands and River Breaks; Woody Draw and Savanna Types.

Standardized Common Name	Flora of the Great Plains 1986	Flora of North America 2003, 2007
Western wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron smithii</i>	<i>Pascopyrum smithii</i>
Needle and thread	<i>Stipa comata</i>	<i>Hesperostipa comata</i>
Blue grama	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>
Green needlegrass	<i>Stipa viridula</i>	<i>Nassella viridula</i>
Prairie Junegrass	<i>Koeleria pyramidata</i>	<i>Koeleria macrantha</i>
Plains reedgrass	<i>Calamagrostis montanensis</i>	<i>Calamagrostis montanensis</i>
Kentucky bluegrass	<i>Poa pratensis</i>	<i>Poa pratensis</i>
Sandberg bluegrass	<i>Poa sandbergii</i>	<i>Poa secunda</i>
Buffalograss	<i>Buchloe dactyloides</i>	<i>Buchloe dactyloides</i>
Small needlegrass	<i>Stipa curtisetata</i>	<i>Hesperostipa curtisetata</i>
Thickspike wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron dasystachyum</i>	<i>Elymus lanceolatus</i>
Little bluestem	<i>Andropogon scoparius</i>	<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i> <i>scoparium</i>
Bluebunch wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron spicatum</i>	<i>Pseudoroegneria spicata</i>
Saltgrass	<i>Distichlis spicata stricta</i>	<i>Distichlis spicata</i>

Table 13. Major Grasses of the Pine Savanna; Pine-Juniper-Bluebunch Type.		
Standardized Common Name	Flora of the Great Plains 1986	Flora of North America 2003, 2007
Bluebunch wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron spicatum</i>	<i>Pseudoroegneria spicata</i>
Western wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron smithii</i>	<i>Pascopyrum smithii</i>
Thickspike wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron dasystachyum</i>	<i>Elymus lanceolatus</i>
Needle and thread	<i>Stipa comata</i>	<i>Hesperostipa comata</i>
Blue grama	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>
Green needlegrass	<i>Stipa viridula</i>	<i>Nassella viridula</i>
Little bluestem	<i>Andropogon scoparius</i>	<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i> <i>scoparium</i>

Table 14. Major Grasses of the Black Hills Pine Forest; Pine-Spruce-Aspen Type.		
Standardized Common Name	Flora of the Great Plains 1986	Flora of North America 2003, 2007
Western wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron smithii</i>	<i>Pascopyrum smithii</i>
Bluebunch wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron spicatum</i>	<i>Pseudoroegneria spicata</i>
Needle and thread	<i>Stipa comata</i>	<i>Hesperostipa comata</i>
Green needlegrass	<i>Stipa viridula</i>	<i>Nassella viridula</i>
Prairie Junegrass	<i>Koeleria pyramidata</i>	<i>Koeleria macrantha</i>
Blue grama	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>
Hairy grama	<i>Bouteloua hirsuta</i>	<i>Bouteloua hirsuta</i>
Buffalograss	<i>Buchloe dactyloides</i>	<i>Buchloe dactyloides</i>
Needleleaf sedge	<i>Carex eleocharis</i>	<i>Carex duriuscula</i>
Threadleaf sedge	<i>Carex filifolia</i>	<i>Carex filifolia</i>

Table 15. Major Grasses of the Montane Forest; Pine-Fir-Spruce Type.		
Standardized Common Name	Flora of the Great Plains 1986	Flora of North America 2003, 2007
Bluebunch wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron spicatum</i>	<i>Pseudoroegneria spicata</i>
Idaho fescue	<i>Festuca idahoensis</i>	<i>Festuca idahoensis</i>
Nelson's needlegrass	<i>Stipa columbiana</i>	<i>Achnatherum nelsonii nelsonii</i>
Spike fescue	<i>Hesperochloa kingii</i>	<i>Leucopoa kingii</i>
Prairie Junegrass	<i>Koeleria pyramidata</i>	<i>Koeleria macrantha</i>
Needle and thread	<i>Stipa comata</i>	<i>Hesperostipa comata</i>
Spike oatgrass	<i>Helictotrichon hookeri</i>	<i>Avenula hookeri</i>
Sandberg bluegrass	<i>Poa sandbergii</i>	<i>Poa secunda</i>

Table 16. Major Grasses of the Upland Woodlands; Aspen-Ash-Oak-Juniper Types.

Standardized Common Name	Flora of the Great Plains 1986	Flora of North America 2003, 2007
Roughleaf ricegrass	<i>Oryzopsis asperifolia</i>	<i>Oryzopsis asperifolia</i>
Little ricegrass	<i>Oryzopsis micrantha</i>	<i>Piptatherum micranthum</i>
Long-beaked sedge	<i>Carex sprengei</i>	<i>Carex sprengei</i>
Kentucky bluegrass	<i>Poa pratensis</i>	<i>Poa pratensis</i>
Associated Grasses		
Western wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron smithii</i>	<i>Pascopyrum smithii</i>
Bluebunch wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron spicatum</i>	<i>Pseudoroegneria spicata</i>
Thickspike wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron dasystachyum</i>	<i>Elymus lanceolatus</i>
Blue grama	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>	<i>Bouteloua gracilis</i>
Porcupinegrass	<i>Stipa spartea</i>	<i>Hesperostipa spartea</i>
Little bluestem	<i>Andropogon scoparius</i>	<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i> <i>scoparium</i>

Table 17. Major Grasses of the Riparian Woodlands; Cottonwood-Ash-Elm Type.		
Standardized Common Name	Flora of the Great Plains 1986	Flora of North America 2003, 2007
Canada wildrye	<i>Elymus canadensis</i>	<i>Elymus canadensis</i>
Slender wheatgrass	<i>Agropyron caninum majus majus</i>	<i>Elymus trachycaulus trachycaulus</i>
Virginia wildrye	<i>Elymus virginicus</i>	<i>Elymus virginicus</i>
Prairie sandreed	<i>Calamovilfa longifolia</i>	<i>Calamovilfa longifolia</i>
Needle and thread	<i>Stipa comata</i>	<i>Hesperostipa comata</i>
Green needlegrass	<i>Stipa viridula</i>	<i>Nassella viridula</i>
Marsh muhly	<i>Muhlenbergia racemosa</i>	<i>Muhlenbergia racemosa</i>
Reed canarygrass	<i>Phalaris arundinacea</i>	<i>Phalaris arundinacea</i>
Prairie cordgrass	<i>Spartina pectinata</i>	<i>Spartina pectinata</i>
Bottlebrush grass	<i>Hystrix patula</i>	<i>Elymus hystrix</i>
Mountain ricegrass	<i>Oryzopsis racemosa</i>	<i>Piptatherum racemosum</i>
Kentucky bluegrass	<i>Poa pratensis</i>	<i>Poa pratensis</i>
Yellow sedge	<i>Carex pensylvanica</i>	<i>Carex pensylvanica</i>
Long-beaked sedge	<i>Carex sprengeii</i>	<i>Carex sprengeii</i>

Literature Cited

- Barker, W.T., and W.C. Whitman. 1989.** Vegetation of the Northern Great Plains. North Dakota State University Experiment Station Research Report #111. Fargo, ND. 26p.
- Baumberger, R. 1977.** South Dakota rangeland resources. Old West Regional Commission. Society for Range Management, Denver, CO. 150p.
- Bluemle, J.P. 2000.** The face of North Dakota. Third Edition. North Dakota Geological Survey. Educational Series 26. 205p.
- Bose, D.R. 1977.** Rangeland resources of Nebraska. Old West Regional Commission. Society for Range Management, Denver, CO. 121p.
- Brady, N.C. 1974.** The nature and properties of soils. MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., New York, NY. 639p.
- Clarke, S.E., J.A. Campbell, and J.B. Campbell. 1942.** An ecological and grazing capacity study of the native grass pastures in southern Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. Division of Forage Crops Dom. Experiment Station. Technical Bulletin 44. Swift Current, SK. 31p.
- Coupland, R.T., and T.C. Brayshaw. 1953.** The fescue grassland in Saskatchewan. Ecology 34:386-405.
- Coupland, R.T. 1950.** Ecology of mixed prairie in Canada. Ecological Monographs 20:271-315.
- Coupland, R.T. 1961.** A reconsideration of grassland classification in the Northern Great Plains of North America. Journal of Ecology 49:135-167.
- Fenneman, N.M. 1931.** Physiography of western United States. McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, NY. 534p.
- Fenneman, N.M. 1946.** Physical divisions of the United States. USDI Geological Survey. Map.
- Flora of North America Editorial Committee, eds. 2003, 2007.** Flora of North America. Oxford University Press, New York, NY. Vols. 24-25.
- Froiland, S.G., and R.R. Weedon. 1990.** Natural history of the Black Hills and badlands. The Center for Western Studies, Sioux Falls, SD. 225p.
- Goodin, J.R., and D.K. Northington (eds.). 1985.** Plant resources of arid and semiarid lands. Academic Press, Inc., Orlando, FL. 338p.
- Great Plains Flora Association. 1986.** Flora of the Great Plains. University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, KS. 1392p.
- Hacker, P.T., and T.P. Sparks. 1977.** Montana rangeland resources. Old West Regional Commission. Society for Range Management, Denver, CO.
- Hunt, C.B. 1974.** Natural regions of the United States and Canada. W.H. Freeman and Company, San Francisco, CA. 725p.
- Kaul, R.B. 1975.** Vegetation of Nebraska (Circa 1850). Conservation and Survey Division, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE. Map.
- Kuchler, A.W. 1964.** Potential natural vegetation of the conterminous United States. American Geographical Society. Special Publication No. 36. New York, NY. 116p. + Maps.
- Moss, E.H., and J.A. Campbell. 1947.** The fescue grassland of Alberta. Canadian Journal of Research. 25:209-227.
- Ojakangas, R.W., and C.L. Matsch. 1982.** Minnesota's Geology. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN. 255p.
- Raisz, E. 1957.** Landforms of the United States. Copyrighted Erwin Raisz Map.
- Robinson, C.S., and R.E. Davis. 1995.** Geology of Devils Tower National Monument. Devils Tower Natural History Association, WY. 96p.

Ross, R.L., and H.E. Hunter. 1976. Climax vegetation of Montana based on climate and soils. USDA, Soil Conservation Service. Bozeman, MT. 64p.

Shaver, J.C. 1977. North Dakota rangeland resources. Old West Regional Commission. Society for Range Management, Denver, CO. 118p.

Shrader, J.A. 1977. Wyoming rangeland resources. Old West Regional Commission. Society for Range Management, Denver, CO. 87p.

Soil Survey Staff. 1975. Soil taxonomy. USDA Agriculture Handbook No. 436. Washington, DC. 754p.

Whitman, W.C., and W.T. Barker. 1989. Mapping North Dakota's natural vegetation. Proceedings of the North Dakota Academy of Science. 43:4-5.