

**PROJECT BACKGROUND**

This map was produced as part of a biophysical mapping pilot study carried out in the Watson Lake (NTS 105A/2) area in 2004. Biophysical mapping (also known as ecological land classification) is an integrated system of mapping describing terrain conditions (surface geology, slope, landscape position, drainage and permafrost conditions), as well as ecological values (vegetation community and structure, and soil moisture and nutrient regimes). At a local (1:50 000) scale, biophysical maps are an essential tool for facilitating stewardship and sustainable development of energy, mineral and land resources.

This map accompanies the report 'Local scale biophysical mapping for integrated resource management, Watson Lake area (NTS 105A/2), Yukon' (Lipovsky and McKenna, 2005). Please refer to this report, as well as the accompanying surficial geology map (Lipovsky et al., 2005) for more detailed background, methodology and descriptions of map units. For users with GIS capability, it should be noted that while the biophysical map presented here is extremely complex, it is much easier to interpret and/or filter digitally using the associated GIS data (which is included on CD-ROM inside the report).

**KEY TO INTERPRETING ECOSYSTEM UNIT MAP LABELS**

The polygons on this map represent ecosystem units, as described in Table 4. The green labels found within each polygon are built from a composite group of letters and numbers each representing a particular aspect of the ecological conditions within that polygon (see example label to right). All codes used are outlined in Tables 1, 2 and 3 below.

- Parent material is designated by the first letter.
- Moisture regime is indicated by the next number.
- Vegetation association is indicated by the group of letters following the dash.
- Wetland class (if applicable) follows the vegetation association, and is preceded by a colon.
- Disturbance modification (logging, agriculture or other development) is indicated by the capital letter following the second dash.
- Percent cover decal is indicated by the superscript digit (between 1 and 10) shown at the end of the component (multiplied by 10 to get percent cover).

There may be up to four ecosystem types or components defined for a single polygon when different ecosystems are intermixed or too small to outline at map scale. Where multiple types are defined, the most dominant (by percent cover) is listed first, followed by the next dominant listed beneath it. The proportion of each type, in deciles, is indicated by the superscript number.

The hypothetical map label above summarizes the ecosystem designations for a single map polygon, which in this case consists of three ecosystem types:

- 1) MAC-VWSw-L<sup>1</sup>: 60% till parent material, mesic soil moisture regime, mesotrophic nutrient regime, logged, Alaska birch / white spruce vegetation association
- 2) GBS-SwP<sup>2</sup>: 30% glacioluvial parent material, submesic soil moisture regime, submesotrophic nutrient regime, black spruce / lodgepole pine vegetation association
- 3) CTC-WiCw-W<sup>1</sup>: 10% organic parent material, subhydric soil moisture regime, mesotrophic nutrient regime, willow / sedge / fen wetland vegetation association.

#### SOIL MOISTURE REGIME

Moisture regime is classified between 0 and 5, based on an assessment of environmental factors, soil properties, and indicator plants. The following definitions for classes 0 through 5 are based on the BC Field Manual for Describing Terrestrial Ecosystems (1998). Class 0 was added specifically for this project.

Table 1. Soil moisture regime classes.

0 - Very xeric: water removed extremely rapidly in relation to supply; soil is moist for a negligible time after precipitation. Precipitation is the primary water source.

1 - Xeric: water removed very rapidly in relation to supply; soil is moist for brief periods following precipitation. Precipitation is the primary water source.

2 - Subxeric: water removed rapidly in relation to supply; soil is moist for short periods following precipitation. Precipitation is the primary water source.

3 - Submesic: water removed readily in relation to supply; water available for moderately short periods following precipitation. Precipitation is the primary water source.

4 - Mesic: water removed somewhat slowly in relation to supply; soil may remain moist for a significant, but sometimes short period of time. Available soil moisture reflects climatic inputs. Precipitation in moderate- to fine-textured soils and limited seepage in coarse-textured soils is the primary water source.

5 - Subhydric: water removed slowly enough to keep soil wet for a significant part of growing season; some temporary seepage and possibly mottling below 20 cm. Precipitation and seepage are the primary water sources.

6 - Hydric: water removed slowly enough to keep soil wet for most of growing season; permanent seepage and mottling; gleyed colours common. Seepage is primary water source.

7 - Subhydric: water removed slowly enough to keep water table at or near surface for most of year; gleyed mineral or organic soils; permanent seepage on below surface. Seepage or permanent water table is primary water source.

8 - Hydric: water removed so slowly that water table is at or above soil surface all year; gleyed mineral or organic soils. Permanent water table is primary water source.

9 - Shallow open water: water is at the surface all year. This moisture regime consists of shallow water wetlands of the Canadian Classification System characterized by emergent or aquatic vegetation. This is applied to small wetlands not included in the NTDS hydrographic base.

#### NUTRIENT REGIME

Nutrient regime is classified between A and F, based on an assessment of soil properties, indicator plants and site characteristics. The following table is from the British Columbia field manual for describing terrestrial ecosystems (1998).

Table 2. Nutrient regime classes.

	Organic	A	B	C	D	E	F	Non-nutrient
	Very poor	Poor	Medium	Rich	Very rich	Abundant	Abundant	Abundant
Available Nutrients	very low	low	average	plentiful	abundant	abundant	abundant	abundant
Humus Form			Mo					
A horizon	A horizon present	A horizon present	A horizon present	A horizon present	A horizon present	A horizon present	A horizon present	A horizon present
Organic Matter Content	low (light colored)	medium (pink to dark)	high (dark colored)	high (dark colored)	high (dark colored)	high (dark colored)	high (dark colored)	high (dark colored)
C:N Ratio	high	moderate	low	low	low	low	low	low
Soil Depth	extremely shallow	very shallow to deep	shallow to deep	shallow to deep	shallow to deep	shallow to deep	shallow to deep	shallow to deep
Soil Texture	coarse textured	medium to fine textured	medium to fine textured	medium to fine textured	medium to fine textured	medium to fine textured	medium to fine textured	medium to fine textured
% Coarse Fragments	high	moderate to low	moderate to low	moderate to low	moderate to low	moderate to low	moderate to low	moderate to low
Parent Material Mineralogy	base-low	base-medium	base-medium	base-medium	base-medium	base-medium	base-medium	base-medium
Soil pH	extremely - mod. acid	moderately acid - neutral	slightly acid - mildly alk.	slightly acid - mildly alk.	slightly acid - mildly alk.	slightly acid - mildly alk.	slightly acid - mildly alk.	slightly acid - mildly alk.
Water pH	<4.5	4.5 - 5.5	5.5 - 6.5	6.5 - 7.4	7.4+	7.4+	7.4+	7.4+
Seepage		temporary	permanent	permanent	permanent	permanent	permanent	permanent

Table 3. Codes used in ecosystem labels.

VEGETATION		PARENT MATERIALS	
A	Populus tremuloides (trembling aspen)	C	colluvial
Al	Alnus sp. (elder species)	F	fluvial
Ar	Arctostaphylos uva-ursi (bearberry)	G	glacioluvial
B	Populus balsamifera (balsam poplar)	L	lacustrine
Bi	Betula species (birch species)	M	tille
Ca	Carex aquatilis (water sedge)	O	organic
Cc	Callamagrostis canadensis (bluejoint grass)	R	rock
Cl	Carex limosa (shore sedge)	W	water
Cu	Carex intricata (beaked sedge)		
Ca	Carex sp. (Carex species)		
Eq	Equisetum sp. (horsetail species)		
F	Alnus lasiocarpa (subalpine fir)		
Fm	feathermoss		
G	graminoid species		
L	Larix laricina (larch)		
P	Pinus contorta (lodgepole pine)		
R	Rosa acicularis (prickly rose)		
Sb	Sparganium sp. (sparganium species)		
Sh	Sheuchzeria (white spruce)		
W	Salix sp. (willow species)		
W	Betula neolasiakana (Alaska birch)		

WETLANDS	Environment	Cover types	Species groups
Wb	bog	+/- ombrotrophic; pH < 5.5; >40 cm fibromesic peat	conifer/ broad or low shrub
Wf	fen	fibromesic peat; groundwater-fed; pH > 5.0; >40 cm fibromesic peat	deciduous shrubs, sedges and brown mosses
Wm	marsh	mineral soils or well-humified peat; protruding shallow flooding (0.1-2 m)	large emergent sedge, grass, forb or horsetail species
Ws	swamp	mineral soils or well-humified peat; temporary shallow flooding (0.1-1 m); significant water flow	conifers, willows, alders, forbs, grasses and leafy mosses
Ww	shallow water	permanent deep flooding (0.5-2 m)	aquatic species, emergent vegetation <10% cover

**DOMINANT VEGETATION ASSOCIATION**

The biophysical map is coloured and cross-hatched by the dominant vegetation species and disturbance conditions of the primary ecosystem unit found in each polygon. Where multiple ecosystem units have been identified in a polygon (up to four), polygons are coloured only according to the primary ecosystem unit. The only exception to this is if any wetland or disturbance is mapped within a polygon, the corresponding hatching is applied to the entire polygon. Please refer to the polygon label and the accompanying type description (Table 4) for a more extensive description of representative vegetation species.

balsam poplar	white spruce	lichen
aspen	fir - white spruce	wetland
brch - white spruce	shrub	cultivated
pine	grass - sedge - horsetail	logged
black spruce	non-vegetated	developed
larch - black spruce	water	burned

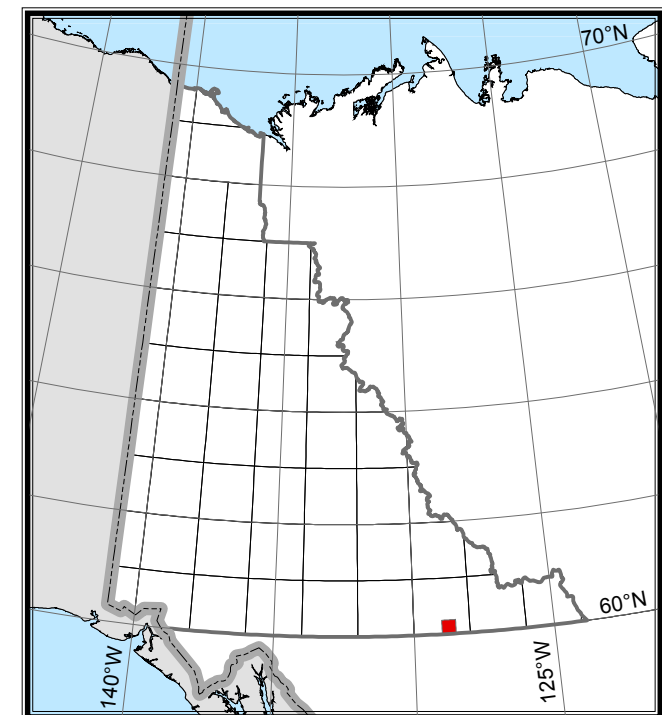
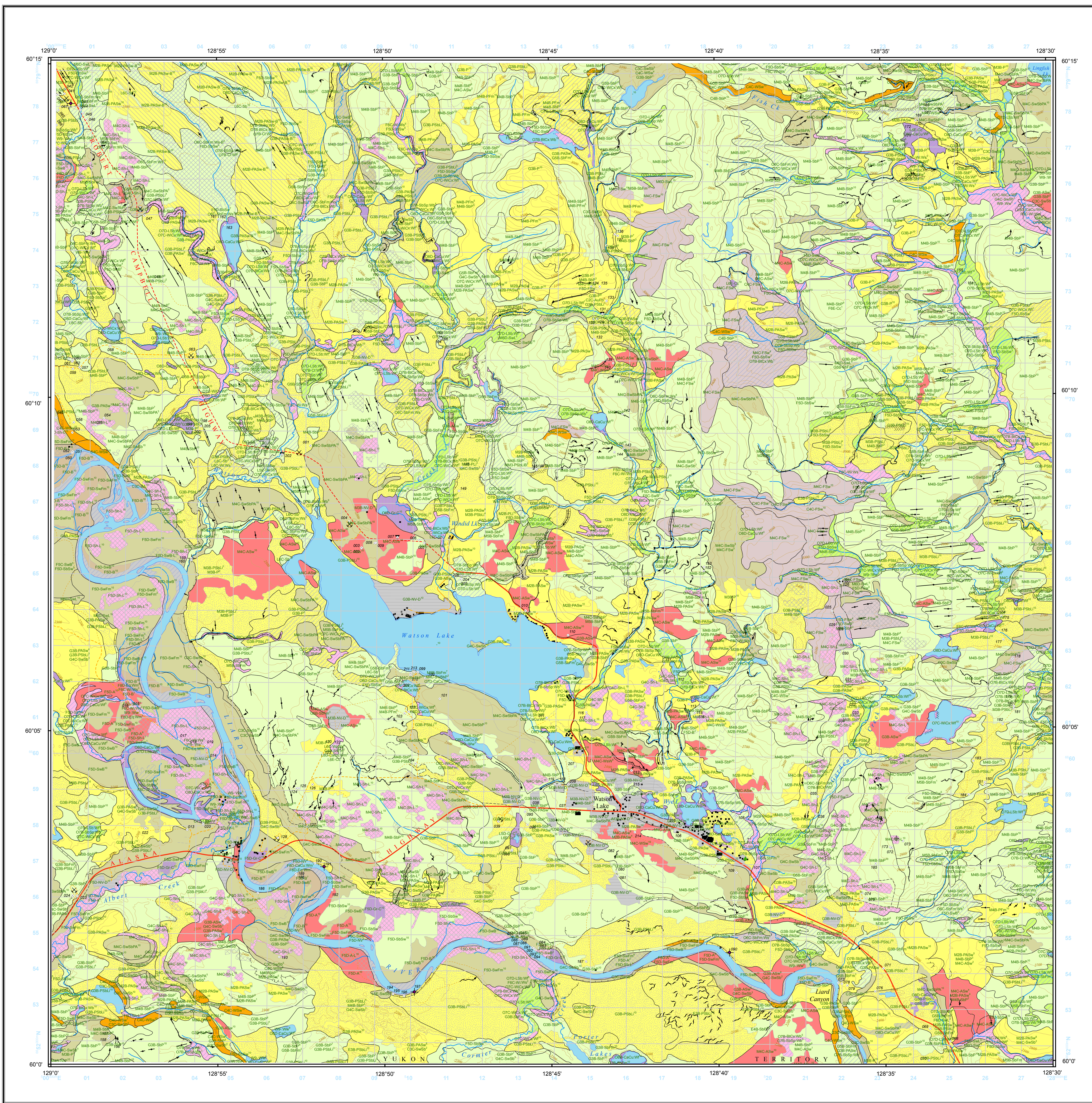
Canada

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada  
Knowledge & Innovation Fund

Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada

Yukon Geological Survey

Yukon Energy, Mines and Resources



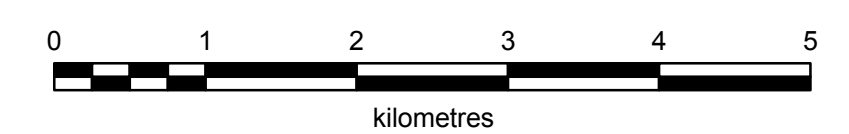
1:50 000 scale topographic base data provided by CENTRE FOR TOPOGRAPHIC INFORMATION NATURAL RESOURCES CANADA

ONE THOUSAND METRE GRID Universal Transverse Mercator Projection North American Datum 1983 Zone 9

CONTOUR INTERVAL 100 FEET elevations in feet above mean sea level

BIOPHYSICAL MAP  
WATSON LAKE  
YUKON

SCALE 1:50 000



Use diagram to obtain numerical values APPROXIMATE MEAN DECLINATION 2005 FOR CENTRE OF MAP: 24° 56' E Annual change decreasing 18.4"

105A/6 MIDDLE OF WATSON LAKE	105A/7 TOM LAKE	105A/8 SUNRISE CREEK
105A/3 DOOD LAKES	105A/2 THIS MAP	105A/1 BLIND LAKE
104P/14 OLD TADY LAKE	104P/15 LUTZ CREEK	104P/16 LOWER POST

#### ECOSYSTEM UNIT DESCRIPTIONS

Table 4 outlines the classification system used to define the ecosystem units, or types, on the biophysical map. The 69 types are classified by various combinations of parent material, soil moisture regime, ecological nutrient regime, plant community, and disturbance history as described to the left of the map. Vegetation species are listed in order of mean percent cover; shrub and grass/forb strata are separated by semicolons.

Table 4. Site and vegetation characteristics of ecosystem units.

COLLUVIAL TYPES	
C2C-AFw (Colluvium: aspen - white spruce)	Site: steep south-facing slopes; parent materials and textures variable
C2C-B (Colluvium: pine)	Site: steep south-facing slopes; parent materials and textures variable
C2C-BA (Colluvium: balsam poplar - aspen)	Site: steep south-facing slopes; parent materials and textures variable
C2C-BSw (Colluvium: white spruce - black spruce)	Site: steep south-facing slopes; parent materials and textures variable
C2C-Fw (Colluvium: fir - white spruce)	Site: steep south-facing slopes; parent materials and textures variable
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Table 4. (Continued).
<b>MORANAL TYPES</b>
<b>MOB-Paw (Microal: pine-aspen - white spruce)</b>
Site: mixed forest ecotones on warmer aspects at low to high elevation; commonly occurs on slopes where openings in the forest allow establishment of deciduous trees, possibly associated with disturbance such as fire or logging; soils are Orthic Dystric Dystric and Brunfist soils with sandy loam to clay loam textures.
Vegetation: lodgepole pine, aspen, spruce, Labrador larch, alder, blackberry, rose, bunchberry, northern common crowberry, kinnikinnick, twinniflow Labrador strawberry, moss, Cladonia sp.
<b>MOB-PLU (Microal: pine - larch)</b>
Site: rapid to moderately well drained plains and gentle slopes; usually late seral to mature forests
Vegetation: lodgepole pine, some shrubs, alder, blackberry, black

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