



Across the nation, USDA and local units of government define lands highly suited to agriculture as prime, unique, and soils of statewide or local importance.

Soils have markedly different land use capabilities that are not obvious to most observers. Recognizing local soils that are best suited for farming allows land use planners to consider the importance of locally grown food and fiber while looking at development. Knowing the soil's agricultural value allows for better community planning.



Soils of local importance are identified by a local agency or agencies, like a soil and water conservation district or borough. The soils have specific properties favorable to regional agriculture and crops. The distinguishing characteristics of the soil vary by region but they all have one thing in common - the community recognizes the soil's agricultural potential and priority.

Farmland Protection Policy Act

Respecting prime farmland, unique farmland, and soil of statewide or local importance is part of the Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA). The FPPA minimizes the impact Federal programs have on the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses. It recognizes local desire to protect farmland and control urban sprawl but does not regulate private land use or property rights.

Farmland subject to FPPA does not have to be currently used for cropland. It can be forest land, pastureland, cropland, or other land, but not water or urban built-up land. Activities funded with federal assistance are subject to FPPA, such as state highway construction (though the Federal Highway Administration), airport expansion, railroad or telephone construction, or reservoirs and hydroelectric projects.

Alaska Designations

There are designated soils of local importance within the Kenai Peninsula, Matanuska-Susitna Valley, and Greater Fairbanks Area. No national or state designations have been made in Alaska.

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