

# The Coastal Plainer

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

## Message From The MO-Leader's Desk

By Charles Love, State Soil Scientist/  
MO-15 Team Leader

Greetings!

It's hard to believe that FY-03 has come and gone! It seems like it was just yesterday when we began developing soil survey business plans for achieving all the soil survey and technical soil service activities. This past year has been a busy one for everyone in the MO-15 region!

In this article, I want to focus on just one of the many successful activities we completed within the region. During the week of September 8-12, 2003, we had the opportunity to host the **Correlation & Management of MLRA Soil Surveys** course in Auburn, Alabama. Thirty-four enthusiastic and energized soil scientists from across the country received this excellent training session (see picture on the following page). The training focused on various correlation and

MLRA Soil Survey  
Region #15



management approaches and concepts for carrying out soil survey activities in a large geographic work area. Participants generated good discussion points from the various lesson plans and the correlation role-playing exercises. The group discussions really placed emphasis on the great value of maintaining good communications across state and regional boundaries. Good communications are needed to prevent the duplication of soil survey efforts and to make the best soil correlation decisions for the MLRA or geographic region.

We want to thank NEDS and NSSC for bringing the training to the MO-15 region. A special thanks goes to Earl Lockridge, training

coordinator, and to each cadre member. They did an outstanding job of providing the training. I feel the training was very effective in improving our skills in correlation and management for carrying out soil survey activities across the region.

As MO-15 Team Leader, I am very proud to have had the opportunity to host the Correlation and Management of MLRA Soil Surveys training within our region. If you have not received this training, I definitely encourage you to do so. ■

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**Correlation and Management of MLRA Soil Survey**  
**Auburn, Alabama**  
 September 8 - 12, 2003



1 - Dennis Brezina (TX)	11 - Alfred Green (GA)	21 - Cathy Scott (GA)	31 - Earl Lockridge (Inst.)
2 - Cathy McGuire (AZ)	12 - Nathan Haile (TX)	22 - Chris Ford (AL)	32 - Don Breckenfeld (AZ)
3 - Bob Evon (GA)	13 - Jamie Douglass (TX)	23 - Ken Monroe (GA)	33 - Doug Clendenon (AL)
4 - Kelly Attebury (TX)	14 - James Mason (AL)	24 - Bob Weatherspoon (FL)	34 - Mike Hansen (Inst.)
5 - Tommy Calhoun (Inst.)	15 - Jim Lathem (GA)	25 - Sandy Page (AL)	35 - Dennis Potter (Inst.)
6 - Ralph Thornton (MS)	16 - Scott Anderson (AL)	26 - Mike Lilly (MS)	36 - Bill Svetlik (AZ)
7 - Chris Hatcher (MS)	17 - James Gordon (TX)	27 - Susan Casby-Horton (TX)	37 - Johnny Trayvick (AL)
8 - Dave Kingsbury (Inst.)	18 - Donald Sabo (TX)	28 - John Burns (AL)	Not Pictured -
9 - Jeff Olson (Inst.)	19 - Mark Johnson (ID)	29 - Carmen Santiago (PR)	Bob Beaty (AL)
10 - Craig Harris (TN)	20 - Alan Stahnke (TX)	30 - Dennis Ressel (TX)	

*Participants at the Correlation & Management of MLRA Soil Survey Areas course held in Auburn, Alabama, September 8th to 12th.*

## Smithsonian Soils Exhibit

By Julie A. Best, Public Affairs Specialist, Auburn, AL

Plans began in July 2002 to develop a soils exhibit at the Smithsonian as a part of the Global Links Gallery at the National Museum of Natural History. The Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) is the driving force. The museum, located in Washington, DC, charges no admission fee. The exhibit will include a display of State soil

monoliths and an educational, interactive section to help the museum's 6 to 9 million visitors understand how soil is intricately linked to the health of humanity, the environment, and the planet. Related publications and web activities will reach millions of additional people. Never before have we had such an opportunity to advance the understanding of soil.

For individuals who may be attending the SSSA's annual meeting in Denver, there will be a "town hall" meeting on Mon-

day, November 3, 4:00 to 5:30, in the Governor's Square #17, Concourse Level, Adams's Mark Hotel. The meeting will be to view updates and listen to presentations on progress. I encourage you to drop by and get the latest information.

The exhibit provides an opportunity to educate visitors to the Smithsonian of the importance of soil and earth sciences. A website has been developed to apprise interested parties of the progress and plans. The URL is: <http://www.soils.org/smithsonian/> ■

## Student Trainee Summer Experience

By Amanda Zelasko, Soil Scientist  
Student Trainee

Working at the soil survey office in Alexander City, Alabama, this summer has been a wonderful experience.

I have truly enjoyed working with everyone, and I will never forget the friends I made. My experiences this summer have left me more excited than ever to pursue a career in soil science.

This summer I was able to learn a lot about soil science and Alabama in general. I discovered that the most beautiful part of Alabama is not the remarkable landscape but simply the kind-hearted people that inhabit it. I will never forget the memories of this summer, including my first encounter with both mica and a very large rattlesnake. My favorite memories include a visit to Crenshaw County, traveling the countryside with Milton Tuck, eating lunch at Horseshoe Bend Military Park, and soil mapping in the piedmont. I will be taking home lots of memories as well as an abundance of useful knowledge that will give me a headstart in my classes this coming semester.

As the summer draws to a close, however, I am looking forward to starting classes again at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale.

I wish to thank everyone that helped make my summer wonderful and wish you all the best of luck in your future endeavors. Hopefully, I will be able to return to Alabama in the future to continue my learning experiences.

Again, Thanks!  
Amanda Zelasko  
Soil Scientist Student Trainee

*Editor's Note: We at NRCS wish Amanda the best as she returns to her studies at Southern Illinois University, and we look forward to her returning next summer. ■*



## Natural Resource Inventory Update

By Herbert Ross, ICCS Leader,  
Auburn, Alabama

The 2003 National Resource Inventory (NRI) is underway. "Happy days are here again!" Yes, happy days are here again. It is time to add another data collection cycle to the data set.

The 2001 NRI data was released on July 11, 2003, marking the first public release of data since the NRI began a transition from a 5-year survey

to an annual survey. The 2001 Annual NRI survey provides national-level estimates on the status and trends for soil erosion, land use, urbanization, and development. The estimates from the 2001 Annual NRI are at the national level only. At this time, the 1997 NRI remains the best source of information regarding natural resource status and trend information at other geographic scales. This will be the first time the NRI has been released wholly via the Internet. Conservation funding in the 2002 Farm Bill was increased over the 1996 Farm Bill by 80 percent.

The deputy area for Soil Survey and Resource Assessment conceived and designed the Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP) to assist the agency measure national-level benefits of conservation programs. Using NRI sampling frame and existing models, CEAP will estimate the conservation benefits of EQIP, CRP, WRP, WHIP, and CTA. Onsite data will be collected on field management activities through farm surveys and integrated with the information on land use and soil characteristics at each NRI sample point. Use of the NRI captures the diversity of the Nation's agricultural base (soils, topography, and climate) and provides a link to historical NRI data (1982–2001). Water quality, soil quality, and water-

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use conservation benefits will be estimated using field-level physical process models (EPIC and APEX) and data associated with the NRI sampling points. Field-level modeling results will be combined with performance reporting data (EQIP and PRMS) to provide estimates of the benefits of conservation at the national level.

Through hard work, data gathers have made significant contributions to the development of NRI data sets and information that address current agency program needs and priorities. The development of state-level trends remains a primary design parameter and goal of the continuous inventory process. ■

## A Few Thoughts From NARSSO

By Doug Clendenon, Soil Scientist

We at the North Alabama Regional Soil Survey Office (NARSSO) just installed another new SCAN site, this one at Allen Bragg's farm in Madison County. This is a high visibility site for farmers because it is located beside the entrance to the Madison County Farmers' Co-op. The site is a fully automated system like the other SCAN sites. The special thing about this site is that the data is available in a convenient form on the AAMU ALMNET

Web site at <http://wx.aamu.edu/ALMNet.html>. The site has easy to read graphs and tables and includes several new features.

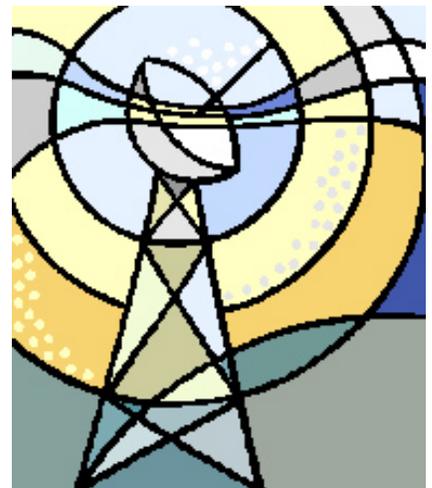
In other news, Madison County will be included in the upcoming NRCS water table study. About 150 data loggers are being purchased by Mr. Charles Love, MLRA office team leader, for a study in MO-15. Mr. George Martin, data quality specialist, has selected some soil types that needing study in Madison County. Our office, in conjunction with AAMU, will study these selected soils and additional soils that are known to have a water table but that show little evidence in the soil morphology, e.g. gray mottles, concretions, etc. This study is of particular interest to the Madison County Health Department, which oversees installation of septic systems. The data from the study will be used to populate NASIS and will provide data to our customer toolkit.

Almost lastly, I just got back from some training on how to use computers in the field for soil mapping and data collection. The use of computers in the field is the way things are going. Someday soon we will be paperless. Our maps will be digitally stored in our notebook field computers. Lines can be digitized in the field using special software that shows the land in 3-D. This software is not "pie-in-the-sky." It is already used by soil scientists in some parts of the country. Eddie Davis and I are

already experimenting with a ruggedized notebook computer in the field. The training also demonstrated "Orthomapper" software, which will allow us to take our 1942 vintage soil mapping and rectify it to fit our modern orthographic aerial photos. The fit is nearly perfect. Rectification will allow us to retain the detail of the old soil maps while correcting map distortion. It also allows for more accurate digitizing. Our new cartographer will be heavily involved in the Orthomapper process.

Lastly, Dr. Web Tadesse, assistant professor, remote sensing, at AAMU will be assisting the digitizing effort of NRCS MO-15 through a contractual relationship. The contract has been signed by the AAMU President and will hopefully be in the works before long.

That's enough for now. There is more stuff happening. I feel like I am just hanging on for the ride! ■



## Mississippi Officially Adopts State Soil

By Mike Lilly, State Soil Scientist

The Mississippi Legislature has passed, and the Governor has signed, HR bill 1273 designating the Natchez soil as the official State soil. The State soil will join the other officially recognized symbols, such as the State flower, State tree, and State bird.

In 1988, the Professional Soil Classifiers Association of Mississippi selected Natchez silt loam to represent the soil resource of Mississippi. This soil occurs on 171,559 acres in 17 counties in western Mississippi.

The Natchez soils formed in very deep loess material under a woodland environment and in a warm, humid climate. Although these soils have high natural fertility and desirable tilth, their slope commonly restricts their use to trees. In less sloping areas, pasture and row crops are grown and the soils are very productive when good management is applied.

The Natchez soils are classified as coarse-silty, mixed, superactive, thermic Typic Eutrudepts. They developed in relatively young material with an ochric epipedon overlying a cambic horizon. They developed in very deep, wind blown loess that is rich in weatherable minerals.

These soils are on strongly sloping to very steep hillsides in the dissected parts of MLRA 134 (Southern Mississippi Valley Silty Uplands). They formed in silty material that ranges from strongly acid to neutral in the upper part and from neutral to moderately alkaline in the lower parts. The amount of free carbonates and shell fragments ranges from few to many in the lower part of the profile. Average annual precipitation is 52 inches, and average annual air temperature is 63 degrees F. The parent material is Pleistocene in age. ■



*A profile of a Natchez soil, which is now the official Mississippi State Soil.*

## 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](mailto:Aaron.Achen@nssc.nrcs.usda.gov).

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