Introduction

This extension note outlines a new standard coding system for site series introduced or revised after March 31, 2010. In addition, coding systems for site units representing non-forested ecosystems and for immature (seral) ecosystems are presented.

Four changes are outlined:
1. Site series in reclassified subzones/variants will be identified by a three-digit rather than two-digit code to reflect classification version.
2. The order in which site series are numbered has been modified.
3. Seral ecosystem units have been assigned a formal coding format.
4. The system for coding wetlands has been extended to other non-forested ecosystem units.

Three-digit Forested Site Series Number Identifies Classification Version

Extensive fieldwork and reclassification of forested ecosystems is ongoing in several regions that will produce revised field guides in the near future. This affects many biogeoclimatic (BGC) subzones/variants where the additions of new data have resulted in better delineation of existing site series, changes in site series concepts, and/or additions of new units. A new site series numbering scheme has been implemented that clearly indicates to users that site series are part of a revised BGC subzone/variant classification.

The new system uses three-digit site series codes with the first number indicating the revision version of the classification. This new system will be applied only when a BGC subzone/variant has been reclassified. Existing two-digit site series codes will continue to be used for subzones/variants where no revisions have been made.

Under the new coding system, three-digit codes will be applied to all site series within a revised BGC subzone/variant, even for specific site series that have not been modified.

For example, with revisions to the BWBSwk1, the xeric site series BWBSwk1/02 becomes BWBSwk1/102, with the “1” indicating that this is the first revision to the subzone/variant classification (Figure 1). In this case, the site series is unlikely to have changed in concept but is supported by additional data. Unit crosswalks will be provided for each BGC unit.

If any revisions to the classification are published subsequently, the next number in the series will be used (e.g., BWBSwk1/202).
**Site Series Number Order Convention**

The new convention for site series number order retains the "#01" as the designation for the zonal ecosystem (preceded by the revision number).

Site series numbers from #02 to #09 are reserved for units drier or poorer than zonal, with the 102 being the driest and poorest and the numbering proceeding left to right, top to bottom (Figure 2).

Numbers #10 to #19 are reserved for forested units wetter or richer than zonal, the numbering proceeding left to right, top to bottom.

Historically, it was not immediately clear whether site series numbers such as #04 or #05 represented units drier or wetter than mesic. The new scheme clarifies at a glance which site series are poorer and/or drier than zonal (e.g., 104), and which are wetter and/or richer (e.g., 110).

**Seral Unit Coding Format**

Seral ecosystem classification units are numbered according to the site series with which the unit is aligned, followed by a “s” character to designate that the unit is seral. Additional information may be added to describe structural stage, stand composition, and seral variation. Published seral units will always include all code components (Figure 3), but for general uses, seral units may be coded only with less specific components (e.g., BWBSwk1/101S, 101S6B, etc.).

The coding for seral unit (s) is followed by the structural stage that the unit typically represents (see B.C. MRF and MOE 2010 for structural stage descriptions), a stand composition modifier for forested ecosystems (B = broad-leaved, C = conifer, M = mixed), and a sequential number that is used to designate the seral variation. Any one site series may have a number of seral variations within a
structural stage/stand composition combination. The one that most commonly occurs will be coded as seral variation “1,” followed by the next most common, which would be seral variation “2,” and so on.

**Non-forested Unit Codes**

Non-forested ecosystems have been variously included and numbered in past guides. The new coding now follows a convention introduced for wetlands by MacKenzie and Moran (2004). These codes reflect broader site levels of biogeoclimatic ecosystem classification (BEC) in a format using two-letter codes for Site Realm/Group and Site Class (Figure 4). Coding and brief descriptions of these units are outlined in B.C. MFR and MOE (2010) or in more detail by MacKenzie (2010). Low-productivity forested wetlands (> 10% tree species cover) and high-elevation krummholz ecosystems will be included in this coding system. Where specific site associations are defined in field guides, units will also indicate a two-digit site association code. Non-forested codes are used across BGC units and may be presented with or without a BGC unit prefix.

**Business Implications**

This extension note outlines changes to site unit code convention for new or modified BEC.

1. Data structure: the new code formats fit within current standard corporate data structures.
2. New code conventions will be applied only to site series in new or reclassified BGC subzones/variants. Current classifications will retain the original two-digit coding.
3. Regional ecologists will provide guidance in published field guides and corresponding digital tools on the application of revised classifications and crosswalks to previous site series.
4. The scope of classification change in new field guides is expected to vary by BGC subzone/variant. In many BGC units, the original site series will be retained with minor modifications and additions. However, in areas that were previously undersampled and poorly described, more substantive classification changes will be presented.

![Figure 4](image)

**Figure 4** Example of unit coding for non-forested site associations.
Literature Cited


Citation


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