

Update FY2008 Soil Quality Program of Work 3/10/2008

Here is a brief overview of what I am focusing on in FY2008 to advance the national soils program:

Data Stewardship:

NRIS Terra/National Soil Information System (NASIS) Integration - This initiative has been underway since 2003. The effort is to reduce the data redundancy between the Forest Service NRIS Terra and the NRCS NASIS corporate database systems. Representatives from NRIS Terra and NASIS are working with associated database developers to resolve some of the technical challenges of linking the two systems. NRIS Terra is being prepped for delivery to FS-NITC. Kansas City, MO. The database structure is being simplified and will make NRIS easier to maintain. NASIS will be the primary location of landtype and landtype phase map unit data. Additional classifications are being investigated for inclusion in the FY2008 release of NASIS including the Forest Service geomorphology classification. Currently I am working with the ISO to resolve firewall issues between NRIS and the national Soil Information System (NASIS).

Inventory:

Federal Lands Advisory Group (FLAG) – This effort began in 2005 and is intended to develop and interagency strategy to complete the soil resource/terrestrial ecological unit inventory of all lands of the United States. FLAG is composed of representatives from the NRCS, BLM, NPS, DOD, Fish and Wildlife Service and the Forest Service. Currently each agency has completed its individual program of work. The Forest Service has completed the review of the NRCS survey database information and established regional priorities of the work to be done. Each agency has prepared a game plan to complete the inventory and database population effort by the 2020. An Information Resources Board multi-BLI proposal has been submitted to begin funding an accelerated TEUI/SRI Initiative. \$2.5 million is being requested in NFIM for FY2009. FY2008 I will focus on an interagency supplemental funding request to submit into the FY2010 budget process.

NRCS Soil Resource Inventory MOU Amendment 2 – NFS has had a national MOU with NRCS since 1961 that established a partnership with the National Cooperative Soil Survey (NCSS) and outlined soil survey responsibilities. The Amendment 1 was signed in 1981 to refine soil survey responsibilities and technical assistance. Since then, the soil resource inventory program has been advanced by changes in computer technology and the issuance of the NFS Terrestrial Ecological Unit Inventory (TEUI) Technical Guide in 2005. Additionally, an effort to institutionalize ecological site descriptions (ESD) is being prefaced using TEUI as the foundation of an interagency ESD manual and policy. Lastly, data sharing between NRIS and NASIS has been problematic especially when integrating vegetation analysis and classification. These elements have created the need to update and amend the national MOU with NRCS. The draft of the MOU Amendment 2 has been finalized and accepted by NRCS and is being reviewed by their legal consultants. The plan is to have the chiefs of the Forest Service and NRCS sign the MOU Amendment in FY2008.

Monitoring:

Soil Quality Standards (SQS) Monitoring Protocols – Work is underway to organize the project being led by a collaboration of the Rocky Mountain Research Station and the Southern Research Station research soil scientists and foresters. The two field seasons have been completed and the results are being evaluated to fine-tune the upcoming field season. A workshop to formulate the publication is set for April 2008 to provide up-to-date scientific basis for soil conservation practices on Forest Service administered lands. A referred research publication is planned to be completed in early FY 2009.

Research and Development:

National Soil Information Laboratory (SoIL) Charter - This effort was initiated to address inconsistencies of field knowledge being used in environmental analysis and land management decisions. This work area is intended to develop an active collaboration between NFS and R&D to aid the field in obtaining and using current soil science research findings. The Charter has been finalized and forwarded to R&D to review. A conference call is being organized for the week of March 17th. The goal is to have NFS and R&D sign the National SoIL Charter in mid FY2008.

Long-term Soil Productivity (LTSP) Program – This program has been underway since 1987. Recently the ten-year results were published. A national letter of recommitment was jointly signed by NFS and Research and Development in late FY2007. In FY2008, we will be investigating amending the national MOU with Forest Management and R&D to include State and Private in co-sponsoring the LTSP program.

Ecosystem Services:

Interagency Ecological Site Description Manual – The interagency writing team, comprised of members from NRCS, FS, and BLM, has been in consultation with their related agencies since early 2006. The Rangeland Management staff has represented the FS on the interagency core team. The policy portion of the manual has been finalized and is being reviewed for signature in FY2008. Wayne Padgett, range ecologist, is the Agency representative on the interagency core team.

Program Administration:

Revision of FSM 2550 - The draft has been finalized by the Regional soil program leaders and is being review by ORMS. The plan is to issue a revised directive in FY2008. The revision of the FSH 2509 Soil Management Handbook will begin in mid FY2008 with a scheduled release in FY2009.

Woody Biomass Utilization Team/Restoration Framework Implementation Team – I currently assist the WFW Director on these two national teams. I continue to assist both teams with the development of program strategies and implementation guidance.

Climate Change:

Soil Carbon Sequestration - I am pulling together a white paper that will provide an overview of the role of forest, range and wetland ecosystem soils in mitigating climate change through carbon sequestration. I am working with Forest Service researches and other USDA researchers in this effort. I plan to have a review draft ready by May 2008.