News & Announcements

Soil Taxonomy Workshops Held for USGS Geologists

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Soil survey data are of value in many disciplines other than soil science, and soil reports and maps are increasingly being used by geologists, particularly those in the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). Full use of these data requires a familiarity with Soil Taxonomy, but training in this system has been neglected for geologists.

In an attempt to bring USGS geologists up to date, two workshops on Soil Taxonomy were presented to them by the Soil Survey Classification and Correlation Division of the Soil Conservation Service (SCS). The first workshop was held November 28, 1979, at the USGS National Center, Reston, Virginia. The workshop gave a formal introduction to the structure, logic, and terminology of Soil Taxonomy, with some discussion on how the classification system is used in soil correlation and mapping. The second workshop, expanded to cover two days, was held at the USGS Central Region Headquarters, Denver, Colorado, on March 25–26, 1980. Although a similar format was planned, the program evolved into a thorough discussion of the use of the system in soil correlation and mapping. Discussions of soil categories and diagnostic horizons were aided by the use of profile slides.

The geologists who attended these workshops are active in studies on surficial geology, environmental geology, engineering geology, land use, and water resources. They expressed a keen interest in the relationships between the soil taxonomic categories and geomorphological features, landscape age, stratigraphic formations, and land use classes. It was realized by the workshop planners that no one could absorb Soil Taxonomy in 1 or 2 days, but the intent of the SCS sponsors was to introduce the system to geologists and to present some possible uses for it in USGS programs.

The workshops were guided by many people in SCS and USGS. Formal presentations were made by SCS staff members Klaus W. Flach, Richard W. Arnold, and John E. Witty at both workshops; Richard L. Guthrie, William U. Reybold, and G. D. Bailey assisted at the Reston session, and Thomas W. Priest, State Soil Scientist for Colorado, assisted at

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