References


Soil Science Society of America. 1984. Guy D. Smith discusses soil taxonomy. SSSA, Madison, WI.


Time To Review Our Soil Descriptions

Jack F. Young

When I put on my manuscript editing hat, I become very picky. Comparing map unit descriptions to taxonomic unit descriptions to official series descriptions does something to one’s mind. Then, when you compare interpretative tables to map unit and taxonomic descriptions, something really snaps.

Manuscript editing is not one of my favorite activities. Then, when a party leader tells me (and they all do) that his manuscript is in perfect shape, he is issuing me a challenge. I have yet to see the manuscript without error.

Internal inconsistencies commonly exist for color, texture, and reaction, not to mention climate. Then there is landform—my most common complaint as of late.

In reviewing some descriptions recently, the map unit described the soil as occurring on a mesa. The taxonomic description from the same manuscript described the landform as a tableland. So far, no problem—a mesa is a variety of tableland. Then I looked at the official series description, and it described the series as occurring on sideslopes of low hills and in swales on remnant tableland. This excludes our soil from the series. We have the options of requesting a change in the series description or proposing a new series based on a narrow range of landform.

A way around this dilemma would be for those writing series descriptions to use the broadest possible terms for landform. Let us look at the landscape description, “sideslopes of low hills and in swales on remnant tableland,” with the eye of a manuscript editor.

1Soil specialist (Interpretations); USDA-SCS; Casper, WY 82609.