



USDA Forest Service National Forest System Briefing Paper

Date: July 3, 2008

Topic: National NRCS MOU Amendment 2 – Related to the making of soil surveys on NFS lands.

Issue: The National MOU between the NRCS and the Forest Service for soil survey was initially established in 1961. This amendment addresses completion of the initial soil survey on all NFS lands, each agency's roles and sharing to soil data stored in corporate databases and acknowledges the need to address ecological site inventories.

Background: The advent of the Natural Resources Information System – Terra (NRIS) has heightened the need to better share soil data stored in the NRCS's National Soil Information System (NASIS).

Data quality assurance has been problematic between the two agencies especially in the western Regions. R-3 has been the most troublesome as it only recently has been collaborative with NRCS soil survey personnel. Other regions have been more successful in collaborating with NRCS.

After 2010 NRCS will increasingly be conducting soil survey on western NFS lands which are very different ecologically from the agricultural lands NRCS personnel have previously focused on. Non-agricultural lands (forests and rangelands) are less uniform and contain a wide variety of ecological plant communities not common on agricultural lands.

Ecological site descriptions are important to establishing benchmark monitoring sites especially for status and trend analysis and for describing and understanding vegetative desired conditions used in land management planning.

Currently standard soil survey and Terrestrial Ecological Unit Inventory (TEUI) has been completed on 133 million acres of NFS lands. 60 million acres remain to be inventoried to NCSS standards.

BLM and the National Park Service often look to the Forest Service to advance coordination issues with the NRCS especially in soil survey and TEUI.

Key Points:

- Updates the completion date of the initial soil survey to 2025.
- Provides ready FS access to the NASIS database.
- Establishes the goal to complete ecological site descriptions on all NFS lands.
- Designates the FS and NRCS as quality control of soil data on NFS lands.

Summary:

The National NRCS MOU Amendment 2 – Related to the making of soil surveys on NFS lands addresses long-standing data sharing issues;

Commits the NRCS to completing ecological site descriptions on all lands;

Commits the FS to completing the initial soil survey and/or TEUI by the year 2025.

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