SECTION II

II - D. SOIL INTERPRETATIONS

11. Waste Disposal

INTRODUCTION

The nature of the soil is important in the application of organic wastes and wastewater to land as fertilizers and irrigation, and when the soil is used as a medium for treatment and disposal of these wastes. Favorable soil properties are required to prevent environmental damage.

The use of organic wastes and wastewater as production resources typically results in energy conservation, prevents the waste of these important resources, and prevents problems associated with their disposal. Where disposal is the goal, and a maximum amount is disposed in a minimum area to hold costs to a minimum, risk of environmental damage is the principle constraint. When the goal is to use the wastes as a resource, and a minimum amount is applied to a maximum area to obtain the greatest benefit, environmental damage is unlikely.

The nature of the soil is important in selecting sites for sanitary facilities (such as septic tank absorption fields, sewage lagoons, and sanitary landfills) and identifying limiting soil properties and site features to be considered in planning, design, and installation. The sanitary facilities interpretations available through the Soil Data Mart and Web Soil Survey can be used as a guide in developing sanitary facilities.

AGRICULTURAL WASTE MANAGEMENT INTERPRETATIONS

Agricultural waste management interpretations are organized into three reports: “Agricultural Disposal of Manure, Food-Processing Waste, and Sewage Sludge”, “Agricultural Disposal of Wastewater by Irrigation and Overland Flow”, and “Agricultural Disposal of Wastewater by Rapid Infiltration and Slow Rate Treatment”. These reports are available for California soil survey areas on the Soil Data Mart.

Within the Web Soil Survey, agricultural waste management maps and tables are found under the “Suitabilities and Limitations for Use” tab, under the section “Waste Management”.

Agricultural Disposal of Manure, Food-Processing Waste, and Sewage Sludge

Application of manure and food-processing waste

Application of manure and food-processing waste not only disposes of waste material but also can improve crop production by increasing the supply of nutrients in the soils where the material is applied. Manure is excrement from livestock and poultry, and food-

processing waste is damaged fruit and vegetables and the peelings, stems, leaves, pits, and soil particles removed in food preparation. The manure and food-processing waste are in solid, slurry, or liquid form. Their nitrogen content varies. A high content of nitrogen limits the application rate. Toxic or otherwise dangerous wastes, such as those mixed with lye used in food processing, are not considered in the rating.

Application of sewage sludge

Application of sewage sludge not only disposes of waste material but also can improve crop production by increasing the supply of nutrients in the soils where the material is applied. In the context of this table, sewage sludge is the residual product of the treatment of municipal sewage. The solid component consists mainly of cell mass, primarily bacteria cells that developed during secondary treatment and have incorporated soluble organics into their own bodies. The sludge has small amounts of sand, silt, and other solid debris. The content of nitrogen varies. Some sludge has constituents that are toxic to plants or hazardous to the food chain, such as heavy metals and exotic organic compounds, and should be analyzed chemically prior to use.

Numerical ratings in the tables indicate the severity of individual limitations. The ratings are shown as decimal fractions ranging from 0.01 to 1.00. They indicate gradations between the point at which a soil feature has the greatest negative impact on use (1.00) and the point at which the soil feature is not a limitation (0.00).

The ratings are based on the soil properties that affect absorption, plant growth, microbial activity, erodibility, the rate at which the waste is applied, and the method by which the waste is applied. The properties that affect absorption include saturated hydraulic conductivity (Ksat), depth to water table, ponding, the sodium adsorption ration depth to bedrock or cemented pan, and available water capacity. The properties that affect plant growth and microbial activity include reaction, the sodium adsorption ratio, salinity, and bulk density. The wind erodibility group, the soil erosion factor (K), and slope are considered in estimating the likelihood that wind or water erosion will transport the waste material from the application site. Stones, cobbles, a water table, ponding, and flooding can hinder the application of waste. Permanently frozen soils are unsuitable for waste treatment.

Agricultural Disposal of Wastewater by Irrigation and Overland Flow

Disposal of wastewater by irrigation

Disposal of wastewater by irrigation not only disposes of municipal wastewater and wastewater from food-processing plants, lagoons, and storage ponds but can also improve crop production by increasing the amount of water available to crops. The ratings in the table are based on soil properties on the soil properties that affect design, construction,

management and performance of the irrigation system. The properties that affect design and management include the sodium adsorption ratio, depth to water table, and ponding. The properties that affect performance include depth to bedrock or a cemented pan, bulk density, the sodium adsorption ratio, salinity, reaction, and the cation-exchange capacity, which is used to estimate the capacity of the soil to adsorb heavy metals? Permanently frozen soils are not suitable for disposal of wastewater by irrigation.

Overland flow of wastewater

Overland flow of wastewater is a process in which wastewater is applied to the upper reaches of sloped land and allowed to flow across vegetated surfaces, sometimes called terraces, to runoff-collection ditches. The length of the run generally is 150 to 300 feet. The application rate ranges from 2.5 to 16.0 inches per week. It commonly exceeds the rate needed for irrigation of cropland. The wastewater leaves solids and nutrients on the vegetated surfaces as it flows down slope in a thin film. Most of the water reaches the collection ditch, some is lost through evapo-transpiration, and a small amount may percolate to the ground water.

Numerical ratings in the tables indicate the severity of individual limitations. The ratings are shown as decimal fractions ranging from 0.01 to 1.00. They indicate gradations between the point at which a soil feature has the greatest negative impact on use (1.00) and the point at which the soil feature is not a limitation (0.00).

The ratings are based on the soil properties that affect absorption, plant growth, microbial activity, erodibility, the rate at which the waste is applied, and the method by which the waste is applied. The properties that affect absorption include saturated hydraulic conductivity (Ksat), depth to water table, ponding, the sodium adsorption ration depth to bedrock or cemented pan, and available water capacity. The properties that affect plant growth and microbial activity include reaction, the sodium adsorption ratio, salinity, and bulk density. The wind erodibility group, the soil erosion factor (K), and slope are considered in estimating the likelihood that wind or water erosion will transport the waste material from the application site. Stones, cobbles, a water table, ponding, and flooding can hinder the application of waste. Permanently frozen soils are unsuitable for waste treatment.

Agricultural Disposal of Wastewater by Rapid Infiltration and Slow Rate Treatment

Rapid infiltration of wastewater

Rapid infiltration of wastewater is a process in which wastewater applied in a level basin at a rate of 4 to 120 inches per week percolates through the soil. The wastewater may eventually reach the ground water. The application rate commonly exceeds the rate needed for the irrigation of cropland. Vegetation is not a necessary part of the treatment;

hence, the basins may or may not be vegetated. The thickness of the soil material needed for proper treatment of the wastewater is more than 72 inches. As a result, geologic and hydrologic investigation is needed to ensure proper design and performance and to determine the risk of ground-water pollution.

The ratings in the table are based on the soil properties that affect the risk of pollution and the design, construction, and performance of the system. Depth to a water table, ponding, flooding, and depth to bedrock, or a cemented pan affect the risk of pollution and the design and construction of the system. Slope, stones, and cobbles also affect design and construction. Ksat and reaction affect performance. Permanently frozen soils are unsuitable for waste treatment.

Slow rate treatment of wastewater

Slow rate treatment of wastewater is a process in which wastewater is applied to land at a rate normally between 0.5 and 4.0 inches per week. The application rate commonly exceeds the rate needed for irrigation of cropland. The applied wastewater is treated as it moves through the soil. Much of the treated water may percolate to the ground water, and some enters the atmosphere through evapo-transpiration. The applied water generally is not allowed to run off the surface. Waterlogging is prevented either through control of the application rate or through the use of tile drains or both.

The ratings are based on the soil properties that affect absorption, plant growth, microbial activity, erodibility, the rate at which the waste is applied, and the method by which the waste is applied. The properties that affect absorption include saturated hydraulic conductivity (Ksat), depth to water table, ponding, the sodium adsorption ration depth to bedrock or cemented pan, and available water capacity. The properties that affect plant growth and microbial activity include reaction, the sodium adsorption ratio, salinity, and bulk density. The wind erodibility group, the soil erosion factor (K), and slope are considered in estimating the likelihood that wind or water erosion will transport the waste material from the application site. Stones, cobbles, a water table, ponding, and flooding can hinder the application of waste. Permanently frozen soils are unsuitable for waste treatment.

Numerical ratings in the tables indicate the severity of individual limitations. The ratings are shown as decimal fractions ranging from 0.01 to 1.00. They indicate gradations between the point at which a soil feature has the greatest negative impact on use (1.00) and the point at which the soil feature is not a limitation (0.00).

SANITARY FACILITIES INTERPRETATIONS

These interpretations show the degree and kind of soil limitations that affect sanitary landfills, daily cover for landfill, septic tank absorption fields, and sewage lagoons. The ratings are both verbal and numerical. Rating class terms indicate the extent to which the soils are limited by all of the soil features that affect these uses. “No Limitations” indicates that the soil has features that are very favorable for the specified use. Good performance and very low maintenance can be expected. “Limitations” indicates that the soil has features that are favorable to unfavorable for the specified use. The tables identify only the top limitations for any given soil. The limitations can be overcome or minimized by special planning, design, or installation. Fair to poor performance and moderate to high maintenance can be expected, depending on the number of limitations and the severity of each limitation.

Numerical ratings in the tables indicate the severity of individual limitations. The ratings are shown as decimal fractions ranging from 0.01 to 1.00. They indicate gradations between the point at which a soil feature has the greatest negative impact on use (1.0) and the point at which the soil feature is not a limitation (0.0).

Trench sanitary landfills (CA)

A trench sanitary landfill is an area where solid waste is placed in successive layers in an excavated trench. The waste is spread, compacted, and covered daily with a thin layer of soil excavated at the site. When the trench is full, a final cover of soil material at least 2 feet thick is placed over the landfill. The ratings in the table are based on the soil properties that affect the risk of pollution, the ease of excavation, trafficability, and revegetation. These properties include saturated hydraulic conductivity (Ksat), depth to bedrock or a cemented pan, depth too a water table, ponding, slope, flooding, texture, stones and boulders, highly organic layers, soil reaction, and content of salts or sodium. Unless otherwise stated, the ratings apply only to that part of the soil within a depth of about 6 feet. For deeper trenches, onsite investigation may be needed.

Hard, non-rippable bedrock, creviced bedrock, or highly permeable strata in or directly below the proposed trench bottom can affect ease of excavation and the hazard of ground-water pollution. Slope affects construction of the trenches and the movement of surface water around the landfill. It also affects the construction and performance of roads in areas of the landfill.

Soil texture and consistence affect the ease which the trench is dug and the ease with which the soil can be used as a daily or final cover. They determine the workability of the soil when dry and when wet. Soils that are plastic and sticky when wet are difficult to excavate, grade, or compact and are difficult to place as a uniformly thick cover over a layer of refuse.

The soil material used as the final cover for a trench landfill should be suitable for plants. It should not have excess sodium or salts and should not be too acid. The surface layer generally has the best workability, the highest content of organic matter, and the best potential for plants. Material from the surface layer should be stockpiled for use as the final cover.

Area sanitary landfill (CA)

In an area sanitary landfill, solid waste is placed in successive layers on the surface of the soil. The waste is spread, compacted, and covered daily with a thin layer of soil from a source away from the site. A final cover of soil material at least 2 feet thick is placed over the completed landfill. The ratings in the table are based on the soil properties that affect trafficability and the risk of pollution. These properties include flooding, Ksat, depth to a water table, ponding, slope, and depth to bedrock or a cemented pan.

Flooding is a serious problem because it can result in pollution in areas downstream from the landfill. If Ksat is too rapid or if fractured bedrock, a fractured cemented pan, or the water table is close to the surface, the leachate can contaminate the water supply. Slope is a consideration because of the extra grading required to maintain roads in steeper areas of the landfill. Also, leachate may flow along the surface of the soils in the steeper areas and cause difficult seepage problems.

Suitability for daily landfill cover (CA)

Daily cover for landfill is the soil material that is used to cover compacted solid waste in an area sanitary landfill. The soil material is obtained off-site, transported to the landfill, and spread over the waste. The ratings in the table also apply to the final cover for a landfill. They are based on the soil properties that affect workability,, the ease of digging, and the ease of moving and spreading the material over the refuse daily during wet and dry periods. These properties include soil texture, depth to a water table, ponding, rock fragments, slope, depth to bedrock or a cemented pan, reaction, and content of salts, sodium, or lime.

Loamy or silty soils that are free of large stones or excess gravel are the best cover for a landfill. Clayey soils may be sticky and difficult to spread; sandy soils are subject to wind erosion.

Slope affects the ease of excavation and of moving the cover material. Also, it can influence runoff, erosion, and reclamation of the borrow area.

After soil material has been removed, the soil material remaining in the borrow area must be thick enough over bedrock, a cemented pan, or the water table to permit revegetation.

The soil material used as the final cover for a landfill should be suitable for plants. It should not have excess sodium, salts, or lime and should not be too acid.

Information in this table is intended for land use planning, for evaluating land use alternatives, and for planning site investigations prior to design and construction. The information, however, has limitations. For example, estimates and other data generally apply only to that part of the soil between the surface and a depth of 5 to 7 feet. Because of the soil map scale, small areas of different soils may be included within the mapped areas of a specific soil.

The information is not site specific and does not eliminate the need for on-site investigation of the soils or for testing and analysis by personnel experienced in the design and construction of engineering works.

Government ordinances and regulations that restrict certain land uses or impose specific design criteria were not considered in preparing the information in this table. Local ordinances and regulations should be considered in planning, in-site selection, and in design.

Septic tank absorption fields (CA)

Septic tank absorption fields are areas in which effluent from a septic tank is distributed into the soil through subsurface tiles or perforated pipe. Only that part of the soil between the depth of 24 and 60 inches is evaluated. The ratings are based on the soil properties that affect the absorption of effluent, construction and maintenance of the system, and public health. Saturated hydraulic conductivity (Ksat), depth to a water table, ponding, depth to bedrock or cemented pan, and flooding affect the absorption of effluent. Stones and boulders, ice, and bedrock or cemented pan interfere with installation. Subsidence interferes with installation and maintenance. Excessive slope may cause lateral seepage and surfacing of the effluent in down slope areas.

Some soils are underlain by loose sand and gravel or fractured bedrock at a depth of less than 4 feet below the distribution lines. In these soils the absorption field may not adequately filter the effluent, particularly when the system is new. As a result, the ground water may be contaminated.

Sewage lagoons (CA)

Sewage lagoons are shallow ponds constructed to hold sewage while aerobic bacteria decompose the solid and liquid wastes. Lagoons should have a nearly level floor surrounded by cut slopes or embankments of compacted soil. Nearly impervious soil material for the lagoon floor and sides is required to minimize seepage and contamination of ground water. Considered in the ratings are slope, Ksat, depth to a water table, ponding, depth to bedrock or a cemented pan, flooding, large stones, and content of organic matter.

Saturated hydraulic conductivity (Ksat) is a critical property affecting the suitability for sewage lagoons. Until sealing occurs, however, the hazard of pollution is severe. Soils that have a Ksat rate of more than 14 micrometers/second are too porous for the proper functioning of sewage lagoons. In these soils, seepage of the effluent can result in contamination of the ground water. Ground-water contamination is also a hazard if fractured bedrock is within a depth of 40 inches, if the water table ids high enough to raise the level of sewage in the lagoon, or if floodwater overtops the lagoon.

A high content of organic matter is detrimental to proper functioning of the lagoon because it inhibits aerobic activity. Slope, bedrock, and cemented pans can cause construction problems, and large stones can hinder compaction of the lagoon floor. If the lagoon floor is to be uniformly deep throughout, the slope must be gentle enough and the soil material must be thick enough over bedrock or a cemented pan to make land smoothing practical.

Within the Soil Data Mart, sanitary facilities interpretations are contained in the “Landfills (CA)” and Sewage Disposal (CA)” reports.

Within the Web Soil Survey, sanitary facilities maps and tables are found under the “Suitabilities and Limitations for Use” tab under the section “Sanitary Facilities”.