

M04t04_BareGround

Indicator number 4 is bare ground and this is an indicator that almost all of us are aware of and have probably some time in our career come into situations where it's one that concerns us because as we see various kinds of activities happen on the landscape we lose the plant cover or, and basically resulting in the mineral soil being exposed and as mineral soil becomes exposed to raindrops then you have the opportunity for raindrop splash and the beginning of the erosion process, as you have bare soil exposed to the direct rays of the sun you then have the opportunity for the site to become more dry than what you'd expect if you had vegetative cover and less bare ground. Now, once again, there are certainly sites where that a high amount of bare ground is normal, our desert landscapes don't generally have the amount of precipitation necessary to grow a full cover of vegetation and so you're going to have a certain amount of bare ground in our ecological sites for rangeland, but, again, our reference sheet will tell us how much, what, were usually arrange that we should expect and so we're concerned about the departure from that reference. The other thing that I want to point out is that we, if we have, if you were measuring ground cover, bare ground and you and you have cover by vegetation, live vegetation, you have cover by litter or standing dead or you have a cover by a rock or biological crusts and that's not bare, that's part of the soil where the rock occurs or where the stick occurs, the twig occurs is in fact protected from raindrops and so that is not considered to be bare ground. Let's look at our comparison slide between the two, again, Southwestern Idaho, in this particular instance, you can see on this same site, sagebrush grass site that you have tremendous differences in the

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amount of mineral soil that can be exposed and you think about raindrops hitting either of these, the left or the right and you can see that the likelihood of what a raindrop will be able to do in terms of causing splash erosion and beginning the erosion process is very different between these two areas because of the different amount of bare ground, the attributes that this bare ground is used to assess are soil site stability and hydrologic function. I'd like to close this segment with a short video looking at issues of bare ground.

As the body crust is disturbed bare soil is exposed, note how the size of bare areas increases from small to large so that they become connected.