CHAPTER 19

CHANGES IN THE NEED AND USE OF SOILS INFORMATION

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The general subject of this symposium is not a new one. When the writer came into the field of soil survey over 30 years ago, there was considerable interest in this subject. The Highway Department of Michigan was already employing men with soil survey experience to assist in planning highway construction. Kellogg and others were making soil surveys in North Dakota for use in tax assessments as reported in USDA Technical Bulletin No. 467. Land classification was also having its day with soil survey serving as useful background information. Even earlier, C. F. Marbut, head of soil survey of the old Bureau of Soils, cooperated with the Bureau of Public Roads in attempting to correlate road failures with types of soil.

Today the use of soil survey in land use planning is a subject of renewed and increased interest and thus deserves the attention it is getting at this symposium. It is the subject of three half-day sessions plus a number of papers on other programs. Certainly, it is important that those working in this field exchange experiences and ideas.

As an introduction to this symposium, a brief review of the recent developments in Virginia's soil survey program and its urban uses will be given. The extensive use of soil survey information in urban development began in Fairfax County, Virginia. A consultant firm, which was preparing a proposed land use map for the county, requested a detailed soil survey to be used as a basis for its report. Since Fairfax County had been previously surveyed, the cooperating agencies felt that the county should bear a substantial part of the cost of the field work for a more detailed survey. The county agreed to contribute some $30,000 toward its cost. The field work began in 1953 and was completed in 1955.

To protect the interests of Fairfax County, the Board of Supervisors appointed a soil survey committee which had the responsibility of not only seeing that the county's needs were met in the making of the survey but also that the agencies of the county government

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