

# Ecological Site Inventory: Structure and Staffing

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State Soil Scientists Meeting  
Columbia, South Carolina  
March 30, 2010



# Acceleration of Ecological Site Description's (ESD)

- Chief White approved a Decision Memo in November 2009 and in January 2010 by teleconference to State Conservationists he announced that the agency was accelerating ESD Development
- A National Bulletin was signed by both Deputy Chiefs for SSRA and S&T that provided additional guidance that ESD efforts will be a cooperative effort
- Acting Deputy Chief Michele Laur and Micheal Golden provided an update on ESD Activities last week at the State Conservationist weekly teleconference

# Ecological Site

A distinctive kind of land with specific physical characteristics that differs from other kinds of land in its ability to produce a distinctive kind and amount of vegetation (NRPH 1997).

# Importance of ESD and FSGD's

- Ecological Site Descriptions (ESD) will enhance NRCS conservation planning operations on all rangeland, forest land, pastureland, hayland, and grazed cropland by providing information describing the interactions among soils, vegetation, and land management.
- ESD's and Forage Suitability Group Descriptions (FSGD) provide a common framework for communication of natural resource information among disciplines (forestry, range, biology, etc.), agencies, third party vendors, conservation partners, and land managers.

# Importance of ESD and FSGD's

- ESD's and FSGD's provide a foundation to assess the condition of current resources, monitor changes, assess management opportunities and predict outcome of management decisions.
- Web Soil Survey linkage allows the user to obtain current ecological site description data for the soils on their operating unit through a geospatial interface.

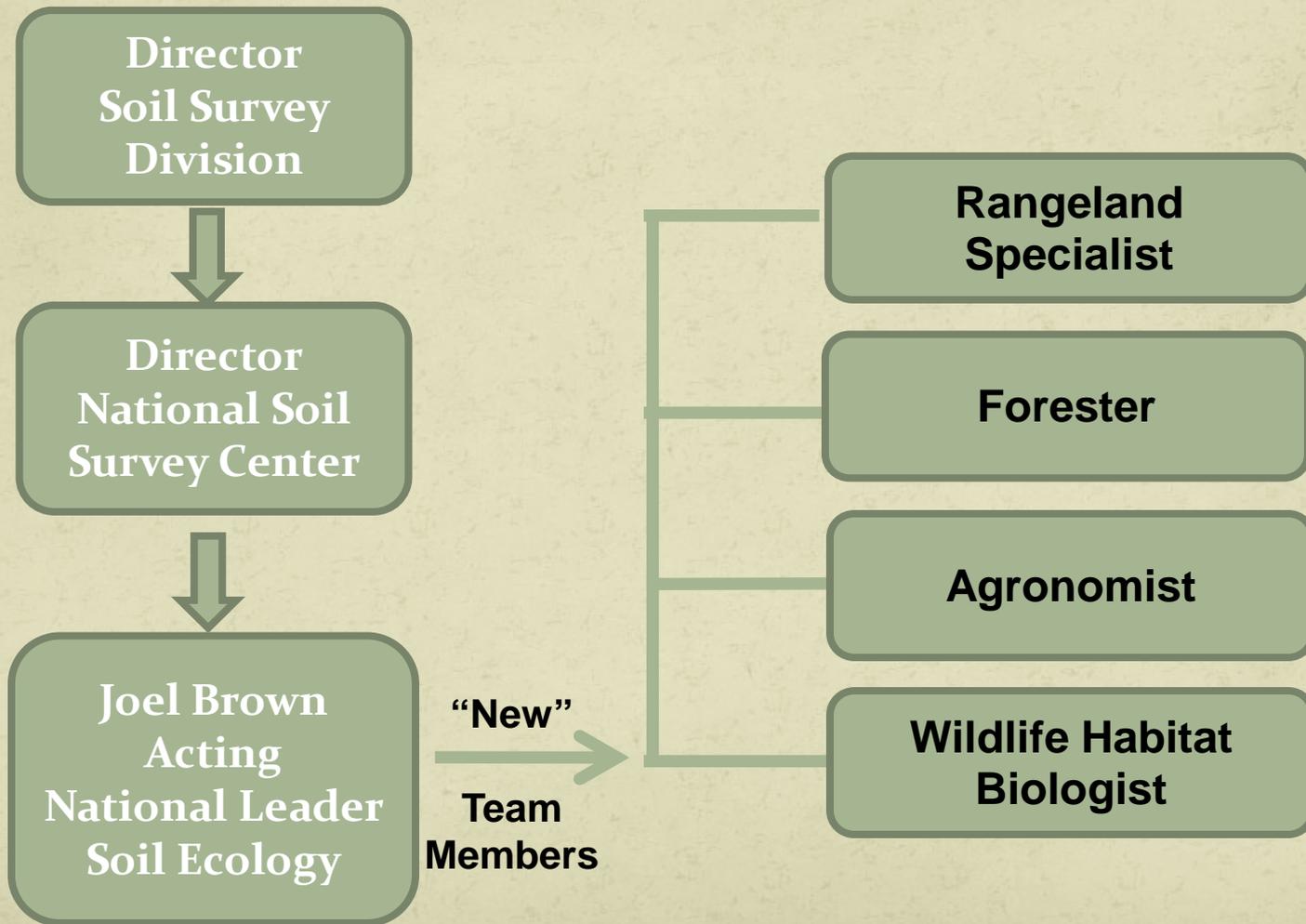
# Additional ESD Benefits

- ESDs capture and present the corporate and scientific knowledge.
- ESDs provide valuable information for credit trading networks, restoring landscapes invaded by exotic/invasive species, and reducing wildfire risks.
- ESDs have broad acceptance by agencies, partners, NGOs, and others.

# Ecological Site Responsibilities

- SSRA
  - Inventory & Development (QA-QC)
  - DSP Data Collection Handbook
  - National Soil Survey Handbook
- S&T
  - Technology Transfer
  - Technical Team Members
  - Programs - Policy
  - Conservation Planning Tools
  - Models
  - Technical Guide III-IV-V
  - Training
- SSRA & S&T “Joint Responsibility”
  - ESD Inventory Policy
  - Data Mart - Technical Guide Sec II

# Planned SSRA Staffing



# ESD Development

- Collection of Vegetation Data (QC by SSO)
  - SSO Vegetation Specialists
  - FO, AO, State or NTSC Staff
  - Partners
  - Contractors or others
- Development of ESD, STM (QA by MO)
  - SSO Vegetation Specialists
  - FO, AO, State or NTSC Staff
  - Partners
  - Contractors or others

# SSRA Funding for Additional Staff

- Seven Vegetation Specialists in MLRA Offices (MO's) for Quality Assurance Located in:
  - (W) Alaska, Oregon, Arizona
  - (C) Texas, Minnesota
  - (E) North Carolina, Massachusetts
- Nineteen Vegetation Specialists in MLRA Soil Survey Offices (SSO's) for Quality Control in:
  - FL, AK, ID, UT, CA, OR, NV, NE, ND, AZ, TX, MN, MI, ME, VA, GA, AR, TN, WY

# S & T Support

- Evaluating ESD Support Needs
  - Staffing (Current vs. Needed)
  - Tools
  - Policy
  - Technology Development
  - Interagency Coordination
- NHQ – Ecological Sciences Discipline Leaders will continue to provide national guidance.
- NTSC – Discipline specialists will provide technology transfer and training support for ESDs.
- States – State Resource Conservationists will Certify correlated ESD's for use in their State.

# Soil Survey and Ecological Sciences Divisions Coordination

- Position Descriptions have been developed for all 30 positions and are ready for classification.
- Both Divisions met February 3<sup>rd</sup> to build on the current ESD work and begin mapping out future cooperative roles and responsibilities .
- Two teams were established to guide acceleration of ESD development
  - Business Work Flow Team
  - Soil Vegetation Point Data Business Requirement Team

# Business Workflow Team

- Team leads:
  - Dennis Thompson - Ecological Sciences Division
  - Joel Brown - Soil Survey Division
- Team members:
  - Pat Shaver, Homer Sanchez, Bruce Wight, George Peacock, Curtis Talbot, Craig Ditzler, Chad McGrath, Mike Sucik
- Map the ESD Inventory and Development Processes
  - How is the job done
  - Who does what
  - Roles and responsibilities

# Soil and Vegetation Point Data Business Requirements Team

- Team lead
  - Jim Fortner, NSSC
- Team members:
  - George Chavez, Chad Ellis, Steve Campbell, Ray Stoner, Tom Ward, Wendell Gilgert, Steve Woodruff
- Describes business requirement needed for development of an integrated information system

# Future Actions

Based on the work from these two teams and the original implementation teams :

- Complete an overall Ecological Site Description Implementation Plan
- Develop a communication plan
  - Teleconferences/webinars with states
- Develop a training plan to include both
  - Training for Inventory & Development
  - Training for Technology Transfer



# Soil Survey and Ecological Site Inventory

*Management* (existing MLRA structure)

- Board of Directors
- Management Team
- Technical Team

# Soil Survey and Ecological Site Inventory

## *Management* (existing MLRA structure)

- **Board of Directors**
  - State Conservationists
    - Grouped by 18 MLRA Region Offices
    - Approves: Budgets, Staffing, Project Plans
- Management Team
- Technical Team

# Soil Survey and Ecological Site Inventory

*Management* (existing MLRA structure)

- Board of Directors
- **Management Team** (Advisory/Recommendations)
  - MO Region Leader provides coordination of team
  - Members include
    - Soil Survey & DSP – State Soil Scientist's,
    - ESD's – State Resource Conservationist's,
  - Expert knowledge of policy/standards/handbooks - Advisory
  - Team determines which soils and ESD's identified by Technical Team are to be collected and prioritized for BOD approval
  - Review of ESD data on field reviews - Makes Recommendations
- Technical Team

# Soil Survey and Ecological Site Inventory

## *Management* (existing MLRA structure)

- Board of Directors
- Management Team (Advisory/Recommendations)
- **Technical Team**
  - MLRA Soil Survey Leader provides coordination of team
  - Members Include
    - State and Area Vegetation and Soil Specialists
    - NTSC Vegetation and Soil Specialists
    - MLRA SSO staffs
    - MO-SDQS, VDQS
    - District Conservationist and staff
    - Others
  - Prepares initial long range and project plans
  - Local input with knowledge of conditions & ecological states

# Soil Survey and Ecological Site Inventory

*MLRA Long Range Plan – Project Plan – Annual Plan*

- *Include Correlation of ESD's - Planned and Existing*
- *Include Benchmark and Other Important soils*
- *Include Collection of Dynamic Soil Properties*

# Questions?

- Two SharePoint Sites have been established where updates will be posted.
- The site will also have a Q&A feature to address important developments.
- The Inventory and Development site is located:  
<https://nracs.sc.egov.usda.gov/ssra/nssc/esi/default.aspx>
- The Technology Transfer site is located:  
<https://nracs.sc.egov.usda.gov/st/NESDIS/default.aspx>