Articles

Evangelists, Scholars, Historians, Lab Types, Computer Buffs, Map Makers, and Auger Pullers in the Soil Survey

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If I were to be asked which of the activities in the title above are most important for a modern soil survey, I would resoundingly answer “all of the above.” A model of a modern major soil survey (to paraphrase a Gilbert & Sullivan song about a model of a modern major general) must include all of these aspects if it is to be fully effective. Each can and should contribute significantly and be considered fully equal to the other components, regardless of Federal or state agency affiliation and disciplinary background (not some more equal than others as has been the case sometimes in the past) in a well-balanced modern soil survey program as full team members. This hasn’t always been the situation. It seems, however, progress is being made and additional progress is forthcoming, growing out of the planning and cooperative attitudes that were displayed at the first South-Northeast Cooperative Soil Survey Planning Conference. The soil survey must continue in promoting cooperation and joint planning if it is to be effective and serve our country well.

Special commendations go to the Steering Committee which arranged the well-planned, well-executed conference. Such a joint session would have pleased Dr. Charles Kellogg greatly, for he was always concerned about the “fault lines” (as he called them) between the various regions of the USA. From what I heard and saw during the conference, there were no iron curtains or trenches between the two regions and among the several agencies participating in the conference. Ecologists and other natural scientists have studied and written about the “tension zones” between the types of forests, vegetation zones, climates, and soils (the Alfisol-Ultisol interface) along and near the boundaries of these two regions. My observation and thought has always been that the tension was in the minds of scientists either side of the regional boundary due to disagreement on placement of human-defined boundaries between these types of natural resources. It is encouraging that by means of a conference this tension was eased in the minds of scientists either side of the South-Northeast boundary.

The steering committee showed good judgment in choosing Asheville in the midst of the beautiful Great Smoky Mountains as the scene for the conference. It was also good judgment to set the conference where participants would have an opportunity to see in the field the interesting soils of this

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