Selected Excerpts from the *National Soils Handbook* on Soil Potential Ratings

The following excerpts were taken from the *National Soils Handbook*, section 603 p. 142-150. The *National Soils Handbook* contains additional information, such as, worksheets for preparing specific soil potentials, procedures, and instructions for their completion, some corrective measures for specific uses, and other related items.

**Purpose of Soil Potentials**

Soil potential ratings are developed primarily for planning purposes and are not intended as recommendations for soil use. They help decision makers determine the relative suitability of soils for a given use. They are used with other resource information as a guide to making land use decisions. Soil potential ratings supplement the land capability classes, woodland suitability groups, range sites, soil limitation ratings, or other soil interpretations in soil handbooks and technical guides. They may be substituted for these interpretations or may supplement them in inventories and evaluations, interim soil reports, watershed work plans, RC&D area plans, and river basin studies prepared by the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) or in reports released by conservation districts or units of government. Soil potential ratings can be included in published soil surveys to supplement other soil interpretations at the option of the state conservationist.

(1) Soil potential ratings have been adopted as a form of soil interpretations to:

—Provide a common set of terms, applicable to all kinds of land use, for rating the quality of a soil for a particular use relative to other soils in the area;

—Identify the corrective measures needed to overcome limitations and the degree to which the measures are feasible and effective;

—Enable local preparation of soil interpretations, using local criteria to meet local needs;

—Provide information about soils that emphasizes feasibility of use rather than avoidance of problems;

—Assemble in one place information on soils, corrective measures, and the relative costs of corrective measures;

—Make soil surveys and related information more applicable and easily used in resource planning; and

—Strengthen the resource planning effort through more effective communication of the information provided by surveys and properly relating that information to modern technologies.

(2) The SCS is responsible for providing assistance to conservation districts and others to prepare and use ratings of soil potential wherever this form of soil interpretations will help to achieve better use of soil and land resources.

(3) The SCS informs local units of government of soil potential ratings and how they can be used, takes leadership in initiating their preparation, and encourages their use. The SCS soil conservationists, soil scientists, and soil engineers are available to help prepare soil potential ratings and conduct surveys and studies for their use.