

Fact Sheet



What on Earth Do You Know About Soil Surveys?



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Natural Resources
Conservation
Service

February 2003

Many people assume that soils are all more or less alike. They are unaware that great differences in soil properties can occur within even short distances. So, before you buy that tract of land, consider checking the soil survey first. Consider your objectives, then look at the soils to make sure the land meets your needs.

What Do Soil Surveys Contain?

Soil surveys are a basic inventory of the soils, showing their location on the landscape and evaluating their potential for agronomic and urban uses. Soil surveys are published by the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service in cooperation with the Texas Agricultural Experimental Station and local soil and water conservation districts. Soil surveys are available from each county office and are available to the public at no charge.

What Are Soil Surveys Used For?

Homes – Soils are the foundation upon which a solid house is dependent. Since soil characteristics cannot be easily changed to fit our needs, it is better to select a soil with minimum problems than try to correct poor soil conditions. Soil surveys indicate soil areas that are appropriate for foundations and which soils are subject to flooding and seasonally high water tables. Sometimes you cannot choose the building site by soils, so soil problems must be identified and plans adjusted accordingly.

Construction – Soil surveys describe important soil properties that affect construction, including wetness, flood hazard, shrink-swell potential, bearing capacity, corrosion potential, and ease of excavation. Proper

foundation materials are critical for proper home site. Soil surveys and supporting laboratory data help determine soil conditions in areas where development is planned.

Waste Disposal -- Soils are used to dilute, filtrate and purify domestic waste to reduce disease causing organisms, nutrients, and other organic materials. Soil surveys show limitations for septic tank disposal filter fields.

Forestry and Pasture – Soil surveys help select areas for growing different tree species and for proper management and harvesting activities. Soil surveys group the soils according to their potential productivity and species adaptability. Soils data help producers manage pastures for maximum forage yields.

Crops – Soil surveys show prime farmland—land that is best suited for producing food, feed, fiber, and forages. These soils produce the highest yields with the lowest amounts of production inputs. Highly erodible soils can be identified and treated properly. Erosion of these areas can drastically reduce yields and produce sediments. Using the soils information, NRCS specialists can plan conservation measures needed to control erosion and maintain the soil.

Wildlife and Recreation – Soil surveys help you select tracts suitable for recreational and wildlife development. Survey reports list wildlife suitability groups based on soil potential to produce vegetation suitable for food and habitat. Surveys also help you select soil suitable for ponds. These reports list suitability of soil for water impoundments.

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