be detrimental to our professions and a disservice to the public. I hope that our exchange of comments will be a step toward closer cooperation between our disciplines.

Charles F. Montgomery
Soil Survey Party Leader
Pell City, Ala.

IN DEFENSE OF CONSERVATION SURVEYS

Gary Konwinski’s comments [Soil Survey Horizons, 17(3):23] on the use of conservation surveys are well taken. Field sheets of these early surveys have been transcribed onto recent aerial photos, and translated into contemporary mapping units successfully in California as well. The defects in these surveys by the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) are widely recognized and well documented: a multiplicity of uncontrolled legends, and lack of uniformity, correlation, and description of mapping units—often compounded by an effort to map intangible soil properties, such as erosion status or permeability.

Among the legends employed in these early conservation surveys was one which was widely employed in the old Pacific Region of SCS, adapted from Shaw’s concept of minimal, medial, and maximal profile development, which was eminently useful and practical. This legend anticipated the idea of the cambic, argillic, and natric horizons which we now employ in our present taxonomy.

These early conservation surveys also possessed two other attributes which made them extremely useful. First, they were timely; that is, they were prepared, interpreted, and utilized in practical terms within a very short time. Secondly, they were developed or modified, both in scale and degree of mapping detail to meet the specific needs of farmers and landowners. Where they were competently prepared, they became a very effective means of gaining the acceptance of the farm plans prepared by SCS technicians. Indeed, they often became the centerpiece of the farm plan, and were preserved and utilized by farmers long after the other material in the farm plan folder was discarded or forgotten.

Thus, these surveys performed a very useful function, both for identifying and evaluating soils, and as means of gaining the confidence and cooperation of farmers and landowners. In instances where they can be intelligently evaluated, they may also provide an effective means of accelerating current soil surveys. They certainly should not be dismissed or discarded lightly, as so often has been done.

George Borst
2322 Brooke Rd.
Fallbrook, Calif.