

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 Committee focused on the current benchmark soils list and how this list may be used to prioritize ESDs.

The Committee acknowledges that the current benchmark soils list needs to be updated but this is not a current high priority factor with regards to ESDs. There are more important factors right now in driving the development of ESDs including 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.

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.

The Committee acknowledges that most highly productive cropland will stay in cropland and that the current ESD model may not be the most useful for landowners/conservation planners. 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.

Susan made a presentation to the group on the concept of agroecological sites which are defined as a distinctive kind of land based on the potential to support ranges of soil functions (as indicated by dynamic soil properties) and their responses to natural disturbance and human management. Includes various cropping scenarios, trends of soil health, production stability, ecosystem

benefits. This concept is currently being discussed and evaluated at the WO level.

Item 3: Create criteria for a minimum dataset for dynamic soil properties and ecological sites. The current USDA-NRCS Soil Change Guide utilized four criteria including relationship to soils function and practicality. The Committee will discuss these criteria and how best to select dynamic soils properties useful for conservation planning or ES differentiation.

This is being addressed at the WO level and draft lists have been developed. These lists will be sent to Committee members for further discussion.

Item 4:

How can the carbon data from the RaCA project best be used?

RACA: Potentially useful for dynamic soil properties but has limited to no use with regards to the development of ESDs.