In 1990 Florida soil scientists were having a difficult time convincing those outside Florida to accept Florida’s hydric soil indicators (HSI). A field trip was organized to demonstrate HSI to Blake Parker, the primary leader as a soil scientist with NRCS in the development of HSI. Experienced hydric soil scientists on this field trip were (see photo) Warren Henderson, Assistant State Soil Scientist, USDA-NRCS; Dr. Victor Carlisle, Soils Professor, University of Florida; Dr. Steven Sprecher and Dar Guam Cheng, Soil Scientists, Florida Department of Environmental Protection; Blake Parker, Soil Scientist, Hydric Soils, Inc.; Frank Watts Soil Survey Project Leader (SSPL), USDA-NRCS; and Howard Yamataki, SSPL, USDA-NRCS (not pictured). The team studied hydric soils and non-hydric soils in Austin Cary State Forest near Gainesville (photo) and in south Florida near Ft Myers. Blake Parker stated that the field trip was very productive, resulting in a better understanding of how to identify hydric soils.

Photo and information courtesy of Frank Watts, Pedologist, AAA Soil Consultants.

Constantin Constantinovich Nikiforoff, often referred to as C.C. Nikiforoff is shown here in ardent discussion with John T. Hack, geomorphologist with USGS, Christmas 1954. Nikiforoffs’ distinctive appearance with his flowing white mustache and goatee made an impression on people, and his extensive knowledge of soils helped distinguish him as an important part of the Soil Survey Division, Bureau of Chemistry and Soils, USDA. Nikiforoff completed his doctoral studies at St. Petersburg University during the prerevolutionary period and conducted studies of soil over a wide range of landscapes that included frozen ground in Siberia and areas ranging from the east to the west coast of the United States. He published “Soil Organic Matter and Soil Humus” in the iconic 1938 Yearbook of Agriculture, Soils and Men. He authored many other publications, including a superb Hardpan and Microrelief in Certain Soil Complexes of California (Tech. Bull. 745, 1941), which he worked on while part of the soil survey of The Pixley Area, California that was issued in 1942.

Photo courtesy of Douglas Helms, retired USDA-NRCS. Information courtesy of Kerry Arroues, retired USDA-NRCS.

Vasiliii Dokuchaev’s well-known Russian Chernozem (1883) is considered a classic treatise on soil formation and remains a highly regarded contribution to soil science. A well-respected geographer, Dokuchaev was called on to lead an expedition to Kamennaya Steppe near Voronezh in southern Russia in 1892 with the objective of reducing the occurrence and severity of drought in the steppe region. Prevailing thought of the time was that cultivation of the steppe grasslands had led to decreased rainfall, soil dessication, and loss of native forests. Dokuchaev’s team initiated an ambitious tree planting and groundwater monitoring program to assess the effect of reforestation on climate. Today a museum at the Dokuchaev Institute at Kamennaya Steppe commemorates the accomplishments of the expedition and Dokuchaev’s career with displays of meteorological instruments, vegetation and animals, rainfall and groundwater records since 1892, and a map of “Stalin’s Plan” for windbreak planting throughout European Russia. This statue and mosaic adjacent to the museum attest to Dokuchaev’s stature as a scientist and pay tribute to his contributions.

Contributed by Tom Sauer, USDA-ARS.