



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Soil  
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Service

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NATIONAL SOIL TAXONOMY HANDBOOK  
430-VI  
ISSUE NO. 3

Purpose. To distribute current procedure for handling amendments to Soil Taxonomy, Agriculture Handbook 436.

Effective Date. This procedure is effective when received.

Filing Instructions. File this copy of amendment procedures in the 3-ring binder with Issues No. 1 and 2. It is suggested that you keep this binder with the Soil Taxonomy volume for easy reference.

Replace 615 contents of Issue No. 2 with the enclosed contents. Replace pages 615-2a and 615-2b dated Sept. 1982 with the enclosed pages 615-2a and 615-2b dated July 1983. File pages 615-2m through 615-2r after page 615-2b.

Supplementation. State and NTC's may not supplement the handbook.

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DIST: NSTH



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Part 615 - Amendments to Soil Taxonomy

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§615.00-1 Purpose of amendments.

Soil Taxonomy needs to be amended periodically to correct deficiencies that have become apparent through application of the system, to incorporate new knowledge, and to improve the structure of the system. This instruction describes procedures for reviewing and evaluating proposals before they are incorporated in Soil Taxonomy. Various proposals will be handled in different ways. Proposals affecting only one subgroup or editorial changes should be processed with a minimum of reviews and be implemented rapidly. Other proposals affecting taxa at higher categories and diagnostic horizons may require review by many soil scientists and their implementation may have to await republication of the Key to Soil Taxonomy or of the entire handbook.

§615.00-2 Changes at the series level. Changes in definitions, addition of new series, deletion of unneeded series.

Procedures for making changes at the soil series level in the United States will be described in the National Soils Handbook (NSH), SCS. In the USA, changes at the soil series level are approved by the respective principal soil correlator. Changes at the series level outside the United States are the responsibility of appropriate national soil survey organizations. No attempt is being made to correlate soil series internationally. To facilitate orderly assembly of information on soil taxa, national organizations are encouraged to develop orderly procedures for establishing and documenting soil series.

§615.00-3. Amendments to Soil Taxonomy above the series level.

Changes above the series level are processed through regional, national, or international committees. Kinds of committees and their responsibilities are described below:

(a) Committees for updating Soil Taxonomy.

(1) The Soil Taxonomy Policy Committee.

All technical committees submit their recommendations to the Soil Taxonomy Policy Committee, which makes final decisions on all changes in Soil Taxonomy above the series level. The committee consists of the following:

Director of Soils, SCS, as chairperson  
National Leader (U.S.), Soil Taxonomy, as secretary

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- 1 soil scientist representing all U.S. Regional Technical Committees 1/
- 1 soil scientist representing all Special Soil Taxonomy Technical Committees (ICOM) 1/
- 1 soil scientist representing the Soil Taxonomy committee of the Soil Science Society of America
- 1 soil scientist representing national soil survey organizations outside the U.S. that have adopted Soil Taxonomy as the primary system of soil classification.

(i) Members of the Policy Committee, other than the chairperson and secretary, serve for 2 years, with two members being selected in alternate years. The first term of the representative of the U.S. Regional Technical Committees and the Special Soil Taxonomy Technical Committees will be one year to provide for overlap in the composition of the committee. The representative of the U.S. Regional Committees will be elected by the four chairpersons of the regional committees, and will alternate between SCS and other agencies represented on the regional technical committees. The representative of the Special Soil Taxonomy Technical Committees will be elected by the chairpersons of these committees based on the recommendation of the chairperson of the Soil Taxonomy Policy Committees. The other two representatives will be selected by the groups they represent.

(ii) The responsibility for developing orderly procedures to select representatives to the Policy Committee rests with the chairperson of the respective groups. Until appropriate procedures can be developed, the representative of national soil survey organizations will be invited by the chairperson of the Policy Committee.

(2) Soil Taxonomy Technical Committees.

There are two kinds of soil taxonomy technical committees--National and Regional, and Special Soil Taxonomy technical committees. In addition, ad hoc committees and referees may be appointed. National and Regional, and Special Soil Taxonomy technical committees make recommendations for amendments to Soil Taxonomy to the Soil Taxonomy Policy Committee. Recommendations may originate within the committee or they may be developed from proposals submitted from outside the committee.

(i) National and regional Soil Taxonomy technical committees. National and regional Soil Taxonomy technical committees may be established to coordinate development and application of Soil Taxonomy in a geographic area or political entity. They may be multinational, national or regional. Procedures for regional technical committees in the U.S. are outlined in the National Soil Handbook, section 602.00-1(d)(3).

1/ As defined in 3.12.

(ii) Special Soil Taxonomy technical committees. Special committees are established by the Soil Taxonomy Policy Committee either at its initiative or in response to a request by a national or international group. Special Soil Taxonomy technical committees may be established to coordinate the establishment or revision of taxa or criteria in Soil Taxonomy. These special committees can request comments on a proposal from any source they consider appropriate. Special committees may establish ad hoc working groups to develop recommendations on specific problems. The secretary of the Soil Taxonomy Policy Committee maintains a record of the charges and chairpersons of all technical committees and distributes a list of active committees each December.

(3) Ad hoc committees and referees.

The chairperson of the Soil Taxonomy Policy Committee or the chairperson of a Soil Taxonomy technical committee may establish ad hoc committees or appoint referees to develop recommendations on specific problems or on proposals that cannot be handled by an existing technical committee.

(4) The Soil Taxonomy Index of Proposed Amendments. (STIPA)

The secretary of the Soil Taxonomy Policy Committee maintains an index of proposed amendments in a computer file (STIPA). This index contains, in addition to other data, the following information on each proposal:

- (i) The name of the originator (individual or committee).
- (ii) The address of the originator.
- (iii) The date of the proposal.
- (iv) The page in Soil Taxonomy affected.
- (v) The taxonomic element (title of the chapter, paragraph, or subparagraph affected).
- (vi) Action taken.
- (vii) A brief statement of the proposal.
- (viii) Reviewer's comments.

The STIPA is updated on a regular basis, and printouts, sorted by page and element, are distributed in December of each year to chairpersons of all technical committees.

(b) Procedures for handling proposals to amend Soil Taxonomy.

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(1) Editorial changes or implied or parallel subgroups.

Proposals for addition of implied or parallel subgroups <sup>1/</sup> or proposals for editorial changes should be addressed to the secretary of the Soil Taxonomy Policy Committee, who normally approves the proposals after comments are received from members of the Soil Taxonomy Policy Committee.

Proposals and requests for the addition of an implied or parallel subgroup should indicate that areas of soils classified in the proposed subgroup have been recognized in a soil resource inventory and should include justification why the taxon should be added to the system. As with series, subgroups should not be established on the basis of a single pedon.

(2) Changes other than proposals for editorial changes or the addition of implied or parallel subgroups.

(i) Proposals sent to Soil Taxonomy technical committees. Proposals for amendments to Soil Taxonomy other than proposals for editorial changes or the addition of implied or parallel subgroups are normally addressed to the chairperson of the appropriate special Soil Taxonomy technical committee or the chairperson of a national or regional technical committee.

(A) The chairperson will acknowledge receipt of all new proposals and inform the originator of the immediate disposition of the proposal. He may request clarification or additional documentation from the originator before accepting the proposal. The chairperson will notify the secretary of the Soil Taxonomy Policy Committee of the acceptance of the proposal for study. The secretary will enter the proposal in the STIPA. After the proposal has been evaluated, the committee chairperson will forward the proposal with the necessary documentation to the secretary of the Soil Taxonomy Policy Committee. In the letter of transmittal the chairperson should include suggestions for the timing and procedures for implementing the recommendation.

<sup>1/</sup> Implied subgroups are subgroups that are excluded from typic subgroups but do not require the addition of an element of definition to the definition of the typic subgroups and that are not included in any intergrade or extragrade. Soils in this category may be handled by extending the range of an existing subgroup or by establishing a new subgroup. Parallel subgroups are subgroups that have been established in one great group and that appear to be desirable in related great groups. Normally, the establishment of a "parallel subgroup" requires the addition of an element of definition to the definition of the typic subgroup.

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(B) Proposals made by a committee member as part of an ongoing discussion need not be acknowledged specifically but should be handled as part of the normal communication within a committee.

(ii) Proposals sent directly to the Soil Taxonomy Policy Committee.

Proposals may be sent directly to the chairperson of the Soil Taxonomy Policy Committee. The chairperson will send such proposals to the chairperson of an appropriate special Soil Taxonomy technical committee or a national and regional Soil Taxonomy technical committee for review and development of a recommendation. An ad hoc committee or a referee may be appointed if no appropriate committee is available. The proposal will be entered in STIPA and the originator of the proposal informed of its disposition.

(iii) Supporting material for proposed changes in Soil Taxonomy.

(A) Proposals for amendments. Each proposal for an amendment to Soil Taxonomy should be accompanied by the descriptions and the laboratory or other data that caused the originator to make the proposal. The proposal should include an evaluation of changes in parts of the system not directly addressed by the proposal that may be needed to accommodate the proposal, an estimate of the importance and areal extent of the soil for which the new taxon is proposed, and an assessment of the contribution of the proposed amendment to the objectives of Soil Taxonomy. The proposal should also list the names of individuals or organizations that have reviewed and support the proposal.

(B) Recommendations for amendments. Proposals that have been reviewed and approved by a technical committee are forwarded as a recommendation to the secretary of the policy committee. In addition to the documentation, the recommendations should include a list and comments of reviewers of the proposal and a recommendation on possible reviews by other Soil Taxonomy technical committees. A copy of the recommendation should be sent to the originator of the proposal. The secretary of the Soil Taxonomy Policy Committee will inform the chairman of the appropriate technical committee immediately of the receipt of the recommendation. Unless additional documentation is needed, recommendations should be acted on within 6 months of receipt.

(c) Implementation of amendments to Soil Taxonomy. Every recommendation submitted to the Policy Committee should include a plan of implementation. The final decision on implementation will be made by the Policy Committee. The need for all soil scientists to have access to the same updated version of Soil Taxonomy, the complexity of the change, the impact of the amendment on the practical usefulness of Soil Taxonomy, and the status of complementary proposals in related taxa will influence the form and timing of implementations. The following alternatives are available.

(1) Implement immediately. The approved amendment is published in the Soil Taxonomy Handbook. An abstract of the amendment is published in the Soil Science Society of America Journal and the Soil Management

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Support Services Newsletter. It will be included in the next updated edition of the Key to Soil Taxonomy.

(2) Delay implementation until a new Key to Soil Taxonomy can be published. We expect that a new key will be printed at least biannually. This procedure should be used if changes are so extensive, affecting several taxa, that pen and ink changes are impractical, but mere explanatory notes are simple enough to be handled in the key. Explanatory material will be published in the Soil Taxonomy Handbook when the new key is issued. Abstracts are published as in 3.41.

(3) Delay implementation until a new edition of Soil Taxonomy is published.