tion to see whether that is appropriate. Many of the limits in Soil Taxonomy were selected to group the soils of the USA into classes that had some real meaning. The purpose of classification is to put together the objects that belong together. How does the classifier decide what things do or do not belong together? The classification problem is not too difficult; he has the rule that the things that belong together have common properties and common behavior characteristics. A soil that has accumulated an appreciable conductivity under irrigation may be capable of supporting at least one, or even two, crops a year under rain-fed agriculture and yet the rules of taxonomy say that it is an Aridisol. This is obviously absurd if one considers such a soil accumulated its salts under irrigation and can lose them readily if they are leached to reclaim the soil from its saltiness. We would then have a soil that changes back and forth from an Aridisol to an Inceptisol according to the year that the leaching is carried out. The absurdity of this sort of classification should be apparent to anyone who is more concerned with putting the things that belong together into a taxon, rather than following the rules that are set by the limits of Soil Taxonomy. 

The classification of the polar soils is going to be determined by this general principle, that the things that belong together have similar morphologies and similar behavior. We left this question hanging so that those who have studied the soils can propose a reasonable classification.

Classification of Histosols

H. R. Finney

While attending the 6th International Peat Congress at Duluth, Minn. in August 1980, I spoke with several scientists from other countries about our classification of Histosols. Generally, their comments were favorable. However, most indicated that the classification was much too complicated. They especially indicated that too many subgroups had been defined to be practical for use and management and scientific purposes. Likewise, I have noted similar comments from scientists in the United States, Cline (1979) for example.

The purpose of this paper is to give some background information on the development of the classification of Histosols in the United States and to offer some thoughts on improving the classification. From this, I especially hope newer soil scientists will better perceive the classification system, be critical of it, and offer ways for improving it.

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