

## Herbaceous Vegetation

### H-BIGB *Andropogon gerardii* - *Sorghastrum nutans* W. Great Plains Herbaceous Veg. Big Bluestem – Yellow Indiangrass W. Great Plains Herbaceous Vegetation

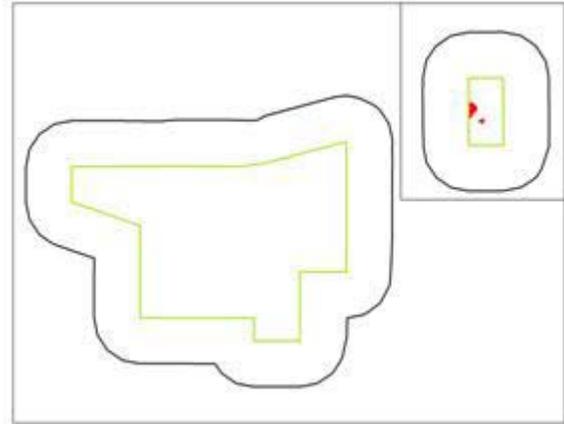
#### Associations and Alliances

*Andropogon gerardii* - *Sorghastrum nutans*  
Western Great Plains Herbaceous Vegetation

#### Common Species

*Andropogon gerardii*  
*Sporobolus asper*  
*Bouteloua gracilis*  
*Schizyachrium scoparius*  
*Sorghastrum nutans*

#### Range and Distribution



#### Description

This type represents the remnant patches of big bluestem prairie that occurred along the western fence line at the Santa Fe Trail Ruts Site. Although this type has some of the same species as the restored prairie type it is thought to be natural stands that have not been planted. At some point the restored prairie areas may be better classified as this type. At the rut site the small patches of this type occurred in some of the wetter areas on silty soils. On the true color imagery this type had a smooth, dark green signature.

#### Photo Signature Examples

#### Representative Ground Photo



***Andropogon gerardii* - *Sorghastrum nutans* Western Great Plains Herbaceous Vegetation**

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COMMON NAME	Big Bluestem - Yellow Indiangrass Western Great Plains Herbaceous Vegetation	
PHYSIOGNOMIC CLASS	V	Herbaceous vegetation
PHYSIOGNOMIC SUBCLASS	V.A	Perennial graminoid vegetation
PHYSIOGNOMIC GROUP	V.A.5	Temperate or subpolar grassland
PHYSIOGNOMIC SUBGROUP	V.A.5.N	Natural/semi-natural temperate or subpolar grassland
FORMATION	V.A.5.N.a	Tall sod temperate grassland
ALLIANCE	<i>Andropogon gerardii</i> ( <i>Sorghastrum nutans</i> ) Herbaceous Alliance	

**Association Identifier:** CEG001464

**RANGE**

*Globally*

This big bluestem prairie is a tallgrass, wet meadow found in the west-central Great Plains of the United States, especially the foothills of Colorado, and extending east to western Kansas and Oklahoma.

*Fort Larned National Historic Site*

Remnant patches of big bluestem prairie occur along the western fence line of the remote Santa Fe Trail Ruts Site.

**ENVIRONMENTAL DESCRIPTION**

*Globally*

Stands occur in valley bottoms and terraces along larger streams and rivers. Soils are deep, somewhat poorly drained loam to sandy loams found in alluvium. Stands require subirrigated soils to persist. It occurs along floodplains of perennial rivers on the plains or, less frequently, on cobbly loam soils along the Colorado foothills. This mesic prairie association is able to survive along the foothills because the cobbly soils are able to retain adequate moisture.

*Fort Larned National Historic Site*

Patches of tall grasses occur in some of the wetter areas of the Santa Fe Trail Ruts site on silty soils.

## MOST ABUNDANT SPECIES

### Globally

<u>Strata</u>	<u>Species</u>
Herbaceous	<i>Andropogon gerardii</i> , <i>Sorghastrum nutans</i> , <i>Panicum virgatum</i> , <i>Agropyron smithii</i> , <i>Sporobolus cryptandrus</i>
Herbaceous	

### Fort Larned National Historic Site

<u>Strata</u>	<u>Species</u>
Herbaceous	<i>Andropogon gerardii</i> , <i>Sporobolus asper</i> , <i>Bouteloua gracilis</i> , <i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i>

## CHARACTERISTIC SPECIES

### Globally

<u>Strata</u>	<u>Species</u>
Herbaceous	<i>Andropogon gerardii</i> , <i>Sorghastrum nutans</i> , <i>Panicum virgatum</i> , <i>Agropyron smithii</i> , <i>Desmanthus illinoensis</i> , <i>Glycyrrhiza lepidota</i>

### Fort Larned National Historic Site

<u>Strata</u>	<u>Species</u>
Herbaceous	<i>Andropogon gerardii</i> , <i>Sporobolus asper</i> , <i>Bouteloua gracilis</i> , <i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i> , <i>Sorghastrum nutans</i>

## VEGETATION DESCRIPTION

### Globally

The vegetation is dominated by tall grasses, particularly *Andropogon gerardii* and *Sorghastrum nutans*. Other grasses include *Panicum virgatum*, *Pascopyrum smithii* and *Sporobolus cryptandrus*. Forbs may include *Desmanthus illinoensis* and *Glycyrrhiza lepidota* (Lauver et al. 1999, NatureServe 2006).

### Fort Larned National Historic Site

At the Santa Fe Trail Ruts Site, native tall grasses occur in discrete patches, each dominated by a different tall grass (*Andropogon gerardii*, *Schizachyrium scoparium*, and *Sorghastrum nutans*). This is believed to be a result of the grazing history of the site. Prior to grazing by cattle the tall grasses would have been more abundant and would probably have occurred in a mosaic pattern. Intensive past grazing pressure may have reduced the tall grasses to a few scattered clumps. Current monotypic grass stands are the result of clonal growth of the few remnant clumps.

MAP CODE: NG1 (Native Grass 1)

PLOTS: AL, AM and AN