

Newsletter

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Editor's Note

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You are invited to submit stories for this newsletter to Stanley Anderson, National Soil Survey Center, Lincoln, Nebraska. Phone—402-437-5357; FAX—402-437-5336; email—stan.anderson@lin.usda.gov.



Executive Summary of the 2006 Western Regional Cooperative Soil Survey and Western Society of Soil Science Conferences

By Jeff Bruggink, Region 4 Soil Scientist, United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service.

Brief Overview

The 2006 Western Regional Cooperative Soil Survey (WRCSS) conference was held in conjunction with the Western Society of Soil Science (WSSS) conference at the Prospector Square Lodge in Park City, Utah, June 19-22. The theme of the WRCSS conference was “Innovative Applications of Soil Survey: Meeting the Changing Needs of Today’s Society.” The theme of the WSSS conference was “The Relevancy of Soil Science to the Needs of a Changing West.” Both conferences were planned under one steering committee that included representatives from both conferences. Utah State University was hired as a conference services contractor to provide Web site development, registration services, financial reconciliation, and negotiations with vendors. The cooperating agencies provided all of the other planning and logistical services for the conferences. A total of 104 people attended the conferences during the week.

The WRCSS conference included a mixture of agency-cooperator reports, technical presentations, and business

sessions. Cooperator interaction also was provided through a full-day field trip, an evening poster session, an evening banquet, and an evening hospitality gathering. The WSSS conference included technical presentations and papers and participation in the evening sessions. A joint half-day WRCSS-WSSS session included technical presentations from members of each group. The field trip included stops at sites where several private and public land management issues were discussed. The use of soil information to assist with land management decisions also was discussed.

The steering committee solicited comments and recommendations regarding the conferences during the general business meeting and during a closeout meeting on the final day of the conferences. The recommendations address issues of interest to the WRCSS, WSSS, and National Cooperative Soil Survey (NCSS) conferences.

Recommendations

WRCSS Conference Content

- The future conferences should include a mixture of new technology development, applications of soil survey, and NCSS business subjects.
- A field trip is very valuable as a means of showing applications of information and issues facing members of the NCSS. Interaction during the field trip between agencies allows the building of partnerships and opens communications between cooperators.

WRCSS 2008 (Washington) Conference Theme

- Several suggestions indicated the need to include Ecological Site Descriptions (ESDs) and Ecological Classification and Mapping in the 2008 conference. Greater participation by range and forestry professionals is encouraged.

Concurrent with WSSS

- The co-location of the WRCSS and WSSS conferences was a success. The interaction between the groups was beneficial to both groups. One recommendation for the 2008 meeting is that the two groups be included under one agenda so that there are opportunities for both groups to attend all sessions.
- The meetings of the standing committees should be open to all who would like to attend, including those who are not part of the WRCSS.
- The conferences should take advantage of the opportunity to recruit students who are attending. Planners of the 2008 conference should consider an information booth or other means of providing information on soil science careers in the various agencies. The agency representatives should be introduced during the conference so that individuals can make appropriate contacts during the conference.

Use of Contract Conference Services

- The conference contracted with Utah State University to provide Web site development, registration, and financial reconciliation with vendors. It is recommended that these types of services be used in the future to assist steering committees with the planning and implementation of conferences. The time saved by the steering committee is generally greater than the cost of the contract services.

Location for 2009 National Meeting

- The WRCSS steering committee recommends one of three states for the 2009 national conference— Arizona, New Mexico, or Idaho. The final decision about the location will be based on views of the National Steering Committee and the commitment of the states.

Recommendations of Standing Committees

- Greater participation by all agencies is needed in the standing committees. Commitments from personnel prior to the conference can ensure that work is completed before the conference and that charges are clearly identified.
- A review of the committee reports is needed for a complete understanding of the recommendations.

Applied Technology

- Bill Ypsilantis (BLM) was the chairperson for the 2006 conference.
- Chair elect is Dave Hover (NRCS), and Co-Chair elect is Don Fallon (FS).
- At the business meeting, forwarding of the committee recommendations to the national conference was moved, seconded, and unanimously approved.
- It was decided that the “Applied Technology Web Page” should include a Digital Soil Mapping section and that the NRCS Soils Web Site section on conferences should reflect the regional organization structure and be more accessible.
- The committee recommended the establishment of a “Digital Mapping Framework” and will forward a copy of a white paper on the topic to the national conference.
- The committee recommended that a work group with representatives from each of the regional committees be formed to develop a framework for NCSS digital soil mapping.

Soil Survey Standards

- This committee did not meet during the conference.
- There is a need for a new chairperson and co-chairperson.

Soil Taxonomy

- Tom Hahn (NRCS) was the chairperson for the 2006 conference.
- There is a need for a new chairperson and co-chairperson.
- At the business meeting, forwarding of the committee recommendations to the national conference was moved, seconded, and approved. However, several were opposed. The opposition was mostly in relation to the discussion on incorporating TERRA landform terminology into NASIS.
- The main committee work had been completed prior to the conference because of the April 2006 deadline for comments on proposed changes to the *Keys to Soil Taxonomy*. Most of the West Region recommendations were incorporated by the NSSC.
- Future review will include addressing the recommendations of the “Mica Work Group,” descriptive terms for gypsum soils, and refinements of descriptions of diatomaceous/mineral soils.
- The committee identified the need for improved identification of paralithic/densic contacts, the need for new criteria on slope stability, and the need for incorporation and/or data dictionary crosswalk of TERRA (FS) landform terms into NASIS.

Research Needs

- Dr. Anthony O’Geen (UC Davis) was the chairperson for the 2006 conference.
- It is hoped that Dr. O’Geen will continue as chairperson.
- At the business meeting, forwarding of the committee recommendations to

the national conference was moved, seconded, and unanimously approved.

- The committee identified the issues and logistics for the new multi-state research project “Benchmark soilscapes to predict the effects of climate change in the western US.” These issues include the need to collaborate with State Soil Scientists, identify catenas with a bioclimatic sequence, and, for NSSL support, select regionally important soils.
- The committee identified issues involving gypsiferous soils, including descriptive terminology, field methods of distinguishing between gypsum and other soluble salts, and investigations that relate gypsum morphology to landscape evolution.
- The committee provided an update on three projects involving dynamic soil properties and identified the future need for reviewers of a manual on these properties.
- The committee identified future needs for geochemical investigations that should focus on benchmark soils in areas not contaminated by trace and heavy metals.

Interpretations (Ad Hoc)

- Sue Southard (NRCS) was the chairperson for the 2006 conference.
- It is hoped that Sue Southard will continue as chairperson.
- At the business meeting, forwarding of the committee recommendations to the national conference was moved, seconded, and unanimously approved.
- It is recommended that the Ad Hoc Interpretations committee be made a standing committee. This business area is critical to improvements of the NCSS, and many issues are identified each year.
- Charge 1.—The committee proposed changes to the “National Soil Survey Handbook” that establish a procedure for the review of interpretation changes initiated by the National Soil Survey

Center (NSSC). It proposed refinements of the procedures on changing interpretations by NRCS offices or cooperators outside the NSSC.

- Charge 2.—The committee addressed three issues on interpretations. It recommended that septic interpretations for aridic soils be the same as those for other soils, that errors on gravel source interpretations for Vertisols and soils with pans be addressed, and that the slope limit for pond interpretations be lowered from 50 percent to 8 percent
- Additional interpretive and database concerns for the West were identified. These included wind erodibility groups for soils with desert pavements, hydrophobicity, site index, and highly erodible lands.

Summary

The 2006 WRCSS and WSSS combined conference was a tremendous success. The interactions between the groups and all of the agencies and cooperators involved led to the identification of many opportunities to improve soil resource management in the future. During the past several WRCSS conferences, we have seen an increased demand for the inclusion of more information on technology advancements and their applications. This demand fits well with our recommendations for the 2008 conference. The inclusion of the WSSS provided a great opportunity to bridge experienced agency personnel with personnel of the future. This opportunity needs to be an important part of our future conferences if we are to ensure the future success of our profession.

The steering committee thanks all of those who participated in the 2006 joint conference, which was a success because of your cooperation. ■

Executive Summary of the 2006 Southern Regional Cooperative Soil Survey Conference

By Karl W. Hipple, National Leader, Soil Survey Interpretations, National Soil Survey Center, NRCS, Lincoln, Nebraska, and Jim Ford, State Soil Scientist, NRCS, Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Brief Overview

The 2006 Southern Regional Cooperative Soil Survey Conference was held at the Clarion Meridian Hotel and Conference Center in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, June 11-16. The theme of the conference was “Reconnecting and Enhancing the National Cooperative Soil Survey Partnership.” The conference was attended by more than 70 participants, including a strong contingent of NRCS engineers from Texas and Oklahoma. The attendees represented five universities (North Carolina State, Texas Tech, Texas A&M, University of Arkansas, and Oklahoma State); the National Park Service; the Soil Survey Division, National Office; the National Soil Survey Center; the National Geospatial Development Center; and the East and Central National Technology Support Centers. Also attending were representatives from 12 states in the Southern Region and one state in the North Central Region. The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) was represented by its president, Billy Wilson, and Ben Pollard, from the Oklahoma Conservation Commission. NACD President Wilson gave the keynote address at a midweek banquet luncheon.

Interaction among the conference participants was enhanced during a full-day field trip on Thursday. The field trip included a visit to the historic Fort Reno Agriculture Research

Service (ARS) Grazing Lands Research Station, where Herman Mayhaux reported on current ARS research projects. The Fort Reno stop was followed by onsite discussions regarding Ecological Site Description development for forest and rangeland sites. Discussions were led by Central National Technology Support Center (CNTSC) Range Conservationist Homer Sanchez and CNTSC Forester James Robinson.

Four standing committees conducted business and provided recommendations to send forward to the 2007 National Cooperative Soil Survey Conference (NCSSC) for action. One ad hoc committee, the MLRA Soil Survey Offices Committee, also conducted business and provided recommendations for the 2007 NCSSC. Following is a summary of each committee's charges and recommendations.

Committee Charges and Recommendations

New Technology Committee

Chair: Duane Daniels

Charge 1.—Review issues related to current mobile digital mapping methods and processes.

Recommendations:

- Explore developing separate IT service level agreements to provide needed support for soil survey offices.
- New employees need GIS and geomorphology training to be included in qualifications and standards.

Charge 2.—Review new technology tools and software.

Recommendations:

- NSSC adopt National Digital Elevation Program Guidelines for Digital Elevation Data v1.0 (2004) as the standard document for terminology, definitions, and validation methodology related to elevation data.

- Develop a strategy to achieve absolute accuracy of elevation data in different terrain/land cover conditions and assess the relative accuracy of elevation data and derivatives.

- Request NGDC and NCGC to host a cooperative workshop for application of high-resolution elevation data.

Charge 3.—Review methods to maintain consistency and enhance the scientific credibility of digital map products.

Recommendations:

- Establish an NCSS committee or subcommittee to review existing NCSS mapping standards for soil survey and ecology business areas and their transfer to a digital geospatial environment.
- Maintain flexibility in producing and using digital soil map products rather than establishing rigid standards.
- Develop a digital map accuracy assessment strategy to improve compliance with Federal Geospatial Data Committee requirements.

Soil Interpretations Committee

Co-Chairs: Jerry Walker, Engineer, NTSC, and Edward Griffin, Soil Scientist, CNTSC

Charge.—Review existing soil interpretations from the standpoint of current user needs.

Recommendations:

- 2007 NCSSC create an ad hoc committee to address urban-suburban-rural interface interpretation terminology and develop contemporary and special urban interpretations.
- General Irrigation Interpretations plus Irrigation Interpretations by system type be submitted for consideration as standard interpretations by the NSSC. Criteria and rules for these interpretations should be circulated to State Soil Scientists and state engineers for their review and comment. Feedback will be processed, and a final

recommendation will be prepared for the 2007 NCSSC.

- Rules and criteria for surface and subsurface drainage (e.g., grassed waterways, diversions and terraces, tile drains, and underground outlets) be reviewed for potential adoption nationally and submitted to the 2007 NCSSC for approval as “standard interpretations.”

- NCSSC take action to establish a standing Soil Interpretations Committee.

- MO-9 Soil Interpretations Workshop proceedings and presentations be provided to all State Soil Scientists for information purposes.

Research Priorities Committee

Chair: Wayne Hudnall

Charge 1.—Review status and provide recommendations regarding the Sharkey research project.

Recommendation:

- Provide all comments to Doug Slabaugh by July 31, 2006. Doug presented the final draft of the project. He will prepare the final report and submit it to the Director, Soil Survey Division.

Charge 2.—Identify opportunities for cooperator partnering on research projects.

Recommendations:

- Establish a research project on plinthite soils in coastal plain sediments that will include all states with plinthite.
- There are two water table studies under way, one in MO-15 and one in MO-16. Two years of data have been collected. This committee recommends that both studies collect a minimum of 5 years worth of water table data and compare rainfall data to help determine those years with normal, higher than normal, and lower than normal rainfall.
- Wayne Hudnall presented a report on

gypsiferous soils, which will be shared with the West Regional NCSS Conference. The committee recommends that a joint proposal (South and West) be prepared and submitted to the Director of the Soil Survey Division, Mike Golden.

- The committee recommends that all Requests for Proposals (RFPs) be sent directly to all NCSS cooperators and not to a selected list.
- The committee recommends that the Research Priorities Committee be composed of co-chairs, one from the university cooperators and the other from the NCSS membership. Wayne Hudnall was elected as the university co-chair.

Soil Survey Standards Committee

Chair: Bill Craddock

Charge.—Review proposals and recommendations from NCSS cooperators regarding needed revisions to *Soil Taxonomy* and determine which proposals should move forward to the 2007 NCSSC.

Recommendations:

- Umbric/humic taxonomy proposal comments should be sent to Bill Craddock by July 31, 2006. The proposal will be forwarded to the 2007 NCSSC.
- The committee recommended opening up a discussion regarding committee membership at the 2006 Southern Regional Cooperative Soil Survey Conference business meeting.
- The committee will continue work on the following proposals: The “Pale” proposal (Oklahoma and Texas), the Rhodic Paleudalfs proposal (MO-14), the proposal to combine the paramicaceous and micaceous mineralogy classes (John Kelley), and the proposal to change Oxyaquic Fragiudalfs back to Typic Fragiudalfs (George Martin).

MLRA Soil Survey Offices Ad Hoc Committee

Co-Chairs: Larry West, University of Georgia, and Dennis Lytle, NRCS

Charge.—Propose methods to strengthen and improve cooperator roles and decision making within the new NRCS soil survey structure (MLRA-SSOs). Three items were discussed: 1) A procedure for documenting data gaps in the new MLRA SS Areas, 2) a funding mechanism for filling data gaps, and 3) structural changes needed to strengthen cooperator roles in new the MLRA SSO structure.

Recommendations:

- Incorporate existing data (reports, theses, and dissertations) after establishing guidelines for identifying data diversity and formats and georeferencing pedon locations.
- Identify a mechanism that can ensure data quality and consistency across MLRA and SSO boundaries.
- Establish MLRA SSO steering teams to identify and prioritize data needs, develop work plans for data collection and generation, and maintain lines of communication among groups.
- Make funds available to all MLRA SSOs by passing funds through State Soil Scientists and identify local sources of funds for specific local needs.
- Provide needed equipment to achieve data-collection objectives.
- Involve all cooperators in all data-collection projects.
- Use student internships, retired soil scientists, and graduate students to meet specific data-collection needs.

Summary

The 2006 Southern Regional Cooperative Soil Survey Conference

(SRCSSC) was a great success. The 2006 conference returned to a committee format, which seemed to be both effective and productive. A high note was the nearly full-time participation of the Oklahoma State Conservationist, which provided a linkage and exchange mechanism for many conference discussions. The committees increased and focused cooperator interaction for problem solving and resolution. The SRCSSC bylaws were updated and reviewed at the business meeting and now align with the National Conference bylaws. During the business meeting, Warren Henderson, State Soil Scientist from Florida, offered to host the 2008 Southern Regional Cooperative Soil Survey Conference. The conference membership accepted his offer, and the next conference will be held in Florida in June 2008. ■

Executive Summary of the 2006 North Central Regional Cooperative Soil Survey Conference

By Paul W. Benedict, State Soil Scientist/MO Leader, NRCS, Bismarck, North Dakota, and Robert J. Ahrens, Director, National Soil Survey Center, NRCS, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Brief Overview

Beautiful Medora, North Dakota, hosted the 2006 North Central Regional Soil Survey Conference, June 25-30, at the Medora Community Center. The theme for this meeting was “Respect for the Past, Racing Towards the Future—Soil Survey in the North Central Region.”

This conference brought together over 90 participants, primarily from the

North Central States, but also from Canada, Idaho, New York, and Washington D.C., to discuss current issues and share the latest applications of soil survey information. The conference initiated future expansion of cooperation among the representatives in the North Central Region.

The first full day of the conference concluded with an informal poster/social session that included over 30 posters for observation and discussion. Posters were displayed throughout the entire conference.

A Tuesday night banquet honored Don Patterson and Kenny Thompson for their contributions to the soil survey program in North Dakota. The evening ended with a performance by a special musical guest, Chuck Suchy.

A midweek field trip included a tour through the south unit of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park, lunch at the beautiful Paasch Ranch overlooking the flood plain along the Little Missouri River, a stop to discuss sodium-affected soils along with no-till farming and grazing systems, and a final stop to observe an outcrop of the Golden Valley Formation, which has interesting and unique properties.

Six committees conducted business and provided recommendations to send forward to the 2007 National Cooperative Soil Survey Conference (NCSSC) for action. Following is a summary of each committee's charges and recommendations.

Committee Charges and Recommendations

Bylaws Committee

Chair: Jonathan C. Gerken, State Soil Scientist, NRCS, Columbus, Ohio

Charge.—Draft a proposal to make the regional bylaws compatible with the national bylaws.

Recommendations:

The committee proposed that the North Central Regional Conference bylaws be modified as follows:

- Specify which National Leader is the liaison.
- Add standing committee chairs to the steering committee.
- Specify three standing committees: Standards, Research Priorities, and New Technology.
- Specify the responsibility of the standing committee chairs regarding the national conference.
- Add substitute national liaison during vacancy.
- Add all MOs within the region.
- Change NRC-3 to NCERA-3.

Taxonomy and Standards Committee

Chair: Michael G. Ulmer, Soil Data Quality Specialist, NRCS, Bismarck, North Dakota

Charge.—Identify management effects on soil properties and provide recommendations on how to classify soils that have use-dependent properties. What taxonomic principals should be used?

Recommendation:

- Create a 7th categorical level in Soil Taxonomy, a subclass of the series called “anthropogenic deviant” for inclusion of soils that do not fit series criteria or classification as a result of changes in dynamic soil properties induced by anthropogenic activity. This proposed revision of Soil Taxonomy will: 1) identify pedogenic relationships between soils at the series and associated anthropogenic deviant levels, 2) provide information regarding human impact on soil properties by comparison of series and associated anthropogenic deviants, and 3) facilitate evaluations of dynamic changes in soil quality induced by human activity.

Interpretations Committee

Co-Chairs: Michael T. Sucik, State Soil Scientist, NRCS, Ames, Iowa, and Randall J. Miles, Associate Professor, University of Missouri, Columbia

Charge.—Identify what interpretations criteria should be used to describe the transient nature of soils.

Recommendations:

- A prewritten document (concise paper) should be developed to explain spatial, temporal, and human-induced variability of soil properties to the soil survey user. The material should be developed to address regional climate, cropping systems, land use, soils, etc. and should be based on the availability of information from NRCS characterization data, observations, and scientific studies. The National Leader for Soil Interpretations through the NSIAG would be requested to develop this material. The material would be posted on the Web Soil Survey and the Soil Data Mart and incorporated into any soil survey documents.
- Brief explanations of soil properties and interpretations most impacted by land use should be developed. This information should be posted in tables on the Soil Data Mart and Web Soil Survey. Each column heading should be hyperlinked to these explanations. The National Leader for Soil Interpretations or NSIAG would be responsible for developing these explanations and maintaining the database.
- An aggressive plan for sampling benchmark series should be developed under the direction of the National Leader for Investigations. The plan should be developed by an interdisciplinary group. Data collected about the soil properties would be tailored to local environments, but also would be part of the minimum data set. The ultimate goal should be to develop a comprehensive database of properties

and interpretations of benchmark series under a variety of land uses.

- Develop a list of properties and interpretations that are affected by other properties. Develop validations in NASIS that ensure that the different properties correspond to each other.
- Propose a change in the NASIS data structure to allow multiple interpretations per data map unit. When the users select “Alpha silt loam,” have them prompted to select land use in order to obtain the most accurate set of properties and interpretations for that map unit and land use.
- Follow up on the proposal South Dakota sent to the NSSC over a year ago requesting attributes for the frequency and duration of soil saturation.
- The North Central Region Interpretations Committee endorses the Taxonomy and Standards Committee’s proposal for an anthropogenic-deviant level within Soil Taxonomy.

Future Direction of Soil Survey Committee

Chair: Phillip R. Owens, Assistant Professor, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana

Charge 1.—Identify future uses and needs for the soil survey.

Findings:

- Identified current users—many.
- Future users were not much different, but methods of delivery and utilization will be different.

Charge 2.— Relate Soil Survey Program to future needs.

Findings and recommendations:

- There is a significant need for improved tabular data to address new users.
- Get university data georeferenced and online.
- Environmental uses of soils data are increasing for modeling and urban uses.

- Incorporation of new technology needed in the Soil Survey Program – GPS, GIS, remote sensing, and models.
- Marketing.—Look at better ways to gain visibility.
- Try to think about societal problems and focus delivery to gain visibility.

Charge 3.—Clarify what the role of the NCSS partnership should be during the next 10 years.

Findings and recommendations:

- NRCS leadership is required.
- Cooperators should be included in the process of updating interpretations.
- Take the time to identify top priorities and goals.
- What happens when the last acre is mapped?

Charge 4.—Define the roles and responsibilities of NCSS partners, including NRCS and universities.

Findings and recommendations:

- Many comments regarding “eroded Mollisols,” but no agreement on a resolution.
- Increase dialog regarding problems in the field to get university cooperators involved.
- Improve student trainee experience; utilize intern requirements from universities.

Research Committee

Chair: Dennis K. Potter, State Soil Scientist, NRCS, Columbia, Missouri

Charge.— Examine the national research committee report to see if there are charges that will relate to the North Central Region.

Recommendations:

- The North Central Region Research Needs Committee should remain active and, by January, 15, 2007, complete the tasks described in the following bulleted items.
- To assess research needs in this region, this committee should continue to refine the initial survey developed prior to the 2006 North Central

Conference and provide the survey to all cooperators for their input. This process will initiate collaborative efforts to prioritize research needs and will ensure that needs are met in a timely and efficient manner for all cooperators.

- A regional Trace and Heavy Metals subcommittee should be established. The purpose of this subcommittee is to canvass the region’s State Soil Scientists and cooperators to determine needs and priorities for a reasonable database on background levels of trace and heavy metals in soils.

New Technology Committee

Chair: James “Chad” Remley, Soil Data Quality Specialist, NRCS, Salina, Kansas

Charge.—Conduct an inventory within the North Central Region to see what new technology is being used.

Recommendations:

- NCGC or NGDC should maintain a comprehensive list of projects using new technology with a contact available on the Web. The listing should have the type of project, new technology in use, contact person, and phone number.
- NCGC or NDGC should develop a training module to help soil scientists understand data standards. This module would explain the standards and requirements associated with each data layer used in soil survey analysis.
- NCGC and the State Soil Scientists should pursue the idea of scheduled teleconferences for field personnel on specific new technology using net meeting.
- A NCSS digital soil mapping framework subcommittee should be established to review existing mapping standards and develop guidelines for the consistent scientific application of digital soil mapping in the NCSS. ■

Executive Summary of the 2006 Northeast Regional Cooperative Soil Survey Conference

By Ron Taylor, State Soil Scientist, NRCS, Somerset, New Jersey, and David Hammer, National Leader, Soil Survey Investigations, National Soil Survey Center, NRCS, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Brief Overview

The 2006 Northeast Regional Cooperative Soil Survey Conference, one of four regional National Cooperative Soil Survey Conferences held in alternate years, took place May 21-25 at the EcoComplex near Bordentown, New Jersey. The EcoComplex is Rutgers University's Environmental Research and Extension Center. This conference was sponsored by Rutgers Environmental Research and Extension and the New Jersey Association of Professional Soil Scientists and was facilitated by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Sunday evening featured registration and a group social at the Ramada Inn. The 4-day meeting convened Monday morning at the EcoComplex. Besides the general sessions, committee meetings, and a business meeting, the week included a tour of the greenhouse operation at the EcoComplex and an all-day tour on Wednesday, featuring the soils and landscapes of both the Inner and Outer Mid-Atlantic Coastal Plain and the famous New Jersey Pine Barrens.

Throughout the week, the Standing Committees of Standards, Soil Taxonomy, and Research Needs addressed ongoing regional concerns. Additional committees addressed issues involving hydric soils and subaqueous soils and additional

selected issues and interpretation criteria.

Attendees

Welcoming remarks were given by Anthony J. Kramer, the State Conservationist of New Jersey; David Specca, the Director of the Rutgers EcoComplex; and Frank Minch of the New Jersey State Conservation Committee. Dr. Bill Puckett, Deputy Chief for Soil Survey and Resource Assessment, and Micheal Golden, Director of the Soil Survey Division, participated in the conference, with approximately 65 other individuals. Other attendees and participants included representatives of NRCS from all states in the region, the U.S. Forest Service, and many cooperating scientists from colleges and universities in the region.

A focused effort was made to invite a spectrum of current and potential university cooperators, and responses were good. Dr. Marty Rabenhorst (University of Maryland), who is co-chair of the Research Needs Committee, is commended for his tireless contributions in this effort.

Activities

Activities included presentations from all standing committee chairs prior to the suite of business meetings that were conducted during the week. Summary presentations were made by all committee chairs during the last day of the conference. Findings and recommendations will be summarized in a conference report. National Cooperative Soil Survey cooperators were allowed to give individual presentations. Agency representatives summarized their agency's participation, collaborations, and future needs. University cooperators

summarized their research activities, relevant efforts by their colleagues, and the status of graduate and undergraduate student programs.

MO Leaders summarized activities and concerns within their respective MOs. Individual MO reports will be included in the conference report.

The all-day field trip on Wednesday was planned with two primary objectives:

1. Introducing attendees to the variety of geology, soils, and land uses in New Jersey, for example, by visits to several fully characterized open soil pits, which were selected on the basis of their relevance to historic land uses and their unique challenges for classification and interpretations.
2. Ensuring that the selected field trip stops were well organized and were suitable for their later use in a field trip for the World Congress of Soil Science meeting to be held in Philadelphia later in the summer.

The field trip included cultural focal points as well as stops focused on land use and soils. Included were a stop at a state park, where an excellent exhibit portrayed the developmental history of the Pine Barrens, lunch at Rutgers University Cranberry/Blueberry Experiment Station, and a stop at a vineyard. During the evening, a catered barbecue at the EcoComplex greenhouse facility allowed time for the attendees to summarize and review the day's presentations and events.

Committee Recommendations

New Technology

1. Develop a list of technology tools currently available for use in soil survey, document the positive

and negative aspects of each tool, identify where each tool is being used, indicate other locations where each tool might be employed successfully, and post this list to a public Web site. Update regularly.

2. Appoint soil survey liaisons to ITS to bring forward IT-related issues affecting soil survey offices and to communicate solutions back to MLRA SSOs. The liaison could be the State Soil Scientist or Assistant State Soil Scientist. (NRCS-specific)

3. Develop and/or communicate a coordinated plan for deployment of software (products and versions) specific to soil survey offices across an MLRA SSA, State, or region; ensure that a high priority is assigned to addressing hardware or software problems that affect field collection tools. (NRCS-specific)

4. Revisit this topic in 2 years, after soil survey staff members gain more exposure to new data-collection tools.

Hydric Soils

1. Supply a minimum thickness.
2. Add size of stripped zones and minimum volume to the indicator's criteria.
3. Describe the color of stripped zones and/or contrast between stripped zones and matrix color in the indicator's criteria.
4. Use the term "uncovered and uncoated" to be consistent with other sandy indicators, or define a maximum volume percent that can be covered or masked, as is done for other indicators, such as S7.

Standards and Procedures

Charge 1.—What recommendation should the Standards Committee make relative to the development of soil taxonomy for subaqueous soils?

Recommendation: Since the Standards Committee did not have a formal report to comment upon, it is our recommendation that Dr. Stolt continue to prepare the draft of the "Taxonomy Key for Subaqueous Soils" so that it can be considered for placement in the next draft of the keys.

Charge 2.—Review the current status of the proposal in Circular Letter #6 on Anthropogenic Soils and make a recommendation on what activities should be considered next.

Recommendation: After a discussion of what needs to be worked on for Circular Letter #7, the committee concurred, with Dr. John Galbraith's agreement, that family criteria related to particle size and mineralogy should be the next phases prepared for consideration for placement in the *Keys to Soil Taxonomy*.

Charge 3.—Review the proposed revisions of the *Keys to Soil Taxonomy* for the 10th edition—February 2006.

Recommendation: The members of the Northeast Work Planning Conference concur in the changes made in the 10th edition of the *Keys to Soil Taxonomy*.

Charge 4.—Should we continue to use the Series Concept (the OSD) now that series properties and data can be placed in NASIS?

Recommendation: Continue to use the OSD and Classification files because the OSDs are the only true sources for descriptions of the range in characteristics and differences between series.

Charge 5.—Which "use-dependent properties" should we be collecting

data about, and how can we make these data available to the user groups?

Recommendation: No recommendation.

Subaqueous Soils

1. A glossary of terms was distributed to the committee. Our understanding was that the terms had been accepted for the NSSH section 629. We could not find the terms in the draft of proposed terms. Plans are to contact Craig Ditzler and check on the status of the terms.

2. Amendments to Soil Taxonomy to accommodate subaqueous soils were distributed among committee members and to those on the Standards Committee. Changes were suggested, and the changes agreed upon by all will be incorporated into the draft document. The draft document will be forwarded to the NRCS National Office for distribution and comment.

3. The draft document of "Standard Methods for Mapping Subaqueous Soils" was distributed among committee members. Any comments or suggestions on the document should be sent to Mark Stolt.

4. A short discussion was held on identifying and recognizing habitat types on SAS landscapes. The committee agreed that, as much as possible in the field, habitat types (i.e., eelgrass meadows) would be described along with soils for the purpose of generating habitat maps and for interpretive purposes.

5. A lengthy discussion on SAS interpretations was held. Mark Stolt indicated that he would circulate a laundry list of interpretations and obtain from

Mike Bradley criteria used for the interpretations on the MapCoast Web-based soil survey of Ninigret Pond.

6. A short discussion on bathymetric methods was held. Methods for collecting bathymetric data are included in the methods document and should be consulted.

7. Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, New York, and Connecticut gave a brief summary of SAS work being done or planned. Jim Turenne demonstrated some of the MapCoast work in Rhode Island. Marty Rabenhorst reported that the work in Chincoteague Bay, Maryland, was nearing completion.

8. A recommendation was developed to encourage national NRCS to support a Center of Excellence for SAS in the Northeast for training of soil scientists in the area.

9. A recommendation was developed to encourage the national NRCS to suggest that other regions consider establishing committees to discuss subaqueous soils in areas other than the Northeast.

Research Needs

Cooperators would like to be on a direct mailing list whenever NRCS has funding available for investigation projects.

1. The committee chair should make an effort to notify other committee members of NRCS projects in adjacent states.

2. The National Cooperative Soil Survey Newsletter should contain announcements of meetings and

activities that are relevant, or could be of interest to, cooperators.

3. Executive summaries of meetings should be prepared and delivered by NRCS to cooperators' department chairs and deans to inform them of cooperator participation.

4. At regional meetings, cooperators should submit a brief, standardized report of projects, publications, and activities relevant to the National Cooperative Soil Survey.

5. Periodic teleconferences should be scheduled so that the committee can remain current and can discuss and exchange ideas.

Summary

The 2006 Northeast Regional Conference was very successful. Attendance was excellent at all events throughout the week. Presentations and meetings were marked by questions and dialogue among the participants. Informal gatherings each afternoon after the scheduled activities also were well attended, and many of the business discussions were continued in this setting.

Cooperators seemed excited about the openness of the meetings and the solicitation from NRCS for ideas, opportunities for collaboration, and possibilities of focused support for laboratory and field work. Recommendations from the active committees reflect the continuing evolution of the modern soil survey, the willingness of cooperators to participate, and an excellent spirit of collaboration and sharing of goals and objectives.

The Steering Committee thanks the New Jersey NRCS state office staff for their imaginative and thorough planning of the conference. ■

Preliminary Notice of Request for Proposals

By David Hammer, National Leader, Soil Survey Investigations, National Soil Survey Center, NRCS, Lincoln, Nebraska.

This is a preliminary announcement that at the beginning of the federal fiscal year (October), the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) will begin a process of soliciting Project Proposals. Investigations will be directed specifically to topics and issues relevant to meeting the applications of soil survey. Expected topics will include, but not necessarily be limited to:

- Watershed-scale investigations of infiltration, subsurface water movement and duration, and effects of seasonally perched water tables under a variety of land uses.
- Models and tools that can be used quantitatively in the context of soil survey update and maintenance, such as terrain attribute models and remote sensing for specific land uses and soil survey interpretations.
- Responses of gypsiferous-gypsidic soils to land use changes/genesis and properties of soils with gypsum.
- Use-dependent soil properties.
- Soil-landscape genesis and responses of soils to climate change.
- Development of techniques to produce precise continuous soil property maps for region-specific user needs.

Awards will be for the duration of the project and are expected to range to \$100,000, depending on the duration (up to 4 years) and complexity of projects. Projects must be linked to NRCS staff participation and must meet an NRCS need identified by the State Soil Scientist of the state within which the research will be conducted.

Tribal Colleges and Universities and 1890 Historically Black Land-Grant colleges and institutions are encouraged to apply.

Overhead for NRCS-funded projects is limited, by law, to 10 percent. Proposals will be required to contain a detailed budget, a time line for work, and a list of expected “deliverables” to NRCS. Quarterly project reports will be required. In addition to a final project report, funded cooperators will be expected to be available to present progress reports or findings at National Soil Survey Conferences.

Proposals will be reviewed by a combination of NRCS and cooperator scientists under the auspices of the newly established NRCS National Research Needs Committee. Priority will be given to proposals that can “leverage” NRCS funds with other funding or internal “in kind” funding to expand the scope of the project. In some cases, other NRCS support (from the Soil Survey Investigations staff and some analyses through the Soil Survey Laboratory at the National Soil Survey Center) can be provided with prior arrangements. Requests for assistance from the National Soil Survey Center

must be made separately through the State Soil Scientist but should be identified in the proposals.

We are not requesting proposals at this time. These preliminary conditions are subject to change. ■

Pronoun Usage

By Robert J. Ahrens, Director, National Soil Survey Center, NRCS, Lincoln, Nebraska.

As soil scientists, we are keenly aware of standards and rules. In fact, we seem by the nature of our profession and the nature of our work to demand standards and rules. For example, we are uncomfortable when our standards for describing soils are not explicit or appear contradictory. We are not the type of people who contemplate every morning what rules we can break during the day. Rather, we start the day refreshed with the thought that soil scientists throughout the U.S. will be applying standards consistently.

So why does a discipline so attracted to standards and policies ignore some of the rules of grammar?

To me, one of the more obvious infractions concerns the pronouns. There are rules. The pronouns “me,” “him,” and “her” are examples of the objective case. That is, they are direct objects, indirect objects, or objects of prepositions. The pronouns “I,” “he,” and “she” are examples of the nominative case and are the subjects of sentences, dependent clauses, etc. It seems that the public in general is afraid to use the objective case of a pronoun, especially the pronoun “me.”

Note the following examples:

“Are you going to the database management meeting with Fred and I?”
WRONG! “With Fred and me” is correct. The pronoun “me” is the object of a preposition.

“Tammy is coming over to load Karl and I on the new NASIS platform.”

WRONG AGAIN! “Karl and me” is correct. The pronoun “me” is a direct object.

The same rules apply to the pronouns “he” and “him” and “she” and “her.” So, know the rules, be bold, and do not just sprinkle your pronouns around in a haphazard manner. ■

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