



MAP OF THE MONTH *December*

LAND RESOURCE REGIONS AND MAJOR LAND RESOURCE AREAS FOR THE CONTERMINOUS U.S. - SIDE A



Large Country, Large Units

The U.S. produces a vast variety of crops on diverse soils in different climates, ranging from citrus in the south to cranberries in the north. How can we make such vastness intelligible? Or more specifically, how can we divide the U.S. into large regions for purposes of resource conservation and water quality improvement? The answer to this question began evolving in the early 20th Century as soil conservationists began working with scientists to create large map units with similar land, water, and biological resources. It continues today with the concept of *Major Land Resource Areas* (MLRAs). USDA currently recognizes 278 MLRAs, each capable of being shown at the national scale and each with its own unique combination of soil types, climate, physiography, geology, ecology, and water resources.

As part of a hierarchical system, MLRAs can be grouped into larger categories or divided into smaller categories. The larger units, *Land Resource Regions*, are shown as A through U on the map.* The smaller units are *Land Resource Units*. These smaller units contain yet smaller soil and ecological units that, in turn, can be divided again and again as needed until the unit size is optimal for management or assessing ecological services. One of the most powerful aspects of the MLRA approach is that it can be scaled down to understand a farmer's field or scaled up to understand the nation's natural resources.

* Not shown on this map are regions Q through Z. Land resource region Q is the Pacific Basin Region; V is the Hawaiian Region; W1 is the Southern Alaska Region; W2 is the Aleutian Alaska Region; X1 is the Interior Alaska Region; X2 is the Western Alaska Region; Y is the Northern Alaska Region; and Z is the Caribbean Region, which covers Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and a few outlying islands.