

SECTION 2 – NATURAL RESOURCES INFORMATION

1. Soils

Soil Interpretations

Recreational Development

(See Part 620 – National Soil Survey Handbook - Soil Interpretations Rating Guides)

Soil interpretations for recreational development are to be used to guide the user in identifying and evaluating the suitability of the soil for specific recreational purposes. The soil survey interpretation rating guides are applicable to both heavily and sparsely populated areas, depending upon the objectives of the user. The ratings are for soils in their present condition and do not consider present land use. The limitation rating for each interpretation is based on the influence of existing soil properties for that use. When a soil is rated for each use, the degree of the limitation and the most restrictive soil features are identified. Restrictive features for soils with limited or very limited ratings require changes to the original design or the application of corresponding conservation practices, or both, to overcome the limitations. Soils with unlimited ratings require no additional measures other than the normal local procedures used in site development and maintenance.

Many soil survey areas in sparsely populated parts of the country have soil surveys of lower intensity. While some general observations may be made, onsite evaluation is required before the final site is selected.

Soils subject to flooding are limited, in varying degrees, for recreational use by the duration and frequency of flooding and the season when it occurs. Onsite assessment of the duration and frequency of flooding is essential in planning recreational facilities.

The ratings do not consider location and accessibility of the area, size and shape of the area, scenic quality, the ability of the soil to support vegetation, access to water, potential available sites for water impoundment, and either access to public sewers or capacity of the soil to absorb septic tank effluent. These features are extremely important considerations in evaluating a site and making the final site selection.

The use of other applicable interpretations made for building site development, construction material, sanitary facilities, and water management help the user to develop alternatives for use in making their final decision. Depending upon the

recreational use objectives, soil interpretations for woodland suitability, wildlife habitat suitability, or potential native plant community should also be a consideration in the final planning analysis. These latter interpretations help to maintain the aesthetic integrity of the recreational site.

Camp Areas

Camp areas are tracts of land used intensively as sites for tents, trailers, campers, and the accompanying activities of outdoor living. Camp areas require such site preparation as shaping and leveling in the areas used for tents and parking areas, stabilizing roads and intensively used areas, and installing sanitary facilities and utility lines. Camp areas are subject to heavy foot traffic and some vehicular traffic.

The soils are rated on the basis of soil properties that influence the ease of developing camping areas and the performance of the camping area after development. Soil properties that influence trafficability and promote the growth of vegetation after heavy use are important. For tent or remote camp sites, the limitations would be less restrictive.

Slope, stoniness, and depth to bedrock or a cemented pan are the main concerns in developing camp areas. However, areas associated with picnic areas may have steep slopes and rough terrain for aesthetic purposes. For good trafficability, the surface of camp areas should absorb rainfall readily, remain firm under heavy foot traffic, and not be dusty when dry. Soil properties that influence trafficability are texture of the surface layer, wetness, permeability, and large stones. The limitations of slow permeability and clayey surface texture are not as severe in dry regions of the country; however, silty soils may be more of a problem because they are dusty. Soil properties that influence the growth of plants are depth to bedrock or a cemented pan, permeability, and presence of toxic materials. Soils that are subject to flooding are particularly hazardous for camp areas because of the danger to life and property.

Paths and Trails

Paths and trails are used for walking, horseback riding, and similar uses and require little or no cutting or filling. The soils are rated based on the properties and qualities that influence trafficability and erodibility.

These soil properties and qualities are stoniness, wetness, texture of the surface layer, slope, flooding, erodibility, and, in dry regions, dustiness.

Picnic Areas

Picnic areas are natural or landscaped tracts used primarily for preparing meals and eating outdoors. These areas are subject to heavy foot traffic. Most vehicular traffic is confined to access roads and parking lots. Soils are rated on the basis of

properties that influence the development costs of shaping the site, trafficability, and the growth of vegetation after development.

Slope and stoniness are the main concerns in developing picnic areas. For good trafficability, the surface of picnic areas should absorb rainfall readily, remain firm under heavy foot traffic, and not be dusty when dry. Soil properties that influence trafficability are texture of the surface layer, wetness, permeability, and large stones. The limitations of slow permeability and clayey surface texture are not as severe in dry regions of the country; however, silty soils may be more of a problem because they are dusty. Soil properties that influence the growth of plants are depth to bedrock, permeability, and the presence of toxic materials.

Playgrounds

Playgrounds are areas used intensively for games, such as baseball and football, and similar activities. Playgrounds require a nearly level soil that is free of stones and that can withstand heavy foot traffic and still maintain adequate vegetation. Soils are rated on the basis of properties that influence the cost of shaping, trafficability, and the growth of vegetation.

Slope and stoniness are the main concerns in developing playgrounds. For good trafficability, the surface of playgrounds should absorb rainfall readily, remain firm under heavy foot traffic, and not be dusty when dry. Soil properties that influence trafficability are texture of the surface layer, wetness, permeability, and large stones. The limitations of slow permeability and clayey surface texture are not as severe in dry regions of the country; however, silty soils may be more of a problem because they are dusty. Soil properties that influence the growth of plants are depth to bedrock, permeability, and the presence of toxic materials.

These reports are available on the Soil Data Mart
<http://soildatamart.nrcs.usda.gov/Survey.aspx?State=WA>.