

Use and Explanation of Soil Interpretations

Soil survey interpretations are predictions of soil behavior for specified land uses and specified management practices. They are based on the soil properties that directly influence the specified use of the soil. Soil survey interpretations allow users of soil surveys to plan reasonable alternatives for the use and management of soils. They are used to plan both broad categories of land use such as cropland, rangeland, pastureland, forestland, or urban development, as well as specific elements of those land uses. For example, irrigation of cropland, equipment use in forestland management, or septic tank absorption fields.

When soil interpretations are used in connection with delineated soil areas on soil maps, the information pertains to the soil for which the soil area is named. Other soils that are in areas too small to map may occur within the delineated area as minor components. More detailed studies are required if small, specific sites are to be developed or used within a given soil delineation. For example, a soil delineation bearing the name Roult loam, 3 per to 25 percent slopes, also can include small, unmappable areas of other soils, such as Buckskin and Foidel soils. The interpretations apply to the Roult part of the delineated soil area and not to the included soils.

No consideration was given in these interpretations to the size and shape of soil delineations nor to the pattern they form with other soils on the landscape. For example, some very desirable soil areas are too small, too irregular in shape, or occur with less desirable soils in a pattern too complex for the intended use. Although not considered in the interpretations, these items may influence the final selection of a site.

Soil interpretations do not eliminate the need for onsite study and testing of specific sites for the design and construction for specific uses. They can be used as a guide to plan more detailed investigations and to avoid undesirable sites for an intended use. The soil map and interpretations can be used to select sites that have the least limitations for an intended use.