

Soil and Ecosystem Dynamics Standing Committee

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Committee members:

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Item 1:

Review the current list of benchmark soils and identify recommended additions/changes to the list with regards to prioritizing the development of ecological site descriptions (ESDs).

- The benchmark list needs updating; however, this is not a current high priority factor with regard to ESD.**
- Factors driving ESD development : existing and available data for specific areas, NRCS initiatives/priorities, interests of conservation partners, external funding availability.**
- In the future, ESD development may be able to help refine the Benchmark soils list as there are plans to eventually development of “Benchmark ecological sites”-which may identify additional benchmark soil criteria.**
- The Committee recommends that ESDs developed on current benchmark soils should be designated as such.**
- Need: Prioritize DSPs on benchmark soils vs. ESDs.**

Item 2:

The Committee will explore the adaptation of the ecological sites (ESs) for use on croplands and discuss how dynamic soil properties can be effectively integrated into all ESs.

- Highly productive cropland will likely stay in cropland.**
- The current ESDs format usually contains a STM with cropland designated by a single box within the model. Croplands can encompass so many different management alternatives that a whole document on management alternatives focusing on soil health would be warranted.**
- Concept of agroecological sites (AES) is under development. Focus will be dynamic soil properties as indicators of soil function. Opportunity for partner collaboration!**
- AES include various cropping scenarios, trends of soil health, production stability, ecosystem benefits.**

Item 3: Create criteria for a minimum dataset for dynamic soil properties and ecological sites.

- **This is being addressed at the national level and draft lists have been developed.**
- **Work in progress – opportunity for partners!**
- **Multiple minimum data sets to be developed depending on intensity of data collection , type of ecosystem and land use.**
- **Draft lists will be sent to Committee members (and any interested partners) for further future discussion and review.**

Item 4:

How can the carbon data from the RaCA project best be used in ESD development and/or conservation planning?

- **RaCA: Potentially useful for dynamic soil properties but has limited to no use with regards to the development of ESDs.**
- **Where mgmt info exists, RaCA data will be incorporated into DSP database.**