

The Coastal Plainer

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Http://www.mo15.nrcs.usda.gov/

Message From The MO-Leader's Desk

By Charles Love, MO-15 Team Leader

Again, greetings everyone!

This has been a very exciting year because of the various soil survey efforts throughout the MO-15 Soil Survey Region. We have been very busy this summer carrying out important annual regional soil survey program business activities. I would like to share a few of those business activities with you.

First, I want to thank everyone that participated in the 2004 joint Board of Directors meeting for MOs -14, -15, -16, and -18. The meeting was on June 10, 2004, at Biloxi, Mississippi, and was a success. Participants included NRCS representatives from fourteen states, the Soil Survey Division, the National Soil Survey Center, and the National Cartographic and Geospatial Center. I was especially pleased that Dr. Joey Shaw, Auburn University, and Dr. Billy Kingery and Dr. Mike Collins, both from Mississippi State University, participated in the meeting.

This year's meeting provided an opportunity to discuss some of our important challenges, such as the future of the soil scientist

MLRA Soil Survey Region #15



career ladder, the establishment of MLRA Project Offices, and electronic delivery of soil survey information utilizing the [Soil Data Mart](#). Of special note was Dr. Joey Shaw's thought provoking report on behalf of the representatives of South Regional Soil Survey. His comments should challenge us to work closely with our university cooperators to maintain or renew our partnerships.

I am very happy to announce the signing of the MLRA Region 15 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for implementation by the Board of Directors. The Region 15 MOU serves as a blanket document for conducting project area management business, such as the coordinating and continuing modernization efforts for all soil surveys within the business area. Also, the MOU will

facilitate the establishment of super project offices for conducting soil survey activities within the region. I would like to commend the State Conservationists and cooperators for their 100 percent support in facilitating the development and implementation of this [MO-wide Management Area Business Agreement](#).

I am very excited to welcome Jerome Langlais as the Leader for the MLRA Project Office at Tuscaloosa, Alabama. He is the second MLRA Soil Survey Project Leader in the MO-15 region. Jerome will be responsible for providing leadership for soil survey activities in portions of Major

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Land Resource Areas 129—Sand Mountain, 133A—Southern Coastal Plain, 135—Alabama Blackland Prairies, and 136—Southern Piedmont (about 9 million acres within this soil survey area). Prior to this position, Jerome served as a project leader for the Soil Survey of Natchez County, Mississippi.

I wish everyone great success in FY-05.



Soil Data Mart— THE Distribution Point for Soils Data

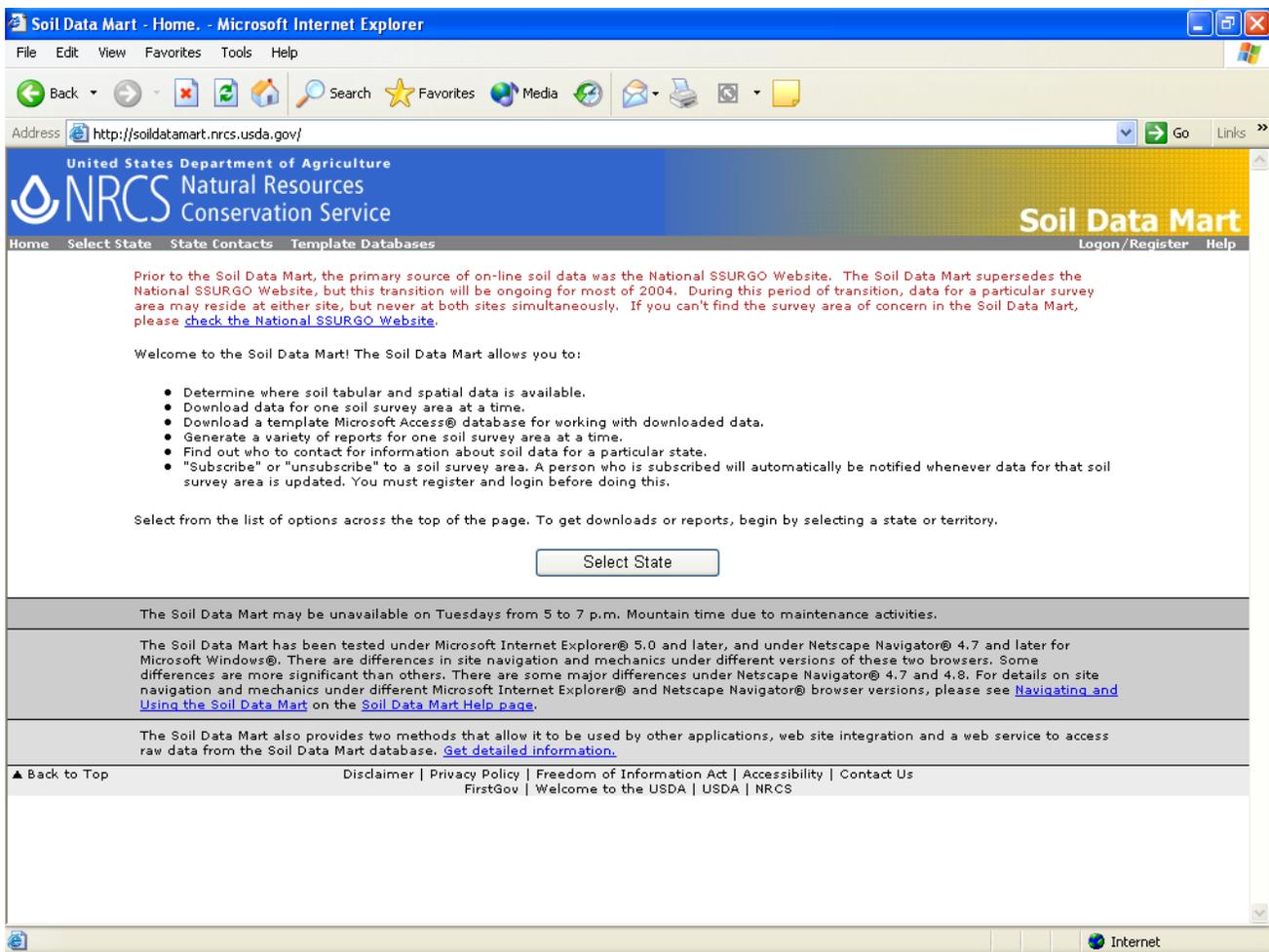
By Rick Zellmer, GIS Specialist

With data for more than 1,600 soil surveys, the Soil Data Mart is becoming the one-stop-shop for digital soils data. Once the tabular and/or spatial data is posted to the Soil Data Mart, that data becomes the official copy for the soil survey.

The Soil Data Mart allows you to:

1. Determine where spatial and tabular data are available,
2. Download data for a soil survey,
3. Download a Microsoft Access template for use with the tabular data,
4. Generate a variety of soil reports,
5. Find contact information for a soil survey, and
6. Subscribe to update notifications for a soil survey area.

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Soil Data Mart - Home. - Microsoft Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

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Address <http://soildatamart.nrcs.usda.gov/> Go Links

United States Department of Agriculture
NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service

Soil Data Mart

Home Select State State Contacts Template Databases Logon/Register Help

Prior to the Soil Data Mart, the primary source of on-line soil data was the National SSURGO Website. The Soil Data Mart supersedes the National SSURGO Website, but this transition will be ongoing for most of 2004. During this period of transition, data for a particular survey area may reside at either site, but never at both sites simultaneously. If you can't find the survey area of concern in the Soil Data Mart, please [check the National SSURGO Website](#).

Welcome to the Soil Data Mart! The Soil Data Mart allows you to:

- Determine where soil tabular and spatial data is available.
- Download data for one soil survey area at a time.
- Download a template Microsoft Access® database for working with downloaded data.
- Generate a variety of reports for one soil survey area at a time.
- Find out who to contact for information about soil data for a particular state.
- "Subscribe" or "unsubscribe" to a soil survey area. A person who is subscribed will automatically be notified whenever data for that soil survey area is updated. You must register and login before doing this.

Select from the list of options across the top of the page. To get downloads or reports, begin by selecting a state or territory.

Select State

The Soil Data Mart may be unavailable on Tuesdays from 5 to 7 p.m. Mountain time due to maintenance activities.

The Soil Data Mart has been tested under Microsoft Internet Explorer® 5.0 and later, and under Netscape Navigator® 4.7 and later for Microsoft Windows®. There are differences in site navigation and mechanics under different versions of these two browsers. Some differences are more significant than others. There are some major differences under Netscape Navigator® 4.7 and 4.8. For details on site navigation and mechanics under different Microsoft Internet Explorer® and Netscape Navigator® browser versions, please see [Navigating and Using the Soil Data Mart](#) on the [Soil Data Mart Help page](#).

The Soil Data Mart also provides two methods that allow it to be used by other applications, web site integration and a web service to access raw data from the Soil Data Mart database. [Get detailed information](#).

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Internet

The homepage of the Soil Data Mart.

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Tabular data can be posted to the Data Mart independently. Spatial data, however, can only be posted if the tabular data has been joined with it and is SSURGO certified. Using the Data Mart is basically straight forward; however, there is a caveat. There is no map for selecting an area of interest, so the user must select the entire county and/or survey area. Once the survey area is chosen, the user can then generate a download request, view metadata, generate reports, and subscribe to receive update notifications.

Data is not directly downloaded from the site. Once the request for a download is submitted, the user is e-mailed an FTP link from which to download the data. Depending on the request, downloads can take anywhere from a few minutes to as long as an extended coffee break. Tabular data downloads the quickest. SSURGO data (tabular and spatial) can take over an hour to download on a dial-up connection. When downloading spatial data, the user has the opportunity to select a projection other than the default. The default projection is Universal

Transverse Mercator (UTM), NAD83. Selecting a projection other than the default can give the user data that does not overlay with NRCS orthoimagery in ArcView.

Many reports can be generated quickly and easily from the tabular data. These reports vary widely and include hard-coded data and soil interpretations. Examples include the nontechnical descriptions, T and K values, site indexes, and interpretations for sewage disposal. Not all tabular data sets include soil interpretations. If interpretations are not available, a blank report is generated. Note that online reports should generate quickly, usually in less than one minute. If the report generation process runs and runs and never produces the report, check with your IT staff. Your browser parameters may not be set correctly.

I am not going to attempt to cover everything that can be done through the Soil Data Mart; however, there is one more important thing to say: Subscribe! Whether you want to download data or generate soil reports online, take the time to subscribe. When you subscribe to a soil survey area, you are automatically notified by e-mail whenever there is an update to the data. Subscribing is critical if you want to make sure you are using the latest and greatest data. ■

Closeup on Mike Golden

By John L. Burns, Soil Scientist

Mr. Mike Golden, Director of the National Soil Survey Division, attended the Alabama Cooperative Soil Survey Work Planning Conference at Tuscaloosa, Alabama, in March 2004. Tuscaloosa is the site for the second super soil survey project office in Alabama.

Mr. Golden grew up near Ada, Oklahoma, and has a B.S. in Agronomy (Soils) from Oklahoma State University. Mr. Golden mentioned that he is very interested in genealogy and that he has family roots in Alabama. He has 30 years of work experience with the agency, mostly in New Mexico and Texas. Before starting his current position, he was leader for Major Land Resource Area (MLRA) Region 9 and State Soil Scientist of Texas.

Mike Golden is a down-to-earth kind of individual, genuine, and a field person who worked his way up through the ranks. While at the Alabama Soils Conference, he mentioned the many goals he has as Director of Soil Survey. Some of the things that he supports include the MLRA Project Office concept, the MO structure, Technical Soil Services in states, the National Soil Survey Center and National leaders, the National Cartography and

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Geospatial Center soil support branch, the SSURGO initiative, the Geospatial Data Warehouse, a publication "Web Soil Survey" Data Mart (<http://soildatamart.nrcs.usda.gov/>), the next generation of NASIS (National Soil Information System, which in 2 to 3 years will be web based), and the Soil Data Viewer.

He mentioned at the conference that Soil Survey is going to the next level through marketing, technical soil services, and new technology. The new web-based soil surveys (like the Soil Data Mart) will be able to be

customized to deliver the information the customer needs.

We look forward to Mike's continuing tenure as the Director of National Soil Survey Division. ■

Hyperthermic-Isohyperthermic Study in South Florida

By Greg Brannon, Soil Data Quality Specialist

The first year of the hyperthermic/isohyperthermic

study was concluded in February of 2004. The data loggers were recovered, and new ones were installed in several sites north and south along the Tamiami Trail from east of Naples to the Homestead area.

Preliminary data indicate the existence of an isohyperthermic region extending from just south of Everglades City to Homestead, but additional data will be required to confirm this hypothesis. The Florida Keys have already been established as being isohyperthermic. A

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Retrieving and replacing soil temperature data loggers in the Big Cypress Preserve in south Florida.

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tentative date of the first week in March 2005 has been set to retrieve the data loggers and to conclude the study.

Participants included Henry Mount, soil scientist from the NSSL; Warren Henderson, Florida State Soil Scientist; Greg Brannon, soil data quality specialist; Howard Yamataki and Ken Liudahl, resource soil scientists; and personnel from the Department of Interior. ■

ArcGIS Training

Over 30 USDA employees recently received training on ESRI's ArcGIS software. A 3-day workshop was held at Auburn University Library. Although many of the participants were from Alabama, some came from as far away as Puerto Rico and Idaho. MO-15 hopes to host this training again in the spring of 2005.

Additional information regarding

GIS training provided through the National Employee Development Center and the National Cartographic and Geospatial Center is available on the Web.

Digital Soil Survey Mapping and Updating:

<http://www.nedc.nrcs.usda.gov/catalog/soildigit.html>.

Introduction to ArcGIS 1 (for ArcView 8, ArcEditor 8, and ArcInfo 8):

<http://www.ncgc.nrcs.usda.gov/branch/gdb/products/training/course-description/igis1.html>. ■



Glenn Shea (left front), Resource Conservationist, Idaho, and Stephen Musser (right front), Resource Conservationist, Alabama, conferring on an ArcGIS exercise (Photo courtesy of Auburn University Libraries, Bits & PCs, Summer 2004 edition).

Soils on the Web

NRCS has recently gone to a tremendous effort to increase the availability of soils-related data on the Web.

The Soil Data Mart (<http://soildatamart.nrcs.usda.gov/>) provides a download site for tabular and spatial data. Downloads available from the site include SSURGO data sets that are usable in GIS applications and publication-quality tables that are generated from the official survey data.

The Geospatial Data Gateway (<http://datagateway.nrcs.usda.gov/>) provides a download site for a wide variety of spatial data, including GIS layers for soils, hydrography, roads, orthoimagery, and topography.

The NRCS Soils Web site (<http://soils.usda.gov/>) provides a central point for soils information and includes links to NRCS data, documents, and standards. It also includes links to various news stories about soils.

The PLANTS database (<http://plants.usda.gov/>) provides standardized information about the vascular plants, mosses, liverworts, hornworts, and lichens of the U.S. and its territories. It includes names, plant symbols, checklists, distributional data, species

abstracts, characteristics, images, plant links, references, crop information, and automated tools.

The NSSC Soil Survey Laboratory Research Database (<http://ssldata.nrcs.usda.gov/>) allows users to generate, download, and print reports containing soil characterization data stored and maintained by the NSSC Soil Survey Laboratory.

It only takes a few minutes of scanning these sites to begin to understand the huge amount of data that is now available online. ■

Auburn University to Host the 25th Southeastern Regional Collegiate Soil Judging Contest

Auburn University and the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station will host the 25th Southeastern Regional Collegiate Soil Judging Contest on October 22, 2004. Dr. Joey Shaw, Associate Professor, Department of Agronomy and Soils, is expecting 13 teams from universities in the Southeast Region to compete in this event. The teams of undergraduate students will test their

skills in describing and classifying soils and in identifying soil properties that are important to use and management.

Soil scientists with the Natural Resources Conservation Service will serve as judges for the contest. The Professional Soil Classifiers Association of Alabama (PSCAA) will sponsor a banquet for participants and coaches prior to the contest. ■



Left to Right: Dr. Joey Shaw, Associate Professor, Auburn University; Greg Brannon, Soil Data Quality Specialist, NRCS; George Martin, Soil Data Quality Specialist, NRCS; and Lawrence McGhee, Soil Survey Project Leader, NRCS; prepare a soil pit for the soil judging contest. Photo by Doug Clendenon, MLRA Project Leader, NRCS.

Painting With Soil

From “Tools for Educators” by the National Soil Survey Center; CD distributed by MLRA Office 15.

Soils are among our most important natural resources. They are also important for the beauty their many colors add to our landscapes. Most of us overlook this natural beauty because we see it every day. Often these colors blend with vegetation, sky, water, etc. Soil colors serve as pigments in bricks and pottery.

If you look at the works of many of the great artists, you will notice that “earth colors” are dominant. The color and texture of soil painting is fascinating and a creative opportunity for all ages of students.

Materials

Soil (dried in air)
 Hammer or mallet
 Mortar and pestle (rubber-tipped)
 Paper cups (4 oz.)
 Pencils
 Ink pens (black, different tip sizes)
 Paint brushes (different kinds and sizes)
 Artist acrylic (clear gloss medium)
 Sponges and rags
 Watercolor paper
 Masking tape

Preparing the Soils

- Gather soils of various colors.
- Place one dried soil sample on a piece of paper. Crush the

sample into pieces with a hammer or mallet.

- Place some of the crushed soil into a mortar. Use a rubber-tipped pestle to crush the soil into a fine powder.
- Place the fine-ground soil in a paper cup.
- Repeat steps b through d, crushing all of the different colored soils. Notice the colors and textures.

Artwork

- Lightly sketch artwork on watercolor paper with a pencil. When you are satisfied with the composition, use ink for permanent lines.
- With masking tape, carefully tape paper edges to table or board so that the art work will dry flat.
- Pour small amounts of artist acrylic into small paper cups. Add small amounts of soil. Experiment with varying depth of color and mixing the different soils.
- Use different sizes and kinds of paint brushes, sponges, and rags. Experiment and have fun.
- When your artwork is dry, you may apply another layer of soil paint to layer the colors.
- You may want to use a black ink pen to make finishing touches on your artwork. ■



Editor’s Note

Issues of this newsletter are available on the Internet on the MO–15 homepage (<http://www.mo15.nrcs.usda.gov/>). Click on “News” and then on “The Coastal Plainer.”

You are invited to submit stories for future issues to Aaron Achen, editor, MO–15, Auburn, Alabama. Voice—(402) 437-4157; FAX—(402) 437-5336; e-mail—Aaron.Achen@nssc.nrcs.usda.gov.

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