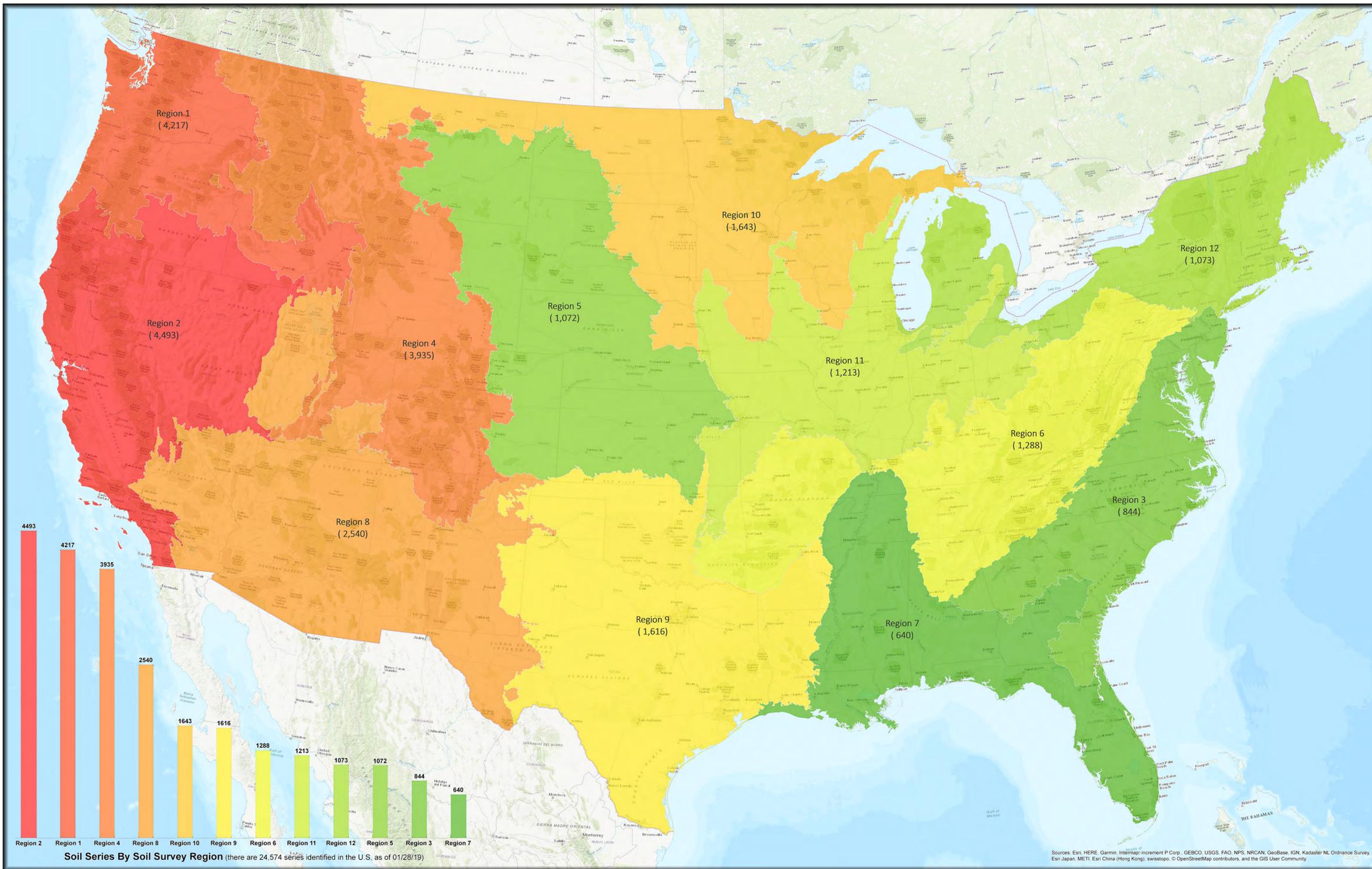


MAP OF THE MONTH

March



Soil Series: A 3-Dimensional Body of Land

This map shows the distribution of soil series in the USDA Soil Survey Regions in the continental United States. Soil series are a level in the soil classification system. Soil Survey Regions are administrative units responsible for the quality of soil survey information.

The soil series is the most homogeneous 3-D body in the U.S. system of soil taxonomy. Soil maps show the locations of 3-dimensional soil bodies. Like a body of water, a soil series has a mappable surface area, lateral boundaries, and depth. A detailed soil map can show not only where series occur on the landscape but also the phases of the series. Phases are based on rockiness, depth to bedrock, slope, and amount of erosion.

In a 1952 paper, Roy Simonson pointed out a conceptually important lesson learned during the first 50 years of mapping soils in the United States. He

noted that soil series are composed of properties that exist in combination. That is, a series is not defined just by the amount of sand, or clay, or organic matter, or by any other single property; it's the combination of properties that makes up the central concept of a series and distinguishes it from neighboring series.

Over 24,500 series have been established in the United States. Each series has an official description that provides the series' classification, depths of horizons, locations, date of establishment, use, vegetation, and range of characteristics. The Official Series Description (OSD) and the Series Extent Map (which shows where a series occurs in the country) can be found by entering "USDA official soil series descriptions" in a search engine.