

#9 Mixed Shrub / *Hesperostipa neomexicana* Shrub Savanna Association (PS)

Mixed Shrub / New Mexico feathergrass Shrubland Association (PS)

This shrub savanna community is characterized by a subcanopy (0.5–2 m) dominated by a low-cover mix of shrubs and a field stratum (<0.5 m) dominated by New Mexico feathergrass (*Hesperostipa neomexicana*). Typically, cover of shrub species is around 5% and is split between creosote bush (*L. tridentata*), fragrant sumac (*Rhus aromatica*), red barberry (*Berberis haematocarpa*), and catclaw acacia (*Senegalia greggii*). Distribution of these species varies, with creosote bush (*L. tridentata*) occasionally present as the sole dominant. The other three species, when present, are large and well-spaced individuals, usually greater than 2 meters tall. The field stratum is characterized by a matrix of native perennial grasses, with cover approaching 30%. New Mexico feathergrass (*H. neomexicana*) is the clear dominant, providing cover around 20%. Sideoats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*), slim tridens (*Tridens muticus*), and purple threeawn (*Aristida purpurea*) are consistent, but low-cover, associates. A mix of subshrubs—littleleaf ratany (*Krameria erecta*) and featherplume (*Dalea formosa*)—provides consistent low cover throughout.

Common species

- *Hesperostipa neomexicana*
- *Larrea tridentata*
- *Senegalia greggii*
- *Berberis haematocarpa*
- *Rhus aromatica*

This shrub savanna community spans the northeast-facing backslope of a mesa at the Castle unit. The community covers 0.87% (3 ha/6 ac) of the Castle unit and is not present at the Well unit. The surface is characterized by loose soil, as well as calcareous gravel and rock fragments of various sizes, with the occasional small bedrock outcrop.

