The North Central Regional Committee 3 (NCR-3) was organized in 1934 and is one of the oldest active committees of the North Central Regional Association of Agricultural Experiment Stations (AES). Because of WWII, it did not officially meet until June of 1949. The committee has met nearly every year since. Initially, there were 12 midwestern states represented on the committee, including Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. The NCR-3 committee is composed of pedologists from each North Central AES, representatives from the USDA, NRCS, and CSREES and an administrative advisor. The university representatives are responsible for coordinating AES responsibilities in the NCSS in their representative states. During the past 57 yr the North East, South, and West regions established Regional Soil Survey committees, but they have all been discontinued. In 2004, NCR-3 was renamed (now NCERA-3) to reflect educational and extension activities in addition to research and coordination functions. Since NCERA-3 is currently the only active regional soil survey committee, membership has expanded to include members from states outside the region. NCR-3 meets annually. In even-numbered years the committee meets jointly with the USDA-NRCS soil survey staff in the Midwest to identify and coordinate research needs that support development of soil survey.

Soil Survey in the North Central Region Prior to 1949

The soil survey of the north central region (NCR) began as a cooperative project between some AES and the USDA Bureau of Soils in 1902 (Smith and Wascher, 1967, unpublished data). Dr. Milton Whitney, USDA, Head, Bureau of Soils and AES staff in each midwestern state directed the cooperative soil survey. The cooperative soil survey programs continued in some NCR states, but in others the program only lasted for a few years. In Illinois, the cooperative arrangement was terminated because an agreement on soil classification standards and procedures in general could not be reached. From 1904 to 1943 the Illinois Agricultural Experiment Staff prepared all the soil maps. Illinois was the last to do so.

In 1951, Guy D. Smith (IL), joined the USDA soil survey program, and was given the assignment of leading the development of a worldwide cooperative system of soil classification. This classification system, though not complete, was published as Soil Taxonomy.

NCR-3 was authorized in 1934, organized immediately after WWII, and the first meeting was held in 1949. H.H. Krusekopf (MO) was elected chairperson and T.E. Fenton (IA) was secretary. Meeting sites rotated around the region and officers served one or two years, with all participating state representatives eventually serving as chair.

By 1949, progress in soil science was great enough that revision of most county soil survey mapping was needed. There was also a need to join the soil lines, which was not possible where individual counties had previously adopted USDA soil mapping procedures.

In 1951, Guy D. Smith (IL), joined the USDA soil survey program, and was given the assignment of leading the development of a worldwide cooperative system of soil classification, though not complete, was published as Soil Taxonomy. From 1951 to the present, members have reviewed and responded to the soil names and color descriptions that result when the soil is mapped.

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