

Differences in Plant Species Composition as Evidence of Alternate States in the Sagebrush Steppe

Author(s): Emily Kachergis, Maria E. Fernandez-Gimenez, and Monique E. Rocca

Source: Rangeland Ecology & Management, 65(5):486-497.

Published By: Society for Range Management

<https://doi.org/10.2111/REM-D-11-00137.1>

URL: <http://www.bioone.org/doi/full/10.2111/REM-D-11-00137.1>

BioOne (www.bioone.org) is a nonprofit, online aggregation of core research in the biological, ecological, and environmental sciences. BioOne provides a sustainable online platform for over 170 journals and books published by nonprofit societies, associations, museums, institutions, and presses.

Your use of this PDF, the BioOne Web site, and all posted and associated content indicates your acceptance of BioOne's Terms of Use, available at www.bioone.org/page/terms_of_use.

Usage of BioOne content is strictly limited to personal, educational, and non-commercial use. Commercial inquiries or rights and permissions requests should be directed to the individual publisher as copyright holder.

Differences in Plant Species Composition as Evidence of Alternate States in the Sagebrush Steppe

Emily Kachergis,¹ Maria E. Fernandez-Gimenez,² and Monique E. Rocca³

Authors are ¹Postdoctoral Research Ecologist, USDA-ARS High Plains Grasslands Research Station, Cheyenne, WY 82009, USA; ²Associate Professor, Department of Forest and Rangeland Stewardship, and ³Associate Professor, Department of Ecosystem Science and Sustainability, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO 80523, USA.

Abstract

State-and-transition models (STMs), conceptual models of vegetation change based on alternate state theory, are increasingly applied as tools for land management decision-making. As STMs are created throughout the United States, it is crucial to ensure that they are supported by ecological evidence. Plant species composition reflects ecosystem processes that are difficult to measure and may be a useful indicator of alternate states. This study aims to create data-driven STMs based on plant species composition for two ecological sites (Claypan and Mountain Loam) in northwestern Colorado sagebrush steppe. We sampled 76 plots with different management and disturbance histories. Drawing on the hierarchical approach currently taken to build STMs, we hypothesized that A) differences in species composition between the two ecological sites would be related to environmental factors and B) differences in species composition within each ecological site would be related to management and disturbance history. Relationships among species composition, site history, and environmental variables were evaluated using multivariate statistics. We found that between ecological sites, species composition was related to differences in soil texture, supporting Hypothesis A and the creation of separate STMs for each site. Within ecological sites, species composition was related to site history and also to environmental variation. This finding partially supports Hypothesis B and the identification of alternate states using species composition, but also suggests that these ecological sites are not uniform physical templates upon which plant community dynamics play out. This data-driven, plant species-based approach created two objective, credible STMs with states and transitions that are consistent with the sagebrush steppe literature. Our findings support the hierarchical view of landscapes currently applied in building STMs. An approach that acknowledges environmental heterogeneity within ecological sites is necessary to help define finer-resolution ecological sites and elucidate cases in which specific abiotic conditions make transitions between states more likely.

Resumen

Los Modelos de Estado y Transición (MET), que son modelos conceptuales en cambios de la vegetación basados la teoría del estado alternativo, su aplicación está en aumento como herramienta para la tomada de decisiones en el manejo de la tierra. Como los MET se han creado a través de los Estados Unidos, es vital que aseguremos que estos están apoyados por evidencia ecológica. La composición de especies refleja el proceso del ecosistema que es difícil de medir y podría ser un indicador útil de estados alternativos. Este estudio ayuda a crear un MET dirigido por datos basado en las composición de especies de plantas de dos sitios ecológicos (Claypan y Mountain Loam) en la estepa de artemisa al noroeste de de Colorado. Muestramos 76 parcelas con diferente manejo e historias de disturbio. Dibujando el concepto jerárquico actualmente usado para construir los MET, establecimos las siguientes hipótesis A) Las diferencias en la composición de especies entre los dos sitios ecológicos podrían estar relacionadas a factores medioambientales y B) las diferencias en la composición de especies dentro de cada sitio ecológicos podrían estar relacionadas por el manejo y la historia de disturbio. Las relaciones entre la composición de especies, la historia del sitio y las variables medioambientales fueron evaluadas usando estadística multivariada. Encontramos que entre sitios ecológicos, la composición de especies estuvo relacionada con las diferentes texturas del suelo, apoyando la Hipotesis A y la creación de MET separados. Dentro de los sitios ecológicos, la composición de especies estuvo relacionada a la historia del sitio y también a variables medioambientales. Estos resultados apoyan parcialmente la Hipotesis B y la identificación de estados alternativos usando la composición de especies, pero también sugieren que estos sitios ecológicos no son uniformes en la plantilla física que es donde la dinámica de la comunidad vegetal se desenvuelve. Este concepto basado en datos dirigidos en especies de plantas creo dos objetivos, creíbles MET con estados y transiciones que son consistentes con la literatura de la estepa de artemisa. Nuestros resultados apoyan el punto de vista jerárquico de paisajes que se usan actualmente para construir MET's. Un enfoque que reconoce la heterogeneidad medioambiental dentro de sitios ecológicos es necesaria para ayudar a definir mejor resolución de sitios ecológicos y aclarar casos donde condiciones abióticas específicas hacen la transición mas probable.

Key Words: chemical shrub treatment, ecological site, multivariate statistics, northwest Colorado, rangeland management, state-and-transition model

Research was funded by the Colorado Agricultural Experiment Station (Project Number COL00698), a Natural Resource Conservation Service Colorado Conservation Innovation grant (AG-8B05-A-6-33), and a grant from the USDA National Research Initiative Managed Ecosystems Program (COL0-2008-00725).

At the time of research, Kachergis was a graduate research assistant, Graduate Degree Program in Ecology, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO 80523, USA.

Correspondence: Emily Kachergis, USDA-ARS High Plains Grasslands Research Station, Cheyenne, WY 82009, USA. Email: emily.kachergis@gmail.com

Manuscript received 1 August 2011; manuscript accepted 6 May 2012.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/4404601>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/4404601>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)