Missouri Puts a Wrap on the Once-Over with a Web Publication and a Ceremony

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As of January 1st, 2002, every acre of Missouri soil has been officially mapped. This milestone has been explicitly recognized in two events: a symposium and a Last Acre Ceremony.

The Symposium

The Missouri Natural Resources Conference is an annual event in Missouri, and is well attended by natural resource professionals in the state. At the 2002 Conference, NRCS and University of Missouri soil scientists organized a symposium called “Soil Information for Natural Resource Assessment and Management.” It consisted of ten, 20-minute invited presentations by foresters, wildlife biologists, conservationists, and soil scientists from NRCS, University of Missouri, Missouri Department of Conservation, and Missouri Department of Natural Resources. Speakers with high name recognition in their respective fields in Missouri were invited, in an attempt to draw in Conference participants who would not normally attend soils papers. The strategy seemed to work; foresters came to hear the popular forestry professor, wildlife students jammed the room to hear the renowned wildlife biologist, etc.

If you go to that much trouble to put on a symposium, it’s nice to go the extra mile and put together a proceedings. But who’s going to publish such a document? The modern-day answer is: put it on the Web. The Symposium abstracts and presentations are now posted on the Missouri NRCS web site, on the soil survey page. Visit and review the Symposium at: http://www.mo.nrcs.usda.gov/soilsur_intro.html (verified 16 July 2002), which has a link to the Soils Symposium.

The Ceremony

Missouri’s “last” Last Acre Ceremony took place April 19, 2002, in the Carnahan Memorial Garden, adjacent to the Governor’s Mansion and across the street from the State Capital in Jefferson City, MO. A handsome collection of dignitaries were in attendance, along with a colorful assembly of soil scientists, both practicing and retired. One highlight was the symbolic mapping of the Last Acre, with an incongruous lineup of dignitaries in business suits and schoolchildren, struggling with back saver probes (Fig. 1). Dennis Potter, NRCS State Soil Scientist, declared the Last Acre to be part of the Harvester-Urban Land map unit. Many in the crowd, however, noticed the dark epipedon (uncharacteristic of Harvester, a fine-silty, mixed, superactive, nonacid, mesic Oxyaquic Udorthent), and questioned Potter about his documentation. He adroitly deflected these questions by pointing out that Harvester is a human-influenced soil derived from the Menfro series (fine-silty, mixed, superactive, mesic Typic Hapludalfs), which is proposed as Missouri’s State Soil. The symbolic significance of having the State Capital built in the State Soil was, hopefully, not lost on the assemblage.

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