In the summer of 1993, Soil Survey Horizons published an article by George Demas called “Submerged Soils: A New Frontier in Soil Survey” (34:44–46). In this article, Demas (1993) recognized the need for soils information to provide the support needed to make wise environmental management decisions, especially in areas with deteriorating water quality. After researching previous mapping and analysis of submerged soils in the United States and Europe and conducting a subaqueous soil survey mapping project, he began to realize the neglect by soil science. Discussions quickly focused on how to define these materials as soil and how to include the classification of subaqueous and submerged soils in the Keys to Soil Taxonomy. To fully justify this new idea and additions to soil science, Demas realized there must be a practical reason to make this change. His justification was that the quality of our environment is being threatened, that we should be concerned about continuous loss of habitat and declining finfish and shellfish populations. This consideration was enough for him and others to support, as Demas stated, the “missing link” in the water quality information chain.

More than a decade later, coastal zone soil survey mapping, the termed now used to incorporate subaqueous, submerged, and adjacent subaerial soils, was started in Connecticut and Rhode Island. Through mapping, full characterizing, and classifying subaqueous soils in Connecticut and Rhode Island we are finding valuable information to assist in replanting aquatic vegetation species, restocking shellfish populations, calculating sedimentation rates, interpreting modeling potential acid sulfate soils. With this information, many new series descriptions that have contributed transforming the Keys to Soil Taxonomy and NASIS database.

Recently, the Soil Survey Office 12-6, Rhode Island University of Rhode Island staff have combined efforts to produce a soil survey product on a section of the coastal zone special sites, parts of Connecticut and Rhode Island. This will be a subaqueous soil survey product made by NRCS and will be unveiled at the second National Workshop on Subaqueous Soils during the week of August 9–13, 2010.

As Demas stated in his article, let us take the first few soil scientists have gone before—and submerge our own new frontier!

References

In Memoriam—James R. Coover (1919–2009)

James R. Coover, former Principal Soil Correlator for the South National Technical Center Area, died August 24, 2009. Jim was born and grew up in Pennsylvania. He was a graduate of Penn State University in forestry. Jim came to Waxahachie, Texas in the late 1930s as a soil scientist for the Soil Conservation Service. He married Mary Hall there.

I first met Jim at an interstate meeting where Soil Survey Staff members were meeting to share ideas and additions to Soil Taxonomy keys. Jim said “With this document each soil scientist could be their own correlator.” Old timers will remember that the then titled, Senior Soil Correlator, was Jim organized an annual meeting where retired soil scientist could meet for lunch and visiting. This was later expanded into a meeting for all retired SCS (now NRCS) employees.

In his work with Soil Survey, Jim served overseas in the Army Air Corp during World War II. Jim served from 1966 to 1970 as specialist soil correlator and was Principal Soil Correlator from 1975 to 1976. He retired from the Soil Conservation Service in 1978.

Jim is survived by a daughter, Eileen Burger, of Waxahachie and six grandchildren and seven great grandchildren. He is remembered by a great number of co-workers.

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