SOME OBSERVATIONS ON COLOMBIA

Milo I. Harpstead
Stevens Point, Wisconsin

The equator passes through Colombia, South America but a Midwesterner can be quite surprised to find that most of Colombia is free of jungle. I spent about a month in Colombia last summer visiting brother Dale who is a plant breeder for the Rockefeller Foundation. While there I had an opportunity to travel around a bit, but I cannot claim to have seen all of the country.

Columbia has been formed mainly from sedimentary rocks which give the eastern part a level landscape, but the western part is folded to form the northern extremity of the Andes mountains. Bogota, the capital, is situated on an old lake plain at about 8,600 feet above sea level. The climate there is cool and humid. The average annual temperature is 58°F and seldom deviates from this by more than 10°F. The lacustrine soils of the Bogota area are primarily Humic Glei and support small grain and forage production.

The mountain terrain around Bogota has an elevation of about 10,000 feet and Alpine soils predominate. Vegetation is sparse in many places but the thick A horizon has a high organic matter content. Potatoes are the main crop on the small farms. It is common to see a wooden plow drawn by an ox.

The level eastern area is known as the llanos (Plains) and this is cattle country. The lateritic soils produce considerable forage during the wet season but cattle production is limited by the forage available during the dry season. The soil here becomes very hard when dry; and, according to reports, the blade of a D7 Cat will barely penetrate it at that time.

Two rivers, the Magdalena and the Cauca, drain the mountainous part of Colombia, and alluvial soils along these rivers constitute the major crop producing area of Colombia. Small grain, corn and rice are grown extensively.

Some day I hope to investigate some soils of the tropics more carefully, but for this summer another trip is planned -- this time with a new bride.

SOIL SALINITY AND LAND CAPABILITY CLASSIFICATION

By: Robert E. Fox, Soil Scientist
Pecos, Texas

Land capability classification, based on the predicted salinity level of irrigated soils, is being used in Trans-Pecos Land Resource area of Texas. Authors of the classification scheme arrive at capability classes by using a formula from Agricultural Handbook No. 60 by which seasonal increase in soil salinity is calculated for a given soil receiving a given quality of wa-

Published August 4, 2015