

The Coastal Plain

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

Message from the MO–Leader's Desk

By Charles Love, MO–15 Team Leader

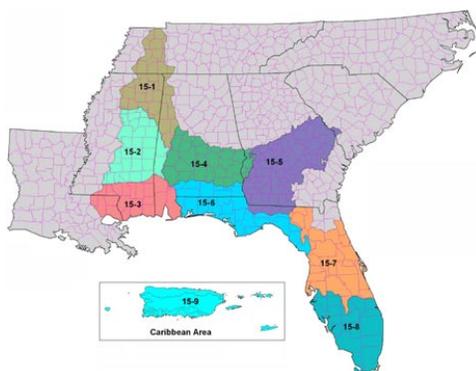
Again, greetings everyone!

We have started another exciting fiscal year in the MO–15 region. I am glad to report that all of the positions for MLRA Soil Survey Leader have been filled for the MO–15 region and about 80 percent of our MLRA Soil Survey Offices are in place. I want to thank our State Conservationists and State Soil Scientists for their hard work in meeting the goals for MLRA soil survey restructuring.

Kudos go to the MLRA Soil Survey Leaders in Florida, Puerto Rico, and Tennessee for taking the lead in using the new structure and starting evaluations for long range plans and project plans. Of course, Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi are working hard to complete the initial soil survey mapping, which is still priority one. There is about 1.7 million acres of initial mapping left to complete in the region. As they are completing the initial mapping, the MLRA Soil Survey Leaders in Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi are using the opportunity to conduct preliminary evaluations for using the new structure in their areas. This is a very good approach that allows them to be involved in the MLRA concept as they complete the initial mapping.

I encourage our MLRA Soil Survey Leaders to continue posting evaluations, plans, and

MLRA Soil Survey Region #15



technology demonstrations to the MO–15 SharePoint site as examples for others to review. We surely do not want to duplicate these great efforts, so let's share our ideas.

We now have a scanner at the MO–15 office, and some of our MLRA Soil Survey Leaders are working with the Data Quality Specialists to scan historical documents

(lab data, correlations, old field notes, et cetera) for their areas. The documents are excellent tools to assist in conducting evaluations. These key documents will be reviewed by the technical teams and used for the development of project plans.

I would like to highlight our efforts with the prototype for a National Soil Geospatial

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Database (NSGD). The development and implementation of a NSGD was recommended by the Soil Business Area Analysis Group (SBAAG) in June, 2005, and is being conducted as a collaboration between the National Cartography and Geospatial Center, National Geospatial Development Center, National Soil Survey Center, and Digitizing Units. The goal is to provide new spatial tools that support evaluations, planning, quality control, and quality assurance at the MOs and MLRA Soil Survey Offices.

We are working closely with the staff of MLRA Soil Survey Region 18 to carry out workflow functions involving checking data in to and out from spatial soil databases in the prototype. The soil survey team for MLRA 18–3, located at Alabama A&M University, is working with the staff of the MLRA Regional Office at Lexington to provide excellent expertise to ensure that the pilot testing is a success. The MLRA soil survey team will be documenting the functionalities related to check out and check in for key spatial databases.

The prototype is a pilot project. It is part of an overall effort in research, testing, and development for the National Soil Geospatial Database. The purpose of the pilot project is to test and evaluate a developmental version of the NSGD (Pilot NSGD) in a pseudo-operational environment against actual soil survey projects. The test environment and test plan reflect recommendations derived from several years of research and analysis.

As currently envisioned, the spatial component of the NSGD will include four sets of regional transactional data layers. The sets will represent the conterminous U.S. and Puerto Rico; Alaska; Hawaii and American Samoa; and the Pacific Islands. Each region will have the following data layers: map unit polygons, map unit lines, map unit points, special feature lines, special feature points, and soil survey area boundaries.

The MLRA Soil Survey Offices responsible for the pilot sites are expected to have a draft long range plan, project plan, and annual plan of operations. The project plan and annual plan of operations for an initial soil survey project will include mapping goals and require digitizing of new soil polygons. The project plan and annual plan of operations for an update soil survey will include milestones that require edits to existing spatial data.

The pilot will begin on November 17, 2008, and end on March 13, 2009. MO–15 and MO–18 are glad to have the opportunity to participate in the NSGD pilot project.

As always, thank you for your hard work and support. ■

—Charles

MLRA Connection

By Scott Anderson, Soil Data Quality Specialist, MO–15

The MLRA restructuring plan is nearly completed for our MO–15 region. Only a few minor details remain. A couple of MLRA Soil Survey Offices (SSOs) still need to be set up, and the Regional Soil Scientist position has yet to be advertised. We have, however, filled all nine of our MLRA Soil Survey Leader positions, and most of them are in their new offices.

A listing of the MO–15 MLRA SSOs, MLRA Soil Survey Leaders, and SDQS responsible for QA is in the table on the following page.

A map showing the MLRA SSO areas has been posted on our MO–15 SharePoint site (<https://nrcs.sc.egov.usda.gov/ssra/MO-15/default.aspx>). Look for the file “MO–15_MLRA_SSAs” in the Open Documents section.

Now a word about roles and responsibilities. With the advent of the new MLRA management structure, many of the activities once handled at the MO will now be the responsibility of the MLRA SSOs. These include carrying out soil

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MLRA Offices, Leaders, and Data Quality Specialists

MLRA SSO	MLRA Leader	MO SDQS
15-1 (Tupelo, MS)	Steve Depew	Scott Anderson
15-2 (Meridian, MS)	Chris Hatcher	Scott Anderson
15-3 (Mobile, AL)	Jerome Langlinais	Greg Brannon
15-4 (Auburn, AL)	Lawrence McGhee	Scott Anderson
15-5 (Tifton, GA)	Alvin Perez-Torres	Greg Brannon
15-6 (Quincy, FL)	Milton Martinez	Greg Brannon
15-7 (Tavares, FL)	Jeff Deniger	Greg Brannon
15-8 (Ft. Myers, FL)	Howard Yamataki	Greg Brannon
15-9 (Mayagüez, PR)	Jorge Lugo	Greg Brannon

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correlation, conducting progress field reviews, preparing the review reports, scheduling soil samples for lab analysis, maintaining official series descriptions, and maintaining STATSGO, just to name a few. The MLRA Soil Survey Leader has a role very similar to that of the former position of State Correlator. They are to ensure consistent mapping and correlation throughout their area of responsibility and to coordinate joining with adjacent soil survey areas.

Quality assurance continues to be the responsibility of the MO. We will still conduct QA reviews and participate in local progress field reviews. The biggest challenge for us at the MO will be region-wide coordination of the nine MLRA SSOs. Remember, the overall goal of the MLRA concept is to produce one integrated, seamless, soil survey product for each MLRA. In order to pull this off, the MO will need to coordinate mapping scales, legend development, mapping concepts, soil investigations, et cetera throughout the region. For example, MLRA 133A (Southern Coastal Plain) covers parts of six MLRA SSOs (15-1, -2, -3, -4, -5, and -6). It will be the job of

the MO to coordinate activities and legend development between all of these SSOs. In addition, because MLRA 133A extends up the East Coast, it will also be our responsibility to coordinate legend development with MO-14.

Sounds like quite a task. Want to know how we plan to pull this off? MLRA Technical Teams, which will be the subject of my next article.

Want more information on roles and responsibilities? Refer to the [National Soil Survey Handbook](#), parts 601.01, 607.01, 608.01, 609.01, and 610.01. ■

Soil Survey of San Germán Area, Southwestern Puerto Rico

By Jorge L. Lugo-Camacho, MLRA Soil Survey Leader, NRCS; Samuel Ríos-Tirado, Soil Scientist, NRCS; Carmen L. Santiago, State Soil Scientist, NRCS; and Miguel A. Muñoz, Researcher, Agronomy and Soils Department, University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez Campus

The Soil Survey of San Germán Area updates the Soil Survey of Lajas Valley Area published in 1965, which was performed using the old soil classification system. The updated

Lugo-Camacho, continued from page 3

survey covers an area of 223,211 acres and is comprised of seven municipalities. The survey of the Lajas Valley area covered 102,609 acres. Nine soil orders and 86 soil series were recognized in the update. The identified soil orders are: Mollisols (29.6 percent), Inceptisols (21.4 percent), Vertisols (13.6 percent), Aridisols (12.3 percent), Ultisols (9.3 percent), Entisols (7.5 percent), Alfisols (3.4 percent), Oxisols (2.0 percent), and Histosols (0.9 percent). The Soil Survey of San Germán Area is the first soil inventory to report the Aridisol soil order in the Caribbean Area following the recognition of the aridic soil moisture regime in Puerto Rico in 2005.

The survey confirmed the presence of the aquic, aridic, and perudic soil moisture regimes (1.4 percent, 21.9 percent, and 5.3 percent, respectively). The ustic and udic soil moisture regimes formerly reported in the survey of the Lajas Valley area cover 28.5 percent and 42.9 percent of the area, respectively. The isohyperthermic soil temperature regime covers 94.7 percent of the surveyed area, and the isothermic regime covers 5.3 percent. The updates in soil climate regimes resulted in the establishment of 34 new soil series in accordance with the 10th edition of the Keys to Soil Taxonomy (2006). Two soil series were classified as Histosols (Haplohemists), and three soil series were classified as Entisols (Endoaquents, Fluvaquents, and Psammaquents) in an area with an aquic soil moisture regime. Fourteen soil series were classified as Aridisols, under the suborders of Argids, Calcids, and Cambids. Also, in the area with an aridic soil moisture regime, two soil series were established in the order of Vertisols (Calcitorrerts and Haplotorrerts) and three in the order of Entisols (Torriorthents and Torripsamments). In the area with a perudic soil moisture regime, four soil series were established in the order of Oxisols (Haploperox), two in the order of Mollisols (Argiudolls), two in the order of Ultisols

(Haplohumults), and three in the order of Inceptisols (Eutrudepts and Dystrudepts). This is the first field recognition of the Haploperox soil great group in the United States and its territories. ■



*Profile of Cerro Gordo mucky peat, 2 to 20 percent slopes.
Cerro Gordo soil classifies as fine-loamy, mixed,
isothermic Typic Haploperox.*

2008 Southern Regional Cooperative Soil Survey Conference

By Darrell Leach, Soils Specialist, NRCS Gainesville, FL

This year was Florida's turn to host the biannual Southern Regional Cooperative Soil Survey Conference (SRCSSC), which was held in Gainesville July 14–17. The purpose of the conference was to bring together representatives of the National Cooperative Soil Survey in the southern states for discussion of technical and scientific issues. Representatives from NRCS and cooperating universities were in Florida from nearly a dozen states,

several NRCS national centers, NHQ, and the cooperating agencies. Approximately 65 participants attended.

On Monday, July 14, a preconference field trip was held. It was sponsored and coordinated in partnership with the Florida Association of Environmental Soil Scientists, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the University of Florida (UF) Soil and Water Science Department. The field trip first took the group to the UF Plant Science Research and Education Unit near Orange Lake, Florida, where the participants saw soil pits and discussed soil characteristics. One pit showed the phosphatic soils that are common in the area. Although soil tests show that these soils



Devil's Den sinkhole, which is an area of geological interest near Gainesville, Florida. Participants at the Southern Regional Cooperative Soil Survey Conference visited the sinkhole as part of a preconference field trip.

Leach, continued from page 5

are high in phosphorus, they are low in water-soluble phosphorus.

The field trip then viewed the Devil's Den sinkhole (a cave diver's spot) to discuss the Floridan Aquifer and the shallow-to-limestone geology of the area. From the sinkhole, the group traveled to the University of Florida. At the university, they saw a soil at the base of a scarp that cuts along the Plio-Pleistocene terrace, which was explained by Dr. Harris, and a presentation on digital soil mapping by Dr. Grunwald. Finally, the group went on to the Austin Cary Memorial Forest to see the in-situ monitoring of soil saturation and redox conditions by Wade Hurt, NRCS retired. Dr. Willie Harris discussed the flatwoods landscape and some soil borings of the site. Dr. Rex Ellis gave a presentation on subaqueous soils at the education building while everyone was served pizza. The participants received a broad overview of soils and technological resources in Florida.

The conference theme was "Innovative Technologies for the New Soil Survey." The conference utilized committees and conference discussions to summarize and clarify new findings in the field, shared presentations (oral and poster), and provided opportunities for procedure synthesis and the exploration of new ideas. The conference also functioned as a clearinghouse for recommendations and proposals received from individual members and state conferences for transmittal to the National Cooperative Soil Survey Conference in 2009. The agenda (including links to documents and presentation) is posted at <http://soils.usda.gov/partnerships/ncss/conferences/2008/south/index.html>.

A poster session was held on Wednesday evening, and the abstracts of the poster can be accessed at the conference link above. There are some very informative presentations, and the Web site is well worth visiting. ■



Dr. Willie Harris discusses soil borings from a site in an area of flatwoods during the preconference field trip.

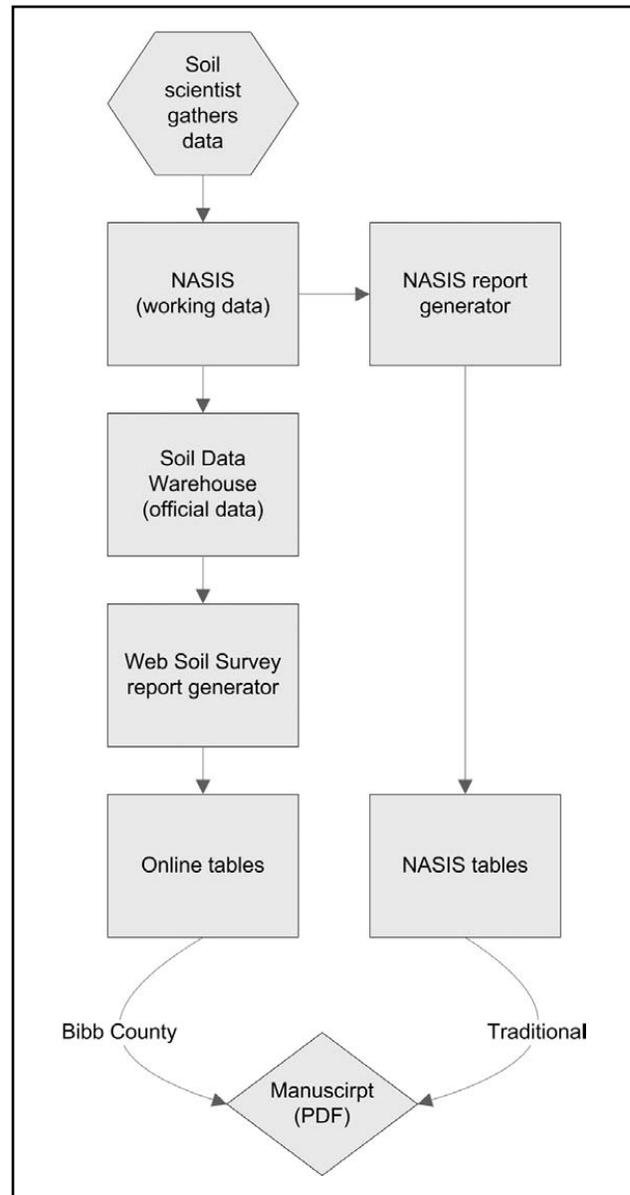
Tables from the Web Soil Survey

By Aaron Achen, Editor, MO-15

A new option is available for the tables in soil survey manuscripts for the MO-15 region. We can now create the tables using the Web Soil Survey instead of the NASIS reports generator.

You can see an example of the new tables in the Soil Survey of Bibb County, Alabama (<http://soildatamart.nrcs.usda.gov/manuscripts/AL007/0/Bibb.pdf>). The climate tables and the wildlife habitat table were generated by traditional methods and formatted to match the new tables. The other tables were created in the Web Soil Survey by selecting the entire survey area as the “Area of Interest,” clicking on the Soil Data Explorer tab, clicking on the Soil Reports tab, selecting a report, and clicking on “View Soil Report.” Copy and paste were used to transfer the tables into typesetting files, which were then used to generate the PDF file.

The most important difference between traditional tables and the new tables is not in the formatting. The most important difference is in the quality control processes. Traditionally, tables have been generated from the working data in NASIS. The new tables are generated from the official data in the Soil Data Warehouse. In ideal situations, these data sets are identical. When they are not identical, the new tables have the advantage of matching exactly what was delivered to the public by the Web Soil Survey at the time the tables were made. ■



Tables in soil survey manuscripts are based on data in the National Soil Information System (NASIS). The tables can be created by a report generator in NASIS or by a report generator in the Web Soil Survey.

“History is largely a record of human struggle to wrest the land from nature, because man relies for sustenance on the products of the soil. So direct is the relationship between soil erosion, the productivity of the land, and the prosperity of people, that the history of mankind, to a considerable degree at least, may be interpreted in terms of the soil and what has happened to it as the result of human use.”

—Hugh H. Bennett and W.C. Lowdermilk, circa 1930

Aridisols in the Caribbean

By J.L. Lugo-Camacho, MLRA Soil Survey Leader; S. Ríos, Soil Scientist; and C.L. Santiago, State Soil Scientist

The soil climate regimes of Puerto Rico were reevaluated during the recent Soil Survey of the San Germán Area. The reevaluation examined the soil moisture and temperature regimes of Puerto Rico and assessed the performance of the Newhall Simulation Model to predict soil moisture and temperature regimes. The reevaluation also had the objective of documenting the aridic soil moisture regime and establishing the Aridisols in Puerto Rico if the order was supported by the data, as suggested by Castro-López (1987), Mount et al. (1994), and Beinroth et al. (2003).

Data for average monthly precipitation and air temperature from 90 weather stations of the U.S. Weather Service were used to predict the soil moisture and temperature regimes using the Newhall Simulation Model (NSM) program version 1.0 (Van Wambeke, 2000). Monthly data for 1 year, monthly averages

for a number of years, averages of normal years, and latitude and longitude information were used. Potential evapotranspiration was estimated using the Thornthwaite method. The results obtained from the Newhall Simulation Model were statistically analyzed with InfoStat version 2004 using the cluster methods (multivariable statistical analysis). Seven hierarchical clustering algorithms were used. In order to validate the NSM in Puerto Rico, climatic data were included from five weather stations capable of providing hourly data on soil moisture and temperature (USDA–NRCS, 2001). Digital soil climate maps were prepared using ArcInfo. The classification of each soil series was reevaluated using Soil Taxonomy (Soil Survey Staff, 1999), Keys to Soil Taxonomy (Soil Survey Staff, 2006), and characterized soil series data.

The Newhall Simulation Model identified four soil moisture regimes: aridic, ustic, udic, and perudic. The aridic soil moisture regime was

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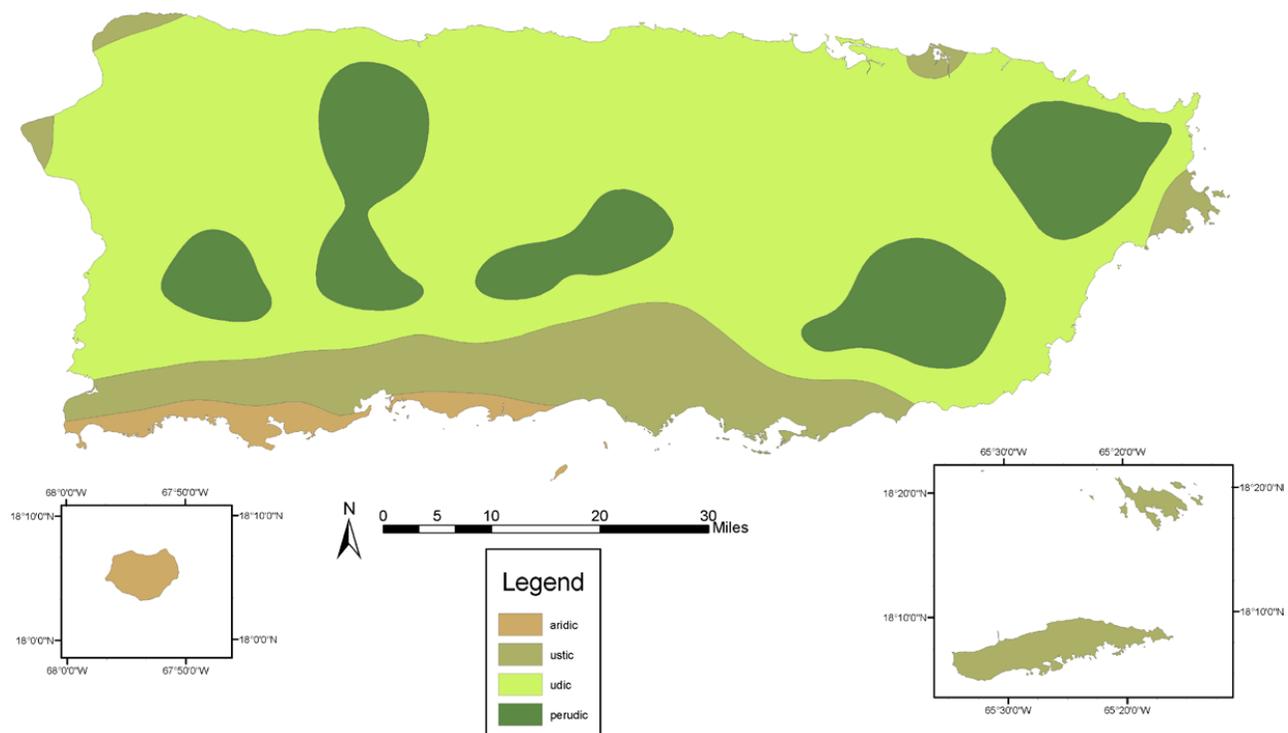


Figure 1.—Soil moisture regimes of Puerto Rico as defined by Soil Taxonomy (Lugo-Camacho, 2005).

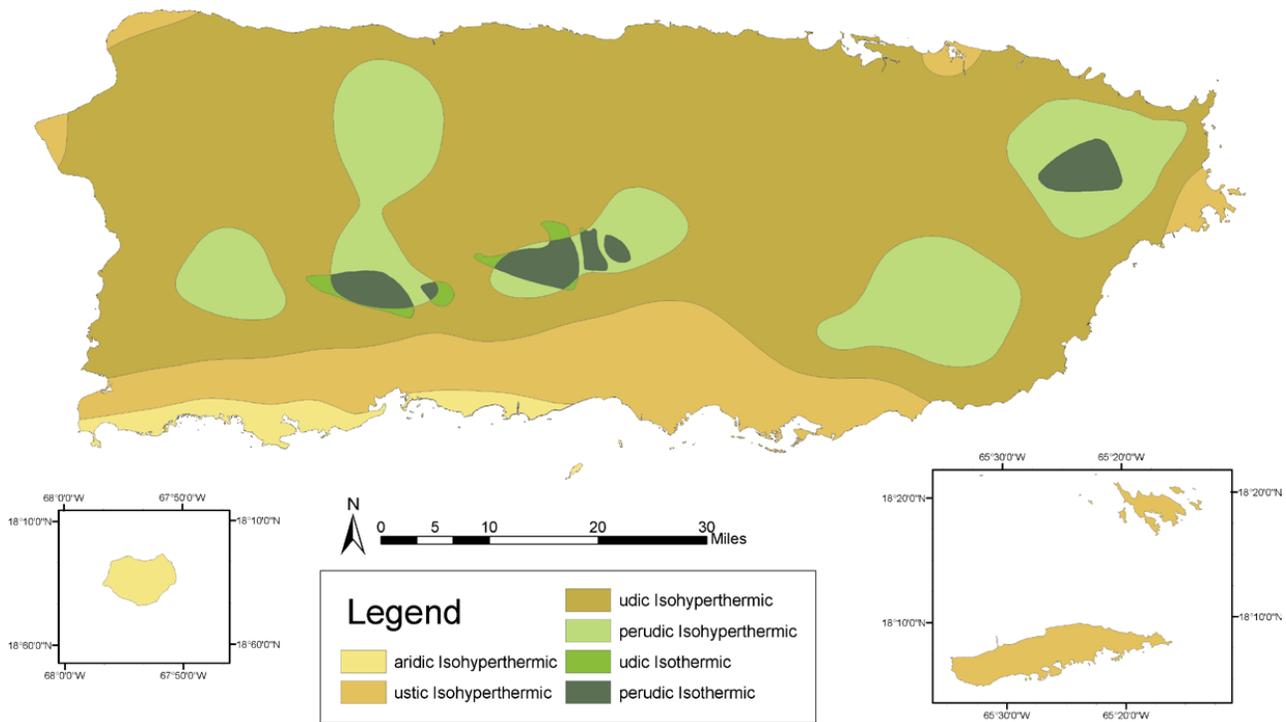


Figure 2.—Soil climate regimes of Puerto Rico (Lugo-Camacho, 2005).

Table 1.—Soil climate regimes of Puerto Rico, including the 750 meter limit elevation of the perudic isothermic regime (Lugo-Camacho, 2005).

Class	Area (hectares)	Percentage
Aridic Isohyperthermic	25,450	2.83
Ustic Isohyperthermic	141,935	15.79
Udic Isohyperthermic	569,906	63.39
Udic Isothermic	1,649	0.18
Perudic Isohyperthermic	134,036	14.91
Perudic Isothermic (> 750 m to 900 m)	16,754	1.86
Perudic Isothermic (> 900 m)	9,292	1.04
Total	899,022	100

Table 2.—Approximate area and distribution of the soil orders of Puerto Rico (Lugo-Camacho, 2005).

Soil Order	Area (ha)	Percentage of soil area	Percentage of total land area
Inceptisols	278,506	35.42	30.98
Ultisols	179,350	22.81	19.95
Mollisols	139,605	17.75	15.53
Oxisols	68,234	8.68	7.59
Vertisols	39,988	5.08	4.45
Alfisols	33,730	4.29	3.75
Entisols	30,593	3.89	3.40
Aridisols	11,342	1.44	1.26
Histosols	3,299	0.42	0.37
Spodosols	1,717	0.22	0.19
Other land	112,658	N/A	12.53
Total	899,022	100	100

Lugo-Camacho, continued from page 8

identified along the southern coast of Puerto Rico and on Mona Island. The ustic soil moisture regime was also identified along the southern coast and on Culebra and Vieques Islands and in small areas in the northwestern corner and along the northeastern and eastern coasts. The most extensive soil moisture regime was found to be the udic regime. The model did not identify the isomesic soil temperature regime currently recognized in the Caribbean National Forest, but recognized three areas as perudic in the west-central mountain range and the Cayey Mountain range and adjusted according to Soil Taxonomy (fig. 1). The soil climate regimes are presented in figure 2 and table 1. The approximate area and distribution of all soil orders are presented in table 2. The Aridisols cover an area of about 11,342 hectares, equivalent to 1.44 percent of the soil area of Puerto Rico and 1.26 percent of the total land area of Puerto Rico. Fourteen soil series were reclassified as Aridisols. Three soil series with an aridic soil moisture regime were identified as Entisols and two as Vertisols.

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First MLRA Office Meeting in Florida

By Darrell Leach, Soils Specialist, NRCS Gainesville, FL

The fiscal year 2009 “Florida MLRA Leader Work Planning Conference” was held in Gainesville, Florida, October 14th through 16th. Two of the three MLRA soil survey offices in Florida were established this summer after the annual work planning conference in July. The meeting in October was the first meeting at which it was possible to set the ground rules and to get moving on the MLRA approach for updating soil surveys.

The conference started by covering the subjects of setting up the offices and how to evaluate the existing soil survey areas and then moved on to setting workloads for the upcoming year. The conference had technology features in which Jean-Paul Calixte



MLRA Soil Survey Leaders in Florida. From left: Milton Martinez (Quincy), Jeff Deniger (Tavares), and Howard Yamataki (Ft. Myers).

taught the use of ArcGIS 9.2 with the Soil Resource Inventory Toolbox (SRITB) and Paul Finnell showed the features of NASIS 6.0 prototype by way of NetMeeting.

The MLRA Soil Survey Leaders will get together for their next team meeting the week of December 8th in Gainesville, Florida, when

they will coordinate their activities. They will present their progress for FY–2009 at the 2009 Annual Work Planning Conference in July 2009. They will also discuss their future projects and their goals for fiscal year 2010. Everyone is excited as the offices will be fully staffed during 2009 and the new way of doing business will begin. ■

“As a nation we need to renew our acquaintance with the land and reaffirm our faith in its continuity of productiveness—when properly treated. If we are bold in our thinking, courageous in accepting new ideas, and willing to work with instead of against our land, we shall find in conservation farming an avenue to the greatest food production the world has ever known...” “One of the best, and certainly the most promising, of the devices yet invented by man for dealing democratically and effectively with maladjustment in land use, as well as for carrying forward positive programs of desirable conservation and for maintaining the work, is the soil conservation district.”

—Hugh H. Bennett, 1943

Sharing

By Aaron Achen, Editor, MO-15

MO-15 now has a SharePoint Web site (<https://nrsc.sc.egov.usda.gov/ssra/mo-15/default.aspx>). The site functions as a secured, interactive intranet. It is not available to the general public.

The site has two main levels of authorization: read-only and contributor. All individuals with an authenticated account on an NRCS server (AgEast, AgWest, AgCentral, or AgLO) have read-only authorization and may look at most parts of the site. NRCS employees at MO-15 and at the MLRA Soil Survey Offices in the MO-15 region have contributor authorization. They can read the restricted parts of the site and can add to the site.

The essence of the site is that users with contributor authorization can add to the site without needing special software or training. Most importantly, they can copy files to the site. Other authorized users can then make changes, such as adding comments, to those files. SharePoint controls which people can

view or change the files. In addition to storing and sharing files, SharePoint provides the ability to create and manage alternate versions of the files; maintain calendars and task lists; create photo galleries; post lists of Web sites; create surveys; search the site; and contribute to discussion boards.

Some advantages of using SharePoint:

The site provides a common point for sharing knowledge between MLRA Soil Survey Offices. The site's search function will allow us to find relevant files from across the region. The MLRA-based structure for updating soil surveys places multiple teams doing similar work across wide distances. SharePoint enables the teams to share their work regardless of where they are located. Those people who get used to posting to the site and searching it for ideas will be able to benefit from each other's work.

The site provides a common point for sharing knowledge within each MLRA Soil Survey Office. Each office will generate a huge number of documents over time. Documents on the SharePoint site will be relatively easy

The MO-15 SharePoint site currently highlights announcements, two document libraries, a calendar, and a list of links. Each of the MLRA soil survey offices in the region has it's own subsite.

to locate. You won't need to ask a co-worker for a document stored on their computer if the document is on the SharePoint site. Years from now, you won't have to wonder what you named a document or where you filed it, you'll just have to remember enough about the document to come up with search terms. (As an example, authorized users are encouraged to search the MO-15 site for "Ksat".)

The site provides a method for transferring files up to 50 MB in size within the agency. Our e-mail system will not send files larger than 10 MB.

The site can be used for collaborative work. Consider, for example, a document that needs to be reviewed by multiple people. Instead of e-mailing a copy to several people and reviewing several replies, you can post the document to SharePoint and allow all the reviewers to mark-up the same copy. This allows the reviewers to see each other's comments during the process. SharePoint also has check-in, check-out, and versioning functions that can be enabled.

Some suggestions from the MO leader for items we could be sharing:

- * Technical team meeting reports
- * Ad hoc committee reports
- * Announcements for meetings, field reviews, etc.

Editor's Note

Issues of this newsletter are available from 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@al.usda.gov.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status,

- * Field review reports
- * MLRA soil survey evaluations
- * MLRA soil survey work plans
- * MLRA soil survey long range plans
- * MO/MLRA annual business plans
- * MLRA guidance documents
- * Lab data
- * Proposed series or type locations
- * Official series descriptions
- * Photographs, including soil profiles and landscapes
- * Lists of the status of benchmark soils
- * Manuscripts
- * Soil proposals and issue papers
- * Marketing tools (presentations, posters, training tools, etc.)
- * Research projects
- * New technology and software tips
- * Links to internet sites, including other SharePoint sites
- * Historical soils data

SharePoint has a small learning curve. The MO site has been set up to be as intuitive as possible for the basic functions. If you want to take advantage of some of the more complicated functions, however, you'll need to read the help files. I encourage you to investigate the site and discover what you can do with it. I suspect that over the next couple years, we will all become quite familiar with the site's search functions and collaborative capabilities. ■

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