

## Land Capability Classification

Land capability classification shows, in a general way, the suitability of soils for most kinds of field crops. Crops that require special management are excluded. The soils are grouped according to their limitations for field crops, the risk of damage if they are used for crops, and the way they respond to management. The criteria used in grouping the soils do not take into account major and generally expensive landforming that would change slope, depth, or other characteristics of the soils, nor do they include possible but unlikely major reclamation projects. Capability classification is not a substitute for interpretations designed to show suitability and limitations of groups of soils for rangeland, for woodland, or for engineering purposes.

In the capability system, soils generally are grouped at two levels--capability class and subclass. These categories indicate the degree and kinds of limitations affecting mechanized farming systems that produce the more commonly grown field crops, such as corn, small grain, cotton, hay, and field-grown vegetables.

**Capability classes**, the broadest groups, are designated by the numbers 1 through 8. The numbers indicate progressively greater limitations and narrower choices for practical use.

If properly managed, soils in classes 1, 2, 3, and 4 are suitable for the mechanized production of commonly grown field crops and for pasture and woodland. The degree of the soil limitations affecting the production of cultivated crops increases progressively from class 1 to class 4. The limitations can affect levels of production and the risk of permanent soil deterioration caused by erosion and other factors.

Soils in classes 5, 6, and 7 are generally not suited to the mechanized production of commonly grown field crops without special management, but they are suitable for plants that provide a permanent cover, such as grasses and trees. The severity of the soil limitations affecting crops increases progressively from class 5 to class 7.

Areas in class 8 are generally not suitable for crops, pasture, or woodland without a level of management that is impractical. These areas may have potential for other uses, such as recreational facilities and wildlife habitat.

**Capability subclasses** identify the dominant kind of limitation in the class. They are designated by adding a small letter, *e*, *w*, *s*, or *c*, to the class numeral, for example, 2*e*. The letter *e* shows that the main hazard is the risk of erosion unless a close-growing plant cover is maintained; *w* shows that water in or on the soil interferes with plant growth or cultivation (in some soils the wetness can be partly corrected by artificial drainage); *s* shows that the soil is limited mainly because it is shallow, droughty, or stony; and *c*, used in only some parts of the United States, shows that the chief limitation is climate that is very cold or very dry.

There are no subclasses in class 1 because the soils of this class have few limitations. Class 5 contains only the subclasses indicated by *w*, *s*, or *c* because the soils in class 5 are subject to little or no erosion. They have other limitations that restrict their use mainly to pasture, rangeland, woodland, wildlife habitat, or recreation.

The capability classification of map units in the county is given in the crop yield report.

**Land Capability Classes and Subclasses for each soil map unit are located in the Nonirrigated Yields by Map Unit table in the Cropland Interpretations (Section II-(A)-e).**